

# Really Wrecked SAC newsletter

Number 43, December 2013



I have just spent an extremely unprofitable 10 minutes reading through the last newsletter. Unprofitable not because it's a total waste of time of time, though of course it is. No, it was unprofitable because it was *just so good*. I realised at once that there is no way I can make this one even *half* as entertaining and informative, so I became discouraged and stopped. That was in June. I think the best thing all of you could do is to discard this newsletter and go and re-read the previous one. For those of you who have thrown away the previous one for some unaccountable reason, I suppose I might as well carry on writing this one, but it's going to be rubbish. Don't say I didn't warn you.

In keeping with the multiple personality disorder of the author, his fishing friends and the club in general, this newsletter completely repudiates the swears and foul-mouthed stance of its predecessor. Your mother will be able read this without blushing, and so will your children, assuming your children can read of course. Education services in Sussex are notoriously poor. I will be borrowing one thing from the previous newsletter though, and that's the picture below. It proved so popular with the ladies (and certain gentlemen) of the club that, due to popular demand, it's back, and twice as handsome.



*The Really Wrecked SAC's Mr. December*

Now, if you have recovered your composure sufficiently after that lovely surprise, I'll get started. Contained within this PDF is a delicious smorgasbord of trip reports, dates for next year, information about the annual dinner, along with tips and hints on how to ensure clubmates don't catch more fish than you (it's easy – just don't go fishing) and much, much more. So if you only do one thing this December, read this newsletter. For most of you, that will take the rest of December, so we'd better get cracking with the trip reports.

## **Newhaven 25th April**

This trip was rearranged after previous blow-offs had left our members champing at the bit, foaming at the mouth, and several other oral metaphors. In fact, this was the trip where the scales fell from everyone's eyes at long last and they realised what a total git I am. (For those of you coming at this fresh from re-reading the previous newsletter after my earlier recommendation, it may help you to swap "git" for something a little more Anglo-Saxon. It doesn't do to go cold turkey after such a massive dose of foul-mouthed obscenity as the one you have just received).

My true character was not revealed during the trip, alas, as I was unable to go due to a financial embarrassment involving an East End bookie and some ladies of dubious virtue. No, in this case, the scales in question fell from the eyes even before the trip started, when I fell foul of the club rule that clearly states that the trip organiser shall do the ring round even when not actually going on the trip unless he presents a chit from his mum at least seven (7) days in advance.

Actually, if I'm honest with myself and with you for a change, I think I'd have to admit that it probably was a bit inconvenient for everyone that I forgot all about it. I was very sorry when I realised some time later. I still am sorry all these months later and I do expect quite a lot of sledging at the annual dinner when I fail to produce a huge new trophy called the "Ben Eveling Award for Ben Eveling being a Total Twerking Wally" (I'm regretting my clean language approach already) which I then award with great ceremony to myself before committing ritual Seppuku to the delight of the assembled

company. Luckily we're a forgiving lot and only the last part of this will be necessary.

Anyway, being nothing if not resourceful we got past this almost insuperable obstacle and the trip went ahead on a very cold Friday. April was doing its best to make up for a warm March by pretending to be January, if you remember. The crew's numbers were bolstered by a work colleague of Smed's, a Russian engineer, who spent one day at sea with Smed's so-called friends and then quit his job and fled back to the welcoming arms of the Russian Secret Police who, it turns out, are very interested in a certain top secret weighing machine being developed for Really Wrecked use aboard floating vessels.

With water temperatures low, we were still drifting the wrecks, with no thought of getting the anchor down to look for some eels. The day started slowly, but on the second wreck things started to pick up with several middling cod and a few pollack being taken.

Strangely, although none of the fish were particularly sizable, Vladimir kept demanding that the fish be weighed on Smed's special device – just in case they were club records. Meanwhile Vlad himself spent most of his time fiddling with his tackle box, making sure the round, almost lens-like clasp was pointing directly at the weighing machine, while muttering something in Russian into a tulip in his buttonhole. Smed assured everyone that this was normal behaviour and that Vlad was like this all the time at work.

The next wreck produced some fish of a slightly larger stamp, including the biggest of the day at around 14lb to Brooksie. In the end it was a fair day with everyone catching a few fish of a reasonable size, with something to take home for the freezer, but without setting any amazing new records for anything except the number of bottles of vodka drunk during a single trip.

### **Newhaven 20th May**

The last of our spring trips to drift the wrecks for cod and pollack was reasonable without being exceptional. The main cause of its being only reasonable was that Rab attended, but at least our brave crew didn't have to put up with me at the same time.

It was one of those days when Dave tried several wrecks but, while most of them produced a few fish, there were none of those moments when you bend into a fish, and look round to see everyone else doing exactly the same. The catch was mostly cod, as you'd expect in late May, with nothing over 12lb. Kim did very well, catching quite a few fish throughout the day, and everyone else had two or three fish, apart from Colin, who seemed to give up and retreat to the cabin for at least some of the day. As you know, these

newsletters are generally highly sympathetic to Colin, but as he's had a couple of really excellent years in terms of catches, we say, "Ha ha ha. Serves you right." In a very sympathetic way, of course.

### **Newhaven 15th July**

This was a "standard" summer wrecking trip with Dave on *Ocean Warrior*. Or at least it would have been had the portents not been so strange and forbidding. The skies were dark and full of weird lights; birds flew backwards; there was a brief shower of frogs, followed by a newt rainbow, which is quite rare, even in Newhaven. The reason for these signs of doom and foreboding were that for the first time in recorded history, Adam was not attending a Newhaven fishing trip.

Adam's "excuse" was that some jumped up paltroon calling him or herself the Mayor of Lewes, or something equally preposterous, was attending Berkeley House, not to oversee the opening of a UK branch of the US swivel manufacturer, or anything else worthwhile, but instead to preside over some Grand Opening Ceremony where the great and the good of Lewes came to watch the filming of the first episode of the remake of *Fawlty Towers*. (For those of you who don't already know, Adam and Amanda have opened a lovely new B&B in Albion Street in Lewes – with excellent rates for club members who are experiencing temporary marital difficulties.)

It was not entirely certain whether the god of fishing would stand for such nonsense. Adam failing to attend a Newhaven trip is the fishing equivalent of Beef exceeding the speed of light, or Steve volunteering to tip extra. The breakfast café was alive with muttered rumours of giant eight-headed cod leaping over *Sea Leopard* while wreathed in fire and speaking in tongues. Mind you, these sorts of things are always happening to Frank, especially on his summer *Scylla* and *Charybdis* fishing trips.

Despite all this, we somehow managed to get out, leaving at 7am on a fairly calm morning for our first eeling session of the year. We stopped about 25 miles off and got the hook down straight away to catch the tide, and fell to it.

Things started quite slowly, but once our scent trail had been down for 20 minutes or so, the eels emerged from the wreck and started sniffing around our baits. Our scent trail is notorious throughout East Sussex, and is generally thought to discourage interest, especially from the ladies. Perhaps these were boy eels.

Steve was first in, unusually, huffing and puffing over a 25 pounder like he was breaking the club record. By the time he'd landed it, four or

five other eels had already been released at the side of the boat. Biggest of these was a fish estimated at 40lb to Phil Brooks. This turned out to be the biggest of the day, as once the tide slackened and the slight wind pushed us away from the wreck, the bites dried up.

Over slack water we decided to have a drift or two, and this turned up a surprise – we actually caught some fish. Not only that, we continued to catch once the tide picked up right through until it was time to set off home again. In the end, we had eight eels to 40lb and 25 cod and pollack to low double figures. Everyone caught something worthwhile and all in all it was a pretty decent day, despite Adams' absence, or perhaps because of it.

### **Weymouth Summer Tripe**

We had low expectations of the trip this year. Richard had abandoned us and set us up with some no-hoper mate of his called Clem Carter on board the aptly named *Wild Frontier*. I say "aptly named", but really, there were nothing wild about it, and there was no sign whatsoever of Clem having a front ear.

On top of that disaster, we were forced through unfavourable circumstance to book into a new B&B. (The unfavourable circumstance in question being that the Sailor's was fully booked when I phoned, and so was everywhere else. I tell you, it gets busier and busier and more and more booked up each year. I'm going to have to phone now in December to book accommodation for next year.) This made Adam VERY CROSS. He doesn't like change. Then again, he doesn't like it when things stay the same either. He just doesn't like things in general, and fair enough I say, things are generally rubbish.

So instead of the luxury of the Sailor's Return, with its two bathrooms with dribbling showers between 12 of us, and its new, improved "no lock-ins for residents" policy, we were forced into the squalor of the Marden Guest House with its ensuite horridness for each room and no "Black Hole of Calcutta" Room 5. On top of that, Jan, our new hostess, insisted on making us packed lunches to order and the breakfasts were great too. All in all it was a massive improvement. Adam hated it.

Kim was also worried about the arrangements. In the end, the only way to reassure him that everything was under control was to produce a minute-by-minute spreadsheet of activities and who would be doing what at any moment, and even then he spent the entire trip teetering on the verge of a panic attack. I think what set him off was on the second evening, Steve went for seconds at the Gurkha before Scoop, which was not the order stated in the spreadsheet. He coped

much better though once we gave him some of Phil Brook's rohypnol.

Another innovation this year was Jari's booking of a place on the trip. Nothing new there, you might think, he generally does that. You'd be right, but this year HE ACTUALLY MADE IT. Admittedly it was by the skin of his teeth, and he had to drive across France in a huge thunderstorm at 120mph on his Ducati in order not to miss his ferry, but still, he made it. Somehow his usual luck deserted him and he wasn't called to a vital last minute meeting on Mars, or stabbed or shot *en route* and he totally failed to break either of his legs, so well done to him.

In fact our arrival was an element of the planning where Kim's fears were realised. Without the Sailor's to meet in, we all ended up in different pubs. You'd think that Steve, Jari and Smed would have had the worst of it in the Wetherspoons, but no, Adam and Scoop managed to pick a far more interesting location. They supped their ale in the Rock, a friendly establishment where the greeting when you ask for a pint at about 10pm is "It's last orders soon" and then when you've paid, the "thank you" sounds like "You'll have to drink up now." On the other hand, it was Adam and Scoop, and, were I a publican, those would probably be my words to them, along with "You're barred."

So day one with Clem started with us bass fishing, much to Adam's delight. Adam, as you may recall, hates bass, and thinks they're a complete waste of space in the sea. This encouraged the rest of us to embrace bassing with great gusto and to demand more of it, despite the fishing only being so-so. We had a few, with Kim landing three, including the largest at 5lb, which he hardly even deigned to notice, so used is he to hauling in double figure fish on his trips out with brother Clive. Jari also had one, as did Smed and Steve.

Next up was plaice fishing, where the bites, while not exactly coming thick and fast, were more plentiful than they have been on some plaice trips we've been on. Kim was again top rod, with a number of fish falling for his spoon-based rig. It was a pretty big tide, and you have to wonder whether a spoon on a big tide helps nail the bait to the bottom. Kim's excellent tally of plaice was topped by a simply enormous specimen of 7lb 10oz. What a mighty fish it really was. It was clearly very old and had carelessly lost half its tail at some stage, but it was fat and in very good condition otherwise, much like its captor.

Jari also had a plaice, Steve had a couple and Scoop came late to the party with three in three drops. Adam managed to fluke a bream on his plaice rig, and Andy Selby did brilliantly to hook

and land a lovely fat pouting all by himself. You may wonder at my bothering to mention the pouting, but in addition to it being worth it just to namecheck Andy with his best fish of the year, it is also worth mentioning in order to compare the efforts of these mighty anglers with those of Phil Pepper and myself, neither of whom had managed so much as a single bite.

We weren't upset or angry though, as there was still plenty of time to make up for it. And our new skipper didn't make it worse in any way by constantly referring to our lack of fish at every opportunity both on the boat and over the radio. In fact, despite our low expectations of Clem, he turned out to be pretty much a carbon copy of Richard, in every unpleasant, snide and nasty detail. He was also quite good at putting some of us on fish. He was aided by some random schoolboy called Luke that he'd abducted from the Weymouth streets. If anyone from Operation Yewtree has picked up on this from a keyword search algorithm at GCHQ, then if you get in touch, we have footage of Clem's sweat shop, where the poor lad was forced to tie up plaice rig after plaice rig until his fingers bled. Mind you, they were rubbish rigs. They snagged up on the bottom constantly and I never caught a thing on any of them. He deserves everything he gets.

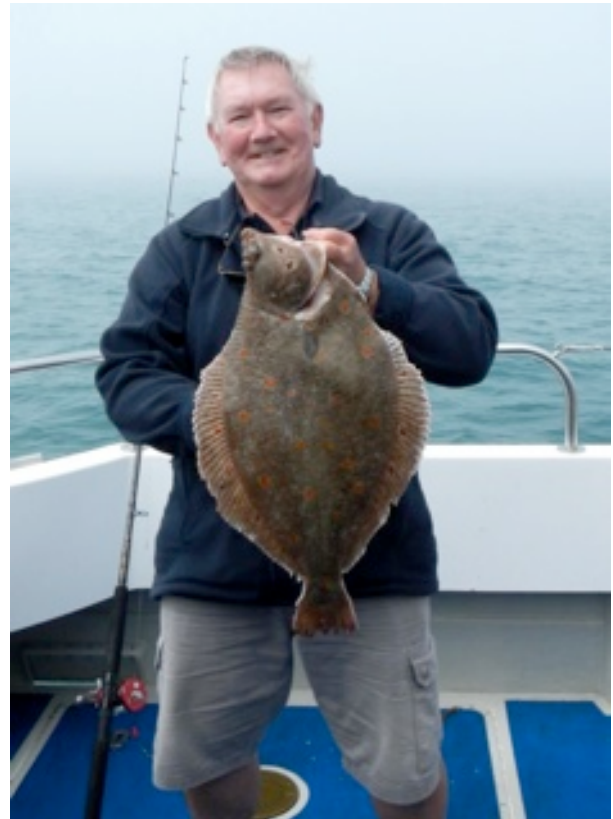
Next treat in store for us was to go trawling on the Shambles for sandeels, which was most entertaining. When the trawl came up, it was stuffed with the little wrigglers, plus a lovely bonus brill. Andy S was disappointed there were no weevers for him to play with, as he's very good with them and has perfected the art of juggling with up to seven without stabbing himself with their venomous spines hardly at all.

Before we went to end the day on the Churchhill Reef, where bass were being taken in numbers, Clem took us to drift some small banks for bass and flatfish. This wasn't hugely productive, with only a couple of small schoolies to show to our efforts. Neither of them went to Phil or I obviously.

We left the banks and once on the Churchill reef, Clem advised us the use the sandeels with a greenish tinge, as the bass seemed to prefer them to the blacker ones, so we made sure we carefully selected our baits before dropping down. Clem's other advice was to make sure we dropped *straight down* when he told us to. "If you don't get it down straight away, don't bother," he said. As it turned out, what he actually meant was, "If you *do* get it down straight away, you'll lose all your gear on a razor sharp ledge."

In this second unspoken piece of advice, Clem proved entirely accurate, as everyone, and especially Steve, lost rig after rig to the tackle hungry snags. Actually, not quite everyone lost

gear, as I didn't lose a single set, but then again, I didn't catch any fish either, so my gear was clearly nowhere near the bottom. In the end, after another couple of small bass, we decided it was all a bit too difficult for us and we retired to the pub to lick our wounds.



*Now that's a plaice, all 7lb 10oz of her. Or him.*

So at the end of day one, Kim had had a magnificent day with bass and plaice aplenty, including the best bass and a new club record plaice. Scoop, Smed, Steve and Jari had done quite well with a few fish each, Adam had had a fluky bream, Andy had his pouting and Phil and I had to put up with a load of grief from everyone, which made the day even more worthwhile.

The phrases I became slightly tired of hearing was "I'm glad I'm not on a pair," and "I don't think anyone's ever had a pair before." For those of you unfamiliar with cricket, a pair is when, in a game of four innings, you are out for a duck both times. Applied to Weymouth, this meant blanking on both days of the two day trip.

This was hardly mentioned at all during our trip to the Gurkha and was barely heard afterwards in the Boot, where the beer, as always, was lovely. At 11pm most of us, being old gits, headed off to bed, but those young scamps Steve and Jari stayed up well past their bed time, drinking red

wine and spirits and counting the fish they'd caught.

Day two dawned and Steve wasn't feeling too bright for some reason, but Jari is Finnish and his iron constitution thrives on adversity (and Sambuca), and he was raring to go. Andy S decided that having finally landed the pouting of his dreams, he never needed to fish (with us) again, and he retired hurt on 1 not out. There was much discussion in advance of the day as to what constitutes a blank. Do pouting count? What about mackerel? I'm sure this discussion had everything to do with a keen interest in debating angling topics, and nothing whatsoever to do with wanting to make Phil and I feel miserable.

Whatever the motives behind the discussion, the result is that we now have an official definition of a blank. It's when you don't catch anything. This is of course, blindingly obvious, but then the lawyers got involved. Clearly bait gathering, such as feathering for mackerel or sandeels is not actually fishing, per se, and so any fish gathered in such a manner, or with a net etc. does not count. However, a fish taken by mistake, such as a pouting caught while plaice fishing, or a mackerel taken when drifting for turbot, is perfectly acceptable. By this OFFICIAL definition, Phil and I were on a pair, and Andy was not.

Andy's stunt double for the day was Tom Fowler, on one of his increasingly rare "I'd forgotten how much I hate sea fishing (with you)," sea fishing trips. It was good to see him though, especially since, sooner or later, a second small Fowler is bound to be produced and he'll NEVER GO FISHING AGAIN.

As on day one, we started off bassing, though this time with live sandeels instead of shads. This proved IMMENSELY disappointing as first drop down Phil Pepper hooked and landed a bass, followed on the next couple of drifts by two more. So Phil was off his pair in style. Not so, me. A couple more bass were taken, and then we had a brief shot at the plaice again, which also failed to lift my gloom, which was thickening by the minute. Funnily enough, the Stygian darkness hanging around me did little, if anything, to dissipate the mood of jollity and larking about on the boat. *It was almost as though my unhappiness made everyone else happy.* Perish the thought.

Next we anchored the Stensness Ledges where you might catch anything on a good day. On this day, small baits produced pouting and big baits produced nothing but rattling bites from pouting. I opted for a big bait and blanking, for the sake of consistency. Then the odd bream started to come. Phil Pepper blasted his way into contention for rod of the day with a fish of over 4lb, which is a lovely bream in anyone's book.

Steve then had a 10lb strap on heavy gear. Still I had nothing. More bream came, still I stuck to my big hook/no fish strategy. Eventually I decided to tie a small size 2 Aberdeen to the bend of my big hook/big bait/no fish rig. This was to catch me a pouting which would then act as a livebait for conger/tope/whatever, if my main bait was robbed by small fish. Who was I kidding? Obviously this was to catch me a pouting so I could avoid the pair. This might well have provoked endless debate about whether a pouting caught in such a way counted as a fish, fished for fairly and caught, or whether it was bait, gathered in an unusual way. Luckily, it didn't work, so the endless debate did not materialise.

Then, miraculously, I had a bite, which turned into a decent bend on my rod. Whatever had taken my bait was pulling back. It might be a ray, or a tope, or a huss, or an eel, but all of these are fish, and fish count. However, what does not count is when the line goes slack and what comes up is your untouched big bait with a straightened fine wire size 2 Aberdeen tied on to the bend. Yes, my brilliant plan had not backfired at all, but had put me in line for so many of our prestigious awards, it almost defies rational thought.

As the tide slackened and changed direction, most others went back to catching pout, but not Clem, who tied on a simple single hook paternoster and carried on catching bream. In the end, I could bear it no longer, and like my fine wire Aberdeen, I bent under the strain and tied up a single hook paternoster myself and starting breaming. Within two minutes I had a half-decent bream. I was delighted, but strangely, the mood of the rest of the boat darkened for some reason; coincidence, I expect. I followed this up with bream after bream, proving that I was the man when it came to bream, but although I became all sweetness and light, somehow the joy had gone out of the trip for everyone else.

Eventually we decided to have an hour on the Kidney Bank, so we upped anchor and set off. Sadly this meant leaving the patch of summer sunshine that we'd been enjoying all afternoon and heading into a filthy squall, but we're nothing if not rugged, so we donned our wet weather gear and set up for blondes. I say "we" but actually there were a number of rather wet individuals who decided to stay dry in the cabin instead of fishing like men. I shall name no names but if I tell you that people like Steve, Adam and Scoop were not wearing any kind of waterproof gear, you may not have formed an incorrect impression of who the real men in the club actually are. And aren't.

Clem's plan was to anchor at the foot of a large bank before the tide got going, so we'd kind of wobble around at the foot of it for a while. Then, as the powerful tide picked up, we'd be pulled into



position some way up the side of the bank, allowing us to fish our baits on the up-slope. This clever ruse helped us hold bottom in a much stronger tide than we'd have otherwise been able to cope with, so well done that skipper.

Kim was first in, again, with a ray of 14lb, followed by Phil and Jari, before he had another, and Tom also had one. I didn't catch one, but I was still as happy as Larry, both to be proving my manly credentials and to have avoided the pair.

Back at the Marden, Jan greeted us bedraggled anglers with beer, which was very nice indeed. Then we dried off, and went for our traditional fin-de-trip curry at the Balti House. We were joined by Andy, Charlie and Penny, an old friend of many of the Lewes contingent. Steve, as usual, was as smooth as silk with the ladies and won much praise for his courteous and gallant behaviour. Charlie was actually suffering a bit, and not just from Steve's gallantry. She'd been savaged by a dog (no, this isn't a standard newsletter comedy lie) and was still on crutches. I'm sure it's much too late now that this newsletter is going out in 2017 (nor is this), but even so, we all wish you a swift recovery.

Afterwards, there was a brief debate as to where we might finish our revels. Steve was all for repairing to the Boot, but Scoop had spotted a lovely pub just round the corner from the Balti House, called the Albion, and in a fit of patriotism, we decided to go there.

Adam and I paused outside for a brief chat and to enjoy the night airs, but were soon joined from inside the pub by Jari, who looked alarmed and whispered something about *The Slaughtered Lamb*. Now Adam must have seen *An American Werewolf in London* more than 200 times, but the only thing he can recall from it is Jenny Agutter's chest, so we went in anyway.



*Adam was very concerned about whether we'd picked the right pub for the evening.*

I don't know what Jari was worried about. It was a charming establishment. It reminded me of being at the house of someone you don't know, late in

the evening, waiting for a cab that won't come, at the point when the host has turned off the lights and is brushing his teeth. It was atmospheric in a "We don't know you and we want you to leave" kind of a way, and the lads at the pool table were clearly just whiling away a couple of hours having spent their Giro in Ladbrokes before they could go off and see whether they could locate any more of Andy's reels.

After a lovely clear pint of refreshing ale, it was sadly time to leave. At this point we were accosted by Captain Ahab, sitting in a darkened corner of the room, nursing his pipe and muttering darkly. He then spent 15 minutes berating us and telling us we knew "nothin' of the ways of the mighty porbeagle," and that "she's a mysterious beast, the shark," and that "I saw the white 'beagle once... it were she that took me arm." This last bit was clearly false, as he had two arms that I could see, but he had us bang to rights on the knowing nothing bit, so we hung on his every word, and he certainly gave us a lot of useful advice. It turns out we're doing it all wrong, but that pretty much goes without saying.

When we did eventually get away, he followed us out, still giving us tips and hints on sharking. I was hopeful he'd follow us home to give us the traditional Weymouth stabbing, but despite Jari being with us, no-one at all was stabbed or even mugged. That, apart from an entertaining interlude when we got back to the B&B and four of us drunken idiots decided it would be a good idea to push Jari's gleaming bike backwards through a narrow gate to make his getaway easier first thing in the morning, was that. As usual, it was great fun, with some good fishing. It was just a shame I let everyone down so badly by catching a few fish in the end. I'll do better next year, I promise.

### **Newhaven 3<sup>rd</sup> of September**

This was down as a wrecking trip, but Dave had tried wrecking and it had been rubbish so on the trip prior to this one, he'd taken a crew to have a drift or two on some offshore banks. They'd had some flatties, so he somehow persuaded our eel-mad cretins to give that a go instead of bagging up on conger, cod and pollack.

The day started well, with some idiot tailgating Phil Brooks all the way down through Newhaven into the marina car park, or it may have been the other way round, but one of them was definitely an idiot and one of them was definitely stuck right behind the other who was driving too slowly. Phil was fuming and determined to give the driver a piece of his mind. Then it turned out that the driver was fishing on Ocean Warrior too, so Phil thought discretion was the better part of valour and became as nice as pie.

After this, things got worse. About 20 miles offshore, Dave stopped the engine and instructed everyone to start drifting for flatfish. Colin was distraught. He'd wanted eels and he felt cheated by this turn of events. He continued to feel this way right up until the moment he landed his third turbot on the first drift.

It soon became clear that this was fishing which called for a certain level of expertise. Colin and Jonathan showed the way with five fish in the first drift, and new boy Adrian Colliver caught fish for fun throughout the day. The technique employed was a complex one. They'd bait up casually, drop the bait in the water, leave it a bit and then turn away to abuse one of the other poor anglers. After a few minutes of taking not the slightest bit of notice of what was happening on the bottom of the sea, they'd turn back to their rod and wind in another double figure turbot.



*I assume this is a picture of raw recruit Adrian with one of his many brill and turbot, but as I wasn't on the trip, I don't actually know. Very pleased for the lad, obviously.*

Adam, on the other hand, was trying a different tactic. He was poised over his rod with a focus rarely seen since he stopped taking acid. Every ridge on the bottom, every slight tug or slackening of the line was felt and analysed by his giant

fishing brain as he strove with all his might to get the most out of what was clearly an excellent opportunity to catch a good number of large flatfish. And catch he did, gurnard after dogfish after mackerel after dogfish. Obviously this did nothing to dent the cheery demeanour of our hero as he watched Jonathan yawn, pick up his rod without even looking and crank in yet another boring 6lb brill.

Another fellow not doing quite so well was Colin, after his strong start. He had taken on the role usually reserved for Kim; that of the slapstick clown. Unlike Kim, who prefers to work without props, rumbling about on the deck like a Weeble, Colin has always had a preference for a more technical act with more moving parts. On this day he worked out a superb routine with his wheeled trolley, which he carefully placed on the engine box before sitting on it. This arrangement would then remain perfectly static until Colin reached over to grab something, or a slight swell caused the boat to rock minutely, at which point the "wheeled" aspect of the trolley would come into play, sending the trolley and Colin sliding on to the deck, with hilarious consequences. This was such a popular item that Colin willingly repeated it on a further two occasions to huge applause.

Not content with this theatrical triumph, Colin also produced a subtle variation of the classic "lost glasses" routine. On several occasions throughout the day he was seen to remove his glasses. I'm not saying that he's vain, although he does wear more foundation than is strictly necessary for a day's fishing. Anyway, he would remove his glasses, forget where he'd put them and then find them again, generally by sitting on them or, by way of a change, by letting someone else sit on them. This delightful comic cameo came to its brilliant and magical conclusion when, unable to locate the missing glasses, he had the whole boat hunting for them. They were only finally located when Steve, for reasons we can only guess at, stared good and hard at Colin's arse to discover the glasses actually somehow stuck to his rear end. A good magician never reveals his tricks, so we'll never know how Colin worked this one, but his stock in the club has never been higher.

Now, it may look as though I'm being a bit beastly to poor Colin, perhaps out of petty jealousy over his excellent catches during the past couple of years, but nothing could be further from the truth. I assure you that my desire is only to report the events as they happened, and to shine the bright light of truth into the murkier corners of the club. If, while I am doing that, certain smug swine get their well-deserved comeuppance, then that is merely a happy coincidence.

Anyway, on a slow day, this hilarity would have been a welcome distraction from the relentless misery of catching nothing and listening to the various miserable whingers of the club (pretty much everyone) going on and on about it. On this day though, there was no need for such distraction. Even Les and Steve were catching so many fish they could find nothing to complain about, not even when they found themselves fishing next to each other! Even Adam was now catching, that was how easy it had become.

Phil "The Power" Brooks then hooked into something pretty special. You could see that if this was a chunk of aluminium with a bit of rope attached to one corner, then it was a big chunk of aluminium and a long piece of rope. He battled the object, which was clearly heavy, all the way to the surface, where, glory be, it wasn't a piece of aluminium with some rope attached, it was the club's first 20lb turbot. How brilliant is that? At 21lb 4oz it smashed our existing record and catapults us into respectability when it comes to flatfish records, although not as far as Les is concerned of course.



*Yet another record, and yet another magnificent fish.*

The bites kept coming and the final tally was 68 flatfish, with a few gurnards and other odds and sods thrown in for good measure. Top rod was Adrian, who has just seen his club fees rise

to £500 per annum, with an additional booking fee of £100 per trip. I was not there, and I think I speak for all club members who missed out, when I say how utterly delighted I am for the lucky few who were present and enjoyed the day.

### **Newhaven 7<sup>th</sup> of October**

A month later, and another possible conger trip was cancelled and then the replacement date converted into a flatfish trip by a combination of little conger action and a big tide unsuitable for eels. Over the same banks as on the previous trip, the drifts were fast; initially around 2.5 knots, but even so, everyone caught the odd flatfish. Although nothing like as prolific as the previous month, enough fish were taken to keep everyone interested until the tide began to drop away, raising hopes that the fish would really come on the feed.

Tench expert and all round fishing guru, Robin "Eels" Eyles, did particularly well with the turbot and brill, landing several with apparent ease. His partner in crime and Really Wrecked's own Mr December, Rab Cook wasn't, unfortunately, quite able to keep pace with his more skilled pal. So when he landed his first turbot, a tiny, pathetic, dab-sized creature, barely bigger than a toddlers hand, instead of throwing it back and trusting to his skill to land another, he put the poor wee thing in a bucket of water saying, "I'll put it back if I catch a better one." True to his word, he kept trying and did eventually catch another; this one, if anything, even smaller than the first. Rather than discriminate against one of the turbot, Rab took the bold and unusual step of killing both telling the aghast onlookers you should "never begrudge a man a fish." True enough, but these were technically fry and although he claimed they were sizable, no photographic evidence exists to prove it either way.

Robin did take some time off from catching fish to indulge in his other hobby, knitting, combining a huge overrun with several other fellow angler's rigs to produce a beautiful woolly pullover made entirely of his expensive braid. That takes dedication and real skill, and Robin supplied both in spades, in his usual inimitable style.

Eventually the tide dropped away almost to nothing, but instead of the flatfish coming on the feed more strongly, Robin hooked into something different, and quite a bit stronger. After a few minutes tussling with it, an 11lb blonde ray appeared at the side of the boat. This amusing diversion surprised everyone, since, as we all know, blondes feed when the tide is flowing hard, so this was obviously but a sideshow to the main event.

Then Adam, fishing with a fixed spool reel and a heavy spinning rod, hooked and landed another



blonde, this one over 16lb. We all know how Adam can fanny around with his fish even when fishing with 130lb class tuna gear, so I'm sure you can imagine what kind of a performance he put up with this light gear. Not to be outdone, Marvin landed a twenty pounder in roughly one fifth of the time Adam had taken with his smaller fish.

Then came the main event, and step forward that man, Adam Frost, and his amazing light gear to provide the excitement again. This time he bent into something properly big, something which turned and dived back to the bottom on no less than six occasions, stripping line off Adam's reel at will. Bravely Adam hung on, and through sheer force of willpower and personality, he dragged his fish up through the depths until it lay beaten in the net, a magnificent new club record; a greater weever of 1lb 7oz.

He then repeated the performance with a blonde ray of 26lb 5oz, but everyone was sated after his battle with the weever, so it seemed a bit of an anticlimax. This second tussle took so long that by the time it was over, it was time to head back in, but the final tally was yet again splendid: ten flatfish, a bream, a near two pound mackerel and many blonde rays, including two twenties.



*This superb specimen greater weever is brought to you by Daiwa and Adam's splendid new light tackle set-up.*

Members of the club interested in minimising their fishing time while Adam leads yet another smallish fish a merry dance through everyone else's line on his light gear will be delighted to know that he plans to fish with his spinning rod and fixed-spool for an entire year, citing his hero, French-Canadian angler and serial fish kisser Cyril Chauquet, as his inspiration.

#### **Weymouth 18<sup>th</sup> of November**

Our traditional wrasse trip managed not to be blown off for, I think, the third year in a row. Because we've been so badly let down by

Richard "Judas" English, this was our first trip out with Ivan Wellington on board *Top Cat*. Again, we had chosen Richard's replacement well, as Ivan not only knew how to put us on the wrasse, but was as full of abuse and general unpleasantness as Richard ever was.

Andy Selby was with us again, although he did his utmost to avoid coming, when he arranged an appointment with his accountant on the same day. Charlie rescued him by promising to go to the appointment in his place, but then, as soon as he was out enjoying himself fishing with his lovely buddies, she went and rearranged the appointment so that Andy had to go another day. How selfish of her! Andy was not best pleased, I can tell you.



*Adam strains to hold up our huge new blonde ray record – all 26lb 5oz of her.*

Six of us had stayed at the Marden again, where once more we were treated very well by Gary and Jan. Adam could barely bring himself to

complain for hours on end that his request to have his healthy pudding option of yoghurt and fruit replaced with his more traditional dessert of cakes, lard and crack cocaine had fallen on deaf ears.

We started off bass fishing in the race. This was less of a rollercoaster ride than we were expecting, but was also a bit light on actual fish, as we only managed five smallish bass in about the same number of drifts. Eventually the tide was right for us to move to the wrasse ground off the Bill, and no-one was too disappointed, apart from Adam, who lives for his bass fishing.

Ivan had procured an enormous bucket of hardbacks as bait, and showed us a new way to prepare them, which went as follows. Off with the claws, then lever off the shell. If you do this from the side, it comes off much more easily than you'd expect. Then remove the legs, and then cut the crab in half with scissors or a knife. Hook the half crab from the "inside" with the hook point emerging from a leg socket, and then turn the hook and push the point back in another socket. You can then arrange the crab so the point shows, but the bait is solidly held on the bend.



*C\*nty. Note the clever asterisk that will fool your kids and your mum.*

We fished through the end of the ebb and slack water and then the rising tide as it picked up. To start with there were plenty of bites, but considering they were from wrasse, they were oddly hard to hit. Things slowly got easier, and the fish, which had been mainly in the 1-2lb bracket, started getting bigger too. Wrasse really do pull back, and once they get over 3lb, you've got a good battle on your hands.

Steve then hooked a real monster. You could tell this was a different class of fish from the bend in his rod, and when it finally broke surface, we could see what a big fish it really was. In the boat and weighed on Ivan's "Venerable Bede" scales,

the fish went 7lb 4oz. On the club scales it was even bigger at 7lb 12oz. Adam reweighed it, and as you all know, he doesn't like giving Steve anything when it comes to the weight of a fish, so if he says it's 7lb 12oz, then that's what it weighs. It really was a special fish – our first seven pounder and almost our first eight.

Steve then proceeded to catch two more monsters weighing 5lb 10oz and 6lb 15oz on Ivan's scales, so they may well have been a six and another seven on the club scales. Whatever they weighed, that was an amazing trio of fish by anyone's standards.



*Not only huge, but beautiful too. This lovely spotted specimen ballan just goes to prove that anyone who thinks they're blotchy is clinically insane.*

Andy Selby was catching as well as everyone else for a change, but was taking time off to demonstrate a new personality graft to all and sundry, and especially me. When you think of Andy, as I'm sure we all do on a regular basis, phrases such as "kind to a fault" and "nothing's too much trouble" and "lovely bloke" spring to mind. Well not today. Today he was in a feisty mood. "Ben," he said, innocently, "you're so theatrical, so flamboyant, camp even, all the time." Then just in case he hadn't made his point clearly enough, he pointed out the many obvious similarities between myself and Liberace and then, Quentin Crisp, I think. I'm not 100% sure about the second comparison, as I had flounced off to the cabin for a good cry by this stage, so I wasn't really listening.

So now, not only are we the posh crew, we're the gay crew. And his prime example of this is me. Me! When there are so many others to choose from. What about Phil Brooks with his continuing relentless obsession with anal beads, or Adam, who wears a cravat while fishing for god's sake (steady, remember there are kiddies reading this)? And what about Robin "Fat cock sucking poof" Eyles? (Oh well... At least none of those words is actually a swear word)

As this newsletter is going to be posted on the Internet, I would like to point out at this stage to my many gay friends, and the world in general, that this rough badinage or banter is merely joshing and in no way reflects an attitude of less than complete respect for all forms of legally permitted sexuality and the life styles that go with them, while at the same time acknowledging that some of the phraseology used does indeed hark back to darker and unhappier times of discrimination against many. I would also point out that context here is key, and that knowing the people in the club is to realise what thoroughly enlightened people we are and that all of this is entirely well-intentioned. I would also like to point out to Andy that when I said "My many gay friends", I didn't... Oh bugger, I think I'll just stop here, now I've managed to offend everyone. And does "bugger" count as swearing?

So, back to the fishing. By this time, everyone was into fish pretty much all the time. The average size was probably around 3lb, with plenty of 4s and quite a few 5s as well. We didn't quite manage to finish the crabs, but when you consider that we caught well over 350 wrasse, and we probably had about a 50% hook up rate, that's an awful lot of crabs.



***Kim holds another large and pretty ballan, that manages to be both blotchy and spotty.***

We finished the day with a hour or so fishing for squid close inshore. We struggled, if the truth be told, landing two and losing three. The best of the lost squid was Kim's and was lost at the net. No, let me rephrase that, it was lost *through* the net. It was easily the biggest we'd have had that day, and possibly yet another club record, but Steve, handling the net with less aplomb than he'd handled his wrasse, allowed the long, wide object to slip sharp end first through a hole in the

net, whereupon it let go of the lure and was lost. A very good effort all round, I'd say.

The most spectacular aspect of the whole thing is that on board *Supanova*, Lyle's boat, they were doing quite well, with a total of 123 squid in about the same time that we managed two. And we were fishing alongside them, and when I say alongside, I mean, we could have netted some of their squid. Clearly they'd grabbed a bunch of them (what's the collective noun for squid – is it shoal?) under their boat and were keeping them drifting along and feeding following their lures. Either that or we're just rubbish at it, and it can't be that, can it?

Despite that, it was one of the most spectacular day's fishing we've had with everyone catching dozens of fish, some very big, with our monster new record topping the lot. As a postscript, there was a whole lot of grumbling next day by email about the state of our hands. What with spiny crabs, spiny wrasse and sharp hooks, everyone was looking at their hands and going "ow" for two days. In fact, is it just me, or does it take two days to recover from a day at sea these days? I used to think it was just having small kids and lack of sleep, or maybe staying up too late mucking about, but actually, maybe it's just age. Or maybe Andy's right about me.

#### **Dinner date**

The annual dinner is booked and we're in the process of finalising the menu choices. It'll be at the Dorset Arms in Lewes at 7.30 for 8 in the evening of Saturday the 25<sup>th</sup> of January. Dress code is black tie/lounge suit/jeans/camo/flotation suit and the cost will be around the £20-25 per head mark, I expect, before you've bought any beer or wine.

There'll be the usual selection of lovely people there, plus the usual selection of club members, all mixed up and talking utter tosh about fishing and anything else that takes their fancy. We'll be handing out endless prizes, and if you come along, you might well win one. If you don't come along you might well win two.

We'd love to see as many of you as possible there, especially any of you who haven't been fishing for a while. Annual subs will be a tenner on the night, or £15 later in the year, so there's an incentive to come along, right there. Put the date in your diary, so you don't forget. We'll be sending out the menu shortly.

#### **Club Notices**

Steve would like everyone to know that if anyone needs parts for a Penn 2-Speed, he has one which he is happy to let others cannibalise. A certain amount of hitting the parts with a lump hammer to separate out the various bits of the



rusty mess may be necessary, but otherwise it's all in perfect condition. Secondly if anyone is interested in a Daiwa Interline rod, used once and never seen again, please contact S. Newham. He can personally vouch for how useful and entirely non-faddy a bit of kit it is. Club members will get a particularly good deal if they call and quote the offer code "RIP-OFF".

#### **Dates for 2014**

These are the confirmed dates for 2014. There are a couple of others that we're just re-arranging now, and we'll let you know what those are ASAP. As with last year's splendid new system, let us know the ones you'd like to go on within a week. Once the week has elapsed we'll try to get you on as many as possible. People who only book a few will get all or most of their selections, people who book all or most days may miss out on a couple, but they'll still be going fishing more than everyone else. We'll also put the dates up on the web site, and once we've allocated places, we'll put the names up too.

**N** Friday 24th January  
**N** Monday 10th February  
**N** Monday 10th March  
**N** Monday 7th April  
**N** Monday 12th May  
**N** Monday 9th June  
**N** Monday 7th July  
**W** Friday 18th & Saturday 19th of July  
**W** Friday 26th of September  
**N** Monday 20th October  
**W** Friday 21st November  
**N** Monday 8th December

There's a subtle Newhaven/Weymouth code involved here, see if you can work it out!

That's it for now, except to thank you for being such fantastic fishing companions for another year, and to put in my usual fruitless pleading for those of you who haven't been out for a while (John, it really is time you christened that Ugly Stik) to screw your courage to the sticking place and book up a trip or two. So, with that done, I shall look forward to seeing you at the dinner and out at sea.

Cheers,  
Ben



*The newsletter ends with the traditional picture of a Hodges with an enormous bass taken on their boat. This one that Clive is holding weighed in at a feeble 15lb 2oz.*