

The Sussex Angler

The Petworth and Bognor Angling Club Magazine



Spring 2009

Issue No.1

News

Information

Articles

How to join

www.sussexangling.co.uk

Interested in joining the Club ?

You can join the club or renew your membership on the spot at the following Tackle Shops.....

Aldwick Angling, Bognor	01243 829054
Arun Angling, Angmering	01903 770099
Havant Angling, Havant	02392 4 50700
Tidal Angling, Pulborough	01798 873790
Tropikoi Angling, Bognor	01243 842660
Waterlooville Camping & Angling	02392 250699

The Membership Application Form and further details are at the back of this magazine. You can also apply by post to Mick Harmsworth, our Membership Secretary – see the Application Form. Permits are sent by return of post. Give Mick a call on 01243 603783 if you need any assistance.

Pay your Membership Fee by instalments

This year Membership Fees may be paid by instalments.
See Application Form Instructions for further details.

Join early for next season

If you wish to join the club before the start of our 'membership year' you may start to fish from 1st March, 2009 for no extra fee with your membership running through to 31st March 2010.

This gives you **13 months** fishing for our normal annual fee.

Welcome to The Sussex Angler

Welcome to the first edition of our new club magazine – ‘The Sussex Angler’.

In this edition we have an update on our progress since we were formed a couple of years ago with the amalgamation of two of the premier clubs in West Sussex. We also include news items, club and fishery information and a selection of interesting articles such as Ray Stewart’s evocative ‘Rother Reflections’ recalling his early angling adventures on the Rother almost forty years ago..

Whilst we are a club of modest size we are very proud of the quality and variety of coarse angling that we are able to offer members who come from all parts of the south to enjoy a wide range of sport on the beautiful rivers, lakes and ponds of West Sussex.

Our top priority is to provide members with quality coarse fishing at the most affordable price. We offer preferential rates for Seniors, Disabled Anglers, Families, Juveniles and Students and free fishing for children under 11 years.

We aim to protect the heritage of our two former clubs by maintaining the best traditions of our sport whilst using the momentum generated by the formation of the new club to meet the challenges which today face all angling clubs.

We hope that The Sussex Angler helps to convey the angling experience that the club offers and that you find our magazine informative, interesting and enjoyable.

Good luck for the new season.

Anglers Evening with Neil Wayte

Friday 17th April at 7:30pm

Our main speaker at this year’s Anglers Evening is Neil Wayte, the well known specialist angler and writer. Familiar to readers of the main angling publications Neil has an impressive list of big fish to his name so we anticipate some impressive pictures and interesting tales.

By popular demand Martin Eyres and John Atter also return to update us on their exploits.

This is a great opportunity to meet up with other club members so please come along for an enjoyable evening. Members and Non-Members are all invited but please call Nigel Chapman on 02392 412463 to reserve a place.

Licensed Bar - Admission Free

**Newtown Social Club, 16A Greencourt Drive
Bognor Regis, PO21 5EU**



Notice Board

Disabled Anglers

This year we have improved a number of swims at Hurston and Walberton to make them safer and more accessible for wheelchair users. These swims are marked with signs saying "Disabled Priority" – all members are free to use these swims in the normal way but should vacate them if requested by a disabled member.

Specimen Trophy

This season's new challenge for specialist anglers has already provided some very nice fish, including one or two very large barbel to well over 13lbs. Carp and bream also feature. I have been surprised by the lack of roach, chub and pike entries although I have heard on the grapevine reports of at least two six pound plus chub being caught on club waters and some very nice roach from our stretches on the the Arun.

Undoubtably the ultimate winner of this trophy will be able to hold their head high and each year as a new winner is added to the list they will become part of the clubs heritage.

This is a serious and prestigious challenge for the specialist angler, so when you catch an exceptional fish, weigh and photograph it and send your details along with the name of a witness to Nigel Chapman (see Handbook for phone number). Entries of more than one species will give you a better chance of winning, alternatively one really great fish could win it outright. We want as many entries as possible.

Good fishing.....**Nigel Chapman**

On the beat

This year we have a team of 16 bailiffs whose role is to look after the interests of our members, our waters, and in particular our valuable fish stocks. There are a number of points that we wish to emphasise or clarify for the coming season...

- If you believe there are non-members fishing any of our waters then please let one of our bailiffs or committee members know. We regularly check permits on all our fisheries.
- Please remember to leave farm gates as you find them and take home any litter, including any left by someone else. Remember that it is your responsibility to ensure that your swim is free of any litter before you start fishing.
- Dogs are permitted only at Hurston Lane, Chichester Canal and Petworth Park.
- We have relaxed our rules about the number of rods permitted. On all fisheries you may now use two rods with no rod limits at all on the Arun, but please check with any nearby anglers if there is any possibility of interfering with their fishing.
- Some anglers go to extreme lengths to secure a bank stick or umbrella seemingly oblivious to the damage they are causing. This has been most noticeable at Walberton. Please ensure that in trying to get comfortably set up in a swim you do not cause any damage.

Our bailiffs are all volunteers, working for the benefit of the club and its members. Your help and co-operation is always appreciated.



How are we doing ?

We review the Club's progress as we enter our third year.

Membership

We have seen a steady increase in membership numbers for the last two years. Since there is no undue angling pressure on any of our waters our last AGM approved a small increase to our Membership Limit so we are still able to accept a few more new members.

Finances

Having successfully negotiated our first two years and achieved a healthy financial position we must now manage our way through the obvious economic challenges ahead whilst retaining the ability to further develop the club.

We are very conscious that we must use members' hard-earned fees responsibly and we have introduced very tight financial management so that every penny is properly approved and accounted for.

A bit of a balancing act but we are well placed to succeed.

Fishery Portfolio

We are constantly looking for new waters to add to our portfolio but unfortunately affordable fisheries do not become available too often. We were therefore delighted in 2008 to acquire several additional miles of fishing rights on the Rother stretching from Shopham Bridge almost down to Fittleworth.

This new stretch has proved most successful with some very good quality fish being caught including impressive barbel, chub bream and carp

Fishery Management

Considerable attention has been focussed upon Hurston Lane which is owned by the club. Regular maintenance and hard work by volunteers is paying dividends and we are starting to realise the potential of this attractive fishery.

The middle lake has been heavily weeded in recent years and we have attacked this problem with determination – hopefully we can achieve a good balance so that it is neither “over manicured” nor left totally wild. It will be very interesting over the coming season to see how the new stocks of small carp and tench progress.

At both Walberton and Storrington we are installing new swims for disabled anglers.

Match Angling

Our thriving Match Angling Section offers events throughout the year ranging from the strictly social to the more competitive. The Members Handbook contains full details.

Since we went to press with this issue of The Sussex Angler before the end of the Match Angling season we have decided to include a comprehensive article in the next issue.

Steve Simmonds (01243 583179)



Fishery Improvements

In order to maintain and improve the quality of our fisheries we ask all members to try and get along to at least one work party each year. Last year these efforts meant that all our fisheries were in good shape and Hurston Lane, which is owned by the club, is really starting to realise its full potential.



Sunday Work Parties start at 09.00 and finish around 12.30. The work involved is not always particularly heavy. For example, it could involve pruning and cutting back of branches, grass cutting or keeping a bonfire going. What we really need is more pairs of hands, particularly at Hurston Lane where we are really trying very hard to improve the fishery by a sustained programme of work and re-stocking.

Whilst we occasionally use professional resources for some specialist or heavy duty work we are reluctant to extend this approach because the costs will inevitably lead to higher membership fees. Please put at least one of these dates in your diary and join us in helping to improve our fisheries.

Nelson Keet – Fishery Management Officer



Simon was lured out of the Carp Lake by a bacon butty at one of our Work Parties!

Date	Venue	Tasks
10 May (09:00)	Bethwins Farm	General maintenance
24 May (09:00)	Hurston Lane	General maintenance
3 June (18:00)	Hurston Lane	Mid-week pond weed cutting
7 June (09:00)	Walberton	General maintenance
14 June (09:00)	Coultershaw	General maintenance
29 July (18:00)	Hurston Lane	Mid-week pond weed cutting
16 Aug (09:00)	Hurston Lane	General maintenance



A little bit of History

Today when you fish the lower part of the Coultershaw fishery you may be blissfully unaware of a major engineering project that was undertaken here some two hundred years ago.

The Rother Navigation was planned to make the Rother navigable over an 11 mile stretch downstream from Midhurst. The work was instigated in 1791 when King George III granted Royal Assent to The Earl of Egremont.

However, the Petworth Canal was one of Britain's shorter lasting canals, opened in 1795 and dismantled in 1826. On completion of the Rother Navigation the Earl of Egremont used his estate workforce to build the 1¼ mile long canal from just upstream of the Shopham Cut to Haslingbourne, with two locks, each with a rise of 8 feet and 6 inches. The

Haslingbourne Stream was diverted to provide the water supply.

The main products carried on the canal were chalk, coal and timber. Coal from Newcastle or South Wales was transferred from coastal ships into barges at Arundel.

Chalk was barged up the River Arun from pits at Houghton and Amberley. Timber and all kinds of timber products, including charcoal and oak bark for tanning were barged out from the Petworth area. Other local 'exports' were lead, corn, and an apparently beautiful variegated fossil limestone, well known in London by the

name of Petworth Marble. A lime kiln was operated at Haslingbourne wharf, and some lime barged down the canal but most of the Petworth trade went to Coultershaw wharf on the Rother navigation, which was further away from the town but was on the well maintained turnpike road to Chichester.

So when you next sit by the river imagining it to have always been a "rural idyll" remember that it was once a bustling trade route during the Industrial Revolution.



The Shopham Loop before and after restoration.



Our Stillwater Fisheries

We offer a good range of stillwater fisheries to our members across West Sussex. We have 8 waters on 5 stillwater fisheries ranging from a beautiful Estate Lake at Petworth Park to tranquil farm ponds at Chiddingfold and Walberton. Our own 3 lake complex at Storrington offers a range of sport from a match-style lake, a tench and crucian pond to a carp pond with some sizeable specimens. The Chichester Canal provides a good alternative particularly during the winter.



Bethwins Farm Ponds

Situated in the north of our region just over the Surrey border near Chiddingfold, Bethwins Farm offers two attractive ponds in a tranquil setting surrounded by woods and farmland.

The Lower Pond contains good sized carp to 15lbs. The Upper Pond can provide a good day's sport to the float angler with a good stock of small tench and a smaller number of decent sized carp.

This is a great spot for a day 'away from it all' in beautiful unspoilt surroundings.

Chichester Canal

We enjoy several miles of fishing on Chichester Canal which provides sport throughout the year. Good mixed bags of roach, rudd, perch, tench and skimmers can be supplemented by occasional large bream or carp. In winter the Canal Basin becomes one of the prime spots with pike often making an appearance.

There are several places to park your car along the length of the canal.



Our Stillwater Fisheries



Hurston Lane

Situated just outside Storrington. Re-stocking and fishery management measures have been undertaken on the 3 lakes recently on this complex. We offer a “match-style” lake with silver fish and small carp; a tench pond and a carp pond which contains some specimens to 20lbs recently supplemented with an additional stocking of smaller carp.

Year-round 24 hour fishing is permitted. Parking is in our locked Car Park.

Petworth Park

This glorious 7 acre lake set in the picturesque grounds of the Petworth Park Estate holds a good stock of tench, bream, crucian carp, perch, roach and rudd.

Whilst most anglers tend to fish the deeper water on the eastern “road” bank it can be worth exploring the shallower areas around the islands where a feeder might find one of the deeper holes that can also be most prolific. The Bream are regularly in the 4lbs to 6lbs bracket whilst tench reach about 5lbs. The Crucians even reach 3lbs !



Light but regular feeding tactics work best and can easily produce mixed bags exceeding 70lbs. Pole, waggler and feeder methods are all productive.

Our Stillwater Fisheries

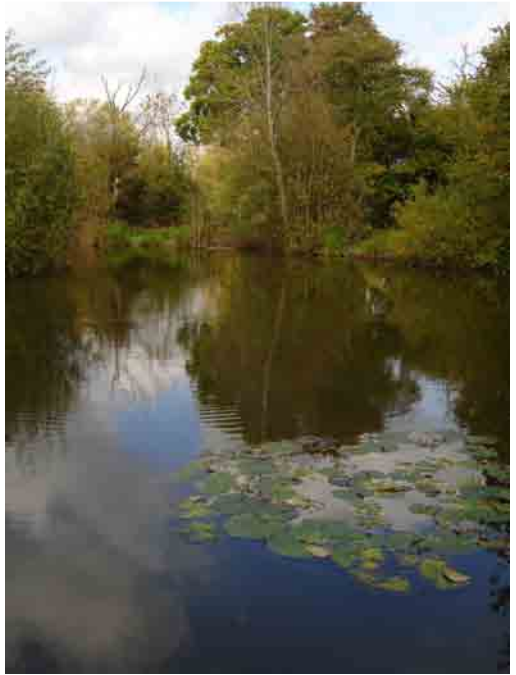
Stemps Pond and Cart Pond

Situated close to the village of Walberton these two attractive ponds situated in farmland and fringed by woodland offer an attractive setting on this immaculately maintained fishery.

Stemps Pond (below) is stocked with common carp, crucians, tench, rudd and bream. See Steve Simmonds' 'In Depth' article in this magazine for a detailed description of this water.

Cart Pond (left) is stocked with carp, roach, skimmer bream and even some chub providing good year-round sport!

Car parking is in our locked Car Park.



In Depth

In each edition we will focus on one or two of our waters 'In Depth'. Here Steve Simmonds take a closer look at Stemps Pond on the Walberton Fishery.

Stemps is part of the two-water complex located in a small copse on farmland just outside the village of Walberton. When you enter the fishery the first water you see is the well known peg 1. This particular peg is renowned for carp both lost and captured a little like it's counterpart peg 15 round the other side of the pond.

The next swim is peg 2 and this is known as a bit of a pole breaker. It is about 10 m across to the island which the carp hug and you need present a bait tight over for the best chance and believe me the carp know all the snags! Moving round pegs 3 & 4 have a sunken tree between them and although it looks inviting it doesn't really seem to hold fish, as one would expect.

The next swim of note is peg 7; tucked away you are in your own little world here

and with deeper water tight on the inside or a relatively easy cast to the island with a feeder this swim offers plenty of options.

Pegs 8,9 & 10 are similar but more open, Pegs 11 and 12 have the deepest water on the lake but 12 is quite difficult to fish. Peg 13 is a platform and offers a bush to the left, which holds carp, fish on the inside to the right for one of the few places to consistently pick up tench, or cast a feeder to the island. From peg 14 you can just about reach the island with a long pole and there are options both left and right with overhanging bushes. This brings us to the ubiquitous peg 15, which just has so many options; a pellet waggler into the bay in front of you the closer you can get to the island the better, tight on the inside to your left or under the tree to your right.

Although Stemps is generally known for its carp they are by no means what would be considered as specimen fish however they are hard fighting and will take a bait on all but the very coldest day. There are also plenty of roach and skimmers with lots of fish in the 8 oz to 1 lb bracket and just to complete the stock there are a few tench and perch but not of any great size.

The pond is suited to almost any form of fishing and you will often see anglers sitting next to each other, but fishing completely different styles; one might be fishing to the island with a feeder of some description, the next a pole and a third will be fishing a waggler on a rod and line, all are catching and all are happy.

Steve Simmonds

Want some help ?

Do you need any help, advice or instruction ?

Maybe you are new to coarse fishing and need advice on what gear is needed. Perhaps you haven't fished rivers before and don't know where to start or maybe you need some help in setting up and using your tackle. Just call Geoff Sumner on 01243 573605 and we will try and find a way to help you.



~ Stillwaters ~



Hurston Lane, Storrington



Bethwins Farm, Chiddingfold



Chichester Canal

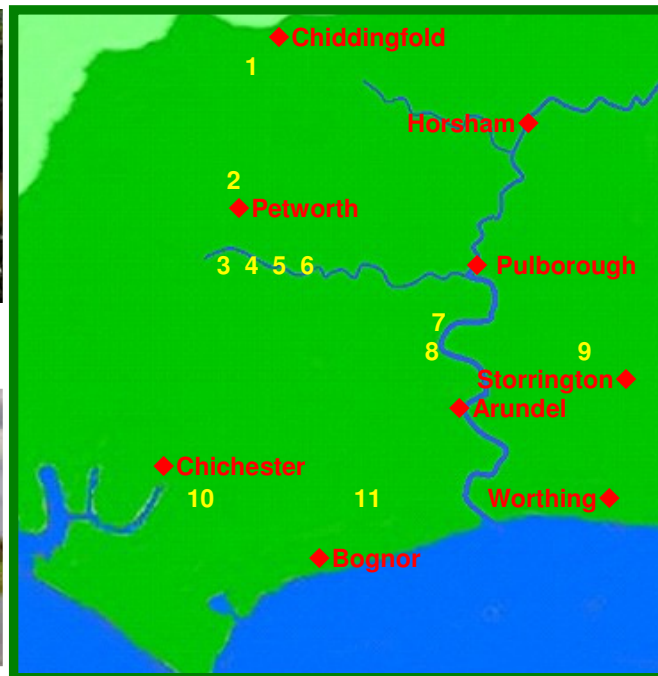


Petworth Park



Stemps & Cart Ponds,
Walberton

Our Fisheries



1. Bethwins Farm, Chiddingfold
2. Petworth Park
3. The Rother at Coultershaw
4. The Rother at Shopham
5. The Rother at Coates Castle
6. The Rother at Fittleworth
7. The Arun at Hardham
8. The Arun at Watersfield
9. Hurston Lane, Storrington
10. Chichester Canal
11. Steps and Cart Ponds, Walberton

~ Rivers ~



The Rother at Coultershaw



The Rother at Fittleworth



The Rother at Shopham



The Arun at Hardham



The Rother at Coates Castle



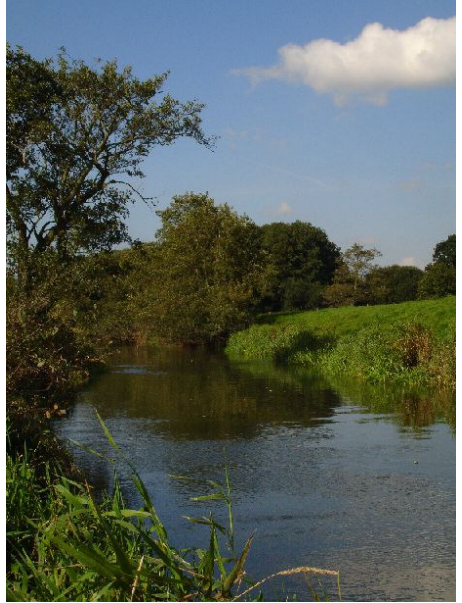
The Arun at Watersfield

Our River Fisheries

Our many river enthusiasts enjoy some of the best sport in Sussex. We offer a great variety ranging from the mid-Rother through to the powerful flow of the tidal Arun and with many miles of bank to explore you can always find a quiet ‘away from it all’ swim.

Both rivers offer a true challenge since their renowned specimens of barbel, pike, chub, bream and carp demand patience and skill. Our members invariably respond to these ‘traditional’ challenges but it is not all about specimen hunting, many anglers preferring to adopt the stick float or light ledger tactics with a mobile approach.

Whatever your preference if you value the traditional challenges of river fishing and appreciate some of the most beautiful rivers in Southern England you will find our river fisheries very much to your liking.



A couple of the swims on our new fishery at Coates Castle.



The River Rother

The Rother flows at a leisurely pace across the Weald where we have several fisheries between Petworth and Fittleworth giving our members the chance of a sizeable barbel or chub with even the occasional carp making an appearance. Decent bream are caught every season albeit in modest numbers and the float angler can also take good bags of silver fish including the occasional grayling throughout the river.



Coultershaw Mill

Situated south of Petworth, this stretch is well known for quality specimens of barbel and chub.

Following re-instatement of the Shopham Loop and closure of the canalised section the fish are now less concentrated and there are rewards for the angler who is prepared to explore the whole fishery including the feeder streams and the lightly fished area at the start of the Loop.

The Millpool and Millstream will shortly be temporarily affected by

work on the Beam Pump and the bridge. Our website and the Notice Board in the Car Park will show details as soon as we have them.

Shopham Bridge

Two north bank fisheries in one here ! Upstream of the bridge there is good bankside cover and the chance of a good chub or a net of dace. The re-instatement of the Loop has encouraged movement of the renowned Coultershaw barbel so a campaign at Shopham might pay dividends.

Below the bridge there is plenty of room to stretch your legs and explore some unpressurised areas. This stretch is a little more open with less bankside cover tempting the float angler with some wide sweeping bends for occasional nice bream.



Fly fishing is permitted on this fishery.

The River Rother



Coates Castle

This fishery stretches from Shopham Bridge almost down to Fittleworth on the south bank. The access points at Shopham Bridge and at the small hamlet of Coates are only a couple of minutes walk from the nearest swims but for the roving angler there are still several miles of river to explore.

Although this stretch runs through open pasture the bankside is well populated with trees and bushes which give

many of the swims that enticing “fishy” look. Having been very lightly fished in recent years the catches of quality specimens of barbel, chub, carp and bream reported during our first season on this fishery have confirmed our hopes for this most attractive water.

Fittleworth

A short distance downstream from Coates Castle is our Fittleworth Fishery.

Similar in features and stocking to Coates Castle it provides a further 1.5 miles of fishing on both banks.

In recent years chub to 6lbs and barbel to 10lbs have been caught here but with a mixture of lightly wooded areas and open pastures this is essentially a good ‘all round’ river fishery.

Be prepared for anything from a gudgeon to a double figure barbel !



The River Arun

We have two sections of the River Arun totaling 2.5 miles of bank. As a tidal river it presents some unique challenges being renowned for some massive bream catches over the years but offering much much more.

Hardham

This stretch of the Arun starts in open pasture land before entering a section with a tree lined far bank, this runs into a section with trees on both sides of the water and then to the final section which is heavily reed lined. There are a number of noted bream pegs along the Hardham stretch and the fish seem to frequent the same areas year after year. The roach and dace can be found virtually anywhere and a big stick or Avon float fished on a long rod is the most enjoyable way to find them. For those more interested in specimen fish there are big barbel, carp into double figures, good chub and of course pike in excess of 20lb. Hardham has plenty to offer any river angler and the results are well worth the walk.



Watersfield

We have recently had a new car park built for the Watersfield stretch. Whereas Hardham can be described as civilised the river shows its wild side at Watersfield. Depth and flow can vary greatly from swim to swim. In general terms the top section starts relatively shallow gets deeper and then shallows up again. The mid section is very difficult to fish due to a combination of reeds and low lying ground, although there are a few really interesting swims to be found. The lower section tends to

dry out on the inside in places as the tide falls but find the deeper glides and you will be in to some serious fish, almost at the end look out for a gem of an inside line gravel run. Roach, dace, perch, and small chub can be caught all through with bream or even barbel and carp liable to show virtually anywhere.



Rother Reflections

In this evocative article Ray Stewart recalls his early experiences of the Rother when The Beatles were still going and we still had pounds, shillings and pence !

My first memories of the Rother go back some forty years, in fact I believe it was in 1968 that I first experienced its piscatorial delights. I was in my latter years at school and the first visit was with a school friend, his brother and my father.

The trip was an evening one in late summer to the Coultershaw stretch. At the time, day tickets could be purchased at r, The Racehorse pub (now Badgers) for a couple of shillings or so. The fishing was along the bank in the field behind the pub (the south bank) and the side stream alongside the disused railway station. We were the only ones fishing the stretch that evening and we had the choice of swims to ourselves. The only other angler we saw was a sea trout man fly fishing the mill pool itself from the opposite bank.

Chub were our main quarry, my friend's brother Chris having heard that the river held some veritable monsters. After exploring the stretch for likely looking lairs my friend Tony and I settled for the

side stream and its junction with the main river, leaving my father and Chris to try the main river upstream. Alas as dusk fell the chub were to remain elusive, and after scaling our end tackle down all we caught that evening were a couple of lively dace and a few gudgeon. But the spell had been cast and those ever so promising looking pools called out for my return!

It was a couple of years later that my next visit took place, as lack of transport dictated that my fishing trips would be to the local gravel pits and canal in pursuit of tench and carp. By this time I had joined a local angling club and made some friends who had had some measure of success fishing the Rother, and a trip to the river was arranged.

We set off early morning to fish the Fittleworth stretch. It was mid summer and the river was in good condition when we arrived. There were four in the party, again my father and I being joined by Tony the local tackle shop

manager and fellow club member Barry who was to be my tutor for the day. Barry and I fished by the bridge trotting down to the shallows. I learned an awful lot that morning, feeding the swim and mastering the stick float.

Sport was fairly brisk as the sun rose high in the sky, the water was crystal clear and the numerous dace we caught glistened in the current as they caught its rays. The fish had to be guided through the streamer weed and as we got further down the shoal some care had to be taken with this exercise as we started picking up some very decent specimens. Apart from the dace we also picked up a few small chub up to just on a couple of pounds, at last I had caught one and my appetite for river angling was whetted.

We fished to around midday and if I remember correctly there were four-dozen fish in my net all dace bar two chub. My father and Tony who fished further down with static baits in the deeper pools only mustered a handful of gudgeon.



Rother Reflections

After our lunch and a pint or two at the Swan, where we discussed tactics and river craft, the die had been cast and my interest in the carp and tench made way for the pursuit of the specimen Rother chub.

My father and I became regular visitors to the stretches at Fittleworth and Shopham, and it was upstream of Shopham Bridge that I took my best chub a fine fish of 6 lb 7 ozs, taken on a midweek foray in the opening week of the season. I took this specimen in a fairly shallow run trundling my bait down the edge of the weeds in clear water, the float being superfluous apart from a means of keeping the bait moving through the swim. I struck the moment my bait disappeared as he moved out from the weed cover. My prize alas was beaten not once but twice in the club specimen competition that season but neither of them broke the 7 lb barrier though. I knew fish this size swam the river and had indeed seen them. One such specimen used to frequent a narrow but deep side stream and more

often than not could be tempted out of the cover of the small bridge where I first spied him.



I took Tony to my secret spot one morning and as we lay on our bellies dropping pieces of bread flake under the bridge, his eyes nearly popped out of his head as the monster drifted out from under the bridge, his great length followed by a huge tail, devouring the offering before moving back to his station in the sanctuary of his lair. We both agreed it would be a waste of time to fish a bait down to him as he would be nigh on impossible to land with the copious amount of weed that filled the stream either side of the bridge. But he was swimming testimony to the size of fish that dwelt

in the river.

The Rother offers much more to those that have fished it over the years, and we now have some very large barbel to fish for these days. I remember when the then river authority first introduced the species to the river in the early seventies. Although small, the first fish captured came from the Fittleworth stretch I believe. I remember thinking at the time if these fish settle well into their new habitat, there could potentially be some very good barbel angling to be had in years to come on this river.

I moved away from Sussex later in the seventies, spending the subsequent thirty years in Cornwall and later Scotland, mainly pursuing sea trout. Returning to Sussex in 2007, I was very pleased to read the catch reports for the river, confirming my thoughts of some thirty years ago. It would be interesting if any long standing fellow members also remember the initial stocking all those years ago, and the subsequent development that followed.

Ray Stewart



The Angling Year

Here is a selection of the quality fish caught by our members from the club waters in 2008.



Barry Stanton
Rother
12lbs 4oz Barbel



Mick Mills
Coultershaw
5lbs 12ozs Bream



Mike Kitchener
13lb 8oz Barbel
Lower Rother



Martin Cornish
Rother
12lbs 10ozs Barbel



Rick Hansen
Arun at Watersfield
5lbs 8ozs Bream



Nelson Keet
Coates Castle
8lbs 3ozs Bream



Mick Harmsworth
Coates Castle
7lbs 8ozs Common Carp



Megan Herringshaw
Quality roach from Hurston
Lane for one of our young
members.



Leon Turner
Rother
6lbs 8ozs Chub



Bird Life

Most anglers will tell you that there is so much more to our sport than simply catching fish (who said that catching fish was simple anyway ?). We are fortunate to have a range of beautiful, quiet fisheries across West Sussex and often we see the more recognisable bird species such as heron, kingfisher, wagtail or buzzard but it is only when you share the bank with an expert that you realise just how much you are actually missing.

We therefore asked member Terry Scragg, a keen local ornithologist, to give us some pointers for the coming months.

Farmland birds

The environment around our clubs lakes and rivers is mainly farmland, which strongly suggests what birds we are most likely to see. Where farmland is largely devoted to grazing animals this in turn provides a range of feeding opportunities for birds. The larger birds typically include Rooks, Crows, Magpies and Woodpigeons, and less commonly Kestrels and occasionally Barn Owls. You may also see the Buzzard soaring above farmland as they have increased significantly and are now seen in most parts of Sussex. Where there is arable farmland, for example around the Stemps and Cart ponds, it is likely to attract a smaller range of birds due to densely planted crops with its less diverse vegetation.

The presence of copses, hedgerows and scrub around field margins on farmland is particularly important as it is a good habitat for woodland birds such as Blackbirds, Thrushes, Dunnocks, Chaffinches and Wrens. Where there are suitable trees you may also see, or hear, Woodpeckers. As spring approaches this habitat becomes home for a few months to the warblers who are summer visitors from Africa.

Two woodpeckers you may see or hear

You are likely to see two woodpeckers along the Rother with its extensive woodland, particularly where it contains older or decaying trees.

The Green Woodpecker flies fast in an undulating flight pattern on rapid wings. You may hear its characteristic

laughing call (the yaffle) or see it on the ground where it is searching for ants - its main food source. In the summer you may also be fortunate to see it teaching its young to feed by exposing ants nests.



The Great Spotted Woodpecker (above) is more often heard than seen. If you hear a rapid drumming noise coming from woodland it is likely to be the Great Spotted, a black and white bird with a red head, which drums on trees as it digs nest holes and announcing its presence to females that a mate is around and warning off other males.



Bird Life

Spring arrivals

Spring heralds the arrival of birds that migrate to the UK from Africa, driven by the combination of weather and available food that provide the right conditions for breeding. As soon as they arrive the male establishes its territory, attracts a mate and raises one or two broods before setting off to Africa again in the late summer or early autumn. They include, the Willow Warbler, Whitethroat, Blackcap and Nightingale.



Nightingale

Many of these birds, which birdwatchers call little brown jobs (LBJ's), can be difficult

to identify, as their plumage tends to be drab with few easily distinguishing marks. The main key to identification is through their song. One of the easier warblers to identify is the Chiffchaff whose song is described in its name.



Willow Warbler

Early in the spring around March - April you may hear the repetitive 'chiff-chaff' endlessly repeated. The Nightingale is also easy to recognise once you have heard it with an experienced birdwatcher. Interestingly some warblers now overwinter in the south which may be related to long-term climatic changes.

A newcomer

On the Arun you may see the Little Egret, a 'Persil White' heron that is spreading rapidly through the southeast and was once more commonly seen around the Mediterranean. This heron was first identified in Dorset about 20 years ago and has spread along the south coast, with a large number of pairs now resident in Chichester harbour and successfully breeding on the south coast. I regularly see a roost of 10 birds at Itchenor and have even seen one on the Prebendal playing field in Chichester !

These pictures are from RSPB - their excellent website is worth a visit to learn about all British Birds including help in identifying different species with sound clips !

Terry Scragg

Frustrated Writer ?

Have the articles from our guest writers Terry Scragg and Ray Stewart reminded you of any interesting angling experiences ?

Why not write an article for The Sussex Angler ? Maybe you would prefer to just meet up for a chat (or a pint !) with one of our "intrepid reporters" and let us write the article. We are also keen to publish any interesting pictures.

Contact Geoff Sumner on 01243 573605

