

The Flydressers Guild Sussex Branch



Newsletter FEBRUARY 2024

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Flydressers Guild

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FOR SALE

The club has two collapsible tables for sale. Each table is approximately 6ft x 3ft when up, and when collapsed are 3ft x 3ft. Ideal for the garden, bootsales etc.

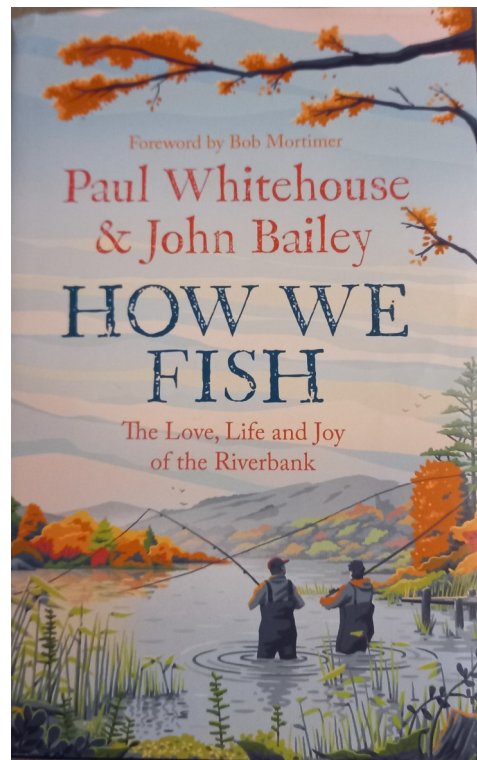
The club is asking £50 for them. Please contact Tony Woolnough for full details on 01273 483833 or via email tonyfishway@gmail.com

Book Review

How We Fish.

Authors: John Bailey and Paul Whitehouse.
Hardback.

Publishers: Harper Collins
308 pages with some line drawn
illustrations. Price £22



I was given this book as a Xmas gift probably because the donor knew I had watched the "Gone Fishing" BBC series (Paul Whitehouse being one of the main contributors). Although its professed target was said to be those new to fishing, it has a mixture of content and some more experienced anglers might find it an interesting read. John Bailey is a renowned angling guide, author and broadcaster and Paul Whitehouse a comedian and actor of stage and TV is also a widely experienced fisherman.

The opening chapter entitled "Why We Fish" seemed a little "gushy" to me. Whilst we would probably all attest to the therapeutic value of angling, the language seemed a little florid for my tastes. This could be the old cynic in me

believing that the popularity of the TV series, which has already spawned a not very impressive follow up book, gave an opportunity for further earnings. The statement that Paul had to be convinced to contribute as he thought people would think he was “cashing in”, would be a little more convincing if a proportion of the proceeds were given to say something like the Angling Trust. However, there is no denying the evangelistic enthusiasm for the sport which both writers display but their professed aim to appeal to both the newcomer and the seasoned angler leads to a bit of a strange structure to the book.

The ensuing chapters try to lead the novice from the basics of becoming an angler to more complex ideas about fish behaviour and strategies and techniques. The chapter titles literally try to lead the reader through the why, where, when and how of fishing. The main text is interspersed with *italicised* sections with more personal stories and musings from Messrs Bailey and Whitehouse on particular species, sessions, locations and events. Here Bailey's evocative descriptive skills I find impressive and the elements most likely to encourage newcomers to take up the sport, whilst giving some highlights from a lengthy angling career.

Throughout the book there is a heavy emphasis on **river** fishing for both coarse and game fish, though for some species such as tench and carp there are passages on selected still waters. Bailey in particular seems very dismissive of commercial fisheries, eschewing the modern emphasis on either huge bags or massive specimens and competition fishing. His championing of the skills of watercraft, stalking and focusing on the quality of experience are probably best served in the river environment context, though many reservoir, loch or lough fishers would argue against this view. Unfortunately, from a South Eastern trout angler's perspective game river fishing opportunities are limited and often very expensive. However, I would echo the view that certain

modern perspectives and techniques in coarse fishing have replaced skill with technology and have led to some ugly, overfed fish and a dominance of carp in too many waters. The latter sections focus on fishing through the seasons and an alphabetical listing of the “nuts and bolts” of fishing. Whilst the former again has some pleasant descriptions, neither is entirely convincing as an approach to explaining methods to novices which was the stated aim of the book.

To sum up, whilst I found a fair amount an enjoyable read, I didn't feel I was the intended market. At £22 it would be a rather expensive addition to the seasoned angler's library. As a treatise for the newcomer, it is a rather lengthy read and would benefit from better illustrations. However, its well-crafted, humorous and enthusiastic descriptions of fishing exploits and sessions might well encourage uptake of our beloved sport.

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ADVANCE NOTICE

On Saturday 16th March the Chairman's Day event will take place a Coltsford Mill Trout Fishery, Oxted. This an Open event for members and will be limited to the first 18 members that put their names forward. It will be a four fish ticket. The cost will be around the £40 mark, yet to be confirmed Full details to be advised soon. Please let Peter Winder know if you are interested in attending.

Words from our Webmaster

A Rave From The Grave Recently I decided that a few words of explanation from your webmaster (that's me by the way) might now be in order. Over recent cold, dark, winter nights I have spent several hours gainfully employed in front of my nice warm computer gathering together the archive issues of our august organ the SFDG

newsletter. They are all in PDF format starting from November 2001 and running up to 2017. I am now delighted to announce that these will all be available on our Guild Website. As I point out on the Newsletter Page: "Over the years there have been countless articles contributed by members of the Sussex branch covering every imaginable subject. If it has anything to do with fly tying or fly fishing then there's a good chance it will be here". It would have been nearly impossible to format and list them all onto the existing Newsletter web page so I have loaded the whole lot up into a dedicated folder that can be reached by a clickable link from the Newsletter page and once inside this 'Aladdin's Cave' you will be free to wander to your heart's content. In truth I have been planning to add these documents to the website for a long time but, quite frankly, the prospect of collecting and collating it all has defeated me! Anyway, after giving myself a jolly good talking to, I have managed to complete the task. The result will hopefully make the site even more of a valuable resource than it already is. I hope you will all look favorably at these changes and check out the new additions for yourself.

By Mike Guest

Know the quarry – Triploids.

In the USA, a problem developed when stocked rainbows mated with native cutthroats and produced hybrids that were neither full rainbows nor true cutthroats. In time this would have resulted in the disappearance of the local strains of fish. The solution was to stop stocking with rainbows to waters that contain other trout species but rainbows do not necessarily stay in their stocked lake, many migrated both upstream and

downstream and bred with native fish in other lakes.

So what to do? Fishing pressure called for stocked fish to be available. Eventually biologists discovered that given that female trout possess two sets of chromosomes (**C**) and males one, at spawning one **C** from each sex combine and form a juvenile with the spare **C** of the female being rejected. Rarely in the wild fish juveniles develop with the three **Cs** turning them into "natural" triploids which are unable to breed although complete in all other ways.

Biologists found that by either exposing the eggs to pressure or warmth soon after spawning, the two **Cs** from the female stuck together and triploids were produced.

This solved the inter breeding problem, although we can often identify "stockies" we should be grateful that we can now enjoy trout fishing for all, including large still waters.

Hybrids formed from other species also have their uses. At Washington University I was shown a tank of pike / muskellunge hybrids which are used as "cleaning fish". There were stocked in lakes with high densities of coarse fish which are soon decimated by the cleaning fish which did not require removal at the end of the process, as they could not breed and therefore would die out naturally.

As a matter of interest, most of our rainbows originated from Shasta Lake in California, you may remember, if you were awake, that I displayed a slide of a fish lift into this lake in a previous presentation.

What does this mean to the angler ?

- We know the origin of most of our rainbows
- We know how triploid trout of all species are produced.
- Plenty of sport

Tony Woolnough

Happy New Year

In my fishing record book I usually write up a summary of the year ended and my wish list/plans for the next year's fishing. With my Secretary and Events Co-ordinator hats on, I thought it might be a good thing to do in the newsletter. Although committee members do some background explanation of their decisions at the AGM, some people don't hear that so I thought it would be good to clarify the background to some changes. By the way these are my thoughts and beliefs and may not be shared entirely by everyone on the committee.

The biggest change this year has obviously been the drop to 2 nights a month fly tying sessions. For those who have been with the club some time, this seemed a retrograde step but less than 20% of the branches around the country have once a week sessions and quite a few are only once a month. It was also necessary to reduce the major financial leakage from venue hire, as other income sources have dwindled. We have lost the substantial income derived from our auctions in the past. Having been involved in the lead up to the last one, I came to appreciate even more the huge time commitment put in by Roy Gurney and particularly Tony Harrison over the years, which sadly no-one is willing to emulate. However, the change does not seem to have put off new members, as we have had more signing up this year than for the last 5 years at least. It does create some issues of the instructors having insufficient time to teach the skills required to reach Bronze Level in a year. This is particularly so if we have interruptions to the schedule but I believe that most who join us are more concerned with gaining the skills, rather than achieving "certification" over a set time scale. It is also interesting that the majority of our new members came to us

via our revamped branch website. For most people interested in particular clubs/societies today, a web search is the first port of call. So although it comes with a cost, it is I believe one we have to bear for our continued survival. Thanks must go to our "webmaster" Mike Guest who has given his time freely to the club and created a far more easily navigated site.

The rise in subscriptions is, I believe, less controversial despite it being a substantial percentage rise. This was the first rise in prices for at least 10 years, probably more and is still in my view very good value for money compared to other clubs and societies and indeed other branches of the Guild.

Where fishing events are concerned it may also seem we are on a downward path, with only about six competitions planned this year. Some look back to the halcyon days when we had 10 events in the year and I can remember 25 turning up to fish the Brass Monkeys competition at Hazel Copse on a very chilly February day. Nowadays we are fortunate if we get into double figures for attendance, with a few exceptions. There are several contributing factors here, not least of which is cost to our members. Most fisheries have been forced to raise their prices substantially due to increased energy and stocking costs. Even those who have their own attached fish farms have seen feed costs rise astronomically. There are a few who have endeavoured to keep their prices at a reasonable level, Brick Farm, Coltsford Mill & Chalybeate being some but when transport costs are added, it can become quite an expensive day out. The narrow margins for the fisheries mean they are also less willing to give us "extras" such as free bacon rolls as inducements, unless we can get substantial numbers involved. With this in mind I hold the somewhat contentious view that we should use our not insubstantial financial reserves to subsidise these events. In my opinion it is largely the current membership

who “earned” this money and hence they should receive the benefits from it. What are we holding on to it for?

The upshot of this is that we decided to limit outings to one a month as we thought this was more manageable financially.

Then it’s deciding upon which ones. Some seemed more popular and should stay e.g. Lakedown, Trophy Day and the Xmas outing. Where Moorhen was concerned several factors played against it for this year at least. As Wendy and Mark are selling up, the new ownership and pricing are a somewhat unknown commodity.

Added to this the long journey puts some members off, so we are going with Coltsford Mill for the Chairman’s Day instead. I was asked to sound out the idea of trying to re-instate the Charity Pairs boat competition on Bewl. I did some research and most members and other clubs who *might* be involved favoured a mid-week, spring timing. However, again we struggle for numbers on boat fishing, struggling to get beyond 3 boats whenever we have a Bewl day. What about Powdermill I here you shout? I love Powdermill but sadly our previous competition against Hastings FF has foundered upon lack of interest from both clubs in recent years and as a replacement for Bewl it is difficult due to the lack of engines on the boats. Hence I am trying to repeat the combined club event with EDFFC and OVSF at Bewl in May. So for those who love a boat fishing outing, count me in, we can combine our Frank Darrah Pairs, a competition against EDFFC and for those who are also members of Ouse Valley, entry in their boat competition.

When we reviewed fishing events at Committee someone pointed out the lack of an outing in September, so I am hoping to get a return to Hazel Copse. Reasonable prices and C & R options are popular here, the only potential fly in the ointment (excuse the pun) being recent high temperatures in September. Where carp on

the fly is concerned we have moved away from Passies due to dubious water quality and poor customer service. The alternative venue at Springbarn in Kingston, organised by Tony Woolough, proved very popular last year.

This has proved a rather lengthy musing but I hope it helps to understand how we have got to where we are.

Here’s to Tight Lines in 2024

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