



Sussex Branch Newsletter



MARCH 2007

ANNUAL DINNER – 24th MARCH 2007

Have you got your tickets yet? If not, contact John Burt or Roy Gurney immediately and we'll make sure you will get in! As advised, it will be at The Dyke Golf Club, Seddlescombe Road, Devil's Dyke, Brighton, 7.30 for 8.00 pm.

Dress is lounge suit or smart casual, and tickets are £19.50 each.

Choice of menu is on the ticket application form.

Grand raffle organised by Jim White and Chris Croucher with outstanding prizes.

Fishing trophies will be presented to the 2006 winners.

March Speaker: Tony Woolnough

15th March sees one of our members giving an insight into the world of river improvement. Tony is a fishery engineer, and his interesting article on the regeneration of an Irish river a few months ago gives some idea of the invaluable work he and his colleagues do. An evening not to be missed!

TROPHIES

Calling all trophy holders – if you are holding a trophy for fishing events or fly-tying and haven't already done so, please return **URGENTLY** to Roy Gurney in order that engraving can be done for the next recipient. The current trophies for the Frank Darrah and the Charity Bowl are out there somewhere – whoever has them please return for updating ASAP! You will be pleased to hear we have now acquired two pairs of cups for the pairs competitions, so each of the winning pair can have hold of a trophy for the year.

Presentation of fishing trophies won in 2006 will be made at the Annual Dinner on 25th March. Winners were listed in the December newsletter, so it hoped that all of them will be there to collect them!

The fly-tying trophies for 2007 will be awarded at the end of season gathering on 5th April.

FLY-TYING COMPETITION 2007

You have until 22nd of this month to get your entries in (we have extended the deadline by a week, so no excuses!) – get tying!!! Just to remind you:

Beginners: Flashback PTN & Soldier
Palmer (one of each)

Intermediate: Light Cahill
(matched pair)

Open: Muddler Minnow
(matched pair)

The Intermediate class is open to all who have not won a prize at Intermediate or Open, and anyone can enter for any class above his qualifying level.

SUSSEX PISCATORIAL

Sussex Piscatorial Society, one of the oldest angling clubs in the country, have a number of coarse and trout fisheries in Sussex where traditional angling methods are encouraged. The trout section has three lakes, one near Heathfield and two just west of Steyning. Not intended to hold large fish, one to two pounds, but purely for anglers to enjoy themselves in peaceful surroundings. Fishing is normally limited to three days each week per member and catch and release is encouraged. They also have a short stretch of the river Itchen in Hampshire that is currently undergoing restoration. Anyone interested should contact **Bob Burbidge** (who is one of our members, usually in attendance on Thursdays) on 01903 873878 who will give you full details. Membership is less than £250.00 per annum including guest tickets which is exceedingly good value.

DOWNLOAD PROBLEMS

One or two people have experienced some problem in downloading attachments (forms, etc) which are in Word format (.doc). If you are one of these, please let Roy know, and he will send it in .pdf format – it may be a problem with your firewall

VINTAGE TACKLE FAIR

For those of you who are interested, the next Vintage Tackle Fair will be held on Sunday 11th March at Romsey Community School, 9am – 3pm. Entry is £1 and you can buy, or just fondle, those lovely rods and reels of yesteryear.



Photo by Phil Waller

NEW BOOKS

Trout from Small Stillwaters

by Peter Cockwill (Crowood Press £16.99)

Peter is well known to our branch as a speaker, his own first class tackle shop at Albury as well as running a trout syndicate near his home in Surrey. This is a complete rewrite of his previous book some twelve years ago bringing it up to date. Peter took many years to put this book together and had some huge problems halfway through, finally having to switch to another publisher. He is considered one of the most respected stillwater angling writers in the UK who really knows his subject. This book is for the novice through to the experienced angler, written in a very practical way putting the reader in no doubt that it's from a real expert, with lots of advice and instruction. The pages on the trout's natural food and their imitations are excellent with photographs taken by Peter Gathercole. He also puts over the fishery owners point of view on how they try to make a living and keep the angler happy, not an easy task during the last year with the hot weather! The last chapter covers fly fishing for other freshwater species such as carp and chub. Peter has been fishing for carp successfully now for several years. I have only one gripe and that is that there are no references in the back for further reading and addresses of the angling organisations, including the Guild of course!

This book will make an ideal gift to young angler starting out and certainly a good book to start your angling bookshelf. If you cannot get a copy locally give Peter a ring and he is sure to put one in the post for you, signed if required, on 01483 205196. Surprisingly the cost of book is the same as the original, so its very good value!

PE

NB. Phillip Ellis has a copy for anyone to peruse on tying nights.

Fly fishing Venues in the South East

This booklet arrived on my doorstep a couple of weeks ago published by the Kent branch of The Salmon & Trout Association and is certainly going to be useful to anyone not acquainted with the venues in the south or is looking to travel outside their immediate area. It covers the counties of Essex, Kent, Surrey and Sussex. Sadly it does not cover Hampshire but I am sure future editions will rectify the situation. Each county is described separately with a map and as much detail including cost of fishing. Certainly worth having a copy, it is small enough to leave in car as a reference. Copies cost £2.00 published annually and Phillip Ellis has copies for sale on a Thursday evening for members to purchase.

PE

The Trout Fly Patterns of John Goddard

Merlin Unwin Books (01584 877457) - £25

Many of you will have read reviews of his new book; being impressed by the reviews I obtained a copy and can report that it is surely a "must have" book! He describes 35 of his successful patterns with notes on each one's creation. Many of his patterns are available commercially and will be for

many years. Not only is John a first class angler but also an entomologist and from this knowledge he created these patterns over many years, and with innovation has added trigger points that he believes attract fish. I am sure John will go down in angling history with Skues, Halford and Sawyer as one of the greatest.

Alan Chamberlain and I fished the Test for grayling in November where John Goddard also fishes. The river keeper told us that John recently caught 100 grayling in a day and, would you believe, is able to pick out the bigger fish from a shoal! That is something to admire for a man in his 81st year!

The book is not perhaps one for novices but for those more experienced and need inspiration to create our own patterns with that little bit extra. **PE**
The Branch has obtained a copy from the publishers which will be presented as a prize in the next round of the fly-tying competition.

CHAIRMAN'S CHAT LINES

By now all of us have had the chance to look over the programme of events arranged by our committee for this season. Your responses to the Annual Dinner are needed as soon as possible so please contact John Burt as soon as you can. This is an enjoyable evening that is open to all members and as many guests as you would like to bring. If you would like to sit at a table with a group of friends then please indicate on your reply sheet. It is at this dinner that our guest speaker will present the fishing trophies awarded during the last year.

Frank Darrah was, I believe, the founder chairman of the Sussex Branch and I was glad to be taught by him. The memorial competition that carries his name takes place on 22nd. April so do please come and join us. The competition side is not taken too seriously by most of us: it makes a good day out with excellent company (plus a few beers provided at lunchtime) and at this time of year Bewl can usually be relied upon to produce good bags of fish.

As I write this on a warm February afternoon I notice that the frogs in my garden pond are already spawning which is a good indicator of water temperature so when fishing it is worth giving imitative flies a go. Early season usually means black and yellow lures such as Viva or Tadpole on a sinking line but do try a small nymph or wet fly on a floater: you may be pleasantly surprised.

Tight Lines and don't forget your entries to this seasons events.

John Plowman.

Surrey Branch

Our neighbouring branch, who meet at Effingham Golf Club, Guildford Road, Effingham, Surrey KT24 5PZ, invite Sussex members to come to their speaker evenings. Details of their programme can be found on their website:

surreyflydresser.members.beeb.net.

Also on the site are some good tying tips and currently a good coverage of the Diawl Bach – take a look!

There may be a welcome in the hills

Even when we try not to be biased it is amazing how first impressions still count. I was visiting the 'out-laws' (like in-laws but these are actually wanted) in South Wales a few weeks ago when the 'worst snowfall' of the year occurred. When the snow melted and the BBC reports of extreme weather and travel chaos were just catching up with the real conditions, my wife – otherwise known as the FPO (fishing permission officer) - suggested I went fishing for the day. When I picked myself up off the floor, the tackle was in the back of the car and I dispatched myself faster than a sneezing turkey in a Bernard Mathews factory.

One problem - I hadn't decided on where to go and South Wales has a good selection of small waters scattered along the M4 corridor. A quick flick through the back Trout Fisherman and a couple of calls later I was no better off (one had closed due to the owner being ill and the other required 4-wheel drive to get up their track!). In the back of my mind, and these days it does take a true Amazonian-type expedition to get into the tangled jungle of synapses and extract anything useful, I remembered about Shimano having a fishery at their UK servicing HQ just north of Swansea. I let my fingers do the walking and found the number (Yellow Pages 1, Trout Fisherman 0).

I appreciate that not all people have a good telephone manner but sometimes I am stunned. I will quote some of the exchange.

Me – *Oh hello, is that the Shimano trout fishery?*

Them – *Yes*

Me – *Are you open today?*

Them – *Yes*

PAUSE

Me – *Has the snow melted on the road to the fishery?*

Them – *Yes*

Me – *How is it fishing at the moment?*

Them – *Not well*

Me – *Is it easy to find?*

Them – *Yes*

PAUSE

Them – *The turning is opposite the Ll-andy-ff-pandy-dd-tiddle-hi-po-ecklefecken Pub and you can't miss it*

Me – *Want to bet?*

Actually I didn't say the last bit but I wanted to. I came to the conclusion the person on the other end of the phone was alphabetically constipated (hadn't got proper vowel movements) and was hording them so that he could mention the name of the pub and then go for a well deserved lie down to recover.

I set off with lead in my heart (or should that be non-toxic lead substitute), and surprisingly the fishery isn't difficult to find – about 10 mins north of junction 46 on the M4, in the village of Felindre. I tend to forget that southerly edge of the Brecon Beacons stretches down this far and the beautiful moorland scenery that goes along with it. I had high hopes for the aesthetic appeal of the fishery as I started to climb up the southerly slopes of the

foothills. As I parked the car it appeared that I had arrived in a quarry. Now that isn't always unappealing – think of Raygill in Yorkshire, but in this case it doesn't quite work. Maybe I'm being unfair, as most places don't look their best in winter although a good dusting of snow can normally transform a grot-hole into a picturesque wonderland – unfortunately this place still looks like a quarry with snow in it.



Shimano Felindre big fish water (in the summer!)

In case you thinking I'm being biased towards pretty fisheries – I just like to confirm it and say I am. However sometimes I'm willing to forego style if there is some substance.

This fishery has a track record of substance in spades. For example I can guarantee that when Mr Nick Freeman set out on a 4-fish ticket he didn't expect to weigh-in 83lb 12oz and go home with a new world record for a 4-fish bag. Or for that matter Michael Keach with a 30lb 3oz Rainbow for a new Welsh record, or Tony Phipps with the Blue Trout British Record at 14lb 15oz or Jason Turpin with a British Record Golden Trout at 21lb 2oz, or (and I promise this is the last one) Dave Kirkland with the British Rainbow Brace Record of 49lb 10oz.

**Michal Keach. Welsh rainbow record
30lb 2oz**



The fishery stocks at a minimum of 3½lb and guarantees a 3lb minimum with mid range from 4lb to 9½lb, low doubles 10lb to 13lb, mid range doubles 14lb to 20lb and super rainbows from 20lb upwards. Lets be honest, these sorts of statistics whet the appetite and give a heightened sense of anticipation. It is this anticipation (and the anticipation is entirely down to personal whims) - and for me it can be fishing somewhere new, or the anticipation of issues such as whether there will be a take, will it be a personal best, will it be a stunning fish, can I cover the fish and get it to take

- that to me is the major part of whether the day is enjoyable or not.

I scuttled across the car park and into the office. The owner (who also owns the Shimano servicing franchise) was sat with his back to me staring at a computer screen. I waited. I shuffled from foot to foot (in a typical British 'I'm waiting sort of way'). I waited some more. I did what anyone else would do in such a situation. Nothing. Several hundred pairs of eyes swivelled to look at me. No, these didn't belong to the owner but belonged to the vast pride of cats that were littered over every surface. OK drastic measures were required - I pulled out my travel Euphonium and blasted out a quick rendition of The Green Green Grass of Home. That seemed to hit the right note and the owner turned around. A bit of probing and it was clear that prices were incredibly reasonable considering the stocking policy (5 Fish - £37.50; 4 Fish - £32.50; 3 Fish (Eight hours) - £27.50; 2 Fish (5 Hours)- £19.50). I opted for the 3 fish ticket and a bit more probing revealed that standard lures were the order of the day fished deep, however the easterly wind would make fishing difficult. It also transpired that as soon as the fish arrived at the stew ponds they were not artificially fed again, this is to ensure the fish are really 'switched on' to natural foods as soon as possible.

Tackling up I thought about the advice and decided to try something that I usually use on a new fishery for the first time, especially for fish that should be switched on to winter 'naturals'. A floating line teemed with a 13-14ft fluorocarbon leader and an Apps bloodworm (fishery rule - single fly only) fished under a Turn-On strike indicator (these really are the best on the market - you'll see why in a minute). The breeze blowing down the lake created ideal drift fishing conditions. The first cast went out and halfway around the cast halted. The strike revealed nothing. Several similar casts later and it was clear that the bottom wasn't even. This is beauty of fishing this method on a first visit to a fishery as you can effectively plumb the depth, find weed beds, channels etc whilst actually fishing. The Turn-On indicator is a positive boon as you can adjust the depth you are fishing to find the fish without changing leader, fly etc - all you need to do is slide it down the leader. The downside is that you do sacrifice some distance and also some turnover but these are minor compared to the benefits.

I spent an hour slowly walking around about half the lake getting a mental picture of the trout's underwater world whilst fishing at the same time. It was clear that the lake averaged about 8ft deep although there were patches of tall weed and close in to the far bank was a channel about 15-20ft deep. I changed the fly several times to buzzers, other nymphs such as Diawl Bachs etc in the hope one might tempt a fish but to no avail.

Anyway it didn't really matter the weak winter sun was warm and a 'bad' day fishing beats a 'good' day at work, or and this was more appropriate to my current situation, being dragged shopping with my wife and mother-in law (just a thought for those who want to make a mint - put a tackle shop

next to those high street clothes shops - put some comfy chair in it, with tea and coffee and a supply of fishing porn (Trout & Salmon etc).

Another benefit of indicator fishing is that you are not repeatedly whipping the water into foam and you get time to look around, observe and generally take things in. I noticed a Red Kite being mobbed by 3 crows but more importantly I noticed that a few fish were cruising around about 3-4ft down. These occasionally rose and took something in a typical head and tail rise. The question that I'm often perplexed by is 'what'? Now head to a river find the guy in tweed using a split cane rod and ask him this question and watch his face light up! "Oh that's an Iron Maiden Blue Dun and you'll need a Led Zeppelin emerger. Unless there is a Z in the month, or, and of course you knew this, the hatch starts on a Wednesday in which case you'll need a size 28 Def Leopard dry", or some such words are spoken at which point I glaze over and nod sagely but in complete bafflement. Anyway I tried some CDC emerger patterns that the trout treated with utter contempt.

Four other people were fishing and these were having as much luck as me. It was time for a change of tactics. Off came the nymphs and indicator, the floating line remaining, and on went a gold-head cat's whisker. Cast out, count to 20 and a very slow retrieve back intersperse with the odd fast spell. Typical small-water plan - two complete fans of casts and then a move along the bank. Another hour or so passed of further ingraining all my bad casting habits, and to top it off even the sun gave up shining.

Then the rain started, not the heavy rain that sends you scurrying for the car or lodge, but that fine rain that wets you through by sneaking up on you whilst you are still thinking 'this will ease off as I can see it brightening up over there'. The locals who obviously had a better knowledge of weather in this part of the world decided enough was enough and beat a hasty retreat leaving the entire fishery at my mercy.

Why is it that when you're thinking about admitting defeat (rain dribbling down your neck and back to your underpants is quite a dampener on your spirits) that you get a take? The take came as a solid stop as I slowly retrieved; I have to admit I thought it was the bottom until I felt a headshake. Then came a truly memorable fight, not because of how good it was but completely the opposite. The fish thrashed a bit and then gave up, it had obviously realised that being dragged to the bank and being put out of its misery was preferable to the existence it had experienced up till now. I didn't like to disappoint so that is exactly what I did. The scales tipped around to 6¼lb - a decent fish, a shame it hadn't performed as it should have! With renewed enthusiasm, despite the rain getting worse, I spent another 2 hours trying to make a brace. I failed. 'Enough is enough', I thought and squelched back to the car. I reported back to the office (as you are required to) and the owner logged my catch record. He had locked up, fed the several hundred cats (I was glad as they were eyeing me and I didn't fancy becoming a headline

in the local paper ‘Angler’s body feeds feral cats for a week’) and was sitting in his car with the engine running before I had even snipped my leader off. I think he was desperate to leave. I also felt like that. So there I was rushing to get untackled and changed under what seemed to be the impatient gaze of the owner and the slightly less hungry gaze of the cats. I felt so welcome! So summing up my experience of the fishing – It is good value for money considering the quality of the stock (although I think the fighting quality is down to the time of year rather than anything else), the aesthetics may be better when there is some foliage around. Would I go again? Yes, I would try the fishery once more, if nothing else just to see if my first impressions are correct and to check the cats haven’t eaten anyone. **Paul Davis**

Geoff Cherrett

Our February speaker proffered a somewhat different approach to fly-tying, preferring to dye his own feathers and embellish the markings with the adroit use of marker pens. The first half of his presentation was devoted to this, but by far the most interesting was the second half of the evening when he showed video clips of himself tying various patterns.

The techniques used were well demonstrated and some of the tips invaluable to ease the tying of some of the more tricky patterns.

He explained that he was still developing his skills in videoing the tying, and when perfected this is likely to be the yardstick for such instructional videos.

CHAIN LETTER

We are indebted to Jack Jupp for this reminiscence (who else recalls the Brighton Angler?):-

“What follows is very dated as it comes from a postcard that The Brighton Angler shop in Duke Street Brighton would hand to any angler in the 1950’s.

" Dear Angler,

This is a chain letter designed to bring relief and happiness to all despondent married anglers. It does not cost money. Send a copy of this letter to five of your equally miserable friends, then bundle up your wife, a few odds and ends of tackle you never use, and some cans of beer, send the lot to the man at the top of the list. Then add your name to the bottom of the list.

When your name reaches the top of the list you will receive 16,478 women, sufficient beer to remain sozzled, and enough tackle to open a shop!

Have faith in this chain letter. One disbelieving angler broke the chain and received his old woman back. Don't let this happen to you!

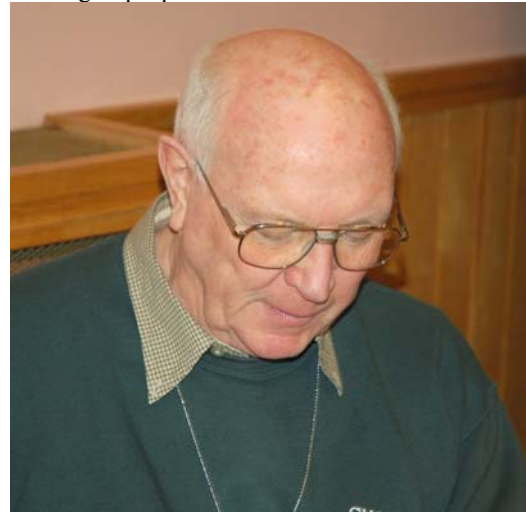
Best Wishes

Regards Jack.”

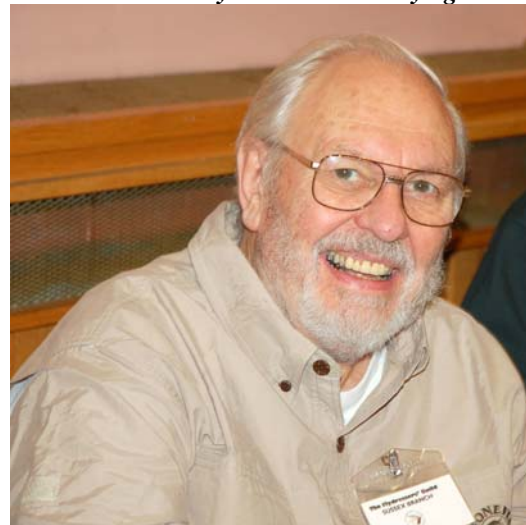
TACKLE FAIR

Sunday 22nd February saw Brian Hendry and Roy Gurney demonstrating at the show in Rustington (if that is the right description – it is amazing how little tying is done when anglers get talking!!). We hope to have gained some new members in due course as there was considerable interest in our

activities, despite the accent on coarse fishing and vintage tackle. Maybe it’s the “vintage” aspect which gets people interested!



Brian Hendry concentrates on tying



The editor concentrates on talking

[Photos by Phil Waller – well known as one of our speakers on vintage tackle and an expert on reels]

MEMBERS’ DAY at ALBURY – 4th March

Ten members ignored the impending warnings of a heavy rain and gales and turned up at 8am for exclusive use of the Vale End complex of lakes at the Albury Estate Fisheries.

Albury is a pretty fishery nestled at the foot of the North Downs and in the Surrey Hills AONB. The Vale End complex consists of two ponds and one lake and a section of the Tillingbourne chalk stream. The river section and the smallest of the ponds were closed, as these are brown trout waters. It left the large pond and the smaller lake (which actually has the Tillingbourne running through the far side of it) for members to explore.

The rules were simple for the day, fishery rules to be followed and we would break at 12 for lunch together and in addition there would be a small competition for biggest fish and best bag of four fish with the weigh in set at 3.30. As it would be likely that these weights would be close together a time bonus would apply to save having to flip a

coin (the time bonus was simple, 4 fish weighed in before 12 would get 2lb added to the total added and fish weighed in between 12-3 would get 1lb added to the total).

The weather was overcast but dry and the wind was behaving itself as I explained the rules, after which everyone tackled up and headed off.

I was still tackling up in the car park as I noticed Tony Keeley on the smaller lake, was into a fish on his first cast. After a struggle the fish eluded the net. It didn't really matter as Tony's third cast brought success again and this one didn't escape. Tony then proceeded to give us all a masterclass in competition fishing as he caught his 4 fish in less than 50 minutes. This included a 5¾lb fish for a 4 fish bag of 12¾lb! It seemed that the successful fly was a self-tied yellow Cats Whisker variant fished about 3 rod lengths out. Tony can be found on the beginners table on Thursday evenings should you wish to place orders!!!!

Fortunately the way the fishery was booked (we had to pay for a minimum of 12 people on a 4 fish ticket) and this meant that we had a total of 48 eight fish that could be taken by ten members, therefore you didn't have to stop fishing if you had caught four fish

Everyone seemed to catch fish early on although the spot vacated by Tony was definitely the hot spot with at least another 5 fish coming from it. On the other lake everyone was moderately successful with the odd 1-2 fish coming to nearly everyone. John Perry was making a good showing with it appearing that he also would reach the 4 fish before lunch. Wayne Duerden had a brace with the largest (5lb) making a run for the big fish prize.

The forecast rain appeared about an hour before lunch but didn't dampen spirits too much with everyone fishing on. Bill Smith coming round and keeping spirits up. By lunch two members (Tony K and John P) had 4 fish with quite a few having 3 fish (myself and my father included – nothing like a bit of family competition to keep the keen edge on your fishing!). Only 2 members had yet to open their account Tony H and Roy G.

At lunch everyone commented on how fit the fish were and fought well above their weight causing quite a few fish to be lost. There was also a good bit of banter with Peter Buss commenting that Bill S must be 'slipping' as he hadn't sold any raffle tickets to the fish and Tony K being advised to buy a lottery ticket whilst his luck held.

After lunch everyone went out into the rain again, by now the banks were looking like a trench in the Somme and mud was the main element to combat although the wind had a habit of changing direction completely from one minute to the next. Despite these challenges, as the afternoon progressed almost everyone had caught 4 fish and 3 members had caught 5! Tony Harrison put on a late spurt and caught 4 fish in the 2 hours after lunch.

By about 2.30 most people had decided that enough was enough and called it a day. Only one person sprayed his flies (or his 'new' reel bought at auction) with fish repellent instead of bringing their lunch with them (more banter at lunchtime), but I

won't mention his name in case he doesn't put this report in the newsletter.

Tony K swept the board with both the best bag and the best fish however he could only receive one prize, so accepting the best bag prize that meant that Wayne D could accept the best fish prize. Each were presented with a signed copy of the new Peter Cockwill book 'Trout from Small Stillwaters' (thanks must go to Peter for a generous discount on the prizes).

As the last members (Bill S and Tony H) left at about 3.30 stating how much they had enjoyed the day, I decided to stay on and fish (as we still had fish in hand). Within 15 minutes of them leaving the rain stopped and the wind settled down. I then had another 4 fish and lost 2 within an hour, I'd obviously picked up some of the Tony K magic by sitting next to him at lunch. This brought the total tally to 39 fish shared between the 10 members. The fish aren't everything however and the last word should go to 'my old man' who told me when he got home to Suffolk that he had a brilliant day with a great crowd of people, good banter and not even the weather could spoil it. I guess that's what a members day should be all about.

Paul Davis

Editor's note:

A great start to the fishing season and special thanks to Paul for organizing and reporting so fully. One downbeat note however – the lack of full support means a financial drain somewhere – DO support your Branch organizers, please.

TENTAGE FOR SHOWS

We are now the proud owners of a 3m x 3m heavy duty tent for use at outdoor shows such as the South of England, etc. This means we have a similar sized gazebo surplus to requirements. Any member interested in purchasing this should contact Roy Gurney. It is in good condition having been used about three times a year only.

FOR SALE

Size XL "Countryside" waterproof waxed cotton jacket -- brand new in sealed bag. Bargain at £25. Please contact Albert Horne (or Roy Gurney if he is not around).

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