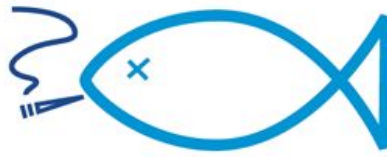


# Really Wrecked SAC newsletter

Number 44, July 2014



I wonder whether there's a point on the road to hell when you realise there's no turning back and you might as well not bother with the good intentions any more. If so, presumably at that point the road is no longer paved with good intentions, so you could, if you were looking out for it, spot that point and realise that this was probably the last place at which you could turn back if you wanted, making your very next step the actual entrance to hell.

That is my not-at-all-obscure-or-overdone attempt at a vague kind of apology for the lateness of this newsletter. You see, I definitely intended to write it months ago and then at lots of other points since then, making the thing you are reading itself a series of excellent intentions left in my wake on my personal descent to my well-deserved resting place. Whether the actual writing of it represents my turning back from the portals of the underworld at the very last moment or a headlong plunge into the darkest nether regions of Hades, time alone will tell. So with that cheery thought, welcome to this, the 44<sup>th</sup> edition of the highlight of your sorry lives. For those of you enjoying your first ever newsletter, a special welcome to the club, and don't worry, things aren't usually this cheerful either in writing or on the sea. I'm making a special effort for you.

In the rest of this mish-mash of half-remembered half-truth, bald-faced lies and Adams' opinions on what you're like to fish with, you'll find some actual fishing reports from actual fishing trips we've been on, along with important notices for all members of the club and special notices for those going on the annual Weymouth summer jamboree, so don't imagine just because the first part has been so dark and uninviting that the rest of the newsletter will be. It'll be rubbish in its own badly-written, inaccurate and annoying way, as usual.

## Annual Dinner

The fishing club dinner took place in its now-traditional home of the Dorset Arms in Lewes and as usual, they treated us very well. The food was good, my speech was, if anything, even more hilarious and magnificent and long-winded and pointless than usual. The poignancy of the evening was much enhanced by the addition of a slideshow to the speech, giving people a lovely

visual picture of the fish, hats and cock-ups to go with the mental one I was conjuring up with my beautiful prose. When I wasn't speaking and handing our prizes (i.e. about ten minutes out of the entire four hour event), the projector cycled through the literally hundreds of images I have of us in various stages of disrepair, disaster and general incompetence, along with the occasional glimpse of triumph and success, from years past, reminding us that we weren't always this old and disfigured. Well, some of us anyway. Steve is actually looking younger these days. "Younger" is a relative term here.

The undoubted highlight of the evening though was not my windbagery, or the pictures, but was another magnificent shift by Beef, putting us all in mind of our very first ever annual dinner and his speech then, featuring the ceremonial "lighting of the cork and trying to smoke it believing it to be a cigar" and the longest pause in any speech given in recorded history. This year's effort was no less entertaining. It did not, for the record, contain any pauses, long or short, but neither did it contain any discernable syllables of any language understood or spoken by the audience, or indeed by anyone else on planet earth, either now or at any time in the past. It was a magnificent freeform exploration of sound, erupting from Beef's inner being as he stood in the centre of the room, swaying like a mighty sequoia in a hurricane, or Chieftan tank suspended below a Chinook, mesmerising his listeners with its hypnotically regular unsteadiness.



*Our man has a nice sit down in the middle of all the tables to enjoy the slideshow.*

There were, it has to be said, various mitigating circumstances which contributed to Beef's bravura performance, but this is not the place to dwell on those. This is the place to celebrate another famous chapter in our history, and one that will live as long in the memory as the skinny dipping, Steve's tattoo reveal and that day we caught some fish. When was that again? Or did I dream that?

There was another event of note which occurred at the dinner, but as it comes as close as it's possible to come to making my shrivelled and hardened heart fill with sentimental joy, I'm tempted to omit it. Oh, what the hell, here goes. At the end of last year I had the great joy of turning fifty, which I know will come as a great surprise to most of you, as I seem to have been tormenting you with these pointless newsletters for at least a century. My lovely and long-suffering wife pulled out all the stops, and with the aid of Adam and Andy at Weymouth Angling, bought me a Century Excalibur 20-50lb class rod. This is a better rod than I deserve and a better rod than any of you will ever see, as I never come fishing these days. It weighs less than nothing, is so sporty that landing pouting is fun and yet can handle an 80lb conger no problem. It is actually a divine miracle. If King Arthur had had this instead of some mythical metal blade, he'd still be ruling today.

So far I'm just showing off, but the sentimental bit is coming, I promise. Unbeknownst to me (and I never thought I'd ever use "unbeknownst" in a real, actual sentence, especially not one written for you lot, but there really is no better word here), at the same time, Adam was taking contributions from you in the club to buy me a lovely reel to go with this gift from the deities in charge of rod manufacture at Century.

At the end of the speeches, after Steve had awarded another newly-created and quite splendid trophy (to go with the Box of Frogs (Mad as a) award he gave me a few years ago), which is actually quite cool and which sits on my desk at home, Adam interrupted proceedings to make a small speech about how little I was liked in the club and then, finally, to hand over the reel he'd bought with the money he'd collected. When the purpose of his speech became clear, I was a bit overcome, until I opened the box and found it contained a Shakespeare multiplier.

I then had to pretend to be grateful. I mean the club doesn't have a vast membership, but you'd have thought that between the thirty or forty of you, you'd have been able to scrape together a little more than the £2.99 necessary to buy this cheap piece of crap off of Ebay. Still, I did a reasonable job of grinning and saying thank you and I think I kept my swearing to a minimum as well.

Then it transpired that this was just one of Adam's little jokes and that actually what you'd bought me was a Boss Accurate multiplier. I have been lusting after one of these for about ten years, ever since Adam sent me a link telling me how much better these things were than my crappy Shimanos. I didn't have to pretend to be grateful any more. For a brief, transcendent moment I was actually filled with love for you all. Obviously then my medication kicked in again and the bile and rage that sustains me in the normal course of things took over, but in that fleeting second I saw the possibilities of what life might be like as a normal person with friends who liked him, who was respected in the community and loved by his family, and for that, I am profoundly grateful. So a massive thank you to everyone who handed over hard-earned cash, or considered it and then thought "nah, fuck him". You're really very naughty, and so DON'T EVER DO IT AGAIN. Well, not until my sixtieth, anyway.

## TRIP REPORTS

This is the standard fictionalised account of what may or may not have happened on club trips in the past few months. The names, fish weights, successful lures, methods and baits, and skippers involved have been changed because we forgot to write them down.

### Monday 10<sup>th</sup> of March

This was a trip with Dave on the gleaming white fish-catching machine that is Ocean Warrior 3 (or it is blue?) in search of mighty, sleek pollack and glistening, fat cod on the drift over offshore wrecks, and what's that I spy? Is it actually Ben making his way down the pontoon to go fishing? Could this be something to do with the incredibly lovely new birthday gear he has to christen? Let us not fixate on such questions, but welcome him aboard with our customary friendliness i.e. swearing and complaining about the lack of organisation and how late he is in arriving. I **think** Dave remembered who I was, but I'm not 100% sure. I may have seen Adam whispering my name in his ear, but my sight isn't what it used to be back in the day.

It was actually a fair day, weather-wise. It hardly rained, it was even a bit sunny at times and was about as flat as you ever get in early spring. Hurrah to all that. We headed South and a bit East for quite a way. Les, with his unerring in-built GPS (he's actually part cyborg these days) could probably have told you which wreck we were heading for and why it was going to be a shitty day's fishing and so, even though he wasn't there and didn't say anything about it, we'll probably award him the Steve Newham Cup for Optimism and Cheer, just because he would have.

As we sped out to wrecks distant, an eerie silence overcame those present as I unsheathed Excalibur and held her aloft. According to some witnesses, the rod was actually thrown to me from a white clad arm, which crested the foam, effortlessly keeping pace with our speeding craft. This is actually quite likely, as Frank's latest venture involves fishing for alligator gar off Newhaven from a white-painted nuclear submarine, so it's entirely possible that our drug crazed crew (mainly statins, beta-blockers and Voltarol these days) mistook the periscope for the lilywhite skin of the Lady of the Channel.

Excalibur shone brightly in the pale March sunshine, as though she burned with an inner fire, and when the mighty Accurate reel was bolted, with precision-machined bolts, to her slender, yet inconceivably powerful, butt, some say a flash of light connected the boat to heaven and the very seagulls themselves fell silent. This may be an exaggeration, of course, or poetic licence, but what is indubitably true is that when Rab asked the inevitable question, "Is that a Fladden?" he was struck by a searing bolt of lightning so powerful as to forever erase him from the annals of history. At least we all hope that's what happened, we were too busy gawking at my new rod and reel to notice little things like divine fire and whether Rab had ceased to ever have existed.

We stopped at a wreck, as you do, when you want to fish it, and we dropped our lures over the side. Many of them were actually attached to line for a change so when we started to retrieve them again, perhaps it shouldn't have been a surprise when several rods bent over at once. Naturally, Excalibur was among the rods assuming the position. Four fish were netted on the first drift. Sadly Excalibur and I didn't start the day with the club's first twenty, managing a more modest five pound fish, but still, gear christened first drop down... Can't be bad, eh?

On a more prosaic note, Adam was also trialling a new rod, a lovely sweet-actioned Conoflex he'd bought on Ebay for next to nothing, and certainly a lot less than it was worth. He also, despite his best and most incompetent efforts, managed to land a fish or two and thereby christen his rod, but frankly, who cares when the fishing tackle equivalent of the second coming is making an appearance a few rods down?

Next drift produced more of the same, with one larger fish among the single figure pollack, and the same again next drift after that. The fish were fairly evenly spread around, although I have a feeling that Colin had a fairly miserable morning of it, followed by an extremely miserable afternoon. That may just be me remembering things through rose-tinted spectacles, though.



*Marvin holds up the kind of fish that kept our rods bent most of the day.*

Unlikely though it seems, Robin and Brooksie caught the largest fish, with nice doubles of around 14lb each. They may have weighed them, and if you see them and can bear to talk to them they may tell you what they actually weighed. They won't be boring about it though, how could they be?

At the end of the day we had about 30 pollack with a few low doubles and a few cod up to maybe 8lb. A decent day's fishing with sport for all apart from Colin, and Rab expunged from our memories forever. You can't ask for more than that from a day.

#### **The Flatfish Cup, Monday, 28<sup>th</sup> April**

This was our second attempt to get out and show the filthy cheating swine in the Newick Hookers how to catch flatties, the first having been blown off. It was also our very first boat share with them, as they have, for a number of years, struggled to put together a full crew, on account of the strange reluctance of most of their membership ever to

get on board any vessel containing one L. B. Whiteman.

This, then, was our first chance to sample the all-round boat-handling brilliance of Colin Penny and to enjoy his superb and eldritch skills when it comes to putting a crew on plaice, turbot and brill. If ever a man was heir to Ken Leicester in that regard, it is Colin Penny.

And what a day we chose as our first outing with him. Flat calm, it wasn't, with crystal clear water (which is ideal for the sight-feeding plaice, turbot and brill) restricted to taps and the Caribbean. Despite the filthy, dirty water stirred up by all that winter rain and lots of spring storms, Colin plugged away all day to give us the best possible sport.

To start with we drifted the Shambles for what seemed like interminable hours but was probably only interminable hours. This had the utterly absurd result of giving the Newick Hookers two small turbot and a small brill to our nothing whatsoever. When I saw small, I mean criminally small. By rights the 'anglers' involved ought to have been gaoled for even thinking about weighing these fish, rather than them being permitted to claim the lead in the competition.

Shortly after everyone had lost the will to live, we made the move to fish the mussel beds for plaice. Adam in particular loves the mussel beds, and loves plaice fishing. He always does well there. No, really, he actually genuinely does catch quite often. I don't know what it is. Perhaps plaice are a particularly stupid fish, attracted to the smell of stale BO, cigarettes and other men's wives that always seems to hang around on Adam's fingers, but whatever it is, he seems to catch more than his share. This time he tied up a particularly lovely couple of rigs, with more beads, more and larger spoons and just MORE of everything. If anything was going to be visible in the Stygian gloom down on the mussel beds, it was these beauties.

You know what happened. Of course you do. It happens so reliably it's almost not amusing any more. Almost, but when it happens to Adam, it is, of course, still amusing. Yes, first drop down, tighten up to the rig and... ting! Damn and blast, better tie on that second rig. Down she goes, even sweeter than the first. Tighten up and... ping! Fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck. Right. Lead, swivel and hook, and that's all. Not even a measly knot-protecting bead will be wasted from now on.

Of course he blanked. Not a single bite all day. Mind you, he was hardly alone in that. Over the mussel beds the hardy souls of the Really Wrecked SAC did manage to stage a storming comeback, with all the fish taken falling to our rods, and nothing to the Newick Hookers. Sadly "all the fish taken" amounted to a single plaice caught by Steve Newham, so this year the Flatfish

Cup has been stolen from its rightful owners by that gang of crooks from Newick. Oh well. As a postscript, and to highlight Colin Penny's brilliance, with our total of four flatfish, we were the top boat in port that day, so well done us.

#### **Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> of May**

As you may be able to tell from the unusual Thursday-ness of this trip, this was rearranged from yet another day out that was cancelled by the weather. Let it not be said that we don't work our little socks off to give you the sport you deserve.

We headed South East to fish the Sub, one of Dave's favourite early season wrecks, with good reason. We've had some excellent sport off it over the years. This time our crew included two Pearces, though sadly it wasn't the girly pop group for Adam to drool over, but was Colin and his son Luke. Jonathan had also tired of fishing with people who despise him and had brought along a chum of his own, called David. Weirdly, despite being a friend of Jonathan's, David seemed to know all kinds of fishing-related stuff, like where to attach the reel, what a hook looked like and whether he was right- or left-handed.



*Some bloke, can't really see who, with a fish of some sort. Probably a pouting.*

He, along with most others, caught a few fish. The weather was lovely, the seas calm, but there was a lot of May bloom in the water, and sport was slow. We had perhaps one fish a drift, mainly on blue shads with red tails to start with, though bubblegum pink became the taking lure later on.

All in all we had perhaps a dozen cod and a couple of pollack to maybe six or seven pounds. Luke actually accounted for about a third of these, which is precisely 100% more than his dad managed, so well done him, and long may it continue.

At slack water we headed off to the banks to try for a turbot or two. Or a dozen. No such luck; we were plagued by whiting and between the two boats fishing there, only one turbot was taken. And it wasn't by our boat. So clearly the fish aren't there yet, or the water was still too murky. Overall, not our best trip, but at least we had a few fish to take home.

### Monday 9<sup>th</sup> of June

Despite having an original crew of nine with three reserves, due to Kim's bad back, Rab's incompetence and my work ethic, we eventually scraped together a crew of nine. "What's that Brooksie? Forgot to book the day off work? You do know we're leaving in 45 minutes?!" Sorry, a crew of eight. Special congratulations to Brooksie, making this early bid for about half the awards the club hands out each year.

We almost set out with a further reduced crew of seven as no-one thought to ask the badly dressed tramp on the pontoon whether he'd like to join us, until someone peeked under the brim of the cuntiest hat seen for many a year to spot the svelt and sophisticated form of Phil Boxall lurking under all those all-weather rags. We will be having a whip round in the club to see if we can get something from an Oxfam shop for Beef that isn't in tatters, is still faintly waterproof and doesn't smell of urine.

Almost as disgraceful as Beef's general appearance was Nick Coster's 'tackle box'. This consisted of a plastic bag, and not a sturdy 'Bag for Life' either, filled with junk from the 1960s, some of which may once have proved useful in a fishing context. I don't know what has happened to Nick. Perhaps now he has a boat of his own to use as a tackle box, he doesn't bother with a smaller version when he comes out with us.

The weather was overcast, the seas flat and the tide just right for eeling, so we headed out more than 20 miles offshore for a group of smallish wrecks over the horizon. Before we got the hook down, we persuaded Dave to let us have a drift or two. This worked out very well. Having had lovely dry weather all the way out to the wreck, as soon as Dave yelled "Down you go", the

heavens opened and soaked us all to the skin, though none more so than Ole Raggy, aka Beef.

That first drift produced six fish, and the second five. By the time we'd had three drifts, this trip was already more productive than the previous one. Scoop did particularly well, with six fish in his first six drops. He emailed us specially to let us know. Nobody likes a smug fucker, Scoop.



*Nick's 'tackle box'. The man's an inspiration to us all.*

After the drifting, we got the hook down. The weather having cleared up, as soon as Dave had finished positioning the boat and had retreated to the cabin leaving the cockpit to us anglers, the skies opened again and once again treated us to a biblical soaking. Now thoroughly wet, we proceeded to show Dave that we hadn't forgotten that our main skills definitely lay in the eeling direction. First up, Steve's much-abused Penn Twin speed got stuck in low gear, meaning that it took Steve about 45 minutes to retrieve his lead every time he wanted to rebait. This had the effect of reducing his enthusiasm for rebaiting in general, meaning that he'd walk the boat to the back and then sit there for about two hours catching nothing, before making way for other, more serious anglers. So basically his standard performance.

There was also a spectacular tangle, which resulted in the loss of about 45,000 miles of braid. History doesn't record which lucky and skilful fisherman now has the chance to replace all that tatty old line with brand new, expensive stuff, but whoever you were, well done, splendid effort.

The eeling wasn't bad, although the general stamp of fish was fairly small. Dave even reckoned there were some fresh-run fish newly in from their epic migration from the Sargasso, which is good news. Chris Grant heads the leader board for the Really Eely Tankard, with a good

fish of 40lb. The final score was 18 eels, 15 pollack and 25 cod, making it a thoroughly enjoyable day at sea.

It was made even better by the fact that, having more or less dried off from the many soakings the weather had aimed at us when we dared show our faces outside the cabin, as soon as we disembarked and had begun to make our weary way back up the pontoon to our cars, the skies opened up and really showed what they could do, demonstrating that they had only actually been mucking about before. In the five minutes it took to get back to the car park, 16 inches of rain fell on Beef alone, and the rest of us, despite using him as a tattered shelter, fared little better. An excellent end to the day.

### CLUB NOTICES

The main news concerns summer T-shirts and the Weymouth trip. If you're not going on the summer trip but would like a T-shirt, please let me know by email ([ben@eveling.com](mailto:ben@eveling.com)) with the size you require ASAP, as I'll be ordering the shirts in the next couple of days. If you are coming to Weymouth and your body has changed its general form since the last time you came, due to a surfeit of pies, or a mid-life crisis, please let me know your new size, or you'll get the same as you had last year. If it's your first year, then send me a size. They'll cost about a tenner, as usual.

If you are coming, you need to pay in advance, as usual. The cost this year is £290, so please either send me a cheque or, far better, pay by BACS via your bank and then email me to let me know you've done it. The sort code of the club account is 83-20-02 and the number is 00245798.

I don't believe I have anything further to say, except perhaps, "See you in hell", or at sea, which depending on the vagaries of the capricious god of fishing, may amount to the same thing.

Tight lines,  
Ben xx



*Bastard.*



*Another bastard, with a fish. It may have weighed 13lb 8oz.*



*Being a vampire has its advantages when it comes to sucking the blood from innocent virgins, but it can have its drawbacks when fishing at midday in Florida, as Colin found to his cost.*