



# Verulam Trout News

November 2016



## Verulam Trout Committee and Co-Opts: Roles and Responsibilities

**Bob Ring** \* (Chairman) Contact: tel: 01582.764442 or 07747795334 (bobring@btinternet.com) - Chairing Verulam Trout Committee Meetings and the VT Annual Meeting. Overall responsibility to ensure the smooth running of VT Representative of VT at the VAC General Committee. VAC Open Day co-coordinator for the VT. Fun Day organizer. Fish purchases. PLUS Assistant Fisheries Manager at Bellows Mill

**Barry Evans** (Secretary) Contact: tel: 01923.682388 (trout@verulam-angling.co.uk) **Season Ticket Sales** (and liaising with Chris Jennings on ticket preparation etc). Accounts. Agendas and Minutes of Committee and Annual Meetings. Maintenance of the Membership database used for communication and survey

**Clive Butcher** Contact (jcbutcher@gmail.com) - VT Webpage on VAC website. Fly Casting tuition/Introduction to fly fishing/fly tying. Newsletter (for communication to VT interested members)

**Neil Roberts** VAC FORUM – Trout discussions moderator

**Chris Jennings** \* Contact: tel: 01442.265866 (early evening) (chrisjennings@btinternet.com) - Day and Guest Ticket Sales at Riverside Road and Bellows Mill

**Richard Russell** \* Contact: tel: 01727.838178 (richardrussell\_9@sky.com) - Support for Day and Guest Ticket Sales. Away Day organization. VAC Training Coach

**Mal Shaw** - Social Secretary

**Peter Phillips** - General Duties - Ford Lake, Bellows Mill bank maintenance

\* Fly Fishing Day and Guest permit seller

## **On the Cover**

Nick Ring tubing at Elinor (see report)

## **Bellows Mill Autumn Season**

We seem to be following our usual model for the season with the warm water from the summer preventing the fish from feeding well in the first few weeks of the autumn. The early days were again difficult with few anglers out and even fewer fish. As the nights lengthened and the water cooled so the fishing picked up and the average catch rose. By the end of week four the catch was up to our yearly average of two fish per angler. Whilst blanks were not uncommon the usual "clever dicks" managed their limit by midday. Among the "Thursday Boys" Jim Waller landed three of the larger fish before lunch.

Having "time on their hands" they launched the work boat to trim back the tree at the inlet end.



**Our Chairman carries out an Impromptu Work Party**

## **River Itchen 8<sup>th</sup> October 2016 - Barry Evans Reports**

On 8<sup>th</sup> October VAC anglers, both fly and coarse, visited the Lower River Itchen. This year the visit was earlier than usual in order to benefit from longer day light hours before the clocks changed. Good weather prevailed, the river was a good height and very clear with plenty of weed.

The clear water enabled the fly anglers to sight many of the fish caught, both brown trout and grayling. For some, like Alan Stainton and Ray Marks, it was a day of firsts. Catching brown trout on a chalk stream, catching fish on a dry fly, and catching grayling.



### **Rowland Elvidge fishing the weir pool**

Many fish followed the fly but as is the case with anglers they were on the wrong bank, or on the wrong side of the bend to get correct presentation. Or the fast river flow just skated the dry fly sideways across initially interested quite large trout who quickly knew something was up, lost interest and disappeared into the weed.

Or in the case of Neil Roberts being snapped up by a salmon.



**Ray Marks - Brown Trout**



**Paul Andemahr - Brown Trout**



Barry Evans - Grayling



Andy King - Sea Trout?



**Neil Roberts - Sea Trout?**



**Andy King - Brown Trout**

Two of the fish caught, by Neil and Andy King, may have been sea trout. I will leave their identification to the experts.\*

As usual the fly boys left the river just after mid-day and had the all important lunch together to swap fishy tales. This time we were joined, about ten feet above our heads, by a hornets nest that occupied a bird nest box on the adjacent fishing lodge. Fortunately (confirmed by the experts) the hornets were not interested, unlike wasps, in our food, or us.

We also gave a toast in memory of Ken Huitson who last accompanied us in 2015.



### Lunch

In the afternoon some carried on fly fishing while a few of the fly anglers went over to the dark side and moved downstream to the coarse section and used, dare I say, MAGGOTS, to catch more trout and grayling. Methods used ranged from ledgering, swim feeders and float fishing. The use of centre pins was remembered by some but they paid the penalty by getting into many tangles.



Andy King - Grayling with maggots!

The coarse anglers also caught plenty of trout and grayling on maggots and sweet corn with one landing what he thought was a large sea trout.

Although not all of the fly anglers caught fish all agreed it was a very enjoyable day. Roll on the 2017 trip!

Barry Evans

### **\* Experts View**

Clearly not me but I did have a look on the internet and even The Atlantic Salmon Trust, who obviously are (experts, that is), say its quite difficult to distinguish between brown and sea trout. If you've caught a brown trout in the Itchen, or any other sea trout river, that weighs more than six pounds, is silver with black spots and has sea lice its either a salmon or a sea trout. If the black spots are mainly above the lateral line and the maxilla (the bony plate above the jaw) does not extend beyond a vertical line below the eye, its a salmon. If the maxilla extends past the eye its a trout; but which? The tricky bit is fish around the size as caught by our heroes.

The first sign in brown trout is red spots - sea trout don't have them and neither do our ones in question. Fresh run sea trout are silvery but if they've been in a river for some time (eg May to October) they become somewhat browner. A plus point for Andy King's but less so for Neil's. Another distinguishing feature is a distinct halo around the spots in brownies; quite clear in the pictures above of fish with red spots but much less so in Andy and Neil's. Apparently the only sure fire way of knowing is to have the bones or scales analysed for strontium as there's more of it in the sea and therefore it follows, in sea trout. But who wants to go there?

So, on balance, I would say that both Andy and Neil's fish are sea trout.

But look again at the trout caught by Ray Marks; is that a sea trout that's been in the river all summer?

My brain hurts!

## **Richard Russell reports on the last two Away Days**

### **Eyebrook - Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2016**

We arrived at Eyebrook reservoir in the drizzle and mild wind and by the time we had paid for our tickets, taken coffee in the lodge, tackled up and transferred our gear to the boats weather conditions had deteriorated to such an extent that I for one wasn't looking forward to the next 6 hours being buffeted around like a piece of drift wood in the Irish sea. The moment we pulled away from our moorings the waves started crashing over the bows. The wind was blowing away from the dam wall during the morning and this helped us to make up our minds where to fish. Ken Woollard and I headed for the opposite side from the dam wall where we were able to drop anchor and fish towards the shore with the wind at our backs. The boat next to ours was having some luck and I saw the occupants land a couple of fish, but nothing was biting where we were moored. I made a couple of phone calls to other boats in our Vac party and discovered that Fred Edwards had lost one under the boat and David Fisher had landed one trout caught on a black buzzer. I heaved in the anchor and tried a few other spots along the far bank without any luck. The rain started falling heavily and the wind changed direction towards the dam wall, we decided to drop the drogue and try drifting towards the dam. I changed my buzzer rig for a Kennick killer damsel lure on the point and after a few very quick retrieves I thought I'd had a pull but as the wind was howling and my line was being blown everywhere it was difficult to detect a bite. I persisted with this method for a few more drifts and eventually got lucky and landed a trout of 2lb 4oz. We met back at the boat landing stage at 15:00 for the weigh in and it didn't take long as only two fish had been caught between the eight of us. The biggest fish was caught by David Fisher and weighed 2lb 8oz. We were all very wet but decided to extend the torture for a few more hours and returned to the water. I continued with the same method and hooked a further trout only to get snapped up within seconds of hooking it. Sadly, that was the extent of the action, but as if by magic the sun came out and the wind ceased at 17:00, just when we were thinking of calling it a day. At least we travelled home in the dry.



**David Fisher with the best fish of the day – 2lb 8oz rainbow trout**

## **Elinor - Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2016**

Elinor is a regular fixture on the Vac Trout calendar and a fishery that is always well stocked and not too big in acreage to be daunting. We arrived in bright sunshine with not a ripple on the water, a complete contrast to last month's visit to Eyebrook. It's rowing boats at Elinor and most of them are in a pretty shoddy state, but what's most important is that you find a decent set of oars as most of them have splits or chunks missing from the paddle end, sometimes I've found myself rowing with what seemed like a pair of cocktail sticks. They get damaged by people using them to push their boat away from the bank. There were once again just the eight of us that attended the away day and 6 fished from boats whilst Bob and Nick Ring opted for their float tubes. Our boats spread out over the lake trying to find the most productive spot. At about 11:00 my boat partner Ken Woollard hooked and landed the first of his five fish taken on a damsel fly. A gentle wind picked up around midday and this presented perfect fishing conditions. I phoned Andy King to find out what the fishing was like at the other end of the lake and he reported fish on the surface all around their boat, but no takes as yet. He phoned back a few minutes later to report both he and Andy Fenn had caught using blobs. Bob Ring was paddling around the dam and overflow corner and catching on a blue backed damsel fly, we asked permission to invade his space and he kindly ushered us into a spot alongside the dam. Ken switched to a tequila blob at this point and had further success landing three more fish. Nick Ring was also having some success fishing with black buzzers and he finished with three fish on a catch and release ticket, similarly Bob also fished a catch and release ticket.

<b>Angler</b>	<b>Fish 1</b>	<b>Fish 2</b>	<b>Fish 3</b>	<b>Fish 4</b>	<b>Fish 5</b>	<b>Total</b>
Andy Fenn	2lb 0oz	1lb 7oz				3lb 7oz
Andy King	1lb 15oz					1lb 15oz
John Eggle						
Martin Ede						
Ken Woollard	2lb 14oz	1lb 10oz	2lb 4oz	1lb 10oz	1lb 7oz	9lb 13oz
Richard Russell						
Bob Ring	C & R	C & R	C & R	C & R	C & R	-----
Nick Ring	C & R	C & R	C & R			-----



**Weighing the catch**



**Winning angler Ken Woollard collects the pool money**

## **The Weever's Tale**

No, not one of the Canterbury Tales but a true and cautionary warning from Mal Shaw on a sailing holiday in Croatia earlier this year.....

*It was a calm and sunny day at the beginning of September. We were travelling at around two knots, gliding through the blue Adriatic Sea, near the beautiful island of Hvar. True to form, I was taking full advantage of the light winds and leisurely pace of the graceful 40 foot Oyster yacht....I was spinning off the stern.*

*Heavily weighted, the spinner was working well, I had caught several small, strange but, colourful fish, returning them safely to the ocean. The rest of the crew mates were unimpressed, because they were waiting for something large enough to eat! Then I hooked the biggest one of the morning (still quite small) So, in my inimitable style, held it up, still on the spinner, shouting, "Champiarno, Champiarno" in*

*my best Croatian, much to the applause of the crew!*

*The fish obviously didn't enjoy the attention and flipped off the hook on to the deck and in the chaotic few seconds of trying to retrieve it without causing the fish any lasting trauma.....I accidentally caught the fish, in my bare feet, under my big toe.*

*The barbs on the fins injected a protein based poison into my foot (I didn't know this at the time) The pain was unbearable.....I did however have the presence of mind to return the beast to the ocean!*

*My foot went bright red and swelled like an inflated balloon...The pain increased at such an alarming rate, that I was now vomiting over the side. At this stage, we weren't certain what type of fish it was, but suspected it was the dreaded Weever.*

*We had no Wifi to check what the antidote was, so the skipper dropped the sails, turned on the engine and raced to Hvar. We slid slowly down the edge of the tyred quay, unable to stop due to the impending arrival of the ferry. My son and I jumped gingerly off and went in search of a doctor.*

*I am, by now dragging my foot, like Quasimodo through the streets of Hvar. Alex, my son went into a very busy chemist, to enquire about a doctor....But the assistant refused to attend to him saying "you put on shirt" !!!! She then took one look at me and pointed, saying "doctor on third floor."*

*With no lift, we climbed the steep stairs passing a veterinary on the first floor, a dentist on the second floor and finally the doctors surgery. Greeted by a smiling nurse, she took one look at my foot/leg and showed me straight into the doctor, ahead of many waiting patients.*

*The very serious lady doctor said in a very loud voice...."Weever fish?" to which I nodded, she was not impressed "How long since the sting?" she asked. I said around an hour and she explained that the foot needed to be immersed in near boiling water for an equal amount of time to neutralise the protein. The area affected has to reach over 40c to achieve this.*

*At this stage, the pain and swelling were so bad, I just said, do what you have to do. A deep bucket of steaming hot water was put in front of me and I gingerly started to immerse my foot. Not satisfied with my cowardly progress, she push my leg deep into the scalding water....for which I was eternally grateful.*

*Within minutes the pain started to subside*

*Some 60 minutes later the pain had greatly reduced and I felt much better. However, there was collateral damage.....the water was so hot, I had now had three very large blisters on my foot/ankle. In some ways, a small price to pay to extinguish the pain. They kindly dressed my blisters and sent me on my way.*

*My marine activities were somewhat contained for the rest of the voyage, but the medicinal wine helped!! So, the moral of the story is, not to fish in bare feet and make sure you know the antidote for any stings you are likely to get in certain countries.*

*Having said that, there are 9 varieties of Weever fish around the world, some of which, reside off the coast of the UK. So, if you are unlucky enough to get stung, you now know what to do. The quicker you immerse your sting, the less time it takes to neutralise the protein. Can I also suggest that water needs to be hot, but not near boiling, hence reducing the chance of blisters*

*You'll be glad to know, my foot is back to normal after some 6 weeks. Also, I have already booked my next sailing holiday.... and bought some new deck shoes!!*

*Happy days*

*Mal Shaw*

Mal also sent the picture below of a weever fish; not *his* one but one caught off a beach in North Wales, so that you know what to avoid. Thanks Mal!



## Its a Date

Diaries out...

Our now traditional **Festive Fun** competition will be held on **27th December starting around 9.30am for a 10am start**. Contact **Bob Ring** 01582.764442 or 07747795334 (bobring@btinternet.com) if you want to take part and enjoy a minced pie and mulled wine.

The **Annual Verulam Trout Meeting** will be on **10th January starting at 7.30 for 8.00pm**. As usual it will be held at **New Greens Social Club, High Oaks, St Albans, AL3 6DL**. All VAC members are welcome. Further details of both events next month.

## And Finally...

### Fancy Some Free Trout Fishing?

Chris Jennings spotted the following on the BBC on 12th October

*Up to 80,000 farmed rainbow trout have been accidentally released into the sea in Denmark, prompting a call for anglers to try to catch them.*

*The accident happened when a cargo ship crashed into a fish farm on the Horsens Fjord on the Jutland peninsula.*

*There are fears that the fish, weighing about 3kg (6lb 10oz) each, could disrupt the reproduction of other trout species.*

*A local environmentalist urged "anyone with fishing gear to... go fishing".*

*Soren Knabe, chair of the environmental group Vandpleje Fyn and a member of the Danish Angler's Association, told the Copenhagen Post that it was the worst possible time for rainbow trout to be released into Danish waters.*

*"Sea trout are currently coming up into Funen streams to spawn, and sea trout eggs are a favourite food for rainbow trout," said Mr Knabe, referring to Funen island, south of the farm.*

*The cargo vessel was en route from the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad, to the east, to the Danish port of Kolding when it crashed on Tuesday.*

*Jon Svendsen, a researcher at Denmark's National Institute of Aquatic Resources, said rainbow trout were feared to pose a threat to sea trout reproduction by digging up sea trout eggs while trying to spawn themselves.*

*He said the release would have an immediate environmental impact and the timing was "very unfortunate".*

*Dr Svendsen endorsed the call for anglers to try to round up the fish. However, he said the threat was not long-term - as rainbow trout do not establish permanent wild populations in Denmark.*

*Of greater threat to the local environment, he said, were sand extraction for construction, invasive species, climate change - and fish farms themselves.*

*"Fish farms pose a much greater threat to the local marine environment, mainly because of nutrient releases into the local environment, which may be associated with algae blooms and subsequent hypoxia (low oxygen conditions)," Dr Svendsen told the BBC.*