

The Flydressers' Guild



SUSSEX BRANCH

Newsletter

December 2020

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Ray's Ramblings

Well that's another year almost gone and what a strange year it's been - for many months due to Covid19 the events of the four clubs that I'm in were cancelled and for the period from 23 March to 15 May I didn't get out fishing at all.

During the year Martin Fleetwood left Duncton Mill and the new person running the fishery increased the cost of a four fish ticket from £38 to £60.

Darren Smith left Chalk Springs and again the price of tickets increased. And then in November we heard that South East Water were not going to open Arlington for trout fishing in 2021. This was extremely disappointing news as there are only three reservoirs in this area where boat fishing is allowed. The largest of these is Bewl Water at 770 acres but since the introduction of any method fishing from boats a lot of people don't like going there and then there is also Sailing, Wind Surfing, Rowing and the Aqua Park which all create a lot of disturbance.

The smallest is Powdermill at 56 acres which is a really tranquil scenic fishery where they have a mayfly hatch and there is the chance of seeing a hobby. Unlike Bewl even the boats do not make a noise as only electric motors are allowed.

The third fishery is of course Arlington which at 130 acres is also quiet and with views of the South Downs. I first fished it in 1973 so that's forty eight seasons. South East Water have said

that the fishery is now unsustainable so presumably it has been viable for those forty eight years. Obviously Coronavirus has affected income but that is the same for all fisheries and at most where there is boat fishing they allowed the boats out at the first opportunity to gain extra revenue but for some reason South East Water could not be bothered. The decision to close has been taken without any discussion with the anglers or organisations involved and it seems strange that at the end of season meeting last year no mention was made of unsustainability and only minor changes in prices were made. The fact that the four staff at the fishery will continue at the site means that there will be no saving in staffing costs and the only expenditure will be the upkeep of boats, engines and batteries and the cost of fish for restocking. If the income from anglers does not cover these costs there must be something wrong with the calculation of the ticket prices. It just seems that Covid19 has been the perfect excuse to stop fishing at Arlington even though the Angling Trust persuaded the Government that fishing is of significant benefit to people's mental and physical well being.

My Grayling fishing has been affected this year. On the first day I had booked on the Lower Itchen there had been a lot of rain and it coincided with storm Aiden so I cancelled it. A revised date was fixed but then the second lockdown arrived and I felt a round trip of over two hundred miles did not exactly fit in with fishing locally. So during November I've been fishing Brick Farm and Lakedown which apart from Powdermill are my two nearest fisheries. They have both fished well, my best rainbow coming from Brick Farm at 6lb 9oz, although there have been several fish larger taken up to over 10lb.

Ray Burt

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Still some have not paid up yet!

Subscriptions for both Guild and Branch were due on 1st September, so **please** let Roy Gurney have them ASAP. I know Covid has upset the appletart, but we are keeping going with the Newsletter and Zoom and outings when possible.

Pay by BACS or cheque - £32 for combined Guild and Branch, £12 if you already pay the Guild direct. Our bank details are:

Account: Sussex FDG

Sort no: 08-90-25

Account no: 65004180

And don't forget to advise Roy at:

roygurney33@gmail.com you have done so.

Arlington Fishery Closure.

No doubt a fair number of you have seen the email exchanges about the proposed closure of the fly fishery at Arlington. Whilst Arlington members will not be entirely surprised at this, the unheralded nature of the announcement was what really upset many. As I have said, it could have been possible to set up some form of discussion about the problems, as we have all become used to online meetings in the past months and this furthers the suspicions of many, that this has been an underlying aim of S.E. Water for some time.

Those who have fished the reservoir for some years know that maintaining Arlington as a trout fishery is not an easy prospect. The unpredictable summer draw off, reducing water levels and hence the activity of the trout & the length of the season are problematic but have been known throughout the lifetime of the fishery & anglers accept these limitations. The repetition of these difficulties by the CEO in his reply made his response **seem** all the more plausible but the underlying key issue I believe is **cost**.

According to Mr Hinton the decline in angler numbers, obviously exacerbated by the Covid pandemic, meant they had to make a quick decision not to restock. This again seems very plausible but did it have to be "terminal"? I think some anglers might have accepted the idea of a year's absence, which would have given time for discussion of the way forward if the fishery is "unsustainable". Indeed, several have said to me that a substantial rise in prices would have been acceptable if it meant the fishery could be saved.

The offer of involvement in the discussion of the recreational future of the reservoir may only be a sop to reduce opposition but if we can offer a realistic alternative to closure then it could be saved. By the way, I think the aside about the huge demand for recreation around the reservoir this year is a red herring. This was an exceptional year when "cabin fever" meant many more people than usual sought outdoor activity and I doubt very much that visitor numbers will achieve those peaks again in the near future. However, my suspicion is that it may provide an excuse to create more paid parking - guess where?

So what is the possible way forward?

- First we need to sort out who the "us" is. Some form of "syndicate" needs to be formed from local clubs, anglers etc. and representatives of these will need to organise a realistic plan or ideas which challenge the need for closure to put forward; it seems via email, suggested by Emma Goddard for next year.

- I intend to contact local fishing groups to see how serious they are but if we cannot have access to Arlington membership details as privacy laws forbid it, we need to find a way of contacting as many of the present membership as possible to canvas their views.
- I think it likely that S.E. Water want to offload the costs of stocking at least, so we need to have access to the finances of the fishery. **S E Water will not release this because they consider it is commercially sensitive information.** So, the only way is to get quotes from local fish farms who presumably would welcome the business.
- We will also need to consider other costs such as running the boats and whether this is practically and financially viable.
- I have a contact at the Angling Trust who will also be asking to be a part of the discussions but he emphasises the "club" idea and the need possibly to **compromise** over Arlington being a purely trout fishery but he does **not** see closure as a "done deal".

To summarise, unless the hot air we have all expelled is turned into enough energy and organisation to create a plausible alternative to other recreational uses, we will lose what is a pretty unique fly fishing resource in this part of the South East.

If you feel you can contribute to the development of these ideas please contact me on wellsywells@btinternet.com or 01273 689054

Alan Wells

Chairman's Chat

Here we are again, back on the Frazer River in British Columbia with an aerial view of a fish pass system. There are vertical slot fishways which are designed to restrict flows to below the burst speed of migratory salmonids (10 body lengths/second) and contain a water velocity which is the same what ever the water level. So fish can pass at any flow.

The river at this point has been restricted by material excavated from the adjacent mountain which was dumped into the river to form a level bench for a railway and a road. Restricting the river channel increases velocity and increases river level. Flows increase substantially when the snows in the Rockies upstream melt. In fact river levels rise over 20 m.

As river levels rise different parts of the channel become impassable to migrants. So the engineers carried out a topographical survey and built a hydraulic model to identify the parts

of the channel where flows were above the fish swimming speed. They then designed fish passes at these points and added these to the model.

So what you see is a number of fish passes in ladder form, each of which come into service as river levels rises.

Fraser River Fish Passes



To get an idea of the size of these passes, the slots are over 2.5 m high. As you can imagine, the construction of the passes was no mean feat but nevertheless successfully achieved.

At the time of construction the passes cost \$1.5M but they increased the run of salmon by over 2,000,000 pa. The value of the increased salmon run (to commercial boats at sea) exceeded the cost of the passes, so the passes "paid for themselves" i.e. a positive benefit / cost ratio.

Tony W

Grayling Substitute



Covid lockdowns have seen me trying out new things, some successful some not so. My mending of 2 broken rod tips with help from Brian Hendry and Youtube went well, as tested by two 2lb + rainbows.

Sadly my setting up for grayling fishing on the Itchen for the first time did not go so well. I had bought new specialist French Leader line and tied a small box of grayling flies but the planned Saturday saw a named storm roll in with gale force winds and torrential rain, so we had to call it off. I did have a little bit of fun trying out my 10ft #4 with two weighted nymphs on Falmer Pond though. This has clear NO FISHING notices but I remembered that the fish had been cleared out during a recent past drought and been taken elsewhere, or so I thought! Anyway, I was only there to practice casting the tricky French Leader set up. Having untangled several times, I was just about managing a rod and a half of leader into the pond, when there was a swirl as I retrieved and what was obviously a carp shot off from the margin. Fortunately it

dropped my barbless fly and I retreated suitably chastened.

So by early November my wife was getting fed up with my glum face and actually encouraged me to go fishing. I whizzed over to Bricks, arriving late morning with the place very busy - so a 2 fish ticket. I had taken the grayling outfit but beefed up the tippet to 4lb and thought I would attempt to use a fish pimp indicator-another first. I managed a few decent casts but learned that if you try and over-reach yourself you end up with massive tangles and the frustration wasn't worth it on a day when I had limited time, according to the forecast.

So it was back to the trusty #6 floater and Stalking Damsel on a longish leader which did the business off Brick Lake dam in about 10 mins, with a 2lb + fish which took savagely and went aerial before coming to the net. The next fish arrived about 10 minutes later so now it was that dilemma - I had my 2 fish by 11.50 am - do I buy another fish? I sat down and had an early lunch thinking about it and then went off and bought a further fish ticket.

Murphy's law meant that the early afternoon spent prospecting a tree fringed inlet, which I thought might harbour a brownie, proved fruitless. So I changed tack and added Diawl Bach droppers and headed down to Spring Lake. This had turned to a mirror calm and I was contemplating leaving as the Western skies darkened, when a very deep, very slow retrieve brought a ponderous but strong take to the Damsel on the point. A stubborn fight brought the best fish of the day at 3lb 4 oz to the net and shortly after getting into the car the heavens opened, so I felt very pleased with myself. You lose some, you win some!

AW

WINTER PIKE ON THE FLY

BY HOWARD DODSLEY

What with the Covid restrictions, it's not looking like I'll be escaping to warmer climes this winter. So (plan B) I just joined one of my local coarse fishing clubs, mainly to open up my wild fishing opportunities and explore some different waters of Sussex. On expedition 3 - out walking another stretch of my local river took me to an overgrown and challenging section of the upper Adur. Firstly, I walked the whole stretch as a reccie then dropped in for a cast wherever I could get in. After a few hours of no bites, follows or fish movement, I scrambled down a steep bank to make a final (hero's) cast downstream to a likely lie. I mended the line and on my first strip back of the fly all hell broke loose and an almighty scrap began on a piece of river maybe 2m wide. After heart stopping jumps, powerful runs (this is the fish by the way,

not me) a beautiful 14lb pike slid into my net.



Took ages for me to stop shaking after an encounter I'll never forget. The fly I used was a Flashtail Whistler tied onto about 2m of 25lb fluorocarbon leader and a clear intermediate fly line on my #8 saltwater rod. I find this setup not only stealthy but easier to turnover large, heavy flies. You can find tying instructions on YouTube. Great looking fly and nice to tie. Make it as big as you are able to throw.



Howie

CHRISTMAS OUTING BRICK FARM – Sunday 6th December (subject to Government guidelines)

Thanks to Covid restrictions, only a token lunch will be available. For details, contact Peter Winder:

e-mail peter.winder@btinternet.com or
phone 01273 973499c

off the mark.com

by Mark Parisi



EDITOR'S FOOTNOTE

Not quite as late as the last one, though apologies to those who receive this by post, due to a combination of unfortunate events - those outlined in the last Newsletter, plus ink running out on the printer well before expected, and the replacement having been delayed allegedly by the Christmas post, (but which will have arrived if you are reading this!).

On the plus side however, we have some interesting articles by members which I hope you will enjoy.

**Happy Christmas and a better
New Year for everyone!**

Roy Gurney

