



## Newsletter No.184 July 2016

President: Bob Ayres [bobjen.ayres@virginmedia.com](mailto:bobjen.ayres@virginmedia.com)  
Chairman: Andy Newman [andy.di.newman@btinternet.com](mailto:andy.di.newman@btinternet.com)  
Minutes  
Secretary: Paul Stevens [faith.paul@virgin.net](mailto:faith.paul@virgin.net)  
Treasurer: Alan Prevost [alan@prevost.net](mailto:alan@prevost.net);  
Bookings  
Officer: Mark Searle [mark\\_hse@btopenworld.com](mailto:mark_hse@btopenworld.com)  
Website: [www.invictaffc.org.uk](http://www.invictaffc.org.uk)  
Affiliated to The Angling Trust

### **Editor's Notes**

Many Invicta members are aware of the flies affectionately known as "Buzzards". I recently came across a book on fly fishing in North America and came across the use of a similar fly known as a "Geronimo". I suspect that Buzzards and Geronimo's are closely related



In this month's newsletter Allan Sefton has written an article about Salmon fishing. He says that he was inspired to write it by Lawson Wight's contribution in Newsletter #180. Hopefully Allan's contribution will inspire other Invicta members to provide future material for our members to enjoy.

How many of you were aware of the literary skills within the club? There are a number of members who have had fly-fishing books published and thought it worthwhile to bring this to the attention of our newer members:

John Gale wrote *Catching Lake Trout* (1990). He also co-authored with David Moore *The Ruddles Guide to Fishing Rutland Water* (1989), and *Trout* (1992).

Peter Reeves wrote a book in 1998 entitled 'The Pleasure of Stillwater Fly Fishing'.

Henry Lowe co-wrote a series of reservoir guides with local expert anglers.

Another club member, Peter Oldham, has written a series of books but they are not about fishing. Maybe only the "hard core" of our members would appreciate them – check out Peter on Amazon

### **NEXT CARR CUP DATE & VENUE**

#### **DRAYCOTE – SATURDAY 13th AUGUST**

This is the club Carl Hunter bowl match. Draycote is a well stocked water and is often a good water for dry fly fishing, also has a good head of 3lb + fish, if you are lucky.

#### **AMFC Dates and venues**

R1 G2 & G3 Rutland	Sat 23 <sup>rd</sup> April
R6 G2 & G3 Chew	Sat 8 <sup>th</sup> Oct.

#### **Group 2**

R2 Bewl	Wed 11 <sup>th</sup> May
R3 Chew	Wed 1 <sup>st</sup> June
R4 Draycote	Sat. 16 <sup>th</sup> July
R5 Grafham	Mon 26 <sup>th</sup> Sept

#### **Group 3**

R2 Hanningfield	Thursday 7 <sup>th</sup> July
R3 Pitsford	Saturday 23 <sup>rd</sup> July
R4 Eyebrook	Saturday 20 <sup>th</sup> August
R5 Grafham	Thursday 8 <sup>th</sup> Sept

Contact David Moore for further information  
[davidmoore48@outlook.com](mailto:davidmoore48@outlook.com)

Disclaimer: Statements, opinions and claims expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Invicta FFC or of the Committee.

Any questions or suggestions on the running of our Club or ideas for subjects or speakers for our Winter Meetings should be sent to Paul Stevens for inclusion in a future Committee meeting. It should be noted that the programme needs to be finalised several months ahead.

## GO SALMON FISHING! By Allan Sefton

My inspiration to pen this invitation is the picture in Newsletter 180 of Lawson Wight's first salmon. Congratulations to him.

Some members of Invicta do fish for salmon occasionally. Can I encourage more to have a go? Cambridge is a long way from a salmon river but we are a well-travelled bunch. Making the transition from trout to salmon is not inhibited by distance. It is the result of myths. I'll try to debunk them.

### Know your quarry

But first, let's try to understand the world's most sought after wild fish.

The salmon is a big, marine fish. Its origin is in freshwater to which it returns to breed. Thus, salmon populations are local as adults return to the rivers of their birth. Many seek out the tributary where their parents spawned. These streams are often acidic and unproductive and the salmon's life-cycle is fragile. Juvenile salmon can be wiped out by flood, frost, drought, starvation and predation. Few survive.

It would be even less if returning adult salmon were hungry!

They are not. Adult salmon lose the ability to eat when they enter freshwater. This evolutionary adaptation is a vital protection for baby salmon. So, when a salmon fly fisher fishes down a pool full of salmon, gets no interest, and asks, "why don't they take my fly?" he is asking the wrong question. Salmon are the only species of fish that anglers' chase that does not eat so the correct question is, "why should one ever take any fly?"

### *Only ten percent are caught*

No one knows the answer to that question. It is the riddle at salmon fishing's heart. Surprisingly, some salmon do take a fly, bait or lure. Studies show that the percentage of salmon caught from the many that may run a hard-fished river is around ten per cent.

This is why the current fashion for 'catch-and-release' by anglers is a political gesture rather than a conservation measure. Nearly all salmon populations would be sustainable if only ten per cent were removed. In practice, female salmon lay lots of eggs and a surprisingly small number of breeding fish are able to fully re-stock a river.

### *Which fly?*

There are many thousands of salmon fly patterns. Why? The answer is that they all work sometimes but none of them is 'magic'. Most experienced salmon fishers believe the choice of fly pattern is unimportant. The vital skill is persistence and presenting any fly to a 'vulnerable' fish.

### *'Vulnerability'*

Experience tells that three factors encourage 'vulnerability'.

The first is 'freshness'. A salmon that is fresh from the sea is more likely to take than one that is 'stale' from weeks in fresh water. Second is water temperature. Salmon, like trout, are a cold water fish. Spring days, and those autumn days when an overnight frost tempers summer heat, make salmon anglers optimistic. Finally, 'new' water helps. In the UK this is usually rain, further north it may be snowmelt.

### *British and Irish salmon fishing is a gamble*

This explains why UK salmon fishing is a gamble. The salmon season is long and salmon runs are unpredictable. Runs are weather dependant.

If you rent the same salmon beat each year in the same week you will enjoy both feast and famine. Some years there will be fresh fish, cool weather and rain. Some fish will be so 'vulnerable' they would take a piece of banana skin tied to a hook. The next year there will be a drought, no fresh fish and a heatwave. Even if the river is full of stale fish mostly you will be wasting your time! There are 'minor' tactics such as skated flies, dabling, fast-stripped big flies fished deep etc. that *occasionally* bring 'major' success when the going is tough but no one can tell you why they work or when.

### *Go North!*

This uncertainty contrasts with the top salmon fishing destinations further north.

The seasons in Alaska, Iceland and on Russia's Kola Peninsula are short. There are distinct, predictable runs of fresh fish. In Alaska there are five species of Pacific salmon and you can choose which to target. Water temperatures remain low and, although there is rarely a shortage of rain, snowmelt makes up for it in warm weather.



So, salmon fishing is mostly about being in the right place at the right time. De-bunking the following myths may help get there.

### **Myth One – Salmon are an endangered species**

Animals that breed in hostile environments and migrate over great distances face many risks. This fragile life-cycle means their populations vary enormously from year to year. Many salmon anglers remember the 1960's and 70's as great salmon decades but nothing was guaranteed. One of the rivers I fish had consistent catch returns during these 20 years except for one when the rod catch was 80% down. High seas netting, seals and poachers were all blamed but probably a year-class was simply wiped out by a natural event.

#### *Catches and numbers do not match*

Rod catches are a poor indicator of salmon numbers.

For example, the lower Tweed had some of its best catches in 40 years in 2010. From early September fresh fish entered the system in good-sized shoals, the weather was cool and regular rainfall kept the river at a perfect height. In 2011 there was an immense flood in the Tweed valley in early September. The whole autumn run ran the length of the river. Soon, the 'vulnerable' fish had been caught. Anglers, who had paid many hundreds of pounds a day for the privilege, spent October and November casting their flies over pools full of stale, leaping fish. Few were caught. The total catch return for 2011 was one of the worse for 40 years. There were angry mutterings about the genetics of salmon changing! In fact, scientists believe the runs of salmon into the river in 2010 and 2011 were probably similar.

#### *Pollution – Bad and good news*

Salmon (and sea trout) populations in some West Highland rivers in Scotland have been devastated (and some have not recovered) by biological pollution from open cage salmon farming in sea lochs which took off in the 1980's. The huge numbers of salmon cause immense concentrations of sea lice, a parasite that is potentially fatal to wild fish.

Sea lice numbers are now partially controlled by intensive pesticide dosing. Pollution is now much less despite a shameful lack of robust regulation

by the Scottish government's environmental agency.

On the largest west coast river salmon catch numbers crashed to ten percent of historical returns by the late 1990's. They have now recovered well. The runs are more variable than in the past but 2016 is looking very good so far.

Sea lice pollution does not affect the Scottish east coast rivers nor any in England. However, it is true that right across the North Atlantic, and especially in Eastern Canada, the percentage of adult salmon that survive their marine migration and return to their rivers to breed is much less than it was 40 years ago. No one knows why.

But it is not all doom and gloom. The health of British and Irish rivers is excellent. Industrial and agricultural pollution is controlled, habitats are being improved and juvenile salmon populations are probably at an all-time high.

England's best salmon river, the Tyne is a prime example. I am writing this in late June 2016. Last week, a record 500 plus salmon went through an in-river counter in a single day. Anglers on the Brae beats on the lower Spey caught more than 80 salmon. On Delfur beat, a few miles upstream, they cracked 50.

Last August, 40,000 salmon ran the Tyne to give the highest ever single month total.

This year already looks very good right across the British Isles.

Do not let anyone tell you salmon are close to extinction. The truth is that the size and timing of salmon runs, particularly in Britain and Ireland, are unpredictable. Wild fish are frustrating. It is why they are so desirable.

### **Myth Two – Salmon fishing is too expensive.**

Wild salmon have always been a valuable resource. For hundreds of years laws have been strictly enforced to protect estate and landowners' rights to this bounty and to keep the rest of us away. When Queen Victoria fell in love with holidays in Scotland, and it became *de rigeur* for the wealthy to do likewise and whole estates, including strictly-preserved salmon fishing, were rented by the season. Rod fishing provided more money for landlords than netting them. Salmon fishing was never a *sport-for-all!*

#### *Accessibility today*

Today, salmon fishing is more accessible than it has ever been (see [www.fishpal.com](http://www.fishpal.com) ) but wild salmon are still valuable, so fishing is not cheap.



As a rule-of-thumb a day's fishing on a 'good' beat in Scotland costs a little over £100 per rod per day, though you may have to book at least 3 days for several rods. Prime fishing at prime time can cost many times that.

Because salmon are so valuable, everyone caught is carefully recorded so you have no problem working out your chances. On the *Fishpal* website you'll find the 5-year average for every beat for any month of the season you fancy. Work out how many rods fish over the course of that month and divide one figure with the other to give the 'average' catch per rod, per day.

I estimate that the 'average' cost of a Scottish rod caught salmon is around £400 whether you fish the cheapest association water (around £30 a day) or the most expensive beats.

Unfortunately, this does not mean if you buy 4 days at £100 each, or a day for £400, that a fish is guaranteed

#### *Feast or famine*

Scottish salmon fishing is either feast or famine. I had a prime-time September tenancy for 15 years on the best beat of the river Findhorn, a spate river. In two of those years my party of six caught over 50 salmon in our week and had some unforgettable days. Once, I even caught five salmon in five consecutive casts, returning to exactly the same spot after playing each fish.

What is less memorable is that on four of those years the river remained stubbornly low and we caught next to nothing. Return to the same beat each year and you will 'average out' in the end.

#### *Rod pressure*

The other factor to consider is rod pressure. As well as opening to all, many Scottish landlords are upping both the number of rods and the price. I gave up my Findhorn tenancy because over the years the number of rods permitted doubled. A 'price-per-rod' calculation raised the cost even more.

Adding rods does not improve catches. The number of 'vulnerable' fish does not increase, they are just shared more thinly. Some Scottish salmon beats are seriously over-rodged. Do your homework before choosing!

#### *Why are so many disappointed?*

When our Victorian and Edwardian forebears rented whole estates they went salmon fishing only when fish were running and there was

plenty of water. At other times they could go off trout fishing or shooting grouse. Today, salmon fishing is let months in advance and few decide not to bother travelling if conditions are unfavourable.

What all this means is that there are an awful lot of disappointed salmon fishers in Scotland after a couple of weeks of dry weather.

#### *The 'house party'*

None of this should put you off what can be a great experience. I recommend copying the great, summer tradition of the Scottish house party. For over thirty years, an adaptable group of friends and I have rented a salmon beat for four rods and a wonderful, luxurious old mansion. It sleeps 14 and overlooks the river. The rod pressure has not changed in all that time. The fishing costs about £2500 and renting the house is similar.

We self-cater, but that is not a chore. Each of the seven couples is allocated one night when they provide the food and wine for everyone. We can all cope with one busy evening.

It sounds expensive but works out at £350 per head for the week. Adjustments can be made to allocate the fishing costs.

#### *England is cheaper*

You do not have to go all the way to Scotland to go salmon fishing. Last October, I went to the Tyne for the first time. Three of us hooked seven salmon over two days and landed five. The fishing cost £75 per day.

#### *Fish cost less in the most desirable places*

You can go much further and sample the world's best salmon fishing in Alaska, Iceland or Russia. The good news is that my rule-of-thumb shows that salmon cost only around £200 per fish there, although prices do vary widely, and that returns are much more consistent through their short season. The bad news is that the cost is around £1000 per day per person with a good chance of five fish. You have to find the airfare too.

So, you might have to choose between that and the luxury cruise!

#### **Myth three – You need expensive salmon fishing tackle**





I am amazed that the favourite salmon fly rod purchased in the UK is a double-handed 15 footer.

If I am fishing on the lower Tay, Tweed or Spey in high water this is probably the right rod. There, it helps if you can cast 35yards plus and Spey cast where necessary. Everywhere else a 15 foot rod is a liability. And, it's pretty exhausting to use all day.

If you turned up with a double-handed rod to fish for salmon in Alaska everyone would wonder what it was. The Americans would all be armed with 9 foot, 7 or 8 weights similar to those you use on Grafham Water.

### *Switch rods*

Similarly, many Scottish salmon fishers equip themselves with Spey-style weight forward fly lines with 60 or 70 foot plus heads. That's more than 20 yards. Over 80% of Scottish salmon rivers are not that wide! These rivers are better suited to a modern *Switch* rod and a matched, short-headed *Skagit*6 or 7 weight line. This can be used as a single-hander but you can 'switch' to using it double-handed to do short Spey casts. Arm the same rod with a normal weight-forward line and it becomes an acceptable 'loch-style' boat rod with a 'fighting butt'.

There is also a great advantage in salmon fly fishing with a single-handed rod. It is easier to retrieve line. This can provide an important advantage on those small streams with complex flows where fly control is vital.

In short, your everyday tackle will catch salmon too. Please have a go!



a 12lb autumn fish from the Tyne caught using a #6 wt. 'Switch' rod.



Allan with a 9lb 'springer' caught on Carrowmore Lake in Co. Mayo using his standard Grafham 10 foot #7 wt. rod.

Thanks go to Allan Sefton for producing this in-depth article.

There is much more information on salmon fishing in Allan's latest book, "Fly Fishing for Salmon" (ISBN 978-1-47213-562-9 published by Robinson last November and is available from Amazon at only £9.98 + p&p)



## **Carr Cup Round 4, Grafham Water, Sunday 10th July 2016**

### **Report by Chris Mcleod**

A lot of work goes into preparing for this day. Not by the anglers but by the team of wives and girlfriends who put together a great lunchtime BBQ. So, thanks to all of them, particularly Jacky, Karen, Jane and supporters. (Although Gary How did say that he peeled the onions).

This is the day that we not only compete for our President's Trophy, but also against the two other local clubs. So along with 18 of us we had a similar number from East Midlands and half a dozen from Grafham. Pairs were decided by a draw for the Invicta match and they set off for all parts of the lake. Conditions were good and a stiffening breeze still allowed access to all parts. Good numbers of fish were caught – and lost. Keith Gilchrist lost twice as many as the 5 he landed, and everybody reported pulls, fish on and off and all the usual excuses.

Lunch was a very sociable affair, with a raffle organised by East Midlands and a few glasses of red to slow some of the fishmongers up.

The afternoon was restricted to the South shore as the wind was starting to blow. Lots of boats anchored or did short drifts in Gaynes Cove and Plummer's areas, and they caught well on nymphs although it began to get rather crowded. Kieran Caulfield did a great mentoring job with Sue Potts who hooked a good number and managed to land 4 fish. She is not keen on handling them so it was some achievement to be photographed with a lovely rainbow.



4 fish for Sue Potts

Putting half the lake out of bounds caused problems for those that had caught in the central areas but Keith Gilchrist managed the change well and was one of four Invicta members to finish on 8 fish; the others being Kieran Caulfield, Paul Heavens, and Mark Searle. Mark, who'd had a good morning, continued to build a winning heaviest bag which gave him the Trophy, and also helped Invicta easily beat GWFFA, although these same rods were beaten by East Midlands – but it has to be said that their team included a couple of 'pointdownwinders'. An excellent day.

## **SUMMER PROGRAMME 2016**

### **Carr Cup Dates and venues**

#### **DRAYCOTE – SATURDAY 13th AUGUST**

This is the club Carl Hunter bowl match. Draycote is a well stocked water and is often a good water for dry fly fishing, also has a good head of 3lb + fish, if you are lucky.

#### **RAVENSTHORPE – SATURDAY 3rd SEPT**

At this time of year this water can produce some very large fish which will also come up for the dry fly. As this is a smaller water than most, nobody is far away, so if you are finding it tough there is always someone close by to give advice.

#### **GRAFHAM – TUESDAY 4th OCTOBER**

This is our last Carr cup match for the season where the cup can be won or lost. Even if you are not in the running or not interested in winning the Carr cup just listening to all the banter between the few that are still competing is worth the trip alone, you will hear permutation of points that Albert Einstein would be proud of.

### **Other Invicta Dates and venues**

#### **ELINOR 6th NOVEMBER**

This is our fur and feather match, more of an end of season get together. We start about 9.30 and finish about 16.00 and make our way to the pub for a warm up, drink and to sort out the prizes. For this trip we all bring a prize and we all get to take home a prize, as with all our trips this is a very sociable day with help and advice in abundance.

