

Invicta Meeting October 24th 2024

The opening meeting of the winter series was almost standing room only with at least 30 members filling the Meeting room in Harston. There was no formal agenda other than to review the season and allow some of our established members to give us an insight to their techniques and, hopefully, improve our catch returns next season.

However, the meeting that a long-standing succumbed to Some members may spent some years as a Basingstoke Ayres



opened on a sober note when it was revealed active member, Alan Taylor, had recently Alzheimer's after almost a decade of decline. recall that he retired to Grafham village and baliff. The club was represented at the crematorium by Steve Middleton and Bob

David Moore commented that we have 107 members and it is run by a committee of 10. The club, which is noted as a friendly outfit, is cemented by the web site run by Andy Trafankoski and contributors. Personally, I would advise all members to join the WattsApp group to receive the latest information. Apply via David Moore. The club runs numerous events including 12 matches to determine the award of the Carr Cup, the Tuesday evening league, and the widely acclaimed Snowbee floating line competition. There is an active fly-tying group and some members take part in the bank clearing operations at Grafham run by GWFFA. There is the Summer Social gathering, the Annual Dinner, the Pilgrimage, not to mention the winter evening meetings.

We excelled in the competition run by the Association of Major Fly-Fishing Clubs (AMFFC). This involves 3 Divisions of 6 Clubs, each consisting of 6 members none of which are allowed to participate in more than 5 events. The precise rules can be found in <https://amfc.co.uk/>. To cut a long story short, the Invicta "A" and "B" teams finished as runners up in Divisions 2 and 3. 29 different members of the club took part in this competition. The venues are spread around the country and hats off to Lee Cartmall who travelled down from Middlesborough in order to participate in some events.

So, as a short summary, we had 20 teams entering the Snowbee FL event. Dave Currie earned an England cap for 2025. Frazer Duffy won the Carr Cup. Dave Currie also won the Tuesday evening league. 49 different anglers fished at least 1 evening. There was some very difficult fishing conditions, particularly in the early events when the catch was down to 0.7 for the opening event. The best part of the evening for some, was discovering the "Mermaid" pub in Ellington for excellent after-event grub!

The lack of fish caused some anglers to comment on the lack of fly life, not only on the water but away where it was noticeable that the typical build-up on windscreens was a thing of the past. Wasp nests were down from 300 per annum to 50. There was a general consensus that farmers using excessive insecticides was responsible although someone reckoned that herbicides were more deadly. Anglers seem to have forgotten that back in the 80's, AW treated the reservoir to a dose of ferric sulphate to kill off crustaceans such as snails and caddis which were blocking the pumping facilities. Before this occurred, it was difficult to anchor at the western end of the reservoir due to Canadian pond weed; afterwards there was a stinking black sludge residue on the bottom. There were millions of snail and caddis shucks on the shore around G point. Another claim which I found iffy was that the large rainbows caught over the summer months were "grown on". Apparently, at the time of writing, the records show that 109 5lb + fish were captured so far

this season. The tails of the fish may well have been rudder-like but to me it shows the quality of the fish from the farm. It transpired that there was indeed a stocking of 4lb + fish back in June.

Dave Currie related his experiences in winning an England cap at Rutland. The fish were located in front of the sailing club. Alas the competition days coincided with a couple of National sailing competitions. It was a tough couple of days. He did not bring a fly box to the meeting because he claimed that he did not have secret patterns. Indeed, he claimed that if you can hold a rod then you have a good chance of fishing for England! This was attributed to the fact that there were fewer anglers and there were 3 venues which were open to all. Come off it Dave, it was no fluke that you won the Tuesday league! Tackle wise, he has abandoned his Shakespeare landing net as it "weighed a ton" and led to the loss of a significant number of fish. He approves of the type supplied by AW. He does not like to waste time. Hence, he has a preference for decaffeinated coffee as a hot beverage as, in his experience, it minimises the need to urinate. Apparently, for a fish to count, the rod must be in the angler's hand at the time of the take. He usually uses 0.2mm leader material especially if the water has been hammered the day before. He has tried cheap Chinese fluorocarbons which are OK in his experience until wind knots form in the leader. He now has a preference for Decathlon. I had a look on Google and I can only find the brand name Caperlan soft 100% fluorocarbon. I cannot guarantee this is the leader used by Dave but at £6.49 for 50 metres, it must be worth a try. So, Dave recommends members to fish the next qualifier which will be on May 25th at Rutland 2025. You too could fish for England!

Chris Mcleod did not have much to say because he has hardly fished since the summer of '23. He has had a crap season so far simply, in his opinion, because he has not spent enough time of the water. He thought that the fly pattern was the least important part of success whereas it is essential to have an idea as to where the fish were located. In the good old days before the internet, an essential tool was to know the number plates of cars owned by successful anglers! He quoted a maxim from the late Henry Lowe who maintained that depth and the speed of retrieve were critical parameters. Chris reckoned that his daughter has generated an algorithm which will increase the chances of a good catch. He promised to reveal all in a future meeting!

Jeff Hickson kindly provided me with some notes on dry fly fishing. He did start off by denying that he was the expert and pointed us in the direction of Alan Briggs as the true doyen in the club. Jeff separated his flies into damps and dries according to how they sit on the surface. I hope that is self-explanatory. His hints and tips were as follows:

- * Use a lighter rod 9-10 feet and 5/6 lines.
- * Accurate casting pays dividends
- * Leader length as long as you can handle – typically 9-10 feet between the line and the first fly.
- * Leader material with a b.s. of 6-7lbs. *Mono Gigafish*, *Copolymer Snowbee*, and for *Fluoro X-Line*.
- * Generally use 2 flies 4-6 feet apart unless the fishing is hard when a single fly will suffice. If no fish are moving try 3 flies and modify when and if the successful pattern is identified.
- * Degrease the leader with "mud". Gink used as a flotant. Dry fly powder for drying waterlogged patterns. Amadou to dry flies (first time I had seen this fungus).
- * Uses Gink to help float Shuttlecocks.
- * Presentation – cast as if you are intending to land the flie(s) on a table 4 feet above the actual water surface. This will help getting the flies down gently.
- * Watch rise forms which will show the direction and speed at which the fish is travelling.
- * Don't forget that trout mostly surface feed when roving upwind.
- * Flies are mostly a #10 or smaller. Also a #10 short shank or flies tied short.

We had a look in his fly box. There were a variety of flies, all beautifully tied. He clearly believed that selecting the correct pattern on (and during) the day was important. Patterns included:

- * CDC Shuttlecock (and Growler by adding a hackle)
- * CDC F Flies
- * Shipmans
- * Midas(?)
- * Crippled midge (one breather)
- * Big dry fly (2 breathers)
- * Booby eyed shuttle
- * Bits but no wing
- * Hopper – full but also a cut down version
- * Bopper (Hopper with a single eye. Best original had booby eyes)
- * Daddy with detached body

I noticed that there were no beetle or snail patterns.

Summarising, he reminded members to:

- * Fan cast
- * Relatively short casting distances
- * Try and put the flies in front of feeding fish
- * Brush up on your casting technique at the beginning of the season – plug for Pete Hartley!

A questioner from the audience wanted to know about refusals. The response from Jeff was to change the size of the fly or the pattern. Perhaps the presentation was poor or the leader too thick?

My 5 bobs worth is to mention wind lanes as a prolific source of fish feeding in the surface layers. Also, in relatively calm conditions with a breeze blowing off the bank, there is frequently a wide band of water which is dead smooth. The region to fish is at the interface where the ripple commences. Best not to wade!

Tim Thompson made a point of writing up his experiences after every fishing trip even to the extent of recording fish per hour! Interesting diary I suspect! Confidence was, in his opinion, the most important virtue. He praised the Invicta Club competitions, especially the Tuesday Evening League, to enable him to improve his skills. His best flies have been the biscuit-coloured hybrid shrimp as modified by Keth Gilchrist, a big red buzzer and a red holographic diawl bach. We touched on kit and noted his preference for MaxCatch Gold floating lines. However, what really got us going was the incident where he fell into the reservoir. He was using a Wychwood seat when there was a bang: the seat vanished beneath the waves and Tim was deposited into the water. His life jacket failed to inflate so much praise to boat partner, Pete Webb, who pulled him back onboard! Although the seat was not recovered, it appears the problem is not uncommon and it was recommended by members that the securing straps were replaced with clamps. A wag suggested that his life jacket did not inflate because he did not dip sufficiently under the surface!! On a more serious note, this problem may be more prevalent than previously thought and a review is underway at Pitsford.

Neil Potts, our Booking Officer, said that the dates for fishing next season, although not fixed, will be very similar to this year driven by the competition fixtures on the various reservoirs. Blithfield was discussed as a possible venue for a club trip in May. It is north of Birmingham, about twice as far from Cambridge than Draycote, possibly needing an overnight stay. It is a club run water, claimed to be over-stocked but not a lot of fly life. The fish are hungry! Feedback to the committee is welcomed.

For those itching on fishing through the winter, the Shrimpmasters events are set for 17th & 24th November, 8th & 22nd December, and 5th & 19th January (2025).

Dave Jones
26th October 2024



Examples of flies from the Hickson fly box