



Sussex Branch Newsletter



APRIL 2019

Brass Monkeys Blowup.

Despite the rather unpromising forecast, twenty doughty souls congregated at Hazel Copse for the annual Brass Monkeys start to the SFDG season, some like Pete Winder negotiating fallen trees on the way! After well deserved bacon rolls and a reminder of the rules, competitors scattered to various points on the fishery where casting was possible in the **very** windy conditions and casting started on the 9.00 am whistle.



Words of encouragement for the troops

Having put up with serious stick from Bill Smith for blanking 2 years running, I am delighted to report that yours truly managed to pull in the first fish at 9.06 am! The north bank of the bigger lake seemed to be the hotspot as Ray Burt and Keith Verrall followed close behind; indeed Keith had his 2 fish before 9.30! In fact, if you picked the right spots, conditions were challenging but at times quite pleasant, as the wind sometimes dropped and in the bright sunshine it seemed Spring was trying to make an appearance.

The Silver Humungous was definitely the catching fly out of the three designated for use in the first hour, with intermediate or sinking lines being the order of the day - not least because it was not very easy to get a floater out into the wind. However, Pete Winder did pull his first in on a sink tip with a "variant" of a Gold Head Hare's Ear. With the difficult conditions in mind members gave over catching spots quickly to those yet to score, so that after an hour most had at least one fish. Those who had chosen the smaller lake were finding the going tougher, as it had coloured up heavily. However, Andy Wood

managed one from here and Ray Bond caught his 2 here by mid-morning. His son meanwhile had trekked to the far corner of the fishery where his father-in-law showed him how to catch fish; nearby Dave P and Ray Love were patiently getting their fish and a few more on C & R.

John Plowman seemed to have got the knack of "C & R at distance" off to a fine art, and even Wayne had to move to a less challenging position after being broken off in the small lake, to then catch his two in two casts on the larger lake. The greater clarity of the water here seemed to be a factor and this might also have contributed to the hard fights that the fish put up. As the morning drew into afternoon the fishing became somewhat harder (if that was possible!), though Ray Burt found various answers to the conundrums and eventually picked off 9 fish. John Cooper became mathematically challenged near the end but kindly gave his "extra fish" to Noake who sadly did not trouble the scorers at weigh in, but benefited from the kind tuition of Tony Harrison for much of the day. Roy Page broke his duck on the small lake with a very nice 2½ lb fish and though Sally did not catch in the competition, she gamely continued in the afternoon to finally get her quarry. The other Tony and Simon decided to keep their gutting chores down to a minimum by taking just the one fish.



Roy does battle!

It was with some relief that people moved towards the new "elite lunch accommodation" that Wilf has supplied, where "cosy" is the term an estate agent would use! At least his strategic parking of the horse box sheltered those who could not squeeze indoors from the onslaught of the strengthening winds. The scores on the doors revealed my early fish gave me first choice of prizes (being a creep I took the fizzy for my wife rather than the malt for me!). Keith Verrall took both heaviest bag and, not surprisingly, heaviest fish (2lb 12 oz) and Wayne D "stole" the bottle of malt for catching the smallest fish (1lb 6oz), beating Gerry Newlands by 1 oz! Sadly no browns were taken.

A few stayed on in the afternoon to fish but most retreated to the warmth of their Sunday lunches. Perhaps it was karma that I didn't organise the weather better, that I spent from about 2.30 till 6.00 pm in a Tesco car park at Broadbridge Heath with a broken clutch, waiting for the RAC! Hey Ho such is life!

Alan Wells

And now another view from a new member:

Brass Monkey fishing competition Sussex Flydressers Guild



10th March 2019 found us at Hazel Copse near Rudgwick, Horsham with two beautiful trout stocked lakes. It was the Sussex Flydressers Guild Brass Monkey fishing competition day. Wasn't such a "brass monkey" day for the time of year, as a "how many knots can you get in your line day". Well for me it was. It was a very windy day to say the least, very tough conditions for a novice fly-fisherwoman. (Only my fifth time out).

However we all gave it our best shot, many were successful early on, some just in time for the weigh-in at lunch time. To start the day we had to use our own tied flies, either bloodworm, humungous or gold headed hares ear. Choosing the heaviest fly I could, I still got knots, and choosing a kind of good direction to the wind, but no-where was easy, I got to casting as best I could.

People catching all around me, give you a feeling of hope, real hope. And then... a knock,

fish on... but then off again, sigh. But it keeps you going, unlike my hand-warmer, which seemed to have gone out already! Change flies to see what happens. Another knock, fish on... but then off again. Getting a little concerned I'm doing something wrong, but realise others are having similar issues, so it's not just the newbie errors.

Such kind and generous people at the club, always offering advice and comments on improving the chance of hooking one; I tried some if not all, and because of the wind tried to cast left handed, well I've only just started right handed, so that was an interesting learning experience, but realise the opportunities this would provide in future (and in better conditions will definitely practice this some more).

So the weigh-in at lunch, with nothing but knots to count for me - but cakes and (fishy shaped) biscuits made by others were a great break and chance to warm up a bit, and perfect time to take a break as the weather turned to a downpour plus hail.



Prizes for all, some great weighing fish, and fun stories all around. Even the story of last year's wind gust that blew the marquee the site put out for lunch that blew away, and left those sitting underneath it at the time, right in the open. This year a new little hut and shelter, and a horsebox wind break were very useful - although at times it felt like that would blow away too this year. But after lunch, and the rain, hail etc... the wind dropped a little, and with only 3 of us back out to try to finish our catch, with more knocks, I finally caught and landed one at 4.30pm, a lovely rainbow 2lb6oz. So it was all worth it. Thanks to all those that were rooting for me, and helping with advice and techniques, I'll be putting them into more practice soon, hopefully in better conditions too. You were giving up your time and competition chances to help the newbies and that is really appreciated. Two of us ladies out this day, which is great to see! So thank YOU.

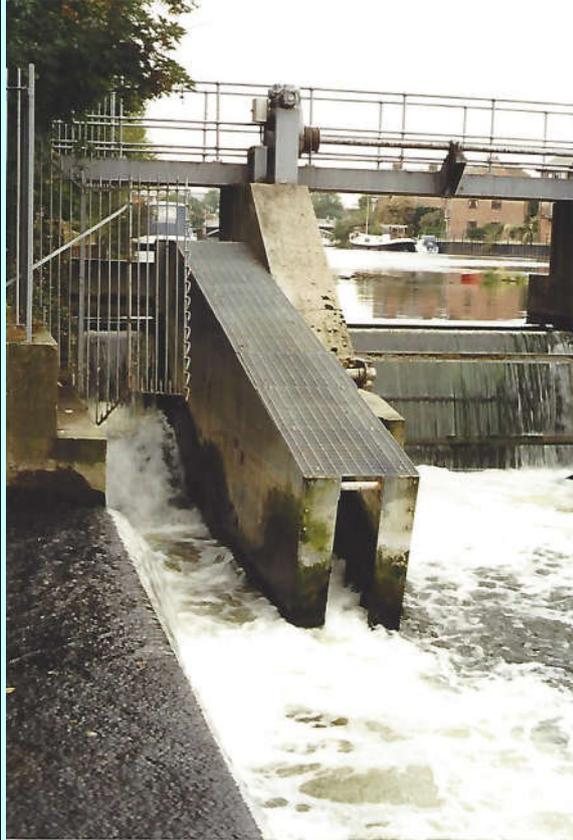
And yes, the trout, when cleaned and just fried up in a little butter, salt and pepper, was just super fresh and tasted fantastic!

Hoping for tight lines (and not knotted) next time.

Sally

Chairman's Chat

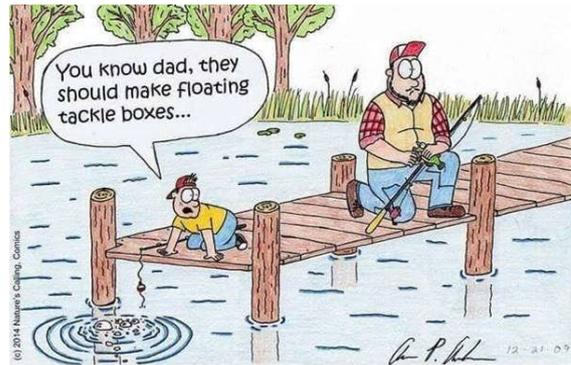
Another difficult one – they all seem to be. At last I have made it to be close to the Monarchy. This system of vertical lift gates is opposite Windsor Castle. I did have a request for fish pass units from a member of the royal household for the Balmoral Estate but it came to nothing. Anyway the Brief was to provide access for a 1,500 run of salmon and sea trout up the River Thames.



Windsor Weir

There is no problem to design the fish pass but how to build it. Yes we could build a steel sheet pile coffer-dam and dewater it. A reinforced concrete floor could be laid and the pass built in the dry. The catch is it would be very expensive and dangerous. After much head scratching we decided to fabricate a complete system of units including walls all in welded aluminium. It would, of course, have to be built in modules bolted together on site. But how to fix it to the bed? It turned out that there was a concrete apron (floor) at the pass position which we could bolt the pass down to under water. After designing concealed bolted joints and three way holding down angles a diver was engaged and the system explained. Construction was worrying and difficult what with drilling holes in concrete under water and fixing and aligning brackets. When fixed the fabricated walls were filled with concrete and the pass set to work. Another headache solved.

Tony W



We are indebted to Terry Scragg of Sussex Piscatorial Society for this informative take on fishing the dry fly – part two next month

Stillwater dry fly fishing

Part one

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

When I began fishing stillwaters in the 1970's I took the usual route of using nymphs and other sub-surface flies but over time gradually moved to using dries. In those days using dry flies was seen as a minor tactic on stillwaters usually reserved for sedge and terrestrial time, with the occasional suggestion of traditional river patterns when olives were hatching. Change began to take place in the 1980's when innovative anglers fishing reservoirs began to develop a range of patterns that mainly represented the chironomid midge, sitting low in the surface of the water imitating insects at the emerger stage. The new patterns included Bobs Bits, Shipman's Buzzers, Shuttlecocks and Hoppers. Similarly, the introduction of the Klinkhammer, originally tied to represent the emerging caddis on rivers was found to be equally successful on small stillwaters alongside a range of similar parachute patterns and the adoption of CdC feathers, deer and elk hair in many dry flies has revolutionised dry fly fishing. Using dries is no longer seen as a marginal activity particularly on reservoirs, but one approach among many other well-established tactics.

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

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

Midges

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

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

Upwinged flies

Second to the midge as the season progresses are the ephemerals, such as the pond and lake olives. Stillwaters have few ephemeral species so this category of flies will be limited with the main hatch season from April through to late summer, particularly from mid-day to mid-afternoon. The range of flies that cover the main olive hatches include flies such as the CdC Hares Ear, Olive Emerger and Olive Klinkhammer. A small parachute Adams is also worth trying. Size of flies when imitating olives: 14-18

Sedges

The third group are the sedges in their different forms, with a dark sedge early in the season on

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

Terrestrials

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

Corixa

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

Damsel

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

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

Tackle

My tackle consists of a 4-weight rod with a middle to tip action that is more forgiving than fast action rods when getting takes from heavy fish, and a corresponding weight forward floating line with a tapered poly leader and tippet with a combined length of around 12 to 14 feet usually with a single fly, although a dropper with contrasting patterns can be useful for searching the water when no rises are seen. As I mainly use small flies ranging from size 14 to 18 a fine tippet is needed if the fly is to fish naturally so I aim for a tippet diameter of between 0.14 and 0.18 giving a breaking strain in the range of 5 to 8lbs. I find fluorocarbon tend to sink flies too quickly for my style of fishing so I rely on low diameter mono or copolymer tippets.

Presentation

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

To increase your chances of success when dry fly fishing it is helpful to try and match the pattern to the natural so that the trout will see it as food. If you have seen a kick sample you will know that the majority of nymphs are very small. Similarly, if you have inspected the stomach of a trout you will often see very small insects, mainly midges, that again suggest we need to use smaller flies if we are to be consistently successful. So, think about size 14's and smaller if you are to match your artificial to the average size of insects consumed by trout. I tend to use size 16 and 18 regularly as this covers a large proportion of the food items found in trout. The exception is with flies that imitate sedges, damselflies and some terrestrials where a larger hook size reflects the size of the natural.

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

In part two I will describe my approach to improve chances of success when using dry flies.

Terry Scragg

Ray's Ramblings

Between 1990 and 1997 I fished five River Nationals on the rivers Wharfe, Dart and Eden. The format was that you fished four sessions and a blank in any of the sessions virtually guaranteed that you would not qualify for the top six places - five in the team and one reserve; and on each of those Nationals I blanked in one of those sessions. So in June 1998, fishing my sixth National on the rivers Derwent and Greta in Cumbria, would things be any different?

In my first session in the morning on the Derwent I caught one brown trout but forgot for once the importance of keeping the fish in the net till it had been measured, as a second fish that looked sizeable and I was holding in my hand to take to the controller on the other side of the river, jumped back into the river and so couldn't be measured. In the second session on the Derwent, I caught four fish including the best caught in the competition at 44 centimetres. In the afternoon on the Greta I caught one fish in each of the two sessions and so avoided the dreaded blank.

When the results were announced, although I had just missed out on the team, I was pleased with my highest ever placing. Would that one lost fish have made any difference - who knows?

The following year in September I fished the Hardy International Team Championship for Bewl Bridge Flyfishing Club, a six-man team event at Rutland Water. It was a two day event and on the first day I boated six rainbows to end up as fifth individual and the team were third.

On the second day I was paired with Dave Shipman, a well known local, and had a really good day catching eleven rainbows. However the normal finishing time of 6 o'clock had been changed to 5.30 for that day. We had both forgotten this and were late back so were both disqualified. Because of this I missed out on being top individual but worse was that the team instead of winning ended up in fourth place.

A year later in May 2000 I fished my ninth Loch Style International at Lough Erne in Ireland - this was the event that I mentioned in the last newsletter. On each of the two practice days I had caught sizeable brown trout but on the day of the competition in eight hours fishing I never had a pull. My Welsh boat partner fared similarly though at half past four in the afternoon he had a take and missed it. The weigh in after the six o'clock finish didn't take long because all of the teams had a lot of blanks. In fact out of the fourteen anglers in the England team only four had managed to get a fish.

After that, I decided to give up serious competition fishing - it demanded a lot of time and money. However, I'd had a terrific time fishing not only all over England but in Scotland, Wales, Ireland and also in France, Belgium and Luxembourg in the European events, and also in the World Championships in New Zealand - so many places that I otherwise would probably never have fished.

Ray Burt

New Committee Member

We are pleased to advise that **ANDY WOOD** has been co-opted on to your Committee.

iFISH

I am sure you will already know that iFISH 2019 has been cancelled. It seems that, although highly praised by all who have been in the past, exhibitors and public alike, it has not been possible to attract sufficient commitment by exhibitors to guarantee covering costs.

We cannot risk losing money on an event such as this, bearing in mind the effort needed from members volunteering for the tasks involved. It seems that we have been overtaken by a surfeit of similar events at about the same time and with exhibitors experiencing strong competition from the internet they are in a similar position.

Your Committee is exploring the possibility of reviving this next year, perhaps at a different time or venue and we will keep you informed of any progress.

SPRING 2019 AUCTION

Once again the auction was a great success due to the enormous effort put in by the organiser, Tony Harrison, backed up by an enthusiastic team and, of course, a great auctioneer in the person of Mike Humphreys, the Guild president (who didn't get home till 1.30 am due to the closure of the M23 that night).

It was a tribute to Tony's hard work in preparing Brian Raw's tackle, over two auctions, that we were able to realise over £2500 for Shelagh – thanks to all of you who came along specifically to support this. We even received absentee bids for items of Brian's from three members who could not make the auction, including one from a member who was introduced to fly fishing by Brian and was in New Zealand on holiday!

However, it was a little disappointing to see fewer attendees this time – are we trying too hard by holding two auctions a year?

Tony Harrison has added that he likes to think that Brian would have been thrilled and delighted that so many of his fly fishing and fly tying friends were bidding specifically for his items and in particular that all of his fly tying materials would be used to tie flies and his tackle to catch more fish – a lovely legacy.

Tony has also asked we thank all of the many helpers who worked their socks off on the night to ensure the evening goes smoothly and is a success.

End of "season" gathering 18th April

Don't forget to come along to witness (and perhaps benefit from) the raffle draw, plus the presentation of trophies for the 2018 fishing season and for the fly-tying competitions.

There will be some refreshments and a great opportunity to have a chat with other members.

Frank Darrah Pairs

Arlington, Sunday 19th May

Get your entries in to David Painter **urgently** as he has to book with the fishery for both boats and to obtain the club discount, as minimum numbers are required. This is a friendly event – not a cup final but a chance to enjoy a day's fishing with other members plus an opportunity to get your hands on a shiny trophy!

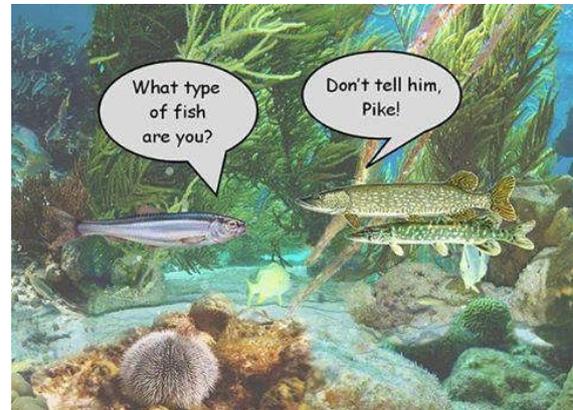
If you haven't got a partner, let David know and he will try to fix you up with someone else in the same boat (no pun intended).

Forthcoming Fishing Outings

The season is now well under way, with boats now available at Arlington and the weather warming up (for those of more advanced age like your editor!) and we would remind you of forthcoming events in April and May:-

April 6th (Sat) Match v. Hastings F F – Powdermill
13th (Sat) Match v. Sussex S&TC - Duncton Mill
28th (Sun) **FDG Bank Competition - Elinor**
May 5th (Sun) Match v. Eastbourne F F – Arlington
16th (Thurs) Casting Clinic – Stanmer Park - 6.30
19th (Sun) Frank Darrah Pairs Comp – Arlington
23rd (Thurs) Branch Evening at Arlington Reservoir

If you have mislaid/deleted entry forms you can download them from the website or contact Alan Wells or Roy Gurney for a copy.



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