

Really Wrecked SAC newsletter

Number 51, January 2017



Before I get down to business, I'd just like to thank those of you who still read this tosh for your unsolicited opinions and reviews. It's good to know that it still gives a few of you a little pleasure/irritation/high blood pressure/the nearest thing you've had to an erection in years. However, I would also like to say that despite the 5 stars from *Newsletter Advisor* (formerly *What Fucking Newsletter* magazine) proudly displayed on the web site, there have been one or two somewhat less than flattering remarks made.

A certain Antipodean correspondent, who shall remain nameless, saw fit, after the last newsletter, to suggest I might be losing my touch. Was I overworked? Things were not as bile-filled and bitter as usual. I can only suggest that this was perhaps because he (or she) was mentioned in despatches without being called a vast, drunken blimp of a man (or woman), with the intelligence and fat content of pork belly and the humour and good taste of deep-fried dogshit. I trust the slippery fuckwit is satisfied now, whomsoever the unpleasant, useless, evil-smelling canister of rat snot might be. I don't want criticism, I don't want concern. I want awe, adoration and a slightly uneasy suspicion that I might mean what I'm saying. For the record, in this case I do.

And while we're talking of fat fucks despised by everyone, Rab has requested a special mention for Robin in the newsletter. This was brought on by a picture in the last newsletter showing the aforesaid, previously lardy, fuckwit holding a nice salmon with a relatively normal caption instead of something along the lines of "What the fuck is this stupid cunt doing and why doesn't he fucking do it from inside a bath filled with his own blood?"

In fact Rab, who may or may not be the fat fuck despised by everyone I mentioned earlier (yes, I was going to leave that ambiguous, but in the end, I just couldn't let it lie), actually requested an entire newsletter supplement dedicated to the overthrow of Robin and all of the evil shit that the man stands for – such as not complaining when someone accidentally trashes

his rod and reel, being pleasant company and generally being a popular figure in the club –

but as we have been there and done that in the notorious scallop pull-out of 2007 (the year is approximate, I really can't be bothered to check), I'm not going to repeat myself. My position on Robin is perfectly clear, as is evident to anyone with half a brain who understands the implications of a statement like "generally being a popular figure in the club". For those of you with less than half a brain (Rab) (and everyone else), let me spell it out. Being popular with the grotesque rabble which comprises the membership of this club is about the worst indictment of a person on every level possible, without that person actually being Adam.

I hope that is clear and that from now on, when you read a photo caption saying something like "Another splendid bass falls to the trip's top angler, Chris", you'll make the mental adjustment necessary to read the sub-text i.e. "What a completely useless arsehole. Fuck me. If this twat was the best of you, what the fuck were the rest of you doing? And yes, I know that you were severely handicapped by having to fish alongside me or Adam all day and having to deal with the concomitant moaning and tangles, but even so, a five-year-old child that's been dead for three years could outfish this loser."

So bearing all of this in mind, let me welcome you to another newsletter, and express my fervent desire that you find something useful or entertaining in it. There's good stuff from the Weymouth summer trip and other exciting trips out of Newhaven and Weymouth, some excellent pics and other goodies inside, along with, I hope, a little flavour of the esteem in which you are held by your club committee.

Weymouth 2016

It has been a few months since this lovely trip, but luckily I took some contemporaneous notes allowing me to keep it all fresh in my mind so that I can share all of the triumphs and wonderful moments with you. In keeping with our club

committee policy of perestroika (Or is it glasnost? In the end, who cares?), I thought you might find it interesting to read those notes, which I reproduce here in full, before you peruse the more complete, vajazzled newsletter-style version of those same fun times.

My Weymouth trip notes

Weymouth summer trip AGAIN. Fuckshitbollocks. What a bunch of cunts.

Adam: Twat.

*Stevie: Tightwad, skinflinting, flying **bastard**.*

Kim: Pessimistic weeble.

Chris: Can't actually express my contempt strongly enough. And Glaswegian. Probably.

Barker: WTF?! I mean, really?

Tony: Rug munching carpeteer.

Tom: Fuck me, why isn't he dead or something?

Scoop: Quite nice actually.

Brooksie: Aaaargh! Just Aaaargh! Even more so than usual. Didn't even fucking mention anal beads.

Adam: Twat. Yeah I know, but he's twice as much of a twat as the others.

Clem: Fucking useless bell end.

Day 1: Shit

Day 2: Shit.

Overall: Had a shit time but totally outfished everyone as usual.

So based on that, here's what "actually" happened...

In keeping with the recently established tradition, the Weymouth fun and games began a full week before the trip with a Smed phone call. This year, instead of phoning up a week before the trip saying that he was just setting off and which B&B were we staying at, he cancelled on us, without bothering to make even a feeble attempt at a pathetic excuse (aka a "hermit crab"). Initially (see disappointing Newsletter 50) I thought this might be because he was washing his hair. This twice-decadely activity takes quite a lot of time, effort and preparation and I know from previous experience that Smed likes to wait a week or so afterwards before appearing in public, to give the disturbed microfauna, birds, newts, rats, badgers, gnu, lions, tigers and bears a chance to re-establish their dens after the kerfuffle. This might have been borderline acceptable; after all, Smed takes his role as an ecosystem very seriously. However, it turned out this wasn't the reason at all. Instead it was something to do with his "life" and something

called "Glyndebourne". Well, Jackie, the entire trip was ruined for every single one of us. I hope you're satisfied.

Joining Smed in the ranks of the unforgiven was perennial let-down, Andy Selby. This weaselly hermit crab of a man did his usual trick of organising something, anything, else instead of forcing himself to have a lovely time out at sea with his friends. His best friends. Actually, we're his only friends. And we really, really dislike him. This year the subsequent engagement was Camp Bestival to which Andy "sorted for Es and whizz" Selby was taking his family. Apparently the line-up included the *Black Lace* tribute act, *Shit music*, and was headlined by *Orville*, sans *Keith*, promoting his new album of improv Jazz/Neo-modernist/Cajun/Jerk cookery/music fusion, featuring Mary Berry and her famous reworking of "I Love to Love you Baby". Well, you don't impress us with your famous friends and your "taste" and "style" and just so you know, those bits of the weekend which weren't already ruined by Smed's absence, Steve's presence or Clem's useless incompetence were totally fucked by you. Thanks a bunch.



No shortage of hat nominations this year.

The fun didn't stop there though. In a fabulous throwback to the very first summer trip, in the halcyon days of 1999, when everything was in sepia, Scoop set out for Weymouth, only to realise some way outside of Lewes, that he has left his reels back at home and returning, somewhat sheepishly, to collect them. I did consider acknowledging this tipping of the hat

(and there's more on Scoop's hats later) to the events that lay behind the creation of the Andy Freeman Cup for Blind Stupidity, by cancelling our beds at the Marden and booking us in at the Sailor's, for a retro 1999 reunion. But nobody, not even us, deserves that hellhole. Somehow, I feel like we don't even deserve to have had it in our past. Then again, perhaps we do.

We arrived in dribs and drabs as usual. But somehow this year, thanks to Steve's relentless nagging, we actually all managed to hook up* in the Boot for a pint or two. It was quite nice really, a bit like old times. We still all went to bed early-ish though, so not quite like old times.

*If you're thinking "hook up" might be a fishy pun and an indication that I might be changing style, think again. This newsletter isn't about puns. Not this time. It's about swearing and showing that cunt Beef that I've still fucking got it. Whatever "it" is.

Day 1 highlights

It was an early meet on the boat, at 7:30am, but Steve predicted we'd leave for the 8 o'clock bridge as we always do. I'm not sure if he was basing this belief on the fact that Clem is a lazy, yet malicious, bastard, who likes getting us up earlier than is necessary, or the fact that we're tardy bastards who can't be arsed to do anything on time. Either way, he was right, which is bloody galling.

As usual, I did the bait run (I'm basically an unpaid servant on these trips) but when I checked the Weymouth Angling Centre freezer, it turned out they'd run out of proper 5lb boxes of squid, so I had to get lots of 1lb packs of unwashed squid, instead. These are all the rage now, as apparently fish don't generally bother to wash their food before eating it. Personally, I don't like it. I mean, what's the point of having built up a reputation as a middle class crew if you have to handle unwashed squid? There had been some discussion amongst senior members of the club of reducing the numbers on our trips to give space on board for members' household staff, to take care of mundane tasks like re-baiting, tackling up, and retrieving fish, but that has been stymied by this development. After all, no decent domestic worth the name would be prepared to handle unwashed squid. The whole thing is a complete shambles.

Clem was on particularly good form to start with (obviously he ran out of patience with us fairly quickly), despite having just come back from a three-day Alderney trip. He had a new crewman in tow, a six-year-old lad called Reed,

whose parents had apparently come down to Weymouth on a day trip and had abandoned their child on the first boat they saw. There's no need to worry about it though, as apparently it's all above board and legal and is, in fact, Dorset County Council's new education policy. Despite his youth, he was clearly a much more experienced fisherman than any of us, and probably a better skipper than Clem. He was certainly a lot handier with a T-bar.

As we set off, Scoop was modelling a particular hideous item of headgear, which Adam and I thought a shoo-in for the Cunt Hat Award. "Not so," quoth Scoop. "For I have a FAR cuntier item in my bag, which I will wear for your displeasure at some point later on." We could hardly contain our excitement at the prospect. On the way out, we picked up loads of mackerel in the entrance to Portland Harbour. They were pretty thick on the ground, so we didn't need to spend too long doing this, and then we headed off west to the Seven Mile Ground, or so we thought. The weather had other ideas. With a 4/5-ish South Westerly running against the tide it was lumpy out there. Getting round the Bill was entertaining and the race was like a very bouncy castle, but we hoped and expected that things would calm down a little by the time we got a bit further west. Sadly by the time we got to the Kidney Bank, we were crawling along punching the waves, and the sea had only got bigger, so Clem decided the sensible thing to do was to turn back and find somewhere to fish east of the Bill.

This has happened before and generally we've ended up on a patch of rough ground off the borstal or to the west of the Shambles, and usually things have been a bit shit for the rest of the day. So we weren't massively cheered by the news, although the swell did mean we had no choice about it. Obviously it was much nicer when we turned round and started surfing with the waves instead of fighting through them, and once back round the Bill, things settled down to just a nasty lumpy sea. Oddly, even the standard whingers in the crew (i.e. everyone) didn't moan too much about the wasted fishing time, not going somewhere decent, the appalling level of organisation that led to us being out in such a sea etc etc. Maybe we're so old now, we were all too exhausted to complain. Actually, no, that's never going to happen. We'll die first.

We finally dropped anchor over some rough ground east of the Shambles, an area we very rarely fish, and settled down to fishing with mackerel fillet, flapper and filthy, unhygienic squid for rays, huss, eels etc. Right on cue,

nothing whatsoever happened. After about 20 minutes of nothing, Clem decided it wasn't going to fish for us, and upped anchor to take us to an inshore wreck about 15 minutes steam away. After what seemed like an age fannying around trying to get the anchor right with the wind and tide, we finally got back to fishing again and this time it wasn't long before we had our first bites. Quickly we converted these into our first fish, doggies and pouting. A mere three hours after we'd arrived on the boat, we were finally filling our boots with the fish of our dreams. You've got to love it.

Normally by this stage of any fishing trip, the air would be thick with whinging, foul language of a type I could never condone, and general unpleasantness. After all, we'd come all this way, the weather was a bit crap, we'd mucked around for hours getting somewhere no good and we hadn't caught anything worthwhile. And yet, there we were, still smiling and making jolly bantering remarks. Mr Barker in particular seemed to have consumed so much Sunny D at breakfast time that he was romping around like a hyperactive toddler, a broad grin on his gormless features, talking absolute nonsense about anything, and even occasionally fishing. In future we need to restrict his access to sugary snacks and E numbers, as they clearly get him overexcited.

In some ways, it was a bit of a surprise that we were able to hear each other's hilarious banter at all. Not because we're all as deaf as posts, though that is certainly true. No, the fact is that Adam has been making a lot, in his recent non-newsletters, about certain club members buying the very latest in third-rate reel technology in the form of the Fin-Nor Marquesa multiplier. For some reason the anti-reverse on these models features an additional dog pawl, the purpose of which seems to be to make an extremely loud rattling sound as you reel, as though someone had taken a biscuit tin filled with wasps made of steel and was shaking it right by your ear.

Lo and behold, yet another club member, in this case Tony, who, having been sold one of these handsome items by Lord Selby, turned up with the intention of fishing all day with it. According to Adam, there's a reel amnesty on at the Weymouth Angling Centre, and you can hand in your Marquesa and, for a large sum of money, they will remove the offending pawl, which has no effect on the reel's, admittedly limited, fishing abilities, but which, in effect, liberates all the steel wasps from the biscuit tin, making your fishing

experience much quieter, but leaving you feeling like you've been stung.

Tony assured us that he had no intention of parting with any more cash than the original extortionate price for the reel, and that his was therefore *virgo intacta*, dog pawl and all. However, when he came to reel in with it, instead of the angry rattling of a million metal hornets, all that came from the reel was a gentle purring, like a smug and well-fed cat. Adam was adamant (of course) that the reel had been de-dogged, (explaining the cat-like noises) Tony was equally firm that his reel had never been dogging and was as nature intended. Adam was insistent, Tony was sure of his ground. Adam appealed to his audience, who, it turned out, could not have cared less, being otherwise occupied with trying to persuade Andy Barker to climb down from the aerial, where he'd gone for a lark and to guzzle his fifth packet of Haribos in peace.

Then, finally, just when you thought I'd forgotten that we were actually fishing, someone hooked something bigger. A few pulls, a bit of line given and then bang... and the fight was on. It was only a smallish strap conger, but where there's one...

...There are lots, it turns out, as the eels really came on the feed. They were mostly on the small side, but they put up a decent scrap in the tide, and it was great to see sometimes as many as six rods bent into fish at once. The largest had probably been around 30lb when Andy Barker struck into a fish which seemed a bit bigger. He was just huffing and puffing his hyperactive way into the fish when I, fishing alongside the manic maestro, also got a bite and wound down into a fish. Mine didn't seem so big so I hurried it along, eager to beat Andy to the top so I could ensure that Reed T-barred my eel off, rather than end up with Clem doing his hamfisted best to try and unhook the thing, possibly snapping my rod and certainly taking ages over the simple operation.

But as I sped my eel up through the sparkling Weymouth waters, it seemed to grow larger and to begin to fight back. Then Andy got a second wind (he'd probably downed a couple of Redbulls while I was otherwise occupied) and began to bring his in at a fair old lick (which is always nice at our age). My eel, meanwhile, had realised it was only a young 'un and was coming in nice and easy again. Then Andy's eel downed a few Redbulls itself and perked up and got its head down. Then mine got all arsey again, and Andy's became all soft and girlish, and it was about this time that we realised that whenever I was hauling a big weight, Andy's eel seemed a slight and

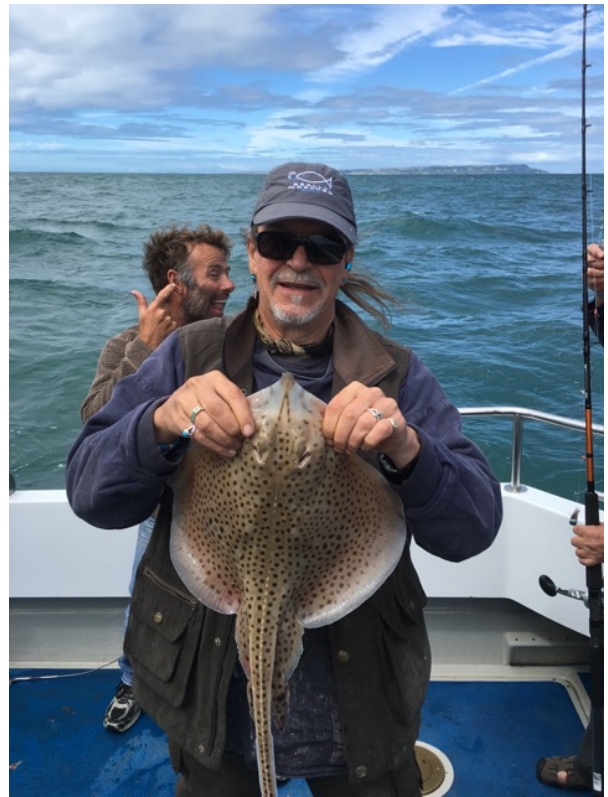
inconsequential thing, while when he was battling a brute, mine appeared to lose all interest. Even two clod-hopping morons like Andy and me were eventually able to work out that we must have become tangled, and there was only one eel involved.

As my "bite" had come second, I didn't hold out much hope that the fish was mine, but when we two heroes eventually hauled the monster to the surface between us, blow me, my trace went straight into its mouth. But blow me even harder (chance would be a fine thing), so did Andy's! It seems that Andy had been so dozy in noticing and dealing with his bite, that the eel had had time to snaffle a second bait before being hauled off the bottom. In all the years the club has been congering, this has never happened before, and is almost certainly worthy of some very important and valuable award. Actually, it may well prove to be, as the eel weighed in at 36lb and while that is not a large eel, it is the largest of the year to date, and may yet win the Really Eely Tankard.

As this drama was unfolding, Steve and Kim were also battling monsters of their own, and shortly after Reed had shown Clem how simple unhooking a twice-hooked eel can be, their fish came to the surface too. You won't believe it, but this was "fish" singular too, with both their hooks in its singular gob. Having waited almost 20 years for a double hookup, along came a second two minutes later. I can't say which one of the two anglers was the dozy one who let his eel pick up a second baited hook in this case, but I think, given the participants involved, honours were fairly even spread on the doziness front.

In amongst all this eeling mayhem, a few other fish put in an appearance to keep things interesting. Fairly early on in proceedings Adam hooked into an inert lump which, after a few desultory wriggles and nods, came in like a plastic bag, or perhaps a jumbo "fat bastard" crisp packet. Adam is well known in certain circles for taking far too long over most activities, and his playing of fish is no exception, but even he struggled to take his usual 45 minutes to land this one. As the fish appeared from the depths, we could see it was a ray - a small blonde by the looks of things, but once we had it on board, we could see that the spots were a little large for your average blonde, and, fancy that, the spots didn't go right to the edge of the wings. And we all know what that means, don't we? No? Anyone? Well, as I'm sure you know really, that meant that it was actually an average sized *spotted ray*, not a blonde, and, as a result, the first of the species in the history of the club. What

an epoch-making trip this was rapidly becoming. Our new record was a splendid 4lb 9oz, and Adam was a happy boy for the rest of the day.



Adam and his spotty, and what appears to be a hideous growth on his right shoulder.

A few eels later, I entered my name in the species-hunting lists, with a very lively scrapper, which led me a merry dance around the boat, running up and down tide. I called it as a tope and was relieved to see the slender shape of a very handsome 32lb mini-shark appear at the side of the boat, once it had stopped trying to tangle everyone else's lines. My fish-calling skills are second only to my fish-catching skills, don't you know. Our usual run of Weymouth tope is generally in the 10-25lb range, so it was nice to see a larger one, even if not quite a club record.

Big Chris also got in on the act, with a nice mid-double figure undulate ray, which for some unaccountable reason, I agreed to photograph and record for posterity. As you know, we prefer to let Chris' captures sink into well deserved obscurity, rather than inflate the boy's already hideously rampant ego any further, but in this case I seem to have rather let the club down. Sorry.



What the Frontier?! Chris, with what appears to be a fish that he caught. Nice gloves, by the way, Chris.

After a delightful day of eels and rays, it was time for supper. Despite rumours of its demise, The Ghurka was alive and well and still serving delicious shredded seagull in plum sauce. Actually, we were all agreed that the food was pretty good this year, the best it has been for a while, but we also thought that next year, on the Friday night, if the weather is good, we might try buying fish and chips and eating them on the marina wall, or something else equally radical, such as going and having a steak in one of the many other eateries that Weymouth has to offer. Wonders will (may) never cease. I'll believe it when I see it etc etc.

I'm sad to report that Brooksie hadn't quite had the energy to be his usual filthy self all day, which I mentioned to him at the Gurkha. Obviously I understood that he'd had a couple of recent operations and perhaps wasn't quite back to his full fighting weight, but I wanted to make it clear to him that his continued presence on high profile club trips depended on him returning to form as quickly as possible. "What, anal beads and all?" he enquired. Yes Brooksie, anal beads

too. We rather miss them now that you keep them to yourself.

Faces stuffed, most of us adjourned to the Boot for a swift one before bed, where Steve, in his usual silver-tongued fashion, managed to make it a swiftish two by the simple and yet totally unprecedented expedient of buying us all a drink. 2016. Remember the year. There will be a T-shirt commemorating the event in 10 years' time. By then it will have become part of club lore and there will be roughly 50 club members who *definitely* remember having been in the Boot that night. Shakespeare had something to say on the subject too.

*We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he to-day that drinks a pint with Steve
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
This day shall gentle his condition;
And gentlemen in England now a-bed
Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not
here,
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any
speaks
That drank with us outside The Boot that day.*

Yes, Steve, I know you must be disappointed by this account of events, but a moment's reflection will persuade you that it was bound to happen. This newsletter never knowingly passes up an opportunity to reinforce a two-dimensional view of its one-dimensional characters, and remains proudly hidebound by reputation, and unbowed and unconstrained by reality.

Day 2 highlights

Day 2 was another early start, but this time, the weather was set fair, with only a light breeze from the West, going variable, and a slight swell from the day before. Along with the general sunniness of the morning, this suggested a pleasant day ahead. Set against that, we were due to be joined by Tom Fowler for the day. So perhaps not such a pleasant day after all.

As we had the day before, we set off for the Seven Mile Ground, the difference being that this time it was a pleasant cruise in a gentle swell instead of battling against a lumpy bastard of a sea. We did stop for a spot of light mackerelling just round the bill, which was very pleasant, though not quite as easy as it had been the day before. On the other hand, our need wasn't quite as pressing, as we had a fair few mackerel on ice from the day before. Because of this we decided there was time to christen the Pink Rod and reel that lights up when you wind it, which we'd

almost given to Chris for his birthday. This excellent bit of kit was not ideally suited to hauling in a string of mackerel, as its fighting curve was more of a series of stepped straight lines than an actual curve, due to the uneven nature of the carbon / glass fibre / asbestos / recycled cardboard that made up the blank. However, it didn't snap and several mackerel were landed on it.

In fact, it was such fun that Reed and Clem took to the rod and fished with it pretty much all day including, for a time, with big baits. They didn't manage to hook a conger on it this time, but next time...



Nice action, Reed...

The fun didn't stop there though, as Scoop decided to unveil his serious attempt at the Cunt Hat Award. Actually I lie, the fun did stop there. It was a horrible hat. Mere words cannot convey the full horror. Look at the picture instead.



Then it was on to the Seven Mile Ground where we did so well last year, to set anchor and start fishing for rays, huss, tope, conger and bream. Our confidence was high after yesterday's surprisingly good result, given the conditions and having been forced to fish a third choice mark, and it wasn't long before we were rewarded with our first bites. As you'd expect, these were actually from dogfish and pouting rather than anything more substantial, but the warm-up was soon over and it wasn't long before Tom, or Barks or Steve or Chris, or one of those other fuckers was into a decent fish, a thornback ray of about six or seven pounds, I seem to remember.

You may be a little surprised, after a run of a few paragraphs without much in the way of filth and swearing, by the return of the foul-mouthed insult, but there's a good reason for it (beyond the fact that it's the plain unvarnished truth). You see, while some people were doing very well, others, such as Brooksie, Kim, Tony, Scoop and, more importantly, me, were doing less well.

While there were clearly some fish about, and these fish were keen to hang themselves on any old badly presented bit of stale mackerel fillet – after all, Steve had a couple, as did Tom – for some reason, they weren't evenly spread around, and about half the crew had to put up with the usual nonsense of bites failing to turn into anything significant, fish falling off and periods of absolutely bugged all. As I have often mentioned in this newsletter, there doesn't generally seem to be any rhyme, reason or pattern to this when it happens, some people just get the bites and other people don't. This is especially true when I'm one of the people not getting the bites.

You can reassure yourself all you like that your turn will come, and that you're doing all the right things, but when you see the likes of that notorious tosspot Adam Frost swinging in yet another ray, while you are delighted, after an hour of blanking, to be unhooking your first dogfish, it kind of undermines your confidence. After a while you start to believe that you're never going to catch a fish, and you start leaving bites for too long, or snatching the bait away from them too soon. In fact, it doesn't matter how soon you wind into a bite, or how much line you give the bastard thing, it's always wrong, and after a brief feeling of pressure, there's just a sickening lack of weight.

So 'we' caught several rays, quite a few actually, maybe 10 or 12. They were undulates and thornbacks mainly, plus, guess what? Two more spotted rays, both to Adam, one of them beating his previous day's record, weighing in at

4lb 12oz, making it two rounds to be purchased by the now teetotal Mr Frost. So, just as with double hook-ups of conger, you wait 17 years for a spotted ray, and then three come along at once. Actually, there is some dispute as to when all this happened, as both Kim and I remember Adam having had two spotties on day one and a further record breaker on day two, whereas Adam swears blind he had one on day one and two on day two. As Kim points out, Adam's brain has been deep-fried in cannabis oil and pickled in Harveys for the best part of 50 years, whereas Kim and I are both upstanding and clean-living members of the community, so whose memories are you going to believe?

As well as the spotties, and thornbacks and undulates, there were a number of rays that appeared to be a bit thornbacky and a little bit undulatory, making them quite hard to identify. After some debate, we christened these fish thorndulates, which is a much better name than unduebacks, which was espoused only by the losers in the crew. Having done a little bit of research since, I'm not 100% sure they weren't actually painted rays, which do look a bit like faded undulates. I've always assumed that someone in the crew is going to know more about this shit than me, and that if we catch a new species, somebody will recognise it. Turns out that's so much bollocks, just like everything else I believe, and that if anything, you're even more pig-ignorant than me. It's just a shame we don't appear to have any proper photos of these fish, otherwise me might have another new club record. If anyone has any pictures of these fish, send them to me for expert identification and possible ratification as a new record.

Finally, having ruined half the crew's morning, Clem relented and moved to our preferred destination, the famous 'tope hole', a massive depression in the sea bed about half a mile across and 60 fathoms deep. For those of you who, unlike Adam, don't demand that everything, including payment, be measured in fathoms, that's 360 feet deep, or 120 yards, or 109.7m, or 4.45 chains, or 0.545 furlongs, or 21.82 rods (or the same number of perch), or 12,960 barleycorns, or 1,097,280,000,000 Angstroms, or 3.556×10^{-17} parsecs. I hope that's clear now.

When, earlier in the week, I had been discussing the fishing possibilities for the weekend with Clem, he had actually sounded quite enthusiastic and hopeful about fishing the tope hole. The tope were definitely there in numbers, and a week or so earlier, during the annual Conger Competition, when Clem had

taken his crew to a wreck in this very, very deep hole, they had caught nothing but tope after tope after tope, rather than conger. So therefore it was a fairly cheery and confident lot that dropped its baits over the side and waited... and waited... and waited... for the age that it took to reach the bottom.

But we didn't have long to wait for our first bites. Within a couple of minutes, there were powerful pulls at several rod tops and shortly thereafter, deep bends in those rods, as they took the strain of a big fish. We eagerly awaited sight of the tope scything through the water as we hauled in our prizes, but it came as no kind of surprise whatsoever when our specialist tope tactics resulted in conger, conger and more conger. Admittedly, our specialist tope tactics were fairly similar to our specialist conger tactics (or indistinguishable to the human eye), but Clem had promised tope and we were being badly let down.

We must have had about 20 eels in this "tope-only" location before I struck into a hard-fighting fish which darted around all over the place before running strongly uptide. After my successful fishing-calling of the day before I had no hesitation in calling this as a tope. Clem agreed, and we were all thankful that at last the tope had shown up. Necks craned to catch a glimpse of my shark, but admiration and envy turned to scorn and mockery when the expected sleek grey form took on a distinctly eely appearance. You lot can be very cruel and thoughtless at times. I really have no idea what I've ever done to deserve it. Okay, so I was wrong (as was Clem, I'd like to point out) but the fish did fight in an extremely topey way and given our location and quarry, it was an easy mistake to make.

It might not have been a tope, but it was a harbinger of things to come, as it was only a few minutes later that Steve brought a small one to the side of the boat. His tope was followed by a second and a third in short order. Finally the tope hole was living up to its name.

Within a few minutes tope were coming over the gunwales at regular intervals, but they were all on the small side, until I had a better one of around 25lb, which started a run of decent tope. Brooksie pitted his poor enfeebled body against a very respectable 35lb tope and, astonishingly, won, while Tom and Barks had sharks of more or less exactly the same size. It was excellent sport, as even in the incredibly deep water, they led us a merry dance, doing their best to swim though every line on the boat at least twice and generally

out-tangle all but the most on-form Jonathan/Smed double act.

In among all the tope mayhem, Kim managed to miss out entirely on the fun. Every time there was a run of fish, he always seemed to find himself playing the bottom, or a small eel, or just not getting any bites. Some weeks later, while discussing this, Kim did manage to come across as still fairly bitter about this, but I suspect that a few trips on his own boat among the double-figure bass, turbot, brill and blonde rays off Littlehampton will sort out his equilibrium once more. Just to be clear, I'm talking about his *mental* equilibrium here, as nothing will ever stop Kim from falling over in the slightest sea, so remember to ensure you leave a few of your rods and reels around on deck to cushion his fall. Kim, please see my earlier remarks on Steve's round re unwarranted stereotyping.



***Not the biggest tope, but the nicest picture.
Apart from the horizon. And the angler.***

Tony, on the other hand, did manage to have an improved afternoon, after a morning as productive as an evening with Frostie is entertaining or edifying. The upturn in his fortunes was partly due to his actually managing to hook and land some fish, but was also down to our listening to his endless complaints and actually, finally, hearing what he was saying about his useless heavy tackle and how much he hated it, and how it was impossible to land fish on it. Firstly his rod was rubbish, with a really short butt

so that his reel was far too close to his groin for sensible winding. Who designs these rods? It really is a common and basic flaw, unless, I suppose, most boat anglers have got tiny, stubby arms like a T-Rex and can't reach to what the rest of us would consider a nice, comfortable, sensible distance from our bodies.

Secondly his reel (a perfectly decent Shimano TLD 15, by the way) was a useless piece of crap, with the drag settings varying from free spool at one extreme, to almost free spool in the strike position and a full six ounces of drag when the lever was cranked all the way over to the maximum. This meant that poor Tony was forced wind in 16 turns of the spool to gain just one turn back from anything bigger than a blenny. When I say "poor Tony", I do of course mean "that useless Realtree-obsessive who couldn't even be bothered to RTFM before bad-mouthing his own tackle" (RTFM is what we technical types think when our friends phone us up to ask why their email has stopped working, it stands for "Read the Manual". There is another word in there, I think, but I forget what it is.)

What Tony didn't know was that the drag on his reel could be reset to a much more useful range of settings by the simple expedient of putting it in free spool, and twisting the knob at the base of the lever in the direction helpfully labelled with a + sign, thereby increasing the amount of resistance in both the strike and the maximum position. A few seconds of fiddling put an end to literally years of misery for Tony and allowed him to fight fish in the way that Mr Shimano intended. It's just a shame he had to put up with it for so long. We're such a selfish, unhelpful lot.

With Tony fishing like a god, the other gods in his peculiar pantheon put on a show for us, and for quite a while we had dolphins sporting around the boat. With an hour or so's fishing left in the trip, we decided to pay our traditional homage to the flatfish on the Shambles and, as tradition dictates, we enjoyed a gloriously fish-free and bite-free hour. On the way the Shambles, Clem treated us to another spectacular display, when a thresher shark leapt bodily from the water in front of the boat. Okay, so only Clem actually saw it, but I was standing next to him in the wheelhouse at the time, so I feel as though I *almost* did.

At the Balti House we broke with tradition even further, having worked out in advance what we wanted to eat, so that as soon as a waiter appeared to take our order for 74 pints of Cobra, we were able to ambush him with our food requirements right away and were sorted out in

double quick time, rather than having to wait until 3am, as is usually the case. The food was good, despite our not being utterly famished by the time it finally arrived. We'll try this new system again. Then it was on to the Boot in plenty of time for a pint or two before tackling the tall ships rigging and a quick swim before bed. There Adam, whom you may have noticed hardly drinks at all these days, having received a series of increasingly angry letters from his liver, culminating in a "cease and desist" notice, bravely had a pint of Guinness like a big boy and suffered hardly any ill-effects at all, beyond becoming slightly more garrulous and "entertaining".

Overnight, our new god Tony worked some more of his special magic, fixing it so that Andy "Bestival" Selby's staff all came down with serious cases of Can't-be-bothered-to-work-on-a-Sunday-itis forcing Andy to have to abandon his camp fun and drive back from the Isle of Wight overnight to open the shop at 6.30am. That'll teach you to go disappointing your important and powerful friends from Sussex and Wiltshire. Only, I don't suppose it will.

So that was it, the thrill-packed ride on the rollercoaster of Weymouth done and dusted for another year. Everyone agreed they were sick of the sight of each other and glad it was finally over. Alternatively, people may have sneakily actually had quite a good time, and enjoyed some lovely banter with their pals for the best part of three days. Decide for yourselves.

Newhaven 23rd of September

This was one of those days out of your defective memory of the good old days, where every trip seems to have been sunny and flat calm, and you never get bruised from having been thrown about on a lumpy sea all day. Conditions could not have been better for a spot of giant eeling. Low water was at 11am, so it meant an early start to catch the best of it, as Dave prefers an ebbing tide for eels on most of his wrecks.

Our manly crew headed off out about 18 miles to a wreck that has produced 80s, and Colin and Luke had got a couple of boxes of excellent-sized cuttle for everyone to share, so everything was looking spot on. The tide was fairly ripping through when Dave got the hook down, so it was 2lb of lead and butt pads all round, but we all know eels like a bit of tide, don't we?

Things were a little slow to start with. Okay, they were actually stationary, with no bites at all in the first 40 minutes, instead of the snake pit we had been eagerly anticipating. Finally Colin had a

take on his whole cuttle on an 8/0 on 150lb mono trace and would down into... a 3lb bass! Not really what he, or anyone else was expecting. The only real shame was that it wasn't Adam who caught it, as Colin was actually kind of pleased whereas it would have ruined Adam's entire day, something it's always nice to witness.

Eventually the eels put in a half-hearted, apologetic kind of an appearance, with maybe 7 coming to the boat to a monstrous 25lb in weight. Inspired by this, Scoop, who doesn't really do eeling, had a go, confident he wasn't going to have to actually land one of the horrible things. But fate has a way of intervening in such matters, and he soon had a solid take, and after a good tussle, was rewarded with a massive lobster which Dave unaccountably failed to knock off the hook at the net, as is usual with lobster. He has promised to go on a Really Wrecked fish-handling course to brush up on his comedy netting skills.



That is one happy boy...

At 7lb 2oz it was a new club record, and at £15/pound at the fishmonger, to say Scoop was delighted would be the understatement of the year, akin to saying that Adam has perhaps deserved to win the Steve Newham Cup for Optimism and Cheer one of these past 15 years.

After this excitement, we drifted with baits at slack water for zero reward, and then headed off

to the turbot banks for the flood. On the first drift Scoop had a turbot, followed by a second on the next drift – the man could do no wrong. Rab was seen touching the hem of his holy garb in the hope that some of Scoop’s magic aura would rub off on him. Scoop was unimpressed by Rab’s attempts to rub off on him, however, and sent him away with a flea in his ear. This soon made friends with the fleas on his body and the lice in his hair, so everything was very pleasant and cordial for Rab’s exoparasites.

Further drifts produced three turbot to the diligent and skilful Colin (please bear in mind my earlier remarks about sub-text) and his son Luke (insert inverted commas at the location of your choice) also landed a turbot and a brill. The rest had to make do with the odd gurnard and dogfish, which, frankly, is more than they deserve. Scoop also landed a 7oz greater weever, which, sadly, was not a new club record, marring an otherwise perfect day for him.

The day would have been entirely perfect for everyone had Adam failed to notice that, on the way back to port, his Grey’s Mk 1 Advent+, mounted with his ultra-rare and expensive Japanese import Shimano Calcutta Conquest, which was sitting at the back of the boat, was peeling off line like there was no tomorrow. For those not around to witness Beef’s brilliant demonstration of what happens when all 200m of braid and 300m of mono backing has peeled off and is trailing behind the boat in the water and the backing reaches the spool knot, it does not end well, unless you happen like seeing your rod and reel disappearing over the back of the boat.

Sadly, Adam reached his rod and reel with some 20 yards of backing to spare and therefore was not forced to admit that the rod in question is as cursed as Beef’s blue rod ever was, if not more so, having exploded on its first use and then attempting so obviously to escape its hated owner. I advise all club members to check whether Adam is planning on taking this rod with him before booking future trips, as its malignancy and deviousness will only increase having been confined to a small cupboard with all Adam’s foul-smelling, bait-and-rust-encrusted gear. I’m not actually, definitely predicting a simultaneous lighting and meteor strike on the boat, but I’d just check before booking, that’s all I’m saying.

Newhaven 14th of November

This was an inshore cod trip on an overcast day with a bit of light drizzle to cheer things up. There was little wind to start with, but it picked up later

on to make it slightly uncomfortable after lunch. If I’m making it sound a bit rubbish, that’s because, as we all know, fishing isn’t supposed to be fun. It’s a test of your reserves of mental fortitude and cheer; a test you are expected to fail. From time to time, things do go wrong, and someone is to be seen with a smile on his stupid face, clearly enjoying himself, as with Scoop, Colin and Luke on the previous trip, but this is the exception to the rule.

Steve had stopped off at the fish merchants on the way to the boat to pick up three boxes of cuttle. That’s a LOT. Not in the Brooksie class of “a lot” – that would have been about 30 boxes – but a lot for a normal crew. It proved just enough for the ravenous hordes of pin whiting and dogfish which took about ten minutes to reduce a good-sized cod bait to sod all.

Despite this, Russell, Steve, Ian and Martin, did manage to land a cod each, with Steve’s the largest at 9lb 12oz, which he had weighed and insisted was a double, despite the fact that it only appeared to be so when the scales were at the very bottom of their bounce on the lumpy sea. It. Was. Not. A. Double.

Russell had the best catch of the day though, a thoroughly splendid 4lb 12oz piece of flint, which fought all the way to the side of the boat, making several long and powerful runs. While some way short of our club best stone, a beauty of 7lb 5oz, which Adam bested several years ago, it is our largest specimen stone for ages. Although my description of the fight sounds sarcastic, and yes, okay, maybe it is a little sarcastic, it does contain a kernel of truth. It is hard work pulling up a dead weight, which doesn’t ever swim upwards in an attempt to lessen the pressure on its mouth and which doesn’t have a swim-bladder to give it buoyancy. If you don’t believe me, stick two 2lb leads (on top of the 2lb you need to hold bottom) on the end of your line in a big tide and see how easy it is to bring it in.

Russell was also definitely NOT involved in the biggest tangle of the day, year and possibly millennium. This tangle, coming at slack water, involved most of the crew, apart from Russell, with many two- and three-hook rigs, leaders, traces etc. all knitted together by a mystery 100m of black braid, which no-one on the team would own up to using. Russell in particular stated that he only ever used dark green braid, as he tied on another leader and rig and recommenced fishing, while the rest of the crew busied themselves with this Gordian Knot. Using the prerogative powers recently granted to members of the club

committee, by the club committee, Adam performed an inspection of Russell's reels and as a result of his findings, the committee has decided that Russell's heart is as green as the ace of spades and as recompense for his crimes, we are looking forward to being invited round to his house for tea and green forest gateau and to listen to him recite verse, as he's a big fan of Dylan Thomas. In fact, to show there are no hard feelings, here's some Under Milk Wood.

It is Spring, moonless night in the small town, starless and bible-green, the cobblestreets silent and the hunched, courtiers'-and- rabbits' wood limping invisible down to the sloe green, slow, green, crow green, fishingboat-bobbing sea.

Weymouth wrasse 12th of December

After missing out on wrasse last year due to bad weather, we were all geared up for more of the same, when the forecasts suggested 4-5 occasional 6s from the West, backing South West later. But Ivan surprised us by focussing on a small window of 4s mid-morning and pronouncing we would go. So go we did.

What do we know? It was lumpy, but certainly not unfishable and in fact, I have to report that despite many, many opportunities to do so, Kim totally failed to fall over a single time all day. I'm not sure what he's playing it, but perhaps he's had a gyro fitted or something.

As usual, Ivan had a vast vat of large, live, and extremely nasty shore and velvet swimmer crabs, which he proceeded to grab *by the handful* and put into a smaller container for our use. Gloves he would have none of and the fact that crabs snapped at him with their mighty pincers had absolutely no effect on our laughing host. Had Superman been on board, he would have willingly handed over his mantle as man of steel to Ivan.

We watched Ivan demonstrate how to get a gigantic, vicious, angry hardback crab ready for the hook, after all, we hadn't done it for two years. I say "we", but truth be told, I kind of drifted off mid-demo, thinking about how much damage I was going to do to those wrasse... blah blah, claws, blah blah legs, or was it shell? Oh well, how hard can it be?

As it turned out, it was quite easy to get it wrong, and getting it wrong meant the shell was quite tricky to remove. Ivan looked at me with pity, gave me a dressing down for not paying attention and then showed me again. Oh... so the shell comes off *sideways!* Much easier. It turned out that Steve and a couple of others had also

failed to follow the important details, and were glad to watch both the repeat demo and the mockery Ivan heaped on my broad shoulders. As I write this, I have a terrible feeling of *déjà vu*, like I've written all this in a previous newsletter. Well this time REMEMBER it, Eveling. Sideways.

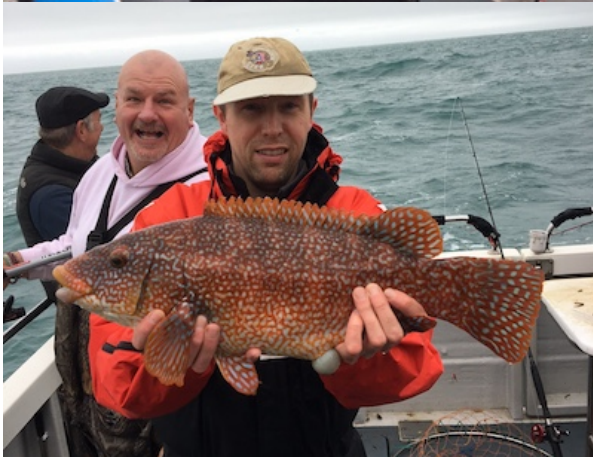
The wrasse were a bit slow off the mark, with only a few small ones in the first 15 minutes, then the floodgates opened and it was wrasse after wrasse. After a while, I heard Kim say something like "12", so I enquired what he meant. "I'm counting them," he said. Well! Anything Kim can do... I started counting mine, and, figuring I'd had a few fewer than him, I started at eight. By the time we'd run out of crabs, I'd got to over 120.

That did take quite a while as we had a lot of crabs, and even allowing for the fact that few, if any, of my crewmates could match my relentless pace and skill, that's still well over 600 and possibly up to 1000 wrasse caught. Given that with the last 1/3 of the crabs we halved them to make them go further, that's still at least 600 crabs we got through.

For some reason, utterly divorced from skill or talent, a small knot of our crew, fishing alongside each other, took most of the bigger wrasse. This cabal of jammy dodgers consisted of Andy Selby, Clive Hodges and Phil Pepper, with Steve Newman making the odd contribution of a bigger fish. Sadly nothing came to the boat which looked like challenging Steve's 7lb record from two years ago, but this little group did have several fives and the odd low six, while the rest of us made do with threes and fours.

As with most kinds of downtiding, the bites slowed up at slack water, but they picked up again with the tide, and even after we ran out of crab and were reduced to hooking on two or three legs and/or claws, we continued to catch wrasse. I tried dropshotting with a rubber worm and a small weighted sandeel thingie, but only managed one wrasse and a few bites from about 30 minutes of giving it a go, so I reckon I haven't quite got my presentation right, cos normally wrasse go bonkers for lures. Maybe I need some Fiish Black Minnows, or something.

After we were forced to start using legs and claws, Ivan offered us a move round the Bill to another spot, and, thinking it might hold that elusive record-breaker, we agreed, but unfortunately it didn't produce anything except two pouting.



This is what happens when you try to take a nice photo of Andy Selby. Blokes keep jumping in front of the camera with wrasse.

We decided to finish the day having a go for squid, prompting Phil Pepper to bring out the big guns, or at least the guns with LEDs in them, to create our first flashing squid rig. Luckily there were no other boats around to witness this insanity and even luckier, after a couple of fruitless drifts, we finally hit a squid, then a drift

later, another, then one more, then a couple more, none of which came to the three-hook-LED-festooned-uber-squid-rig. Less fortunately, at least half of these squid fell to Andy Selby, and when that pattern continued so that he ended up with about ten out of the twenty we caught, everyone, except his Lordship, felt the day was somehow slightly spoiled.

Not totally spoiled though, because it was a brilliant day, with loads of fish. Ivan and his crewman Aaron were really helpful, and everybody had a great time. Until the next morning, of course, when we woke up and realised exactly what we'd done to our hands. Fucked them, that's what. If you want the effect without the cost and hassle of actually coming wrasse fishing, just rub your hands with 24 grade sandpaper, then play catch with a hedgehog then spend an hour sorting through a tray of broken glass before plunging the resulting bloody mess into a bucket of vinegar. Don't worry, it stops hurting quite so much after about a week or so.

Club Notices

Okay, now the dull but worthy bit of this whole enterprise, which I guess you need to know in order to be able to do stupid things like come out fishing and attend the annual dinner.

Annual Dinner News

This is going to take place in the Dorset Arms in Lewes at 7:30 for 8 on the evening of Saturday the 28th of January. We'd love you all to come because a big turn out makes Adam and I feel loved and that the whole thing might just be worthwhile. It's also apparently quite good fun as long as you tune out during the bit where I speak a lot and hand out cups and trophies.

And talking of cups and trophies, **if you have one, now is the time to get it back to Adam**, so we can engrave the next glorious chapter in the club's glorious history on the sides of these citations and decorations.

Dress is, in theory, black tie, but we are extremely relaxed about it, to the point that last year we admitted two tramps thinking they were both, in fact, Adam. Well, they had beards and smelt of rotting fish, what more do you need?

Fishing Date News

This year we not only have a full complement of dates with Dave on board *Ocean Warrior*, plus two with Clem on *Wild Frontier* and one with Ivan on *Topcat*, we have also added four new dates

with two new skippers, from two new ports, to provide you with the variety you've been asking for. We are the listening club committee and exist only to serve your every need. The new skippers are Neil French who fishes out of Littlehampton on *Spirit of Arun* and Jon Himpfen who is fishing out of Brighton on *Misty Blue*. Because of this, the trips are marked with initials indicating the boat i.e. OW = Ocean Warrior, WTF = Wild Frontier, TC = Topcat, SA = Spirit of Arun and MB = Misty Blue

OW Mon Jan 30th Drifting for pollack
MB Fri Feb 10th Drifting for pollack
OW Mon Feb 20th Drifting for pollack
OW Mon Mar 6th Drifting for pollack
OW Fri Apr 7th Drifting for pollack and cod
SA Mon Apr 17th Bream fishing on the Kingmere
OW Mon May 22nd Drifting for pollack and cod
MB Fri Jun 9th Wrecking, eels, cod, pollack
OW Mon Jun 19th Wrecking, eels, cod, pollack
OW Mon Jul 3rd Wrecking, eels, cod, pollack
SA Tue Jul 18th Tope and rays
OW Fri Aug 4th Wrecking, eels, cod, bream
WTF Fri, Sat Aug 18th, 19th Weymouth summer trip
OW Fri Sep 1st Wrecking, eels, cod, bream
OW Mon Oct 2nd Wrecking, eels, cod, bream
WTF Fri Oct 13th Rays, bream, tope, flatties
OW Mon Nov 20th Inshore cod and whiting
TC Mon Dec 4th Wrasse, bass and squid
OW Mon Dec 11th Inshore cod and whiting

Send your choices to Adam by email ASAP. We're operating our usual booking system so that if you only put your name down for a few trips, you're likely to get all or most of your selections, but if you want to go on every trip, it's unlikely you'll get everything, as we do like to get as many people out fishing as possible. Obviously it also depends on how many people want to fish the same trips and how many booking requests we get overall, but we do try to give everyone as much of what they ask for as possible.

Dates and place allocations will be posted online at <http://www.reallywrecked.com/news-and-dates/dates>.

Most importantly, if you can't make a trip you booked, let us know ASAP. We will try to find a replacement, but if we can't, you will be charged your share of the boat. This year we were unable to fulfil a booking with Dave because we had so many cancellations, which cost the club £150. In future we won't be doing that, and instead, everyone who cancels will have to pay, allowing however few people remain to have a boat to

themselves at no extra cost, even if it's just for two people. It's the only way to keep things fair.

Please note that the Kingmere bream trip is on Easter Monday. The Weymouth summer trip will cost £300, with B&B accommodation at the Marden. The Friday is to be aboard *Amarissa* with Ron Brown, and Saturday on *WTF* with Clem. The first trip planned for this year is with Dave on the Monday after the Annual Dinner, so why not make a weekend of it?

Subs news

Club subs are due. Please pay £10 into the club account, with your name as reference. The sort code is 83-20-02 and the account number is 00245798.

Fake News

Chris Grant has been appointed the UK's new EU ambassador, with special responsibility for failing to record any of his catches. Meanwhile Colin Pearce has made the front cover of *Grazia*, squiring Ivanka Trump, in his more lurid dreams.

Missing Persons News

Has anyone heard anything from Jonathon or Smed? There was a worrying lack of tangle-related action last year due to their inactivity, and we greatly miss that, as it's much more fun than actually fishing.

Tackle News

Tackle correspondent, Adam Frost writes, "Should you get conned by a 'Mr AS' into buying the Fin-Nor Marquesa Twin Speed, an even more overpriced model than its single speed sibling, they, like Richard, can never EVER be silenced. EVER! However WAC is offering a set of seven ear defenders with every one purchased – one for every other member of the crew. The owner has to endure the racket without protection."

No More News

Having finished this, it occurs to me, that even after all my efforts, Beef, or Salmon, or some other horse-faced fucker might just remark "Now he's just trying too hard to be vicious and swearsy." Well fuck you, fucker, I don't do this to make you, or anyone else, happy. I do it to stop Adam nagging me. Pure and simple. QED. So stick that in your pipe and smoke it, even after you realise what it actually is. Oh, and have a Happy New Year and I hope we all get out for some fantastic fishing this coming year.

Cheers,
Ben