

# Really Wrecked SAC newsletter

Number 37, May 2010



What the...?!? It's not even December, and yet, here, large as life and 1/5000<sup>th</sup> as amusing, is a second newsletter for the year. You may be asking yourselves what you have done to deserve such a thing. Did you perhaps torture a sweet old granny to death in a past life, or perhaps you were the bloke who told Attila it would be a laugh to torch all the villages between Ulaanbaatar and Budapest? Who knows? Although in the case of Stevie, I think we all know the truth (both are true).

Whatever it was, and it must have been pretty bad, there's no getting away from it, it's here and you MUST read it. Not only does it contain a cure for the common cold, a way to turn lead into gold (which makes better weights, anyway) and the secret of eternal youth, but it also has some relatively entertaining fishing stories and some IMPORTANT club notices. In case you're wondering, "relatively" in this case means "not at all".

Actually, quite a lot has happened since the last newsletter in January. We've battled it out with the forces of darkness (The Newick Happy Hookers) for the Flatfish Cup, we've been drifting for cod and pollack and we've even had one or two cancellations, but I'm getting ahead of myself, because before all that, there was...

## The Annual Dinner

Those of you who attended the 2008 awards presentation and annual dinner (which took place in January 2009, and yes, it is confusing, but that's how we like it) at the Crown Hotel, will probably have recovered by now, but may have been put off coming to the 2009 awards presentation and annual dinner. If that was the case, bad luck, as we appear, by pure fluke, to have hit upon a venue where they not only serve you with a smile, with good food (some very good) and decent wine, but when you order the biscuits and cheese, you get a good quantity of both biscuits *and* cheese.

The scene of this major triumph of culinary and front-of-house excellence was the Dorset Arms. We've been there once before – we held our very first dinner there all those years ago, when Beef made his now legendary after dinner speech during which he lit up and attempted to smoke a cork and then droned on completely unintelligibly

for what seemed like forever. Indeed, as people turned up for this year's dinner, some said they could hear Beef just making his concluding remarks. Don't ask me why we haven't been back since then, but it's great, and we'll definitely be going there again. The room was lovely and big, with plenty of room for all of us and our precious trophies, and they really did go out of their way to make us feel welcome, which makes a nice change from the usual snarls and spitting that accompanies us on our travels elsewhere.

I may have already mentioned the food, but I want to mention it again, because the strawberry meringue and champagne roulade with raspberry coulis and vanilla cream I had for my sweet is definitely in my top 10 puddings ever, and that list includes puddings as great as Rab and Robin. And after the puddings of course, comes the prizes, and boy did we have a treat this year. Two Dogs had been on one of his drug-fuelled breaking-and-entering sprees and one of the houses he robbed contained several splendid trophies, which he duly donated to the club. He has some other story about their provenance – some kind of clearance when the dog track at Brighton was demolished, which he says explains why they all have things like "Woodbines Top Greyhound 1973" on one side of them, but whatever the truth, they are lovely cups and we are very grateful.



*A thumb unaccountably fails to obscure Nick's face in this lovely photo from the dinner. He looks truly delighted to be there.*

So instead of handing over a miserable silver carp with a broken tail and dorsal fin to the winner of Fish of the Year, we were able to hand over a Huge Cup, as tall as two Ric Newths standing on each other's shoulders. And rather than a miserable plastic fly fisherman sitting erratically on a plastic plinth for the Clubman of the Year, we handed out a Vast Cup as wide as John Ham strapped to Beef, and twice as sweet smelling. We also had a lovely new Cup especially for the Ladies. I wanted to call it the Gentleman's Condescending Patronage Trophy for Best in Show, but Adam vetoed that, and it is now the Ladies Cup.

It was a bit lucky that all these trophies turned up when they did, as someone, somewhere, has failed to return the Bass Cup after the 2008 event (in 2009). Now I can fully understand why anyone would want to keep such a magnificent trophy, with its plastic stem, thin tinny bowl coated with some unspecified brassy golden finish, all sitting on a splendid white faux-marblette base, but even so, it's not the Jules Rimet Trophy and you're not Brazil, so you can't hang on to it. Anyway, what with you not returning it and everything, we were a trophy light, and we weren't not going to give Clive something for his splendid bass of almost nine pounds which finally smashed my 7lb record from the Chris Martin era. No, something had to be done. And that was when our eyes alighted on the now-discarded carp, which had been our Fish of the Year. With its abbreviated dorsal, in dim light it almost looked bassy...

We set about our task with gusto, and with the aid of some cocktail sticks and a bit of silver gaffer tape, we fashioned an utterly realistic first spiny dorsal and repaired the tail. What a specimen! What a trophy! All that remained was to stick a couple of bits of paper on the base – one with Clive's name on it, and another saying "Bass Trophy" – and we had exactly the award Clive merited for snatching away my most prized record. His eyes didn't perhaps light up in quite the way that Adam, Amanda and my efforts deserved, and he did mutter something about "making sure we had a decent trophy for next year" but I'm sure it was all meant in jest.

So much jollity was there, and so tolerant of our endless requests for more beer were the Dorset staff, that no-one was too disappointed at the lack of a post-match venue for further frolics, what with Adam's flat being filled to overflowing with about a million boxes of Amanda's which she'd picked up cheap at a box factory closing down sale. So make sure you're available for next year's event, by which time we'll have abandoned the Dorset and have returned to some rat-infested hell hole in a human waste reprocessing factory.

## Club notices

Now, before I get on with the tall tales of aquatic derring-do, there's one or two things I need to get off my chest. Well, one thing mainly, and it concerns this year's summer extravaganza in Weymouth. The long and the short of it is that we need you to start booking your places RIGHT NOW, and to send me the money for the trip, or there'll be trouble.

Now I know last year's trip was a bit rough, with the second day in particular not for the faint-hearted i.e. the A Team and their girly antics, coming in at lunch time. But we've been going down to Weymouth for 11 years now, and this is the first truly bad bit of weather we've had for the summer trip. We've had "too rough for Sean" days before (force 3), we've had "too rough for Matt" days (force 4) and we've even had "too rough for Robin's breakfast after two pints of shandy the evening before" days (force 4-5), but this was the first properly rough day in 11 years of summer trips, so don't let it put you off. Besides, Scoop assures me that the long-range forecast is excellent, so book up now.

As an added bonus we have split the accommodation again this year, with some in the Sailors and some in the Warwick (and no, it is NOT the Victoria, we've stayed there before and it is very nice). The Warwick features luxuries such as en suite showers (in some rooms anyway) and hot and cold running champagne (I may be lying about the latter), and is only four minutes walk further away from the boats in the morning than the Sailors. We'll be taking bookings for each venue on a strictly first come, first served basis, so express your preference to Adam when you book up. There's no difference in the cost.

Talking of cost, boat and accommodation prices have gone up this year, so I've had to increase the overall amount to £230, which is still damn brilliant for three nights away, two days fishing, bait and a club T-shirt. Send me a cheque or (preferably) pay it by BACS or other electronic means. Details are as follows:

Account name: Really Wrecked Sea Angling Club

Number: 00245798

Sort code: 83-20-02

Please add your name as payment reference so I know who has paid.

Send cheques to South Mill, South Mill Road, Amesbury, Wiltshire SP4 7HR

Send your weemen to me also or I, Gonzalo Madeup-MexicanName, will have you, your families and everyone you have ever known, keeled.

Before I get too involved in my role playing, here are the remaining fishing dates for the year.

**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

There were a couple of rogue trips undertaken by the Provisional Wing of the RWSAC on Ocean Warrior, featuring splitters and rabble rousers like Colin Pearce and Mick Deacon. Details of these trips have not been forthcoming so I'm unable to tell you how appallingly unsuccessful they were, much as I'd like to. Oh what the hell, I'll tell you anyway. Nothing was caught on any of these trips, all tackle was lost as a series of freak waves broke over the boat, Colin lost an arm and his scrotum in a bizarre baiting-up accident and worst of all, Two Dogs was not swept overboard at any stage. I may have got one or two minor details of the trips slightly wrong, but they're as accurate as everything else you read in these newsletters.

If any of the participants in these unofficial, inquorate and unsanctioned events would like to fill in a few of the missing details, your accounts are guaranteed to be reproduced in full, with only minor edits for reasons of space. In fact, let me repeat my recent appeals and say that I am very keen, no, desperate, for you to send me *any* accounts of *any* fishing you may have done, so club members can see what real fishing writing looks like. Send photos too.

Right, I think that covers the club notices – on with the Fishing Trip Reports.

### **March 1<sup>st</sup> drifting for pollack**

First trip of the year in March? What the hell's going on? Wind. That's what's going on. Wind, in late winter? I didn't see that one coming. Anyway, the windiness of January and February meant that the first time we got out after those big, fat pollack was on March the first. In fact even this was a re-arranged trip because the original date was blown off.

As it was re-arranged, the tide was a little larger than the ideal, which meant that the drifts were fairly swift. Basically, if you didn't have your rig dropping down while the boat was motoring uptide, by the time you engaged your reel to start gilling, it was time to wind in. Unless you were Adam, in which case there was no possibility of winding in, as every drop down resulted in a snag. No, really, every... drop... down... resulted... in... a... snag.

Obviously this didn't put the slightest dent in Adams' naturally ebullient and cheery nature, and didn't result in a fucking huge black cloud hanging over the boat all day. In fact, Stevie did almost as well as Adam on the snagging front, with eight sets of gear lost to Adam's nine, but did you hear him complain about it all day? Well, yes, you did, actually.

With these two on such fine form, it was down to the others to catch fish quietly without drawing too much attention to themselves. Actually not everyone was catching much, Clive only managed one, which is one more than the record-snatching bastard deserved, but there you are, at least I'm not bitter. Phil Pepper, Phil Brooks, Rab and Kim all had quite a few. Kim also managed a nice cod of 121/2 lb, which was nice to see.

Although all this took place on a wreck far, far away across on the French side of the Channel, where last year we caught all those bass, this year we managed only two bass. However, we did catch plenty of pollack to 14lb, which more than made up for it, if you could avoid all that low-lying thick black cloud.



*Colin with a fine fat pollack from the bass wreck. There's a prize for anyone who can spot what is wrong with this picture.*

### **April 19<sup>th</sup> The Flatfish Cup**

Ah, the Flatfish Cup – the annual contest between the Happy Hookers and the Really Wrecked Sea Angling Club. The Clash of the Titans, that's what

they should have called it. It would have been the Clash of the Tight 'Uns, but neither Stevie nor Les could make it. In Les' absence, Mick Beach took the reins of power and led his team of Happy Hookers. He was particularly assiduous in leading them in the pre-match warm-up, specifically the part that involved drinking beer. This had the happy result of making him more argumentative, while making him less able to argue.

Of course, no-one took advantage of that, and to suggest that we spent hours convincing him that because rays are flat, they count as flatfish would be a scurrilous lie. As would the extension where anything flat counts towards the total, including flat shoes, the Flat Earth Society and a block of flats, as long as they were fairly landed on rod and line.

Mick obviously found this high quality banter thoroughly entertaining, and we obliged him by continuing with it for hours on end. Les no doubt would have found it equally hilarious but he was too busy off salmon fishing with his la-di-dah friends in Scotland to bother to come out with his real mates. It's the same sad old story, they get a bit of fame, they get a bit of cash, and suddenly their old pals aren't good enough any more. You may claim you're still Jenny from the block, Les, but we know the truth, we know.

Anyway, it occurs to me that some of you might not know what the Flatfish Cup is, though the clue is in the name, so perhaps a little history is in order. Way back in the mists of time, the Happy Hookers and The Really Wrecked SAC happened to be fishing for plaice on the same day in Weymouth. We decided to have a little competition, with the biggest fish winning it for the team that caught it. Despite catching 33 plaice to their 18, the RWSAC was beaten by a disputed couple of ounces in a weigh-off.

To celebrate their victory, the Happy Hookers sold some of their shares in Rio Tinto and De Beers and with the proceeds bought a magnificent gold and jewel encrusted Cup, the like of which had never been seen in our poor club, at least until Mick's burglary spree. The two clubs' plaice trips failed to coincide for a couple of years but then two years ago, we had the rematch and Stevie won the Cup for the Forces of Light (us) with a huge plaice of over 4lb.

Stevie was then the custodian of the Cup until this year's match (last year's match was blown off), and the now cheap and tawdry trophy (whatever happened to all that gold and those jewels?) was up for grabs again. That gets us up to the morning of our match...

We (that is the Really Wrecked lot) had decided that the fairest and most enjoyable way to run the match was with a "total length" rule. You measure any flatfish caught, tot up the lengths,

and whichever team is longer, wins! It means that every fish helps your team, but you don't have to kill and weigh your fish, so small ones can be returned. And if you catch a really big fish it would go a long way towards winning the event.

Mick hated the idea, but went along with it grumpily. So he and his full crew of eight sped off at 7.30am at 18 knots to the plaice grounds, while we five (did I mention that you all let us down and we only had a flimsy skeleton crew?), chugged off at 8am at top Bonwey speed of around about a knot and a half. When we eventually joined Flamer on the Shambles, the Hookers had been fishing for about an hour.

Undaunted (mainly because we knew they hadn't caught anything), we set to fishing for turbot with mackerel strip. First drift, my rod tip was going crazy, but as anyone who has fished on the Shambles knows "If you think you've got a bite, you haven't." So I left it. And I continued to leave it until everyone had suggested at least twice that I must surely have a bite, so I bowed to pressure and reluctantly wound down to my lead, to discover that I did, in fact, have a fish.

Seeing how I was fishing on the famous turbot grounds of the Shambles Bank, with a famous turbot bait of mackerel strip, it seemed reasonable to assume that I had caught a small, but delicious, turbot. So of course it turned out to be a plaice. Still it was 45cm in the bank, and we were ahead.



*My splendid turbot, er, plaice.*

Nothing else came from the Shambles, so we moved to the mussel beds, where Kim was soon into a larger plaice, giving us a 99cm aggregate, and an even bigger lead. Then Chris added a further 49cm and we seemed to be doing quite well. But over the radio came the worrying news that the other crew also had three fish – and two were turbot! Then it emerged that the turbot were only little, but still it seemed we were neck and neck.





*Chris' plaice, taken on the mussel beds, put us in the driving seat...*

Kim struck again, with another fish of over 50cm, making us feel pretty good about our prospects, until the radio crackled into life, telling us that the Happy Hookers also had four fish. For those of you interested in technical details, I can reveal that the secret of Kim's success may have been down to the fact that he alone was using a spreader rig. This is like a large extendible coat hanger allowing you to attach two hooklengths to either end so they are kept apart and parallel, hence "spreader". Noting this, both Andy Selby and I put on spreader rigs, to no avail however, so it may not have had anything to do with it.

With nothing more coming from the mussel beds, we moved back on to the Shambles for a last attempt at a monster turbot to seal the victory. Adding up the lengths we were hearing over the radio, it seemed likely that the Happy Hookers had around 160cm of fish to our 201cm. It was a good lead, but one fish could swing it.

We fished, and chewed our nails. And fished, and chewed our nails, but nothing was forthcoming. The radio was silent too, which we took to be a good sign. Then Chris Cairns' boat, out for a couple of hours on the Bank with some novice anglers, dropped into the drift ahead of us. As we watched, one rod, and then another, bent double under the weight of what were clearly decent fish. We watched in horror as the net came out and two turbot, one of 16lb and one of 15lb were plucked from the water. Those were OUR fish. Specifically, they were MY fish. My yummy turbot going to some undeserving neophyte with no idea of the quality of the fish they had caught.

We didn't catch the fish that would have sealed it for us, but luckily neither did the Happy Hookers. So the trophy was ours for another year. It was just a shame that by the time Bonwey

finally arrived back at port (around midnight), the Happy Hookers had all scarpered, rather than wait around a few extra minutes to congratulate us, and hear our manly stories of the sea. It was a great pity, as we only wanted to share details of our amazing catches with them and certainly didn't want to gloat and crow endlessly. No sir.



*Kim's brace keeps the trophy in the right hands for another year. Well done us! Bad luck Hookers.*

So we can hang on to the trophy for another year, and the fact that Stevie has stripped it of its precious gems and metals and melted down the rest for scrap can remain a secret for a little while longer. Hurrah for us. And that also concludes the tales of the sea for this episode of your newsletter, so you can wake up now. Wake up and send me the money to secure one of the last few places on the summer Weymouth trip. Come on, you owe it to yourself...

Light tines,  
Ben



*Clive with a beautiful spring bass of 11lb 4oz, which is the second largest the Hodges brothers have managed from their boat this year. Strangely, Clive couldn't find any pictures of Kim's 12lb 2oz fish to send me...*



**Spot the Angler Competition:**  
*Cunningly concealed in this photo is a well known club member posing with a fish. Circle the place where you think their head might be. Nearest circle wins a night with the angler. He or she is wearing one of those amazing new camouflage outfits, so I'll give you a chance by saying the angler is fairly central in the photo. Keep looking!*