



## Sussex Branch Newsletter



**JUNE 2018**

**In case you missed my e-mail please  
note my new address:  
[roygurney33@gmail.com](mailto:roygurney33@gmail.com)**

### **John Watt Trophy Any more for the skylark? Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> August at Draycote Reservoir.**

Our stalwart captain for this event, **Chris Nunn**, is aiming to recruit two teams, so please get in touch with him **ASAP** to book your place as he needs to know what accommodation to book. This is a friendly day on one of the best waters in England, when you can meet up with anglers from over the whole of the UK. The Branch pays for your fishing, so your only expense will be for travelling and a B&B if required. Let's see if we can regain this Trophy, which we won in 2016. Chris's **phone** is **01825 765272** and **e-mail** is [chrisandairi@btinternet.com](mailto:chrisandairi@btinternet.com) if you have mislaid the booking form.

### **Brass Monkeys 2018**

So, after two false starts thanks to the Beast from the East, we eventually gathered at Hazelcopse on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> March. Wilf confirmed that it would have been impossible to fish on our earlier attempts as the top of water was a little bit hard and impossible to punch a big enough hole through. In between it was Mothering Sunday, from experience always a bad day to organise a fishing outing, and with Easter looming it was now or never. Unfortunately numbers were down slightly because of other commitments and an injury to Bill Smith, thanks to trying to climb a low wall. Fourteen stalwarts gathered from about 7.45am, Tony Harrison's crown of being the first to arrive being taken by Nathan Winter who I am convinced was asleep when I arrived. After bacon rolls and warming coffee provided by Wilf and his wife, we were ready to tackle up and hit the water. But someone was missing? No sign of John Plowman, even though Andy Wood was convinced he'd spotted his car just ahead on the journey in an hour earlier. We waited and waited until a call from John to say that he was nearby but hopelessly lost. Andy provided more direct-

ions but a road closure for a cycle event wasn't helping.

At 9.15 we decided that we should start without John, so after a reading of the rules of engagement we headed off to the lakes. All ready for the whistle we spotted one member already with his fly in the water so a yellow card for Ted How - one more of those and instant disqualification! A couple of minutes after the start whistle and Nathan had hooked a fish but would he land it to claim the first fish prize? After what seemed like an eternity the first rainbow of the day was safely netted just as John pulled up into the car park.

With most anglers catching fish and starting to catch and release we sensed that Bill Black was struggling to land his fish. Dave Walker was on hand to give some tuition and the killer fly which seemed to have a fatal attraction for the tree just behind Bill. Coming up to the final whistle at 1.00pm we started making our way back to the yard for the weigh in. Simon Rickard doing the honours with the scales (no point in us all getting our hands slimy) but it was becoming clear that it was going to be a close match with many fish coming in around the same weight.

The catches weighed, Paul Bond and Wayne Duerden had the task of sorting out the winners whilst everyone else tucked into lunch, again being held in Wilf's stables. Only two horses in residence but they didn't seem to mind us. After cakes kindly baked by Yvonne (Wayne's wife) the day before and for which there was a unanimous "thank you", on to the results:

Best bag	Geoff Moseley	5lb 8oz
Best fish	John Plowman	3lb 4oz
First fish	Nathan Winter	
Smallest fish	Tony Ryan	1lb 6oz

For the first year in the history of our Brass Monkeys competition there were no blanks - so Alan Wells (who couldn't be with us this year) can keep his record intact for another year. A total of 29 fish taken and numerous others returned safely to the water.

Many thanks to Wilf for looking after us again this year and making sure there were plenty of fish to catch and to Bill Smith for rounding up people to come along.

Bring on the 2019 competition!

**WD**

***This is the first of a series from our own Alan Middleton:***

## **IT'S ON MY BUCKET LIST**

Many of the clients I see on the River Test have come to the UK to achieve their dream of catching a brown trout on an English chalk stream. It is up to the ghillie to see that they fulfil this ambition, and so it was on one fine day in May a few years ago.

I was booked to meet up with a client and his wife who had come to this part of England to do such a thing. They were one of many Americans whom we see on a regular basis; Tom was a recently retired cattle rancher from Texas where, I was told, everything is BIG. Tom had a ranch in the heart of Texas which seemed to be larger than England, with goodness knows how many cattle on it. He had given up the ranching business after some 40 years and had bought a small place in Montana, which still seemed bigger than the county of Hampshire.

Both Tom and his wife Mildred were wonderful people, just like many of the people we meet from across the pond. They were warm, friendly, and genuinely interested in everything English. This visit to Europe was their first and it would be four weeks packed to the limits and their itinerary had all the hallmarks of a commando course. If it was Thursday it must be France as on Friday we were "doing", Italy. By the time I met them they had already "done" half a dozen countries, commenting on how small some countries were. Scotland for instance was done in one day and they seemed to have seen most of it!

So, to the here and now; we were after the famous brown trout on the even more famous River Test. Obviously we only had one day as they were off to Stonehenge and goodness knows where the following day. Both marvelled at the countryside; they had never seen so many "greens" in all their life. Apparently, the scenery in Texas is brown, big, but brown.

I met the couple at the small lodge beside the river, which was something of a revelation to them. The lodge had "history". When the owners of the estate were in residence, so the story goes, and the fish were rising, the river keeper would light the fire in the lodge so that the owner could see the plume of smoke rising from the chimney. This was the signal for an evening's fishing - it was simple; no smoke, no fish rising and so no fishing.

Once the formalities of the introductions were completed I gave Tom a brief history of the estate and the beat we were allocated. This beat was a long one, extending some one and a half miles of single bank fishing. The river was about twenty feet wide, clear, and about two feet deep for the most part. As the beat was longer than the norm, there were stretches which could not be easily fished due to overhanging trees and

other obstructions. This would entail considerable walking, but the banks were fairly level and did not pose any immediate threat.

As we left the sanctuary of the lodge, Tom commented that the beat seemed to be a considerable length, longer than he was expecting. I explained that each beat should be long enough to accommodate two anglers for the day whereby they could both fish without one interfering with the other. On this day we had the beat to ourselves, and as Mildred did not fish and only wanted to sit by the river and read her e-book, we would have plenty of river to explore.

Once we had set off it became obvious why Tom was concerned regarding the length of the beat. His walking was slow and laboured. He then informed me that he had recently had a hip replacement operation following a horse riding accident. I said not to be too concerned as we could fish the bottom half of the beat before lunch and I could drive the car to the midway point to meet him and take him to the pub where we had arranged to have our meal. After lunch I would return him to the half way mark, we would fish the upper half and I would rendezvous with him at the upper boundary limit at the end of our day. This would limit the amount of walking he would have to do. As we continued our journey to the river Tom frequently stopped to rest and it transpired that Tom had undergone major heart surgery some years previously following a major heart attack. So we took our time and stopped several times to take in the view. Tom apologised for the slowness of our progress and explained that after smoking sixty cigarettes a day for forty years he had been diagnosed with emphysema and this had restricted his movements for a few years.

So, there we have it; we are here to catch the elusive brown trout, we have a mile and a half of river to cover, plenty of rough terrain walking, we have no lungs, no heart and no hips; a bit of a challenge you might say! He informed me that his fishing experience was limited but he had fished on an off for over twenty years; not all fly fishing but mostly bass fishing with spinners and plugs. All we had to do was get the fly on to the water in the right place and I was confident the trout would do the rest.

What he did not tell me was that he had the onset of Parkinson's disease which made a slack line cast a piece of cake, but the direction of the fly was not immediately obvious and sometimes a slight correction was required. Whilst Mildred was oblivious to the challenges that we had set ourselves, reading one of the many novels she had in her tablet, we battled the river, trees, breeze and disabilities as best we could.

Nevertheless, we triumphed after a couple of hours of fruitless casting; the prize was there to see in the landing net. Not the biggest fish in the

river, but at 3 lb well worthy of the countless pictures taken of it before we sent it back on its merry way. For me, I just breathed a sigh of relief and thanked the gods for a wonderful day.

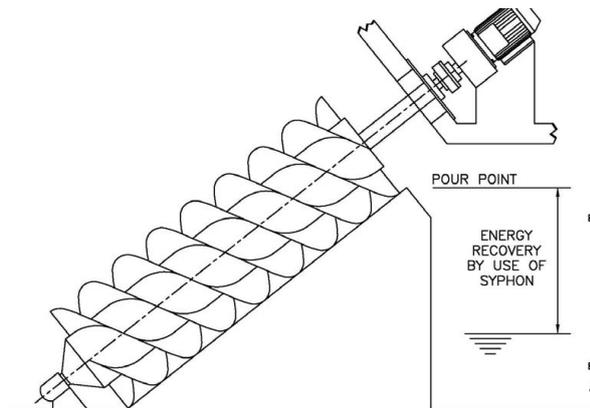
I do not know what else was on Tom's bucket list but I hope his guide and helpers had as rewarding time as I had with him.

*Alan Middleton*

### Chairman's Chat

Screw pumps – what have they to do with Fly Tying ? Fly tying is for fishing - the screw pump shown is “fish friendly” and is used in many land drainage projects; there is one on Pevensey Levels. The revolving screw raises water (and weed and fish) to drain low lying areas with minimal maintenance.

Incidentally, when sited at a weir in a river, the water flows in the top and causes the screw to rotate (the other way) and, instead of an electric motor, there is a generator mounted on the shaft to produce “clean electricity”. This is the usual type of hydro power used in place of more conventional turbines. This arrangement will also pass fish downstream. The system is based on the principal of the Archimedean Screw named after the inventor thousands of years ago.



So, what has this to do with fish? Well surprise, surprise, land drainage pumps obstruct the upstream passage of migratory and other fish species, usually salmonids, elvers & lampreys. It is a matter of opinion if migratory fish should be encouraged to enter what are basically land drainage channels - many with no spawning gravel.

Anyway, the photo below shows a typical land drainage pumping station maintaining low water levels upstream to prevent flooding and improve agricultural yield to allow cereal and other crops to be grown and thereby increase gross margin (profit) from the land.

The pumping station shown also has a tidal sluice with a tidal flap to provide gravity drainage when water levels allow i.e. low tide.



The problem is that there are many problems.

1. Obviously, the water level upstream of the pump is lower than the water downstream in the tidal river, otherwise a pump would not be necessary. So a fish pass would not operate by gravity as fish would be swimming downwards (when the tide is in) instead of upstream.
2. In this case the Client wants a bypass channel which is OK, but incoming tidal flow would bypass the pumping station, erode the banks and cause a major flood. Once flooded by salt water, land takes years to recover, not to mention cattle drowning and dying through drinking salt water (see the 1953 flood on the East Coast).
3. Given the changing tidal levels downstream and fluctuation water levels upstream, the differential head (difference in water level) is constantly changing.
4. Land Drainage pumps operate on cheap electricity, i.e. off peak, so the pump controls contain time limiting and day limiting facilities, together with an override for the higher water levels upstream. This will cause more complex water levels.

So we can produce a complicated graph of changing water levels incorporating the problems shown above.

I now have a month to scratch my head and hopefully identify options for the Client's consideration. I hope I get inspiration soon !

**Tony W**

### Eastbourne Edged Out

A very warm and sunny Sunday didn't seem to augur well for fishing prospects as we gathered at Arlington for our annual pairs boat competition against Eastbourne Fly Fishers on May 6<sup>th</sup>.

However, we were to be pleasantly surprised by the quality of the fishing with over 100 fish caught at a rod average of over 5 and 200 lb plus of trout! The day started marvellously with tea and wonderful bacon rolls supplied by our opposition and after car park tactical discussions and a clarification about regulations at the lodge, we ambled down to the boat dock to get onto the water by about 9.10



EDFFC v Sussex FDG, Arlington, 6 May 2018

Boats seemed to scatter to all corners of the reservoir, most choosing to fish fairly close to the banks, some anchoring, some drifting in the light breeze. My boat partner Neil and I chose the latter tactic, which with a combination of sinking and sink tip lines soon seemed to reap dividends. By about 1.30 Neil had his six bag in the boat and I had crept up to 5. No worries then! Of course, getting that last one took till about 3.25 and involved AW hooking and losing 4 fish - but we got there.

Others had fared even better with Messrs Wood and Winters (sounds like a music hall double act) putting their feet up at the lodge by 2.00 pm & Ray Love bagging up by 11.30. Meanwhile Ray Burt was specialising in catching tiddlers, closely followed in this vein by myself and several others in the FDG cohorts.

This meant that at close of play, although we had caught several more fish than EFFC, the weight was a closely run thing, with us having about 107 lb 8oz to their 99 lb 15 oz.

Eastbourne's weight was much boosted by the best fish of 5 lb 1 oz caught by the youngest member of either team, David Carden, on his final cast - which delighted his boat partner, dad Mike Carden, no end!



EDFFC v Sussex FDG, Arlington, 6 May 2018

However, we did achieve the best bag through Andy Wood's 13 lb 5 oz.



After weigh in and prize giving, there was a raffle in aid of Prostate Cancer charity which raised over £100 a very commendable effort to round off a great day's fishing.

**AGW**

## TIPS FOR TOOLS AND MATERIALS

*from Alan Middleton*

There is not much new in the world of fly tying but sometimes a little innovation can make a bit of a difference.

The usual problem with hackle pliers is that they allow the hackle to slip just at the wrong time and the whole thing unwinds and leaves a tangle of feather around the shank of the hook. After uttering a few oaths the only answer is to start again with a new hackle feather.

One solution to the problem is to use some fine sandpaper to ensure the grip is secure. The idea was perfected by Barry Ord Clarke.

The modification is fairly simple to perform and does make an improvement. The procedure is as follows

1. Cut two pieces of fine sandpaper about 1 cm square
2. Apply a drop of super glue to the inside of one of the grips of the hackle pliers
3. Place one piece of sandpaper gluing the paper side to the pliers
4. Repeat the procedure with the other grip
5. Keep the hackle pliers open and place a piece of sponge in between the grips.
6. Allow the glue to set
7. Remove the sponge
8. Trim the sandpaper to the shape of the grips.

The difference can be dramatic.

Another simple technique involves peacock herl. The standard procedure to remove the fibres from the herl was to use at the back of a sharp knife or a piece of rubber. Both of these techniques are fraught with danger and damage

to the herl is very common. Depilatory cream can be used but this tends to produce a very fragile herl as the chemical seems to reduce the strength of the herl.

The renowned fly tyer Marvin Nolte demonstrated the following technique at the recent BFFI

An alternative procedure is to use candle wax.

1. Take a small shallow dish
2. Melt a section of candle wax in the dish
3. Keep the wax molten
4. Dip the peacock fibres in the wax
5. Immerse for only a few minutes
6. Remove the feathers from the wax and allow to set
7. Run your thumb along the fibre which will remove the fibres and leave the herl intact
8. Wipe the herl with a soft cloth

It seems that the action of the wax seems to keep the herl supple. Store the stripped herl in a plastic bag

## ***Chairman's Day***

On the 29th April at about 8.30 am 12 members turned up at Moorhen Trout Fishery in Hampshire and commenced to tackle up with one hand and eating a bacon roll with the other. The forecast was for heavy rain later in the day which fortunately held off until we finished fishing. What did turn up with biting cold wind, which was not a good start. As usual Wendy and Co made us very welcome and the coffee and rolls flowed all day.

The water was very clear and fish were showing on the top with some fins breaking the surface. Most of us were soon into fish (yes, and me) which were very hard fighting and very good condition, most in the two to three pound range. We adopted a routine of moving when a fish was taken, which ensured that all had a chance in "hot spots". Many takes did not result in hook ups, which I could not understand.

It was a pleasure to see the two new Newfoundland pups which made themselves at home and entertained us, when they were not begging for sandwiches !

Members were invited on the basis of their help for the Branch over the year. Without their support the Branch would literally not be able to operate and I am **very** grateful for their support throughout the year. So can you see your chance, help out and you could be invited down to Moorhen next year?

Moorhen is the best trout fishery that I know, having visited many in my fishing and business life. You can expect an exciting day's fishing and the full support and help of the Staff – not to mention the pups !

I have shown below a random selection of photographs provided by Bill Black; most

Members achieved their bag limit and had a thoroughly enjoyable day's sport.

***Tony W***



***Those anglers are a darned nuisance!***



***Paul Bond and Dave Walker***



***The Chairman takes a break***

## Frank Darrah Pairs

This year the Frank Darrah Pairs was switched to Arlington after complications with the required date. It was also thought that the "any method fishing" was also detrimental to the enjoyment of the day.

As things transpired the switch seemed to agree with all those who fished. The turnout was a little disappointing but all the participants agreed that Arlington fished really well. Three of the five boats caught their limit.

**Best Fish went to Ray Love** with a fish of 3lbs 13oz. Second Place in the Pairs Comp: were Ray Love & Dave Painter with 12 fish for 23lbs 14oz. However **first place & Cup Winners** (to be presented at the end of season get-together) **went to Ray Burt & Martyn Gray** with 12 fish for 26lbs 1oz.

May I thank everybody who participated in this year's competition and trust that you will all fish again next year along with a few more entries.

*David Painter*

### A message to all members

Following our AGM, the Branch Committee would like to understand the 'Good, the Bad and the Ugly' about what you want, think, expect from your Branch. In order to do this we will be circulating a quick survey (by e-mail to those with email contact and by post with prepaid reply to those who receive by mail).

We would really appreciate a little amount of time to help the Committee direct the Branch in the future. Your opinions matter and there will be a chance to benefit from your participation as we will be awarding three prizes randomly to those who respond.

It is our intention to circulate the survey over the next month so please take time to give us your feedback.

Many thanks,

Your Committee.

## Casting Clinic



Our annual casting clinic was held at Stanmer Park on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> May. This year we were blessed with sunshine and a very light breeze, rather than the tempest with torrential rain last year and chilly evenings previously.

Some dozen members attended (are all the rest of you so competent you don't need a tip or

two?) and with the presence of four instructors it was possible to give some personal coaching.

We are grateful for the time and expertise given to us by these gentlemen and appreciate their dedication.

## Arlington Evening

This long-established event has become a misnomer in that many members choose to fish all day, but its origins were when many of our members could only fish the evening as they were at work during the day..

This year the weather was forecast as showers, but by mid-day it had settled into persistent rain and the early starters were quickly waterlogged – so much so that some had to call it a day before the refreshments arrived!

Some hardy souls braved it out to the end, but unusually we broke into the trays of sandwiches very early for those who decided enough was enough by 5 pm. A steady trickle of drowned rats then appeared and a convivial group settled in till the last arrived at just after 8 pm.

Success was mixed – some fully bagged up and others (including regulars at Arlington) blanking. It should be said that there were a couple (or three) wimps who decided to remain in the comfort of the lodge rather than get wet!

In view of the weather we were granted use of the committee room for the *après-fish* so, despite the conditions, all enjoyed the event, which also benefited by the hospitality of the ranger, Tom, who put himself out to see everyone had a good day – he even did the washing-up for us!

Two lessons learnt were that fish come to the top with rain and waterproof wet-weather gear is not waterproof – it merely postpones the soaking!

*RHG*



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