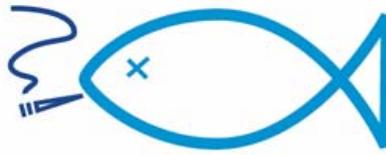


Really Wrecked SAC newsletter

Number 36, January 2010



Happy New Year to you all. May all your fishes be huge ones. I hope you've all resolved to be good boys and girls in the decade that stretches ahead of us and have committed yourselves irrevocably to various noble resolutions, at least one of which involves fishing on a boat this year. I've heard a few of your commitments on the club grapevine. Tom, for example, has vowed to come on every club trip with "turbot" in the title (if not in the boat), Beef is promising to become a natural reef around which billions of fish can live and breed, Andy Selby says that from now on, at least 1% of the ragworm he sells will be alive and Two Dogs has guaranteed he will only fish one rod at a time (though I don't believe that one).

I myself have made a long list of ways to improve myself. It would have been quicker for me to make a list of ways in which I am perfectly adequate, but I don't think that's the point of New Year resolutions. Most of these you really don't want to know about, though you'll be pleased to know that the rash has cleared up and the train carriage involved is now finally free of Vaseline and the smell of tangerines. Some are fish-related however, and the Really Wrecked legal team have cleared the following for publication.

I've resolved to increase the number of times I tell Adam, Sean and Tom that I am going to join them on a trip fishing for tench / barbell / chub / carp / whatever to at least three times per week, as I know they love it when I cancel a few days later, or just don't turn up. I have also resolved to be nicer to Colin this year. His solicitor informs me that this should mainly consist of not going on fishing trips Colin has booked up on and keeping to the 400m exclusion zone around Colin's residence as per the court order, but I've got a few nice surprises planned which will definitely bring a smile to his face in 2010. It's amazing how hard it is to tell a smile from a grimace at 400m.

Then there's my main fishing one... As New Year resolutions go, it's pretty tame, but I'm going to share it with you anyway. I hereby vow to produce more newsletters in 2010 than the feeble, solitary one that I've managed in each of the last two years. If I fail, I agree to spend a week with Adam's fishing trousers which, having never been washed on the entirely spurious grounds that slime, grime and "How clean is your house" style

shit aids waterproofing, have actually evolved into a higher life form than their owner. Admittedly, this is not an especially difficult feat, the majority of invertebrate life on earth having managed it over three billion years ago, but it's still quite an achievement for a pair of Goretex trousers. This fact that has now been recognised by the Royal Society in giving them the scientific name *Stenchipants Frostusgawdhelplus*.

This is despite the devastating blow to my self-esteem I received in Weymouth this year when Steve Newham informed me he hadn't read the last couple of newsletters at all. This may be because he is constantly being mentioned in them, and he is a shy retiring lad who hates the limelight, though his arse-tattooing antics might suggest otherwise. It may be because he feels, as a senior member of the club, he doesn't get *enough* of a mention in these pages, but whatever the reason, and however many of you (who aren't currently reading this) share his inability to read, there'll be a lot more of these unwanted emails appearing in your inboxes in 2010, so you might as well read them on the off-chance they contain something interesting or true.

Club notices

Now, before I get on with the fishing-type stuff, there are a couple of important announcements to make. Firstly, there's the small matter of the annual dinner. The date of this feast of fun, frolics and fishing trophies is Saturday the 23rd of January. The venue is the Dorset Arms, where, Adam assures me, the food is very good. Our usual venue, the Crown is sadly unavailable due to ongoing attempts to eradicate a colony of *Stenchipants Frostusgawdhelplus*, which has become established in the kitchen. The cost will be about £18/head for the food, they serve Harveys, and they haven't yet banned us for being smelly, rowdy idiots. We'll be assembling at 7.30 for an eight o'clock start and dress is black tie / lounge suit / whatever you're wearing at the time / *Stenchipants Frostusgawdhelplus*.

We'll be needing those prized trophies back too, in order to engrave the names of 2009's most successful anglers upon them, **so please return them to Adam ASAP** at the following address: Adam Frost, 59c High Street, Lewes, Sussex, BN7 1XE. Call him on 01272 478886 or email him

on a.frost@ukintpress.com to arrange their return. Do not send them to his work address as he rarely bothers to work these days, and don't delay, as we've got to get them in to the engravers in the next week.



Yes! It's Annual Dinner time again – with all that that entails...

While we're doing dates, and before many more of you have dropped into a gentle slumber in appreciation of the high level of literary skill on display here, these are the fishing dates for next year. All dates are with Dave and Pete on Ocean Warrior III out of Newhaven unless marked with a "W" for Weymouth. Spring Weymouth dates are with Ken, while autumn ones are with Richard.

Please note that there's a trip the day before the dinner, so why not book up on it and really get in the mood?

Friday 22nd January inshore cod and whiting or offshore pollack

Friday 5th February offshore pollack

Monday 22nd February offshore pollack and bass

Monday 1st March offshore pollack, cod and bass

Friday 26th March inshore plaice (W)

Monday 12th April offshore pollack and cod

Monday 19th April inshore turbot (W)

Monday 10th May offshore cod and conger

Monday 7th June offshore cod and conger

Monday 5th July offshore cod and conger

Friday and Saturday 23rd and 24th July Summer trip (W)

Monday 23rd August offshore cod, bream and conger

Monday 6th September offshore cod, bream and conger

Monday 20th September shark, bream and turbot (W)

Monday 4th October blonde rays and bream (W)

Monday 18th October offshore cod, bream and conger

Monday 1st November offshore cod and conger or inshore cod

Monday 15th November huge ballan wrasse (W)

Monday 13th December inshore cod

The summer Weymouth trip is being organised on the same lines as last year i.e. pay in advance to book your place. Prices are unchanged, so send a cheque for £200 or pay by BACS. This includes your accommodation for three nights at the Sailors, the boats, bait and your T-shirt (include your size with your booking). If you don't want to stay at the Sailors for all three nights, let me know which nights you'll be staying and take £25 off your bill for each night that you won't be staying. However, we obviously prefer it if we all stay together in one solid, fish-smelling mass of badness. BACS details are as follows:

Account name: Really Wrecked Sea Angling Club
Number: 00245798

Sort code: 83-20-02

The arrangement for the other Weymouth trips is the usual i.e. we generally stay in the Sailors the night before. If you want to book a trip in Weymouth but DON'T want to stay the night before, let me know well in advance. Accommodation cancelled within a month of the trip may well incur a £10 deposit fee. The same goes for any trip cancelled, which we are unable to fill – you'll have to pay for your share of the boat. This year, costs per head for all our trips are likely to be in the region of £45 for inshore fishing and £65 for offshore fishing.

One of the two Weymouth flatfish trips will be see a resumption of the Flatfish Competition between the noble Really Wreckers and the notorious Happy Hookers. If we get out on the first date (Friday 26th of March), then the event will take place on that date, otherwise it'll roll over to the second date (Monday 19th of April). The winning team is the one with the best (as a percentage of the national record) flatfish, though this may change, as there have been several versions of the rules. Anyway, it's good fun, and we're defending the magnificent trophy we won last time, so we need a good strong team to book up for both trips.

Trip reports

Right – that’s the facts out of the way, and now it’s time to delve into the realm of fantasy, lies and nonsense that is the fishing trip reports. As there is a whole year’s worth of trips to recount, some of the detail may be a little hazy, and indeed mercifully brief in places, but let me start by saying that overall it has been a very good year indeed. If any of you who haven’t been out for a while are toying with the idea of having a go this year (Rick? John? Me?), then if last year is anything to go by, you’ll fill your boots. Quite what you’d want with fish-filled boots, I don’t know. Ask Adam, or his trousers.

Monday 16th of February

This was a fantastic trip – one of the very best. With no wind, Dave was able to put us over a wreck a long way out, and the pollack did not disappoint. All day they kept coming, with lots of doubles, topped by Clive’s record equalling 17lb 8oz beauty. He tried to claim it was 17lb 9oz to snatch Two Dog’s record, but there was too much swell to be able to say for sure. Some on the boat thought the fish looked closer to 7lb 8oz, but who are we to judge? The final tally was 45 pollack, three cod and a gurnard. That’s six fish a person.



Two superb pollack – one a record-equalling 17lb 8oz to some weird, bearded relative of Clive’s.

Friday 13th of March

Unlucky for some, but only if you were a fish. We went a long way out to Dave’s early-season bass wreck and had the trip of a lifetime. We started catching decent double-figure pollack from the off, and then after a couple of drifts, we started catching bass after bass. These were of a decent size too, and I quickly beat my own record with a lovely fish of 7lb 8oz, only to see that bastard Clive catch two eight pounders – the biggest a fantastic 8lb 12oz.



It’s that man again. Clive with another record. The selfish swine.

With so many fish coming, the boat was a sea of happy faces. Well, apart from one face, which remained resolutely unimpressed all day. The face in question was the handsome visage of a certain A. Frost, who seemed downright grumpy, despite catching fish. When questioned about this, it turned out that Adam, who, as you may recall, can’t stand bass, had only been able to catch bass, while all around him caught pollack after pollack. He only cheered up at the end of the day, when I gave him one of my many pollack, possibly the only nice thing I’ve ever done.

Steve also had cause for a little moan, enduring something of an *X Files* moment on this trip. Having carefully marked all his (many) fish with a knife and a specially designed hologrammatic emblem in order to identify them as his, he discovered, when the orgy of gutting and filleting had died down, that he had been left with just the one (unmarked) pouting. I knew nothing about this, but I did notice that Colin and Two Dogs did seem to be struggling to get their tackle boxes off the boat at the end of the day, as they appeared to have doubled in weight. Weird. The final score was 48 pollack to 15lb (six were returned) and 72 bass (30 returned). That’s an incredible 15 fish per person.

Friday 3rd of April

This was another flat calm day, so we went back to the bass wreck. This time the bass seemed to have moved on, and we managed a mere 25 pollack and 10 bass – still a pretty good day, and all in all, a bloody fantastic start to the year.

Monday 18th of April

Every good run has to come to an end, and this year it ended in style on the plaice trip. We had one plaice early on, followed by a magnificent (and delicious) record 3lb lobster to Adam, then lots of nothing. We moved to the Shambles where Rob missed a huge bite, definitely from a 20lb turbot, and I caught loads of launce for the crew to fish with, including a vast new record of 2oz 8dm.

We then moved back to the mussel beds where we had three more plaice. Kim ended the day with two, and Adam and Steve managed one apiece. I personally have failed to catch plaice on any of the last five trips I've been on, and I'm getting to the end of my tether with this particular trip. I'm going to give it another 10 years to produce the goods, or I give up.



Adam deftly handles a vicious snapping brute, using all the skills he has picked up during various previous long term relationships.

Friday 5th of June

This was the first eeling trip of the year and is a day that will long be remembered by those who remember things for a long time. In purely fishing terms it was generally quite a good day. We drifted the wreck and caught 27 cod to 12lb, and

then anchored and caught 11 eels, with Ian Gray taking the biggest. At 64lb it was a lovely fish, though he did manage to spoil the moment by taking approximately three hours to land it on his appallingly flopsy-bunny 20/30lb rod, aptly named the Fox Wankmaster, teamed with a reel which was the bastard lovechild of a Fladden Warthog and a Penn Squidder.



A lovely eel for Ian, landed despite the handicap of using some of the worst tackle ever built. Nice one.

All of this was completely overshadowed by the terrible run of luck endured by your favourite joint club president and secretary, Mr Frost. First of all, he kept hooking the wreck and not fish, then when he finally hooked a decent cod, it snapped him off, at which point our new club pariah, Neil "Rab" "Bastard" Cook, ran the length of the boat, stuck a fist into Adam's face and screamed "YES!!!!" at the top of his voice before dancing a jig of delight at Adam's misfortune, and singing a song of triumph and evil glee. Adam then put his back out by overstretching in his increasingly frantic attempts to hook a fish. Then the wash from a container ship spilled Adam's coffee while at the same time he lost another set of gear in the wreck. And to cap it all off, having failed to hook an eel all day, he finally got stuck into a really good fish, which set off on two powerful runs before ejecting the hook. All of this bad luck is totally and entirely down to the complete lack of any kind of human understanding or empathy shown by Neil "Judas" "Hitler" Cook.

Needless to say, Rab has a slightly different take on the day's events. He maintains that everyone was losing tackle in the wreck, particularly him and Phil Pepper, who were trying to outdo each other in their utter incompetence, and in taking the piss out of each other for it. When Adam lost his first decent fish, Rab asked, "Did you lose that?"

"Yes," replied Adam, tersely.

"Excellent," said Rab in a failed and misjudged attempt at irony.

Then, when the coffee went over and Adam lost his gear, Adam leapt up as fast as his bad back could stand and ran the length of the boat to confront the culprit – Neil "Satan" Cook. "I've lost my coffee and all my gear in the wreck! Are you happy now?!"

At the end of the day, Rab offered to carry the lead bucket back to the car "in penance for my earlier appalling behaviour," which elicited only a snort and a dark mutter from the unjustly treated and saintly Frost.

The moral of the tale for any would-be miscreants aboard the boat is "When in a hole, stop digging" or "Shut up and fish" or "Leave Adam and Ben alone, they're miserable bastards these days. It must be old age catching up with them". I include myself in this because there have been many occasions when Steve and others have remarked I am not my usual annoying self, at which point I have mentally committed acts which are illegal in every country apart from Saudi Arabia, where they are encouraged.

The tale has a happy ending however, as Neil bravely approached a snarling Frost on the first day of the Weymouth summer trip and after 2 hours of grovelling and a small £1000 sweetener, Adam agreed to allow him to remain a member of the club. Let it not be said that the club committee is anything but even-handed.

Friday 12th of June

This was our annual turbot trip, much re-arranged after nasty windy weather had forced us to cancel. We started the day drifting the edge of the race for cod and ended up with six after three drifts, the biggest a creditable 16lb. Modesty forbids me from mentioning the name of its captor. We spent the rest of the day drifting the Shambles. Once more I demonstrated my prowess at catching launce, which is pretty much all I can catch these days, while Clive hooked and landed a 9lb turbot. While playing the fish, it became clear he had tangled with Adam, as Adam's line went slack. So our bearded hero refrained from winding so as to avoid losing the fish. But when Ken netted the fine specimen of turbot-hood, we noticed not one, but two lines emerging from its mouth – one Clive's,

the other Adam's! The greedy swine had swallowed both baits.

Having gutted it Clive nobly split the fish, so both lucky anglers went home with about 4lb of prime turbot. Yummy. When I spoke to Adam later about this, he said something dismissive along the lines of turbot really isn't very nice and certainly not as nice as pollack (if you can catch any). I'd say that this disqualifies him from taking any turbot home in future, and as the donor of a pollack to said Frost, I think that means I get to keep all turbot Adam catches from now on.



This lovely shared turbot means yet another bloody picture of Adam and Clive.

Weymouth Summer trip

This was the summer trip we've always dreaded, and which thus far, we've always avoided. It started well, with Rab almost making up with Adam, and then drinking Sambucca into the wee small hours with Jari. Not having Jari's iron constitution (and iron in that context seems a little soft and flabby, frankly), Rab then spent most of the first day "communing with the sea" (i.e. throwing up) instead of fishing, further penance for angering the great angling god Frost.

There was another reason for Rab's poorly sea legs – the sea itself. It was lumpy, very lumpy, and the fishing was not easy. The A Team fished the Race, the Kidney Bank then the 7 mile ground and managed two bass, three blonde rays, one cod, one tope and one roker (look it up). The B team spent most of the day bream fishing, mainly for small bream. Les in particular delighted in taking tiny, baby bream away from their weeping mothers and consigning them to the fish box.

Day two was even rougher. So rough we actually considered cancelling. Sadly we didn't follow through with that particular plan. The A Team spent the morning on the mussel beds, where Adam top scored with three plaice, while Steve and Chris had one apiece. The same

ground also produced a cod and a gurnard, the latter suffering a hideous fate. With the boat pitching in the heavy seas, Beef was rumbling around the deck like some vast satanic pinball. This state of affairs could not be sustained forever, and eventually he tripped over one of the dozens of tackle boxes strewn everywhere like rubble after an explosion. The poor delicate lad then sat down rather heavily, which really means something if you're Beef, right on top of the poor wee gurnard, which was eyeing the sea hopefully and awaiting his imminent release. When it was prised off Beef's arse cheeks, it was no longer a gurnard, it was a plaice, and quite a thin-bodied one at that, and being returned was no longer a realistic option.

Then, having braved the elements for all of two hours, and despite catching fish, the A Team courageously took the decision to go back in, because it was so rough and they were all scared. Not so, the manly men of the B Team. Too stupid to know when they were beaten, while the A Team relaxed in the shower or gently snoozed, the B Team fished on all day, in increasingly unpleasant seas, catching less and less.

Not *all* of the A Team were quite this sensible. While others went off to shower etc., Rob and Marvin stayed behind in the bar "to have a quick drink". Several hours later, their quick drink seemed to have caught up with them somewhat, leaving them a little glassy-eyed and strangely unsteady on their pins, as though they'd been out on a boat all afternoon.

Meanwhile, back at sea, the day started brightly enough for the B Team, with a few decent bream taken from some rough ground. Once again, Les concentrated on the juveniles, earning a reputation as the Paul Gadd of the bream world. Meanwhile Kim Mace from the Happy Hookers snaffled a club record with an entirely magnificent 4lb 8oz kelp frond, which proved a real handful in the tide and on a heaving boat.

We then moved to the Shambles to try and scare up a few flatfish, but to Lyle's amazement, despite my catching loads more launce, there were no brill or turbot. Lyle was the stand-in for Richard, by the way. Richard had phoned up a few weeks earlier and said something to the effect that "You're a bunch of wankers and I can't be bothered to come back from Denmark where they're paying me decent money and they don't abuse me all day, so I've arranged for a cack-handed idiot to be your skipper. And no, I don't mean Andy Selby." Despite this recommendation, Lyle actually turned out to be a half decent skipper and put up with our ill-judged jibes and sulky strops with very good grace. He also made more tea than Richard, then again, who doesn't?



Kim's splendid kelp record. You can tell it must have been a memorable trip, if this photo is all that's worth including in the newsletter.

We managed another club record while on the Shambles. I was briefly required to answer the call of nature and when I returned to my rod, I found it doubled over in a very exciting way. Seeing how we were turbot fishing, it could mean only one thing. I bent my back and heaved. The fish didn't put up much of a struggle, but it felt heavy. In fact, it was a bit of a dead weight, but with Lyle at my shoulder with the net, I was still very hopeful. When I finally played the monster to a standstill, it turned out to be 4lb of lead, which had been clipped onto my line while I was distracted.

The boat erupted into laughter, apart from me, oddly, who found the whole episode deeply irresponsible and unamusing. Imagine if my rod had snapped under the strain, or I had actually hooked a huge turbot – only to lose it because of the unfunny joke banging against it. Now I like a joke as much as the next man, but only if it's one of mine, and is therefore genuinely funny. In the end, I decided that forgiveness is divine, and my heroics in beating 4lb of lead on a 12lb class rod are recorded as the club record practical joke.

After the Shambles we spent an hour fishing the only patch of rough ground which didn't involve being in a 20 foot swell. Sadly the patch of rough ground in question was about 30 yards

offshore and held only ballan wrasse no bigger than 8oz, and not very many of them. Then we finally got the chance to fish the legendary wreck of HMS Hood. Sadly, the promised new record tadpole fish, tompot blennies and rock cooks failed to show up, but on the plus side we did all manage to lose loads of tackle on what must be one of the steepest sided wrecks in the country.

We then made our weary and wet way back to port to mock the A Team for their cowardly and lily-livered behaviour, while basking the afterglow of a crap day catching nothing in awful, wet (did I mention that it poured with rain all day?) conditions.

The curry was a great success, made all the merrier by Rob and Marvin's non-attendance, as they preferred to spend the evening in the company of some aging rockers murdering a series of Deep Purple, Guns n Roses and Iron Maiden tracks in the front bar of the Sailors. This may have been partly due to their "quick drink" having left them incapable of walking. It was ironic they missed the curry, as we had planned to give the Clubman of the Year trophy to Marvin after the meal, him having failed to attend the original awards ceremony. Ironic because the reason we gave it to Marvin was because you could always rely on him to turn up, and the engraving beside his name on the trophy read simply "Mr Reliable".

When we returned to the Sailors to find them head-banging to *Sweet Child of Mine* and *Breaking the Law*, Rob was somehow altered. Normally a shy and retiring lad, he was now everybody's best mate and several times had to be peeled off club members as he enveloped them in his warm and fuzzy embrace.

It was too windy and wet for old men like us to get up to any high jinks, so we simply drank ourselves into various forms of stupor before watching Jari break all his limbs and stab himself repeatedly. The last word though has to be about the pre-payment plan. Everyone paid for the trip in advance, so I didn't have to keep asking everyone for money, and people didn't have to keep giving it to me. All the pain was over well in advance, and everything went smoothly. I can't believe we've actually done something sensible for a change.

Monday 3rd of August

Broadly speaking, Adam declared himself satisfied by this trip, mainly on the grounds that Rab didn't go. Those who did included Steve, Rob, Marvin (Mr Reliable), Colin, Clive, Scoop, Chris and Nick, any one of whom can be just as annoying as Rab on their day, but they haven't (recently) made the mistake of teasing Adam.

The forecast was for fours and fives (are you sure? The Smurfs out on a forecast with fives in

it?), but the day turned out all right, with a distinct lack of white horses and Alton Towers-like thrills and spills. The main problem was that it was one of those days when the tide never seemed to get going properly. It started off all right with a few cod and a couple of pollack coming on the drift. Nothing enormous, but a 12lb cod or pollack pulls back all right. Then the tide died away and down went the hook. A few eels started coming and also a couple of cod to baits, but then everything died with slack water. And the slack water just kept on hanging around until it was almost time to go. When it did pick up again, so did the fishing, with quite a few more eels, some touching 50lb, along with a couple of early wreck bream and a couple of red gurnards, which had Colin all overexcited, as usual.

And that was that. All in all, it was one of those almost satisfactory days that would get a "Could do better" on its report card, although we did end up with 20 cod and two pollack to 12lb, and 20 eels to around the 50lb mark, so really, mustn't grumble.

Wednesday 14th October

This trip was on a Wednesday, as it had been re-arranged numerous times due to bad weather. The day before was glorious weather, the day after was glorious too, but the Wednesday itself was miserable and drizzly, just like us. Drifting the mid-channel wreck Dave had selected produced very little, so we settled down to fish at anchor as soon as possible.

Cod and conger soon found the baits and for at least three hours, fish were coming regularly, giving a final total of 20 eels to 45lb 20 bream to 3lb and 25 cod to 15lb, all on cuttle. Adam couldn't catch a cod for love nor money, and had to be content with eels, but it was Les who really struck up a special relationship with the conger, to the extent that he couldn't bear to be parted from them and had two or three small eels killed so he could take them home, There was some speculation that the eels were only stunned and not killed, a *la* Stevie, so he could take them home and play "hunt the soap" in the bath with his new "special friends".

Bizarrely, the Smurfs had decided to bring along a donkey, which fished beside Phil Brooks for much of the day, with some success, catching three cod and two conger. However, when it was time to disembark, we noticed that where before the donkey had been of the standard quadruped disposition, it was now a strange kind of biped, standing on its front legs, with its hind legs nowhere to be seen. We quizzed Phil about this, as he'd been talking to the donkey most of the day, but he had no idea where they'd gone. Strange things happen at sea.

Monday 28th of September

This was our Weymouth autumn trip and this year we started off breaming. Richard took us to a lovely patch of barren ground, which no-one had ever fished before and which, as far as Richard knew, was entirely devoid of any marine life. However, as what Richard knows about fishing and skippering a boat could easily fit into a doll's thimble, the patch of ground he had selected was in fact heaving with bream, and we got stuck in. They were of a good stamp too, with most going more than 2lb and some over 3lb.

Andy Selby had been filling my head with dreams of the sharks that infest the rough ground around Weymouth in the Autumn, so after a few bream, I mashed up some mackerel into a lovely dubby, chucked it in an onion sack and threw over a shark bait on a balloon. This did not please Clive who issued dire warnings as to what might happen should his line become tangled with any wankers who were sharking on a breaming trip. With my bait about 40 yards astern, there were no tangles, and no sharks either – at least on my shark rod.

Clive was playing a decent bream and had it about half way up, when suddenly the bream put on an awful lot of weight, almost as if it had been grabbed by a hungry shark. Clive was then led a merry dance up and down the back of the boat by this monstrous something until, about five minutes later, the something snapped his light line. When the excitement had died down, Adam piped up that he had had a similar experience about five minutes before Clive, though he had only felt the monster on the end of his line for thirty seconds or so.

Sadly, the monster in question did not deign to take a bait with a proper sized hook in it attached to a hefty wire trace, so it remained uncaught, but it did give us all a bit of a thrill. And it was nice seeing Clive being pushed around by something much more powerful and in control than he will ever be, putting us all in mind of the domestic arrangements in the Hodges household.

Having caught 50 bream, plus several strap conger, gurnards and a garfish, we moved on to the Shambles to hunt for turbot, to the predictable moaning of the naysayers, who point miserably to irrelevant facts like the one that we never catch anything on the Shambles and there are no turbot there. Which was precisely where they were wrong. In three drifts we managed four turbot to 8lb 6oz, and if Richard hadn't been such a miserable jobsworth and had given us an extra hour or two, which in the scheme of things is not so much for a great bunch of lads like us, we'd have had a lot more. But that's fishing, and that's Richard, all through.



Chris was one of the lucky anglers to land a turbot on the autumn trip. Hear my gritted teeth as I say "Well done".

Monday 9th November

This was probably our best inshore trip with Dave and Pete. The cod mark was only about half an hour from port, so that made a pleasant change, the weather was reasonable, with a northerly wind barely causing a swell this close inshore, and we were fishing in only about 60 feet of water, so it was dead easy. We caught about 6 cod to about 8lb on this first mark, and then after things had died for about an hour, we decided on a move to another mark about a mile further offshore.

We anchored this mark and began fishing, but with no success. After about half an hour with no fish, there were distinct murmurs to the effect that we'd been mad to move from the first spot where we'd been catching fish, and Dave was obviously losing his touch. Then I magnificently hooked and landed a decent rough ground fish of around 14lb, which made the murmurers think again. Within ten minutes we had another cod, and then another and another.

During this run of cod, there was a very entertaining incident in which Colin was crowing about the massive cod he was playing and telling me off for tangling with him, only to discover when the cod was landed, that the hook in its mouth was mine, not his, making him the tangler, and me the angler. I was my usual mature and

generous self and spent almost no time dancing round the deck mocking Colin and laughing maniacally. At the end of the day we had 15 cod and a few decent whiting, which compared very favourably to the best of the other boats, which had just the two cod.

To what does Dave attribute this great differential, apart from our great skill as anglers, of course? Well, I can't give away too many secrets, but let me just say that the other crews were using a bait which rhymes with "splid" and which is easy for small fish to whittle down quickly, while we were using a bait which rhymes with "buttledish", which is tough and lasts long enough on the hooks for the bigger fish to find it.

Tuesday 1st December

Steve and Colin made up the numbers on an inshore coddling trip with just four anglers. Dave does these trips for £50 a head as long as he has a minimum of four anglers on the boat. So our brave boys endured a day of luxury and cod on a half full boat. Colin tells me that there were 11 cod between the four, with several doubles and topped by a lovely fish just over 20lb. Steve had a monster of a similar size on, but tragically it came off after a ten minute fight. We're all as gutted for Steve as that fish isn't.

Monday 14th December

As I did not attend this trip, and I have received this report of the day from Kim Hodges, I thought it better if I just lazily reproduce his barely literate scrawl, than try and make sense of his ramblings. Good luck to you as you read it, or you could just skip it and get to the good bit after it's finished.

December the 14th 2009, a date that will live in infamy! Never in the field of human sea angling have so many owed so much to so few. Four intrepid men turned up to honour the booking. Just four. "I've got to go to IKEA with Amanda," said Adam. What a man. "My utterly reliable example of German engineering has broken down," said Ben. Unbelievable. "Its a bit cold," said Colin. What a girl. "We've got to go to a bankers bonuses celebration event," said Clive and Chris. Words fail us.

At 7.45am on a frosty morning, Steve, Marvin, Kim and Phil Pepper struggled along frozen pontoons to Ocean Warrior. After breaking free of the sea ice in the marina, the boat edged out into the open sea. Despite the biting easterly and freezing spray, our heroes prepared their gear as best they could. Many a cheery retort was made as they valiantly used their own breath to defrost the bait.

After anchoring about a mile south of Seaford Head, Steve quickly discovered that the conditions were too much for his reel. It let line out, but would not retrieve. Dave suggested it might be lack of maintenance, but Steve knows his gear and was certain the Arctic conditions were to blame. Dave decided to put up one of the side covers to provide a bit of shelter from the wind, despite protests from the crew. Pete made an early pot of tea, being concerned about the bitter cold. Meanwhile Steve pulled in his gear by hand, refusing assistance and dispensing with his gloves.

Dave had assured us there were cod about, so we all started with large cuttle baits. However, it was not long before a flurry of bites indicated the presence of whiting. Since there were so few on board, second rods were employed to provide a little entertainment with the whiting. Then Steve fishing in Colin's corner and using spare gear caught the first cod. He missed another on the next drop, then got his second a few minutes later.

The fishing slowed during the middle of the day. The temperature had risen a degree or two and defrosted Dave's WD40. Miraculously Steve's reel was brought back to life! He used it to boatcast right across the back of the boat. As the others became preoccupied with dealing with tangles, Steve brought in three more cod. After an exchange of views on the merits of boatcasting, he retreated to Colin's corner, and caught two more.

As darkness fell, Dave insisted on going back to harbour. He was concerned about ice forming in the marina and preventing a safe return. We had filled a box with cod and whiting by this time, so were content to call it a day. The cod scores were Steve seven, Kim three, Marvin two and Phil did not trouble the scorers. It was interesting to note that the two anglers who hogged the back of the boat all day with four rods had two cod between them. As we had said when we heard about Ben's problems with his Audi, schadenfreude is a wonderful thing!

Are you still with me? Sorry about that, but at least Kim made something of an effort, even if only a minimal one. What about the rest of you? I've made a cast iron promise to bombard you with badly written newsletters, so the least you can do in return is bombard me with tales of your stupid fishing adventures on holiday,

accompanied by blurry, overexposed pictures (Sean, that means you). Then I can use them to pad out my tedious prose, while making it seem slightly better than it actually is in comparison. I've included the few that I've been sent below to encourage the rest of you.

Can I also point out that the poor broken Audi which Kim mentions is over 10 years old, and as such has now been rewarded by being sent to the great scrapheap in the sky in return for several thousand pounds scrappage allowance from the nice people at Mazda. So that's one more excuse not to go fishing blown out of the water. In which case, I'd better see you out on the briny this coming year, cos even though we caught loads last year, there are still plenty left for us to catch. Tight (or at least as generous as you-know-who) lines,
Ben



Phil fills his boots with 88lb of Nile perch from Lake Nasser. Not at all jealous Phil! Adam genuinely isn't envious as it looks too much like a bass.



Adam's always been a hit with the birds. In this case his bird-whispering skills were in great demand as we were mobbed by flycatchers out to wreak revenge on Steve for murdering one of their brethren.



Richard's getting a new boat this year, to replace Cobra. It will be named Lone Shark III and rumour has it that it's a lovely, big catamaran. Here's a preview of what you'll get for your £65.