

# Fishing at Clywedog

Despite the current situation we were desperate for a "get away" a chance to embark on a new adventure. It had to be somewhere remote, scenic with good fishing and a good standard of food and accommodation thrown in.....a big ask given how crazy the world is at present.

Having discussed the idea with Neil and Sue Potts, they too were keen for a break and the chance to fish new waters on different methods and so were totally onboard for an adventure into the heart of darkness, or Wales as it is better known.

We decided on Clywedog reservoir in Llanidloes, Wales. Its unique in that the fishery is operated by the local angling club Llanidloes & District Anglin Association and run by former World Champion Russell Owen with all proceeds put straight back into the fishery.

[www.clywedogtroutfishing.co.uk](http://www.clywedogtroutfishing.co.uk)



Although only a 615 acre reservoir it is extremely deep in places with depths of up to 130ft. It has an elongated shape with numerous arms and bays meaning that you can always "tuck in" from the swirling winds.

Also being on top of a mountain at 600ft above sea level it doesn't suffer from high water temperatures that plague our Midlands reservoirs in the summer often switching the trout off the feed for weeks on end, unless you opt to fish at the crack of dawn.

On the competition circuit I fish for a Welsh Team and have been fortunate enough to fish the reservoir around 15 times in the last 2 or 3 years. Fishing with some of the best Welsh international anglers allowed me access to years of experience regarding methods and patterns as they willingly pass on their secrets to a fellow team member....its effectively allowed me to short circuit years of practice and research on a new water.

Firstly the boat jetty, boats and engines are immaculate at Clywedog. The jetty even has individual "V" shaped moorings for each boat that really helps when loading and unloading tackle. The water itself is nestled in between two large hills, with the nearest town around 15 miles away. You instantly notice how wonderfully quiet it is. In spring and summer it's a stunning water and there is nowhere I'd rather be. However being so remote early and late season can see extremes of weather so good waterproofs are essential and additional fleeces if you feel the cold.

I honestly believe Clywedog has the highest stocking density (40,000 fish stocked in 2020) of any reservoir in Europe, it is simply always stuffed with fish, that's not to say it's always easy, being so deep the fish can occasionally hold deep, but are usually in the top 6ft meaning that catches of 20 fish a day are pretty common. No matter what the conditions there is always the opportunity to have a good day there and it's never the result of a lack of fish or the size.

The stock fish are reared on site in a cage complex, meaning they are accustomed to the water and fight really hard, it also means that "monsters" inhabit the depths around the cage area feeding on loose pellets that are missed by the stockies and growing to giant proportions.

Most Welsh waters don't allow boats to anchor (there are physically no anchors in the boats) I actually like the idea as it provides everyone with an equal chance on the fish, and ensures the fish are well spread out throughout the reservoir, in addition the fish are scatter stocked by boat, again in an attempt to spread the fish over the largest possible area.

Bank fishing is restricted to half the reservoir, and boat anglers (yes boat anglers) have preference as they pay more! Even better you aren't plagued by sailors or wind surfers - there are other boats on the water but generally only a handful even at weekends.

Accommodation was booked on the recommendation of Gareth Dixon, head ranger at Clywedog and an awesome all round angler, he pointed us in the direction of the Y Starr Inn, a 17th century drovers inn with B&B situated just 10 minutes away from the lodge on the south side of the reservoir. On arrival the first thing you notice is that it's remote, nothing for 10 miles in any direction and you wonder how the pub survives financially. From the outside you have your doubts about the place, it could be better presented, and tidied up a little, would the locals be friendly or was this a "local pub, for local people??" - I just hoped that Samantha and Sue would find it acceptable, as anywhere that served beer, food and was warm would suffice for me after a days fishing.



Once inside our fears evaporated almost as quickly as the first 2 pints of "Butty" a nice local brew, the pub and B&B had recently been refurbished and tastefully decorated according to the girls who know more about these things than me. The bar, and restaurant was adequately spaced to ensure social distancing and staff wore masks etc to comply with the Covid restrictions, a huge cast iron stove added character and warmth....it was very welcoming and you were made to feel comfortable.

Our rooms were equally impressive, modern, clean and well decorated- even good Wi-Fi everyone was happy.....

The food was great, no fancy "a la carte" menu, just a good selection of locally sourced starters and main courses that changed every day... and the Breakfast was huge.....A great start so far !

[www.starinnndylife.co.uk](http://www.starinnndylife.co.uk)

In my experience the best time to fish Clywedog is June, July and August, the water has warmed up a touch by then and the fish are hard on the dries - I guess the equivalent time on the Midlands reservoirs would be May or June. Later in the season (September/October) on Clywedog the weather can make fishing challenging.....still this was our only chance so we took it even though it was almost mid October.

## Day 1 boat pairings

Rob & Sue

Neil & Samantha

The weather was kind, 12mph wind, 15c, overcast and slight rain and occasional sun.

Sue and I started our day directly opposite the lodge at Eblyd, this is a small bay surrounded by 150ft of steep imposing cliffs, the water is very deep (30ft) just 5 or 6 feet from the bank. As Clywedog has a slate bed the water takes on a dark tea stained colour although visibility is still good at around 15 ft, terrestrial insects fall from the dense ferns growing on the cliffs and are quickly taken by the trout that patrol the edges.....for this reason "Dries" is undoubtedly the number 1 method from June onwards as the resident fish are conditioned to look up for food.....just ensure patterns are black, claret or fiery brown and around size 12 in size to match the colour of terrestrial insects.

On just the second drift Sue had a fish rise to a black hopper, then almost immediately hooked a nice fin perfect rainbow of around 2.5lb just 3ft from the bank after a spirited fight it was netted followed by the customary photograph before being released into the depths. The cool deep water means catch and release is very successful and fish go back easily at all times of the year.

We continued along the steep cliffs, picking up the odd fish each on dries and missed as many before we broke for lunch at the lodge.

Neil and Samantha had enjoyed much more success from the Cages area to Sailing Club with "Tip" lines and a combination of cormorants, dabblers and small boobies. Neil had even caught one of the wild browns.



Sue and I changed methods and switched to a 3ft tip, with a size 12 cormorant booby on the dropper and a cat's whisker booby on the point....make a cast, strip twice to "pop" the boobies and pull the fish to the flies then just an ultra slow figure of 8 back and wait for it to go tight. It really was as simple as that, Sue and I began picking fish up pretty consistently and soon built a good bag between us with all fish well mended and between 2 and 4lb a couple of blue trout added to the excitement....not a bad start to the weekend.

## Day 2 Boat pairings

Neil & Rob

Sue & Samantha

Again light 8 to 12 mph winds, 14 degC and overcast, Neil and I opted to explore and fish the extremes of the reservoir the top of the Biga Arm and Popeyes Hole.

I again started on dries while Neil opted for the "Tip" approach. After fishing for just 10 minutes Neil and I concluded it would be extremely difficult, the overnight rain had run off the mountain and into the feeder streams the arms were now coloured up, and full of sediment ....fishing was practically impossible with visibility just 2 or 3ft at most. I missed one half hearted rise on the dries but that was our morning ....challenging

Sue and Samantha had fished the Sailing Club and Dam with moderate success with most fish to a cormorant booby.

After lunch we all fished from the Lodge, past the Cages to the Sailing Club and into the Main Basin we new this area was holding the most fish and had good visibility so decided to concentrate our efforts there. Neil switched to a slow glass with 2 boobies and roly polyed back slowly, takes were instant and our spirits lifted, a rainbow of around 10 to 12lb then followed Neil up at Sailing Club point and swirled around his flies, my jaw dropped but it unfortunately didn't take.

The temperature had risen a few degrees we were all catching fish and things were perfect, at around 4pm a big wind-lane appeared and it was though a switch had been flicked, fish were now rising everywhere, I immediately switched to dries and proceeded to just cast at rising fish for 2 hours....with not even an offer to show for my efforts !....I still don't know why Neil also changed and instantly picked up a good rainbow on a black hopper and missed and lost another couple while I continued to struggle.



We could see commotion in Sam's boat 50m away, thankfully she hadn't fallen in but was trying to photograph an obviously large fish.....we motored up to Sailing Club Point to discover that Samantha had just taken a stunning grown on rainbow of approximately 11lb on a size 12 black CDC and 6lb leader...no question this was fish of the day !

Neil and I were definitely beaten, Sam had caught 10, Sue 9, mostly on dries....definitely a day for the girls and they had the bragging rights for the evening!

## Day 3 boat pairings

Rob & Samantha  
Neil & Sue

After 2 days we all knew where the fish were holding, and the methods that were working best. We reasoned that in the morning when it was coldest we would fish tip lines, with a mixture of small dabblers, cormorants and boobies. Then around 2pm when it was a little warmer switch to dries, as the fish were more willing to put their noses out of the water in the afternoon.



Our reasoning worked well, and we were all catching from literally the first drift. Although with it being a Saturday we were hampered by an increase in angler numbers especially beginners fishing, who had no idea that the fish were in the top 3ft of water and that it's not a good idea to motor flat out through the water you intend to fish.....when will people learn that you can't catch frightened fish!

Our rods bending were like a magnet for idiots to converge, so I was relieved to break for lunch.

I decided that it was time for dries, a stealthy approach would be better on these now jumpy fish...I decided to short line (cast just 2 rod lengths) and leave my flies static until they were taken, no repeated casting or movements just let the fish find the flies.....it worked and I was picking up a couple of fish every drift, all to a size 12 black hopper that had proved successful for Sue 2 days before.

Sue was also catching and picked up a nice blue on the dries, whilst Neil and Samantha persisted on the tip lines with boobies

We came off the water at 5pm, just as a storm started to roll in, we had all caught well, on a variety of methods although mostly in the same large area....with the best patterns predominantly black based flies (cormorants, dabblers, hoppers, black boobies)

On reflection it was a wonderful break, everything we had hoped for with excellent fishing, accommodation and company. I've no doubt we will return very soon (a 3 day boat package on Clywedog for 2 anglers is just £190) and are now researching other trips in the UK.

Variety after all is the spice of life...

***Rob Edmunds***