

Sportsfishing Club of Great Britain Newsletter

Quarter two, 2022



Chairmans Strike

Dear Members,

Thank you for the kind words regarding the first of the SCBI new newsletters. I thought it excellent and many thanks are due to Johnmac and his team who have also worked hard on this second newsletter. As ever, a newsletter requires content and we are always happy to receive material from any one of you, whether long or short and whether it relates to a great trip, a successful catch, some 'crying towel' incident or anything else that might be of interest. Provided you steer clear of politics and religion almost anything goes! We can offer editorial assistance so don't worry if your spelling or grammar is no longer GCSE standard, but plenty of pictures are certainly welcome.

I expect many of you have had trips curtailed over the past year. I have missed the Canary Islands; the eruption on La Palma didn't help, though thankfully the folks I know there were largely unaffected. I am hoping to return this summer, though the chaotic state of our travel industry doesn't inspire confidence. I know we have been through two years of pandemic, but one wonders what has happened to the British 'can do' approach in the face of difficulty.

On a brighter note, I'm very much looking forward to the SCBI shark competition again and have also planned a few days chasing bluefin tuna on Sowenna out of Looe, skippered by member Dan Margetts, now that the CHART programme has been confirmed for 2022. The 2021 programme exceeded all expectations in terms of catch numbers and survival rates, demonstrating the viability of a recreational catch-and-release fishery and the value of angler-led scientific data collection, though there is still a huge catch-and-kill lobby actively demanding access to this resource. Will we ever learn? But I risk venturing in to politics, so I'll move on. The complete list of skippers taking part in the 2022 CHART programme is not yet published, I believe. As soon as it is available, we'll let you know.

Sadly, I'm hearing of many cancellations affecting our charter skippers. Perhaps that is understandable given the outrageous prices they are being charged for fuel (as are we all) and, like the rest of us, are finding inflation biting everywhere. They cannot absorb all of these increases and will inevitably be forced to pass some costs on to us anglers, who are also feeling the pinch. My only plea is to remember if we don't support our charter fleet wherever possible, it will fold boat by boat; retiring skippers will not be replaced by new and enthusiastic recruits if those folks can see no future ahead. That would be awful coming at a time when we have seen the first glimmer of recognition amongst politicians and officials that recreation sea angling is actually a good thing! Perhaps the powers that be should consider subsidising charter boat fuel for recreational sea angling, though I won't hold my breath.

Enjoy this newsletter and feel free to contact me or any of the committee to say what you like or don't like about it, what you'd like to see in future editions and, wherever possible, to add to the content for future issues.

Tight lines,
Chris Flower
Chairman, SCBI

Tales of Scales and other potential World Records that might have been.

by Dave West

But it's not all of "that might have been". Collectively, over the past more than four decades since the Club's formation, its membership have established over 80 world records. That's in all saltwater line classes - 2 to 130lbs - and All-Tackle records, together with a variety of freshwater and also fly-caught - fresh and saltwater - records.

And whilst a number were established in this country on light tackle, especially when Berkeley's were offering 1000\$US - subsequently reduced to 500 - for records established using their lines in the '80s a number of others have been established overseas. Here're two - still current at time of writing - and perhaps the most impressive:



Ann Holmes with her 802lb Blue Marlin (Atlantic) taken on 50lb class tackle in Gran Canaria, August 1986.



John Patten with his 237lb Dogtooth Tuna caught in Tanzania on 130lb class tackle in November 2015. It's also the IGFA's All-Tackle record.

But me; my 'contribution'? Well I'm still trying but, on occasions, I've come close! And when you get to my age, believe me, you will have built up lots of memories of those fishing trips past. Let me start though with several that were actually planned - but ultimately failed - attempts.

Faial, Azores. This incident is from August 1999.

I'd arrived - minus my luggage that got 'left' on the carousel in Lisbon airport - and immediately went out that evening fishing on John Gill's boat where it's co-owner's girlfriend - was targeting a record; a Bluefish on 6lb test. And it worked, she caught a 17 pounder, together with what she'd also at my suggestion submitted, a record

European Barracuda. John had invited me to target Blue Marlin, but in the intervening days all I'd managed was releasing a few Whites. Not much fun on 80s and 130s.

Anyway my thoughts turned back to Bluefish and a possible crack at the men's 6lb record. It was one of the oldest 'in the books' having been established in Montauk - 20lb 1oz - back in 1977. So, the 'cunning plan', I was to fish the same reef on the same set of gear, having tested the drag - 2.2lbs - against a litre bottle of water. Rigorous preparation, but and I'll come to that later.

Firstly I caught a bigger - well it was 1/2lb bigger than Jennifer's one - Barracuda on a small Chicharro livebait. (They're baby, Blue Horse Mackerel.) Then I hooked what we were hoping for, a decent Bluefish, and after approaching half an hour it surfaced in the darkness. How big? Well it was long and, as Ted Legg gaffed it, we thought it might make 24/25lbs. Boarded though it was quite lank - spawned out - but was registering, allowing for the swell, between 20 and 22lbs on a set of - 1/2lb increment - scales.

We immediately up-anchored and run back for weighing on a set of accredited scales but, and we come back to the **BIG** but. The scales were on one of the other boats. Banging on the cabin door - we suspected one of the crewmen might be 'entertaining' a young lady on board - didn't evoke a response. So we spent the next hour and a bit fruitlessly wandering around all the local bars, but finally were forced to wrap the fish - both the Barracuda and Bluefish - in wet towels until the morning.

Well the European Barracuda would have broken Jennifer's All-Tackle record but I really didn't want my name associated with a Barracuda. But the Bluefish? On the scales it weighed 19lb 14oz, three ounces short for a tie. Deflated just about sums it up. It was a bit over two pounds heavier than the current European record, but I decided not to claim it. I didn't even bother to take a picture of it and we went out fishing again on the Condor Bank but still no Blue on this trip.

PS. Yup, that 20lb 1oz record caught from Montauk in 1977 is still standing as is Jennifer's Ladies record!

Then moving on to

Isla Coiba, Panama. As a lead-in to this story, one of the Club's now ex-members - a German angler, Hermann Fehringer - had submitted a record claim for a fly-caught 66lb Amberjack on a 16lb tippet from the Pacific coast of Costa Rica, but it had been rejected. It had been incorrectly identified, it was in fact an Almaco Jack. That started me thinking, in that on previous trips to Coiba we'd caught what we'd assumed were also Amberjack, but were they all proverbial 'reef donkeys': AJs? Some certainly were 'deeper' in profile and might they have been Almaco Jacks?



So on my next, and as it turned out last trip to Coiba - and yes, it was still a penal colony - we took a set of accredited scales with us.

One day whilst fishing for bait, John Bowman hooked a Black Skipjack only for it to be immediately taken by a 50lb Almaco Jack. Elation! The species had only just been included in the IGFA's record listings and this would have established the 50lb line class record.

Onshore that evening I started documenting John's catch, and even managed to have the details certified by a Canadian doctor who'd just happened by with

a group of other tourists. Then it was obtaining the line sample & trace, and it was then that my doubts crept in. Even though the fish had been caught on a single lure there were three lures on the trace, and unfortunately Rule G - Hooks and Lures - point 4 clearly states 'only one lure containing hooks may be used at a time.' Oh, bother!

I subsequently checked with the IGFA but, 'rules are rules'.



Ascension Island.

This was another planned attempt. Three game-boats - Andromeda, Harmattan and Shy 3 - had recently transferred from Ghana and six of us were fortunate to have been invited to fish there in December 2002. (God's Favor/God's Will, the recently re-named Madam & the Hooker operation, was also there.)

Our primary targets were its essentially 'unexploited' Blue Marlin fishery plus the prolific numbers of Yellowfin Tuna. But what else was also present? Well lots including Broadbill, massive SixGill Sharks and, once there, we even encountered an isolated shoal of Bluefin Tuna migrating through. However, having examined the IGFA Year Book, there appeared to be real opportunities of having a crack at a Horse-Eye Jack record. Several records had earlier been established there, presumably by military personnel.

The Marlin fishing certainly lived up to its potential; Dick Clack released one that the crew called '950 plus' - the crew's 'code' for a potential 'grander' - and an angler on God's Favor - the 48' G & S - weighed an 1146 pounder.

My thoughts kept coming back to the Jacks though but there was one 'small problem'. Whilst we saw big, cruising Horse-Eyes in small pods they were out-numbered (and often surrounded) by Black Jacks. The latter were unfortunately present in 'plague' proportions!



Still, after one evening's chunking for Yellowfin on the 'mooring' - one put down by the crews on the edge of a 600' drop-off - and having slowly trolled back for Broadbill, our crew wanted to target the Horse-Eyes. They were often encountered in the lee of the anchored (static) oil tanker just offshore. So Peter Gurd and I using 6lb tippet fly gear were speculatively, 'blind' casting into the darkness.

I got a solid hook-up and the full fly line 'rattled' through the rings. It then became a battle of attrition,



approaching a stalemate; it being impossible to apply too much pressure given the resistance from the fly line and with the fish literally 'bumping' along the bottom. (Whilst this was being played out it was fascinating, with the deck lights now on, to see Dolphin 'spooking' Flying Fish and watching a hapless one gliding to 'splash down' and its inevitable 'doom' with the Dolphin tracking it throughout its flight.)

Any rate finally I managed to 'coax' the fish to the surface

and of course it was a bl**dy Black Jack!

Writing this I noticed the current 6lb tippet record is still a 'miserly' 11 pounder, but Hermann again subsequently established the 12 and 16lb tippet records there in 2005 with fish of 25lb 9oz and 28lb 14oz respectively.

So they were the planned attempts but, in addition, there were these few near misses.

Gran Canaria, Canary Islands. A few years after catching my first Blue Marlin on John Holmes' boat White Striker in 1979 I returned to the island. The fishing proved slow. I'd caught a 160lb BigEye Tuna on our first day out, but then "NADA", blank after blank. And all the boats were trolling over the same bit of ocean, so I suggested to our skipper – Francisco Ortega, an ex-commercial hand-liner – that we started an hour earlier the next day and he readily agreed.

We were out there trolling by ourselves, with the sun just coming up, when the dorsal fin of a Blue Marlin surfaced behind my lure. It just held position for what seemed like an eternity when, and perhaps the swell had imperceptibly altered the way the lure was tracking, up came her bill – at that size it was undoubtedly a 'she' – and she took it. All then seemed to happen in 'slow motion'; the rubber bands on the end of the stinger line stretched and snapped and then, nothing – we'd failed to hook up. (Subsequently, when we'd retrieved the lure, you could see all the abrasion on the tape used to ensure the two 12/0 hooks were held at 180 degrees to each other.)

Well the cursing soon stopped for within perhaps only ten seconds or so the other outrigger-ed - a friend's - lure similarly got hit. We suspect it was the same fish. This run was no where near as fast as a Bluefin, but it was stripping the 130lb line off the spool effortlessly. Then nothing, which was odd, as it had seemed a really good hook-up. When we received the line, the lure that was being fished on a 600lb mono leader had gone. On inspection it literally looked as if with the angled cut it had been cut with a knife just inches from where the lure's head had been.

All I can speculate is that there must have been a longliner's (or other) hook embedded in its bill and that, as the pressure had built up, its edge had cut through the leader like the proverbial 'knife through butter'.

So how big was it. It was massive! We asked Francisco's son, Francisco junior, who was working the deck how big it was. He came out with the classic – "Big fish, bigger than 500lbs!". We got him to ask his dad who was on the flybridge and had obviously got a much better view. How big? 650 Kilos was the reply. Around 1450lbs! That's BIG and, at the time if we'd been successful, would have been a World record.

And I was inclined to believe Francisco senior. The biggest Blue Marlin he'd caught on a handline – Hemingway's the Old Man of the Sea style – had seized a 65lb Yellowfin Tuna he was playing. That fish, one of the biggest I've heard of, weighed in excess of 1800lbs.



Image aboard Carmen Primera from the Club's first tournament in 1986 in Gran Canaria. That's Francisco Snr at the foot of the steps.

Madeira. On this occasion, again in the early '80s, we were fishing an international competition and set out, trolling from Funchal across to the Desertas Islands. I didn't really expect much so I'd put out a small 5" hexhead lure, rigged on just 3' of light single strand wire, on 30lb class tackle. It would have been fine for any of the Skipjack Tuna we were likely to encounter.

Well something took the lure and I can remember at the time thinking that the boat was taking a long time slowing down. Starting to fight the fish with just a butt pad I soon revised my estimate, thinking it was perhaps a 50lb BigEye Tuna or equivalent.

But a stand-off started to develop, the fish wasn't taking line nor, for that matter, was I retrieving any. That's when you forget the pre-set drag setting and I started pushing the lever forward until, having taken all the stretch out of the line it was starting to 'sing'. Then I eased it back a fraction.

This seemed to work and I eventually forced the fish, which was significantly bigger than I had thought, to the surface about 70 yards back. I explained to the translator on board that I wanted to quickly reverse towards the fish, whilst it was exhausted. But then I understood part of the reason why we'd taken quite so long to stop initially. The controls on the fly bridge where the crew had been sitting didn't work! So I was now left with the skipper steering the boat from the cabin completely 'blind' and relying on my directions via the translator. Definitely too risky, so I decided to continue the fight from a 'dead' boat.

I continued to slug it out, with the only excitement coming when we had to power forward, parallel and just 30 feet from the fish, whilst it was running sub-surface. You could see a 'rooster-tail' coming off the line.

After what was an hour and three quarters I got the fish beaten and was pumping it towards the boat when, with it in full view less than 20 feet away, the line literally 'exploded'. Whether the line had been abraided by its tail or with less line off the spool I should have eased back the drag I'll never know. One of the crew, who'd fished Tuna on a commercial vessel, reckoned it was around 120 kilos, 250lbs. And I suspect, although we were uncertain whether it was a BigEye or small Bluefin Tuna, it would have broken either existing world record at the time.

Key West, Florida. I'd first fished the 'Keys in late 1979 when, surprisingly, the exchange rate was hovering around 2.40\$US to the pound. A great time to buy tackle on 'the cheap'!

However, it wasn't to be until the summer of 1991 when I would next return. Our daughter had finished her GCSEs so what was to be a family holiday started in Orlando (and Cape Canaveral) before flying South to Key West. (I had wanted to combine Disney with Cozumel but my wife wasn't 'wearing' that, so Key West was the 'compromise'.)

On that previous visit as well as targeting offshore species I fished the Flats for Bonefish and Tarpon, but to complete the 'skinny water' trio I needed a Permit. So I ended up 'gravitating' to a fascinating tackle store on Duval; H.T. Chittum's. (Hal Chittum was one of the iconic 'Keys guides who subsequently collaborated in the design of the Hell's Bay skiffs.) Could they recommend a guide? Yes, and the following morning Bob - RT - Trosset picked me up from my hotel's pier.

But this wasn't to be a classic shallow water Flats trip. At this time of the year Permit have migrated offshore to spawn and we 'gunned out' to fish a shallow water wreck. 'Mr P' was immediately 'ticked off the list', but we continued further offshore into the Gulf to target yet more shoaling, just sub-surface, around one of the array of radar towers. (It's an area the US Navy use to hone the skills of their 'top gun' pilots.)

"Did I want to try for something else?" "Well of course!"

Even though we were 40 odd miles out it was only 65' deep and the bottom largely devoid of structure. So we spent the next 10 minutes or so circling an area until up popped a turtle's head. We'd found our rock pile. And fishing light tackle jigs on 8lb test we started catching an array of smallish Amberjack (AJs), fish in the 20lb to 25lb range. Then the first 'happening'. A fish I'd hooked dived back to the bottom and everything 'locked up'. Bob started to laugh. It was apparent to him that the AJ had been taken by a really big Grouper, a Jewfish or, in more politically correct terms, a Goliath Grouper. Well, on 8lb test, there was no way it even knew it was hooked! I could do absolutely nothing as it sedately cruised around the structure, until the line eventually wore through. How big was it likely to be? Well Bob said they can grow up to at least 700lbs. Yup, definitely no contest!

A little later on I hooked another AJ and, looking over the side, I could see it spiralling up accompanied by 5 or 6 others. At this point Bob started to get very excited and, with a 30lb rod he'd got rigged for this very purpose, he hooked a Blue Runner through the back and was 'dapping' it on the surface. The others came rushing up trying to grab it. And Bob had the mini shoal going frantic as he 'figure of eight-ed' the bait just in front of them. The majority were in the 20lb range, but one was much bigger and looked to be around 60lbs or so.

Now Bob's shouting at me at me – "Get the other rod!". Get the other rod? But Bob had some 10 others rigged up in holders. With my fish, its swim bladder blown, on the surface I put that rod in a holder and grabbed another spin rod. And, of course, as soon as the jig touched the surface one of the smaller fish grabbed it. "Break it off, break it off!" which I duly did, but unfortunately the shoal spooked and went down.

After all that excitement RT explained that whilst attempting to 'isolate' the big fish from the others he'd then wanted me to use the fly rod rigged with a 16lb tippet. In that IGFA had only just introduced that class into their lists, the bigger fish would definitely have been a world record. Hindsight's a wonderful thing, but it certainly demonstrates a need for planning.



Different trip - 44lb Amberjack on 12 with Bob Trosset. Apologies for my particular shade of lipstick!

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The day didn't end there though. Soon after there was an opportunity to deploy the 16lb tippet fly gear for a record but more in hope than expectation. Another AJ surfaced followed by a large Barracuda which lazily 'chopped' its tail end and just lay there. Sometimes with Barracuda you can provoke a reaction by landing the fly heavily several times and stripping fast, really fast but this one, presumably sated, ignored my 'best' efforts and returned to the depths.



It's a Barracuda - a VERY BIG Barracuda that would have been a World record if claimed - that John Goddard caught on a fly but in the Seychelles. Any rate just thought I'd include it.

Well RT wasn't quite finished and on the way in we stopped by a derelict, partly demolished concrete structure and there amongst a jumble of rocks we spotted a really big Permit actively hunting for crabs. Another record opportunity, this time on 16lb spin gear? Bob certainly thought so. However given the force of the current and despite a number of attempts it unfortunately proved impossible to get the crab down into the Permit's sight line. Weighting the line would have just caused it to snag. A frustrating end to the day!



A wreck caught Permit

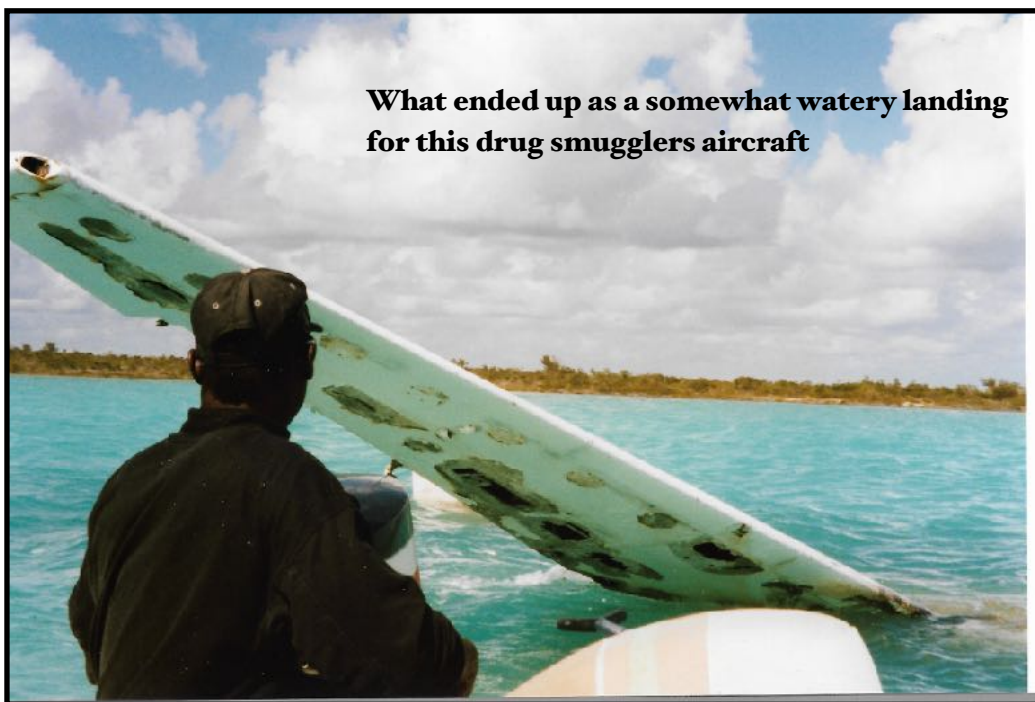
(Bob's approaching 70 now but his desire to establish World Records for his clients hasn't dimmed. It's going back several years but, by then in 2018, as you'll see from [this article](#), he'd been instrumental in racking up 238 records for his clients.)

A number of years after that Charles Reaves and I were targeting sharks on the fly with the guide - Ted Lund - who wrote that article around the Marquesas, about 20 miles West of Key West. A tip, first catch and fillet a Barracuda. If there's one thing that attracts sharks it's a Barracuda, and we had hook-ups from Nurse & Blacktips, and Charles successfully landed a Lemon. But part way through the day we'd had a Hammerhead come into the trail and Ted deployed a set of 4lb test - after a record. The 'fight' if I could describe it as such on ultra-light lasted all of two minutes. It wouldn't leave the chum trail and with my touching the spool ping.



Hammerhead Shark - No contest on 4lb test!

Andros, Bahamas. It's surprising just how shallow a water fish will come into in the search of prey, especially on a making tide. And on this particular trip in the '80s I can recall one seven pounder that took a fly, just 9' – literally the length of my tippet – from the rod top in ankle deep water. Its back and tail were out of the water as it struggled to seize the shrimp pattern.



What ended up as a somewhat watery landing for this drug smugglers aircraft

However this is about BIG fish and, on one particular day, I was fishing alone with an old guide whose eye sight was completely 'shot'. But he really knew these waters and where the Bonefish would be at any particular state of the tide. And, unlike the younger guides, who'd go zooming around the countless shallow water flats, he concentrated on just one small island – Big Wood Cay. It was the nearest island to the Tongue of the Ocean - that deep water channel that runs through the Bahamas' chain – and just 800 yards away.

Unlike most, you tended to get waves, albeit relatively small ones on those ocean-side flats, and the Bonefish push up in the channels between the ridges of hard packed sand. This is where we started – wading, rather than fishing from the skiff - and with me doing the spotting. And the second fish we encountered looked big, certainly over 10lbs. I cast and started stripping the weighted Crazy Charlie fly with the Bonefish following. He was interested, but wouldn't take. Then with the fly just 25' away I decided to stop the retrieve so as not to spook the fish. It swam away and I cast again and it followed again, but still wouldn't take. Of course the third time there was no interest at all! Then I checked the fly and discovered a small piece of weed on the hook. Big fish aren't stupid

We continued along the flat and I spotted what I initially thought was a Barracuda working inshore of us along the beach. It was over 3' long and looked black in the water, so it had to be a Barracuda. (John Goddard suggested we tape out 35" on our rods. We were told everything over that mark was a potential World record.) Sticking my rod in front of the guide's eyes to point it out I got him to confirm - "Yes, it's a Barracuda". Except when the 'Barracuda' turned I could tell from its swimming motion it was a very big Bonefish.

I cast in front of it and it was all over the fly - I was waiting for the tell-tale pluck but it suddenly turned and swam purposely away. Casting again brought no response and I can only assume that an American military helicopter - the island's a drug's surveillance base - clattering along nearly a quarter of a mile away had in fact disturbed it. That was a really big fish; potentially record-sized.

We carried on picking up fish all around the island and I was amazed by his water craft. Then right at the end of the day he wanted to fish an area of mangroves. It started with just isolated shoots here and there in the shallow water, but then got much denser. Bonefish will often feed on crabs - they up-end to take them. And I spotted the flash of a tail waving above the surface. Moving towards it I tried to point it out to the guide but he couldn't, at

least initially, see it.

We got closer and the Bone went into a smallish 'clearing', not much more than 70' or so across, where it was feeding happily.

Like many Bahamian guides he started to get very excited and was hissing – "Cast mon, cast!" But how? We had a mangrove tree right behind us. The first 'flip' caught a leaf, but then I managed a 'steeple' cast – the fly fishers amongst you will know what I mean – and



Andros Island Bonefish

the fish confidentially took the fly and panicked. Where was it to go? I'd clamped my hand on the reel and dragged the rod tip round low.

It sensed the gap before I could release the spool and the 12lb tippet snapped. That again was a fish over 10lbs.

So three big fish in one day and 10lbs is still a mark I've yet to achieve.

The best I've had, from the fabled West side of Andros - the 'Land of Giants' - went 9 and the largest on bait 9 1/2lbs from Islamorada in the 'Keys.



My 9 1/2 pounder

Concluding. What do they say? Well "never say never" and of course "always be prepared", you never know when the unexpected might happen. Or perhaps in my case should it be "Nil Desperandum"?

April 2022

Thoughts on Jacks & Trevally on light gear - Tim Howe

Wading through the inner lagoon with its individual leaves like ribbons of brown tagliatelle feels like I am in a hot broth. My eyes, focused a long way out scanning along the horizon, stutter and blink against the brightness and the stunning beauty of the kaleidoscope of yellow and cyan, cyan and black, brown and yellow, and white. It's so peaceful that can hear the ghost crabs pitter patter up and down on the beach, cooking quietly in the unrelenting heat. They don't dare cool off in the sea.

It's around tea-time on a remote sand cay in the Seychelles, and I'm wading out through water as hot as soup, to climb onto a large dead tree about 5ft up from the water line. In front of me lies a tranquil lagoon, stained brown with decaying seagrass. Directly below me is a sandy gutter, about the width of a small trout stream. Beyond lie open flats of seagrass and broken coral rock. From my perch atop the fossilised Casuarina trunk, I have a perfect view of the gutter and its inhabitants. Butterfly fish, Picasso Triggers, and other small reef denizens flit from one small rock to another like flocks of birds.

I'm playing a waiting game. The tide has just turned and is beginning to push over the flats. I know from watching this spot over the past few days that sooner or later, groups of Trevally: Brassy, Bluefin, and small GTs, will push through here, looking for unsuspecting prey. They will try and herd them close to the shoreline, and then smash them against that barrier between land and sea.



The other day, a beautiful Goatfish flew out of the water at my feet, its body patterned like a sunrise. A big swirl arose behind, as a GT of about 5 kilos turned away, thwarted. I held the little fish for a while until its pursuers had gone, then returned it to the lagoon.

Pound for pound, the Jack family contains some of the hardest fighting fish on the planet, and they are mostly caught on heavy gear. The GT in particular is mainly known in angling circles as a heavy tackle fish, with even saltwater fly anglers tending to opt for high drags and strong lines.

For me though, catching these powerful predators on light lure gear remains one of my favourite ways to fish. Most tropical shorelines contain some type of Jack or Trevally, and in many places, the majority of the fish are small, in the 1-10kg (2-25lb) range. These fish are well within the grasp of gear and techniques that in the UK we would call HRF, or even LRF – rods with casting weights between 0.5 and 20g, reels carrying PE 0.6 to 1.2 or thereabouts. On this sort of setup, even a small Trevally provides an exhilarating battle, but in the correct conditions, it is possible to reliably tame fish up to about 30 lbs.



Pound for pound Bluefin Trevally fight even harder than GT's

The mugger's approach

Back on my log, I have spotted the outlines of a predatory gang approaching. The lead fish is a Brassy of about 7lbs, his three somewhat smaller droogs behind him, spread out in a loose v-formation across the width of the gully. They are just cruising lazily at the moment, about 50 yards up-tide, so I have time to ready my cast. When the lead fish is about 15 yards away, I flick my lure, a 3-inch shad on a 5g jighead, into the gully. It lands with a gentle plop, and before I have time to consider whether to pause or retrieve, the rod is bent over and the reel is screaming like a jet engine. By the time my brain starts to piece together the situation, the fish is well away: a snap of the tail as the lead fish accelerates to engulf the lure, the line tightening, the big splash as it realises it has been hooked. The whine from my spool keeps increasing in pitch, the line angle getting ever shallower, and at this point I remember that I am really quite high above the water and in no position to follow the fish. I must have been "out of my tree" to cast from here, as follow the fish is what I must do. I climb awkwardly down another foot or so, and launch myself into the water below: a slight shock to the knees, but I'm still basically upright and the fish is still attached.

Now it's time to chase after the fish. When fighting Trevally in shallow water, the main aim is to keep the line angle as high as possible. As the line between the rod tip and the fish gets more acute, the risk of two different bad outcomes increases: there is more chance that the fish will cause the line to pass a snag, such as a coral bommie or piece of rock, and there is a greater risk that the line will connect with the sharp scutes on the fish's tail.

The fish has now run out a bit over the seagrass, and then continued parallel to the shore. I splash after it, waist-deep in the lagoon, arms stretched above me like a Gibbon, trying to keep the rod high. After a time, the run slows and I start to gain a bit of line. Catching up to roughly where it has run to, I can feel it hanging there in the tide, and try to pump it in a few metres, which spooks it and sends it running off again. This is the rhythm of a Trevally fight – catch up to the fish, haul it in a bit while gently palming the spool, then when the next run begins, try to cushion the power of the fish as much as possible.

Eventually, after several repeats of this cycle, I finally manage to tire the fish, and slide it up onto the shore, a good 200 yards along from the tree. It is a perfect slab of peppered silver, deep powerful flanks lined with crescent fins and a stiff, powerful tail. I remove the hook, and swim the fish in the shallows until it begins to kick powerfully, and I let it go, watching it disappear out across the open flats.



Fish should be revived in the shallows until strong enough to swim off strongly

Tackle

When fishing for smaller Trevally, I am usually looking to present a paddle tail shad of about 3-4 inches, in a manner that balances casting distance and finesse on the one hand, and line strength and abrasion resistance on the other. In areas where fish are small and there is little in the way of snags, this can mean a rod with a casting weight between 0.5-10g, PE0.6 braid and 10lb fluorocarbon leader. As the potential for larger fish and the presence of snags increases, so must the weight of the setup. Where there are likely to be fish of 10lb and upwards in weight, I switch to a PE1 setup, with casting weights in the “HRF” range – 10-30g, and leader of 15-30lb fluoro. This is obviously mainly a fish welfare issue – there’s nothing admirable about fishing ultralight for fish that you have a very good chance of losing. However, there are benefits to the lighter gear that extend beyond bragging rights – although many Trevally species can be incredibly aggressive feeders, there are times and situations where many species become rather finicky. Bluefin Trevally in particular have a tendency to shy away from lures that are presented incorrectly. I don’t personally believe this is about the fish “seeing” the leader. It’s more that the fish are wary of a lure that doesn’t act right, and the reduced flexibility of a thicker leader affects the presentation of small lures.

Terminal tackle needs to be strong. While you might manage to tame a few fish on the sort of worm hooks you would use for perch in the UK, there is also a good chance of them being bent out during a fight, so aim to find the strongest patterns you can. For the larger lures I like the BKK Titan in 1/0, but for a 3” paddle tail this is overkill. I have found the Rock-F from NineSeven Tungsten to be a good pattern for these. There are many other options out there though.



This 20lb class GT took a Z-man shrimp on a 5g chef head and put up an incredible scrap

As to weight, I have been quite surprised to find that a decent cheb head in the 3-10g range will not in fact pull apart under the drag settings needed to land Trevally. Until recently I shied away from this approach, preferring to use weighted open jigheads, but having experimented with them on several trips, I am now confident in using chebs, which opens up more options in terms of lure weighting and hook choice. Trevally have large, hard mouths and tend to give very confident bites, so there is no reason not to fish weedless.

As to lure choice, I have found shads with a slim body and a large paddle tail to be the most effective. For those of us that have worked hard to learn the coldwater rule of “less is more”, it can be tough to adapt to the desires of tropical fish that seem to shun subtlety, but I have found it pays to have a range of bright, flashy lures, as well as a few more subtle patterns for those situations when they turn finicky. From the UK plastics market, I have found the Fox Spikey shads to be effective, either in a dark colour or redhead-

white. I have also done well on Fish Arrow Flash-J shads in pretty much any colour. Most of these lures are not very durable, so it is necessary to carry quite a few of them. Alternatively, I have also had a lot of success with Zman minnowz, which are considerably more hard wearing. On coral reef areas, Triggerfish can be a real problem – biting the paddle off any lure that passes by, usually without being hooked. In this case, a good alternative is to tie a few basic bucktail jigs or streamer flies around an open jighead. I don’t find them as effective as paddle tails, but at least they survive the attentions of the Triggers.

Location and Tactics

Jacks and Trevally are widespread in their distribution, occurring throughout the tropical and equatorial regions of the Caribbean and Indo-Pacific oceans. They are present in a wide variety of habitats, from open reef and seagrass flats to sheltered lagoons and mangroves, as well as rocky shorelines, surf beaches and harbour walls. As a result it is challenging to provide concrete and exhaustive advice that works everywhere, for all species. Most of my personal experience has been from the reef flats and lagoons of the Indo-Pacific, but I have also use the same

methods in Pacific coast of Costa Rica and Panama, and the Riviera Maya on the Caribbean coast of Mexico.

Let's imagine that you are on holiday somewhere that you think will hold fish, and that this is a "DIY" trip somewhere where local knowledge is scarce. How do you locate fish? Well firstly, your watercraft from the UK still works – like all predators, Jacks will congregate where the food is, and features that work in Bass fishing will work for them too. Rocky outcrops, the mouths of estuaries, and gutters on surf beaches will all hold fish, as will pressure edges where the tide is held back by sudden depth changes such as reef edges, or fields of coral bommies. Predators like to be where their prey are in abundance, and also in places where baitfish are at a disadvantage, where they can reduce the degrees of freedom the prey have to move, or use reduced visibility or strong currents against them.

I would start my search by picking a section of shoreline with a few of these features, and then either walk the shoreline or wade the shallows, blind-casting as I go. In most cases, Jacks respond well to a rapid retrieve, so initially I would use this approach to cover a lot of ground quickly. If the water is relatively shallow, I cast out and begin the retrieve almost as soon as the lure hits the water, retrieving the lure rapidly with a few twitches and direction changes. If the water is somewhat deeper, with a bit of tide, then I prefer to fish mainly on-the-drop, allowing the lure to curve fall on a tight line until it hits the seabed,



A Bar Jack (Caranx Bartholomaei) from Tulum, Mexico. Although most of my fishing is C & R, this was needed for bait



before ripping it back up in the water column and then fishing it back in this manner, with an exaggerated sink and draw approach. In both cases, the aim is to cover as much of the volume of water in front of you with your lure, before moving on. If no takes are forthcoming, keep moving and keep casting until you find the fish.

In the Tropics, I have a strong preference for dawn over dusk. While fish can be caught throughout the day, first light will find the fish at their most voracious, which is excellent for searching. In principle, fish can be caught at all stages of the tide, though a given location may only hold fish at a particular window. As ever, watercraft is key. I have

found that many species like to feed around features closer to shore on the flood, entering areas as soon as the water is deep enough to cover their backs. Once the tide turns, fish tend to retreat into deeper areas. This is just a generalisation though. There are specifics related to reef flats, lagoons, rocky shores etc, which I will leave for a future article, and other areas will have their own idiosyncrasies.

I hope this has given some indication of how I go about chasing these fantastic tropical sportfish on light gear. I plan to expand on what I have written here in future articles, and to cover some other aspects of tropical light game.

Until next time!

Reflections on Half a Century of Sharking - Chris Flower

I have been sharking for over half a century and although I don't remember the actual year of my first trip way back then, I certainly remember that day when I got bitten by the sharking bug. It was a day out from Looe on a family holiday and my father chartered the boat for the four of us: my father and brother, a family friend and myself. We caught three sharks that day and although we had a fourth run, the friend was suffering from the rather bumpy conditions which, coupled with a particularly ripe rubby-dubby, left him a little queasy and by the time he was ready to take the rod the shark had lost interest and cleared off.

I remember many of the details of that day. It was an early start as we climbed down the East Quay ladder in Looe and crossed over the commercial long-line boat whose decks were loaded with wicker baskets of tarred lines each sporting hundreds of swivel-eyed 'conger' hooks and reached the deck of our boat for the day. It was a typical, traditional, wooden Cornish shark boat with the forward wheelhouse and open deck behind. I'm afraid both the name of the vessel and its skipper are lost in the mists of time. There was a fighting chair, which was little more than a plywood seat on a pole mounted into a hole in the deck and with a gimballed socket for the rod butt; but to me at the time it seemed a 'proper job'. The skipper was a man of few words but pleasant enough; after all, to him we were just another day of holiday folks, same as yesterday and he'd have a new bunch tomorrow. It was a full two hours' steam to the shark grounds, though in truth we were probably still inshore of the Eddystone even after all that time.

Eventually we got there and with the engines cut and that lovely moment of silence that follows, the skipper readied everything, including tipping the contents of the rubby-dubby bin into a wicker basket to be hung over the side. It honked – I'm sure you could see the smell coming off in wiggly stink lines as seen in the best cartoons! I remember we fished two rods. Both were green solid glass jobs; one had chromed tunnel rings with those doubled inserts essential for a proper shark rod and the other had similar rings, but they were clamped onto the blank with screw fittings. I'd never seen anything like that before and was mightily impressed though I bought some second-hand a couple of years ago just for old times' sake. Both rods were fitted with Penn 9/0 Senator reels. These were the right tool for the job back then.



The classic 9/0 Senator loaded with 80lbs Sea Ranger, a net cork float and the Mustad Sea Master

Although Hardy Fortuna reels had been in use in earlier years, the 9/0 Senator had become the reel of choice, at least amongst the Cornish sharking charter fleet; few anglers bought their own shark reels as most customers were holidaymakers like ourselves. A Penn 9/0 cost £36 at that time when a man might be happy to earn £1000 in a year - in other words the reel cost more than two weeks' take-home money. The Fortuna reels and wooden rods had been retired from the fleet by the late sixties and most were lost to posterity, though they sometimes pop up on auction sites these days at eye-watering prices. I suspect they had been acquired following the demise of the tunny fishery in Yorkshire and made their way to Cornwall by a circuitous route before being pensioned off a second time.

I clearly remember looking longingly through the window of Eathorne's tackle shop in Looe to see the display of black and chrome Penn Senators perched on their dark blue boxes with hand-written labels in front: the 6/0 labelled 'light tackle shark reel', the 9/0 labelled 'shark reel', and the 12/0 labelled 'heavy shark reel'. There was also a 14/0, or possibly it was a 16/0, labelled 'Not for Sale'! Magic to my teenage eyes. There was also a monster Mustad shark hook on a chain, slightly rusty from the salt air. The hook had a 6" gape and according to the Mustad catalogue was often bought for catching crocodiles, but not in the British Isles.



A 12/0 Senator flanked by two 9/0. In front is a Tatler V on the left, a 6/0 Senator on the right and the red plate 6/0 in between. The "posh" red plate 6/0 had ball bearings and an upgraded drag compared with the standard black plate 6/0

Although that 12/0 Senator might seem quite ridiculous today for blue sharks, back then the size of shark likely to be encountered wasn't known and there were plenty of tales circulating in the angling press of lines and rods being smashed by huge fish. It amused me that lines never snapped or broke but tackle always had to have been smashed, or even smashed up. Of course, hindsight suggests that those mighty, unseen fish were actually bluefin tuna as one or two were caught in nets and I recall one of those was reported to have sported a shark hook and trace.

The line on such reels was almost always Milward Searanger, a pale green braided terylene that was actually pretty tough and abrasion-resistant. It was available in various breaking strains: 27, 35, 55, 80 and 120lb and in those early days was not linked to IGFA line classes. That meant the 80lb would probably withstand a good 100lb pull when new and the 120 would happily hold up to 150lb. A box of four cardboard spools each of 150 yards was the usual make up, though 1200-yard spools were available, apparently. The 9/0 Senator could just hold 300 yards of 120lb Searanger or almost 450 yards of 80lb but was often fitted with just 300 yards of 80lb Searanger as the thinner line gave a bit of room to allow neophytes to wind on the line without worrying too much about laying it level across the spool. An important point when most clients were holidaymakers who struggle to hold the rod and wind the reel at the same time, let alone lay the line level as well.



Two linked spools of Searanger 130lb terylene

A box of four spools therefore filled two reels and when the line became a bit too frayed for comfort at one end, it was simply reversed on the reel to get more use out of it. I guess line was changed when it eventually got too frayed and too short, but I suspect most skippers squeezed every last bit of use out of their lines. Knots were not uncommon as spools might be 'topped up' rather than refilled.

Some years later Searanger changed to produce IGFA-rated lines on plastic spools, but by then dacron was beginning to put in an appearance, though it had its critics. Nylon monofilament lines had improved in quality too and now tended to be used in place of braided line, both because nylon was cheaper and because it was more resistant to abrasion. In the late sixties nylon mono. was pretty elastic stuff and was rarely available in shark strength, unlike the high-quality nylon in all strengths we have access to today.



Two newer spools of IGFA 130lb next to two older spools of unused non-IGFA 120lb Searanger

Two advantages of Searanger were its colour, which enabled you to see it easily and check whether the lines were at risk of crossing over at any time, and the fact that it floated. Actually, I still have a soft spot for that terylene line, even though it is braided over a core and so can't be spliced, unlike most dacron braids.

On that first trip, however, the reels didn't have Searanger but one had a dark green braided line, possibly Auger (I think it was called 'Conger Killa' or similar), and the other a dark brown braid from the commercial gear supplier in Looe. When I asked the skipper about the strength of his lines, he replied I shouldn't worry my head about that as they wouldn't break no matter what we did – quite reassuring!

Each line had a couple of drilled bullet leads above the trace and ran through the central holes of two net corks held in place by pulling the line into a slit in the cork. These acted as floats and were set at different depths on the two lines. The end couple of fathoms of line were doubled and knotted every few feet before being tied to the top swivel of the trace. The swivel was just a giant box swivel but sturdy enough; the wire was galvanised cable, about 400lb or a bit under 2mm thick. The connections were made by wraps of fuse wire soldered in place. Hooks were the classic Mustad Sea Master 7699 size 10/0 or possibly 11/0, and both were stained black through use, but I noted they were sharp and not rusty. These traces were heavy but reliable, unlike many others I came

across over the ensuing years.

I mention trace (as they were always called) reliability because most of the sharks I have seen lost over the years departed as a result of trace failures. Nylon-covered wire was appearing on the scene and was being touted by some as the perfect material for shark traces, but I saw too many failures as a result of poor crimping techniques



The picture shows how the braided line was simply pulled into a slit on the cork rings to hold it in place

or over-weak and often rusty wire snapping under strain and so I avoided it at all costs. Hooks rarely failed, but I saw many sharks lost when brass barrel swivels parted, sometimes under almost no strain.

The problem was most tackle shops only had ordinary barrel swivels in various sizes, though some sometimes stocked slightly better box swivels in large sizes; Berkley had yet to bring their innovative swivels to the UK market. Therefore, the traces supplied by the skipper depended on what he could get or what his booking agent supplied. You might be lucky, or you might not.

My suspicions regarding swivels were confirmed when John Darling wrote an excellent article in Angling magazine back in the 1970's illustrating just how easily ordinary brass swivels could fail. Apparently, the twisted wire wrap that formed the eyes would simply unwind because the brass wire was of variable quality and generally quite soft, though sometimes the whole eye would pull out of the swivel body.

Originally, I wasn't in a position to buy my own rod and reel, but I did make up some traces of my own that I knew would be satisfactory and I never really had any problem with skippers when suggesting I should like to use mine in place of the supplied ones. After all, if they got lost or damaged, it cost the skipper nothing.

Choice of swivels was therefore either the largest barrel or box swivel you could find or you had to hunt down specialist big-game swivels wherever you might find them, which usually meant calling in to every tackle shop you came across more in hope than expectation. In the early days, I was lucky enough to find a supply of solid brass, sausage-shaped, swivels in Plymouth and Newhaven and spent all my pocket money on them. Coupled with some Bowden cable, 10/0 Sea Master hooks and soldered joints I had good traces. I also found strong brass swivels in chandlers, though what role they played in yachting I hadn't a clue, and some in commercial fishing suppliers where they had a retail outlet, usually to sell crab lines to holidaymakers.

About that time Gerry's of Wimbledon imported the first of a new kind of swivel to the UK from Berkley. These were amazingly strong for their size and completely reliable. I bought a big boxful from 1/0 through to 11/0 in size, many of which I still have all these years later as I never did find a use for the 10/0 and 11/0 ones! These were also a lot cheaper than the hard-to-find alternatives. Swivel problem solved.



Swivels from the old days. A big box swivel next to (top), a weak standard swivel, a brass and stainless steel swivel from a commercial fishing outlet, two solid brass "sausage" swivels and (far right) a very strong version with stainless pigtail link; (below) a strong O-D stainless swivel, a chromed and a brass swivel from yacht chandlers and a rare big-game swivel from the tunny days

I fished from many ports in Cornwall over those years and took notice of how the tackle choices changed. The classic 9/0 Senator was being edged out by the smaller (and cheaper) 6/0 and the cheaper-still Tatler V was also putting in an appearance, but few other reels were ever seen. The Tatler wasn't a bad reel and was cheaper than the slightly smaller Penn 6/0 and about half the price of a 9/0. Trevor Housby, author of *The Rubby Dubby Trail*, about the only book on shark fishing to be available in the UK for a long time, extolled the virtues of the Tatler V, especially for porbeagles off the Isle of Wight. Personally, I found it more difficult to spread the line evenly across the wide spool of the Tatler V and the drag system could get sticky if neglected - and I'm sorry to say an awful lot of the shark gear I saw on charter boats was sadly neglected.

Rods were still generally glass, but hollow glass was being seen more as companies like Fibatube produced good blanks that rod builders could easily access for 'own brand' rods sold through local tackle shops. Some solid glass rods were still in evidence with the Marco Eddystone and Milbro Commander and rods by Auger and Allcock also being around along with unbranded models, but generally the action of the more modern hollow glass rods was a great improvement on the rather floppy solid glass of earlier days.

By this time, I had saved enough to buy my own 6/0 Senator and Abu Pacific 8 Zoom rod. I still have both and still use them. That Abu blank was years ahead of its time and it is still a great blank today, now sporting a Varmac



Standard and heavy shark gear back in the day. On the left is the Marco Eddystone white solid glass rod and the 9/0 Senator. In the middle is the Milbro Commander green solid glass rod and on the right is an "own brand" hollow glass rod built on a 130lb Fibatube blank coupled with a 12/0 Senator

and he explained he got through quite a few hooks in a season and the O'Shaughnessy was a lot cheaper but still did the job. I hadn't noticed just how much the cost of Sea Masters had risen as I had laid in a stock when my local Woolworth's dropped fishing gear from its shelves and sold off its stock of shark traces and hooks cheaply; as I remember, it was 10p for three Berkley 4/0 swivels and a 10/0 Sea Master (plus a length of useless nylon-covered wire) – thank you very much. I also acquired a supply of pretty large heavy-duty brass sausage swivels fitted with stainless pigtail links from my local Woolies.

On my various trips it seemed that a variety of different hooks were being pressed into service by the shark fleets in various ports, depending on what the local commercial fishermen's supplier had bought in bulk, some of which I've included in the pictures. Again, I suspect the relatively high cost of Mustad Sea Master hooks was a factor here, though hook selection is one area where second-best may well result in failure. I've pictured a few below.

RS3H reel seat, Aftco alloy butt, Aftco tip roller and Fuji intermediate guides. It had caught me many blue sharks before being replaced by carbon fibre (not graphite, which is suitable only for pencil leads) rods and lever-drag reels.

I also read about using heavy nylon monofilament as a rubbing leader, though such material was not generally available at the time. However, preparing for a boat trip out from Newhaven one day I spotted a coil of 1.8mm mono. in Dennis O'Kennedy's shop and promptly bought it. My traces now consisted of 10 feet of mono. and 5 feet of cable, though they raised some eyebrows on shark boats over the next few summers. Whether it was luck (probably) or my lighter traces, but on one Mevagissey trip I caught six of the seven blues that day – I thought the rest of the crew would make me walk home!

For many of those years I only saw Mustad Sea Master hooks in use. They did the job well but were rarely encountered outside tackle shops in ports where sharking took place. Of course, this was in the days when we thought the seas were inexhaustible and shark welfare was not then a priority. Thankfully we have learned better.

On one trip, I noticed the skipper was not using a 'proper' shark hook - the Sea Master 10/0 - but a 12/0 Mustad O'Shaughnessy 3406. I asked him why



Hooks seen and used. Top - Mustad Kirby Kendal 4x strong sizes 11/0 and 12/0; underneath is a Mustad 4480 1" (now called 10/0) Shark Hook, then a 12/0 Mustad O'Shaughnessy 3406 above a 4" Hardy Limerick (as used on tunny - a rare hook) and under that are two Mustad Sea Master 7699 10/0 and 11/0. On the right is a 14/0 Mustad Best Kirby tinned 3138 above a blued Mustad Kirby 2320 size 1. These last two are typical of the commercial hooks pressed in to use at times.

I remember one trip out from Penzance where the skipper suddenly veered off to one side as we motored out to the West. We stopped alongside a long length of timber that he'd spotted and, after a bit of mucking around with a rope noose, brought on board a ten-foot length of four-by-four hardwood, worth a pretty penny I'm sure. A second length followed not long after. Later, as we watched the floats and waited for some sharky action, the skipper told the tale of a cargo ship that had lost a load of timber from its deck in some bad weather not that long before and was sheltering in the harbour. Apparently, the skipper of that vessel spent many an unhappy hour asking for news of his wood in the many pubs and bars in the area and was always told that the wind and tides would have scattered it all to the four corners of the seven seas by now. Yet, miraculously, after the ship had departed with its depleted cargo, much of that fine hardwood was found to have washed up and stacked itself neatly inside one of the caves nearby! Many a new front doorpost and banister rail appeared that winter, as well as some renewed gunwale work on the many charter boats. The sea provides...

We did catch sharks that day too and I remember that I dropped down to a single fillet of mackerel on an 8/0 Sea Master, constantly bringing the bait in and dropping it back again to get bites. They were all pups really, nothing of any size; but back then any shark was a shark. Later that same holiday I saw my first porbeagle on the dock in Penzance and was amazed by how dumpy it looked compared to the long and graceful blue shark. However, I was told it fought much harder than any blue shark of comparable size.

We are moving into the seventies now and I got caught up in the search for a porbeagle from the Isle of Wight

grounds, fishing both from Hayling Island and from Bembridge on the island itself. I am not sure how many trips I had, but it was quite a few, and I only hooked and landed a single one. In my defence, I had missed the great days when lots were being caught and indeed any porbeagle was a rarity for many years. Still, I and those I fished with did learn a lot about how not to rig for them! In retrospect, I should have got myself a 9/0 Senator and coupled that with the Abu Pacific 8 to have had a pretty good set-up. Instead, I was persuaded to get a 12/0 Senator (even the 10/0 would have been a better bet) and a broomstick rod more suited to a proper fighting chair. Given that my harness set-up was an Efgeeco butt pad and Efgeeco leather shoulder harness, you can see the problems I had made for myself, and I was not alone in getting it all so wrong! Perhaps it was just as well that my porbeagle came on my mate's rod which he passed to me as he'd had two already that day. It was the first time I'd used a lever-drag reel and that Penn 50W was a revelation as to its smoothness. It had cost him a small fortune and he was justly proud of it, even though his rod was still too long and too stiff, as we would eventually learn.

Lines were generally 50 or 80lb dacron or similar strength nylon and floats were a mixture of balloons and polystyrene jobs with the occasional ball-cock float for good measure. Hooks were almost always Mustad Sea Master 12/0, though I saw 14/0 and even 16/0 Sea Masters being used on big baits by others. Leaders, we'd learned that word by now though I still think of shark traces, were a mixture of all cable or cable and nylon mono. depending on personal preference. Rods were a mixture too and generally too long and stiff, though at the time we thought they were the bees' knees.

One day, I noticed my skipper had a box of 14/0 hooks on the wheelhouse deck that looked like Sea Masters but weren't offset. I asked where he'd got them, and he said he'd found them 'out here'. It seems he was ground fishing when his anchor fouled a line that turned out to be a longline set for sharks, something he felt no islander would be doing. Well, rightly or wrongly, he went from one end to the other cutting off the hooks!

Most of those shark trips for porbeagles trips were pretty uneventful, apart from the excitement when we had a run that was followed by the disappointment when it turned out to be a small but greedy tope. However, on one trip with a mixed crew there was a chap who knew everything already and needed no help or advice from anyone. On the journey out from Bembridge to the grounds he was busy stripping his rather small Shakespeare Sealine gold reel of 50lb line, replacing it with as much 130lb Garcia Sea Dacron as he could cram on – just the single spool of 150 yards! We had the feeling it could end in tears, but then past experience suggested we were in for yet another blank day anyway – hope over experience? Of course, when the run came it was a belter and it came to his rod

He picked up his rod and, give him his due, engaged the clutch, struck and hooked into the shark nicely. At this point, the shark, and it was probably a pretty decent one, switched on the afterburners and rocketed off, swiftly coming to the end of the 150 yards of line. The poor chap was instantly pulled off his feet and, holding grimly onto his rod, dragged along the deck till he reached the wheelhouse and could go no further, whereupon his line broke with a crack like a rifle shot. Of course, it was the only run of the day. Memo to self: make sure your line is long enough!

Over the years in the late sixties and early seventies I had used a variety of the boat's supplied rods and reels; some were fine, and some were terrible. The usual catalogue of sticky reel drags, bent and rusted rod rings, frayed lines and other issues were to be seen far too often. In retrospect, one has to ask how difficult is it to give the gear a bit of a wash over before putting it back in the wheelhouse. However, it did afford me the possibility to try several lighter and longer rods than the Abu Pacific 8 I eventually bought, deciding that the long so-called sporting rods were just too unwieldy and lacked enough welly to pull home the hook. This was long before the American stand-up style arrived in the UK and, of course, this was pre-internet and so news of these short rods came via the angling press. Much of the information was muddled because the journalists often didn't understand this new style themselves; sadly, that situation remains today, but made worse by input from well-meaning but poorly informed anglers. Nullius in verba - as the Royal Society advises (i.e. take nobody's word for it).

What about today? My favourite blue shark rod at present is the Shakespeare Ugly Stick Custom model number

1483-80. It is classed as an 80lb rod by Shakespeare, which is ludicrous as it can manage a 20lb pull at most, making it a lovely 30lb rod (again, nullius in verba – ignore any rod rating provided by a manufacturer until you’ve tried the power of that rod for yourself). It is a one-piece 5’9” rod, has an Aftco tip roller and heavy-duty Fuji intermediate rings and an action I like very much, though others may well disagree. I match it with a Penn International 30W or 50 loaded with 30 or 50lb line. The 50lb line is overkill for blue shark admittedly but gives a bit more protection from abrasion when other sharks rub the line during the fight, as can happen when things get hectic; I see no merit in losing fish unnecessarily. The trace or leader is still five feet of cable to the hook and at least ten feet of heavy nylon as a rubbing leader; swivels are now reliable Sampo or Rosco models with the heaviest of coastlock snap links or a small stainless shackle; hooks are now in-line circle hooks (generally the Mustad 39960) with flattened barbs in place of the old-time Mustad Sea Master; and the floats are no longer net corks but foam plastic sliding ones of my own design and manufacture, colour-coded to match the rods when I fish more than one at a time.

I know that sounds fussy, but it can be a great help to all when the float is the same colour as the tape around the rod tip and on the reel sideplate where the drag settings are marked in felt pen. Everyone knows instantly which rod is connected to which line and much confusion can be avoided. It is easy to say ‘The blue float’s going. Can you reel in the red one out of the way for me please?’ rather than saying, ‘I’m on it, but can you reel in the other one for me please? No not that one, the other other one!’

After many years when sharking seemed to be in the doldrums and my friends and I had many trips to Looe without very much success in the eighties and nineties, blue shark numbers have increased considerably over recent years. Several of those past trips involved us staying in a lovely guest house in West Looe, high up on the road overlooking the Banjo Pier. Our host would meet us in the little layby/car park with an airport luggage trolley and cart our gear back to his house whilst we sat on the bench out front enjoying a beer. After an early breakfast the next morning, he would drive us round to East Looe and the SACGB HQ where we’d meet our skipper and go aboard for our day afloat. Later, on our return, once again our host would come over and collect us. As you can imagine, we felt it was a great shame when he retired and sold the guest house!

My memories of those many trips are generally of warm, sunny days and mostly calm seas, though in truth I think there must have been plenty of grotty days with a little too much wind and with rain ranging from just sticky to thoroughly unpleasant.

We do now care for our sharks in ways that were undreamed of way back then and perhaps that is now paying off. The gear we use too is better than it ever was and relatively inexpensive too. I’m very happy with my set-up for blues, though others would say it is over-heavy. I won’t disagree, but then I’m not in favour of using fixed spool reels and very bendy rods for sharking – each to their own. My only issues would be if someone was using a trace or leader that is too short and failing to incorporate a nylon topshot when using modern gel-spun HDPE lines; either or both failings will lose you fish.

Even though the old Senator reel has been replaced by a shiny gold Penn International, Everol or Shimano Tiagra and the Abu Pacific 8 rod by a stand-up Tunastick or Ugly Stik, I do think there is still no sound to compare with the clattering of the ratchet of a Penn 9/0 Senator when a feisty blue shark takes the bait. It is music to my ears and brings back many memories. Maybe I should make it my ringtone!

The Blue Shark: The wanderer of the deep blue. ... Dr Simon Thomas

“They're beautiful - God, how beautiful they are!

They're an impossibly perfect piece of machinery.

*They're as graceful as any bird and as mysterious
as any animal on earth.*

*No one knows for sure how long they live or what
impulses (except for hunger) they respond to"*

Peter Benchley

Blue Sharks, those almost impossibly azure-blue summer visitors that cross oceans to get here have transfixed me since I saw my first live shark over twenty years ago. Not the drab, sorry looking creature with dead eyes and faded hue, which used to be paraded up on a hook for tourists to gawp at, but the sinuous graceful ghost, a shy cautious wisp when alone, a careless cavalier when not. Not the pugnacious bulk of the Porbeagle, a more typical looking shark to the public, but a long almost serpentine beauty, suited to its endless travels around the oceans and how they travel. They are restless wanderers, rovers who may cover 3000 miles in a year and many times that during their 20-year lifespan. An oceanic glider, whose long pectoral fins and flattened belly are perfectly evolved to provide lift, an essential quality needed for an animal which lacks a swimbladder, enabling them to ride the ocean currents with minimum effort. Tagging studies have revealed the extent of the Blue Sharks wanderlust and individuals have traversed entire ocean basins during their life span.

The open ocean still varies between desert and fertile and the Blue Shark is an expert in traversing the former to reach the latter. Much like the ancient mariners they crudely use the earth's magnetic field to navigate, although the identity of this biological lodestone is still a mystery. Whilst Blue Sharks use the North Atlantic currents to move across oceans to find food, avoid or attract mates or to find conditions to their liking; the females use the barren areas of the deep tropical Atlantic to birth, an unusual strategy among sharks. Where possible they follow the edges of continental shelves during migrations, where the cold, nutrient-replete waters from the abyss surge toward the surface, providing a relief from the poverty of the open ocean.

Whilst in the productive waters on the continental shelf, these sleek warriors still seek out features where the likelihood of prey is at its highest. Not necessarily the wrecks or reefs that pollack, cod or ling may favour, but the ocean fronts, where bodies of water collide or up-wellings where nutrient-rich water from below the summer thermocline thrust towards the surface. They are both areas of plenty, where sunlight and nutrients combine to fuel the food chain and provide the Blue Sharks with ample sustenance.

The reach of the Blue Sharks is almost global, only absent from oceans at the upper extremes of latitude. Towards the equator, they search out the cold of the depths (they prefer cooler temperatures of between 12-20 degrees Celsius), to feed on the bizarre denizens of the depths such as various squids, hatchetfish and lanternfish. However, in our waters they are creatures of the light, feeding in the waters above the thermocline, that invisible dividing line that separates the uniform warm waters above from the cool beneath. Five Blue Sharks tracked by satellite archival tags from Plymouth in 2006 rarely dived deeper than 50 feet during daytime, although they did sometimes venture deeper during darkness. Once departing our waters, they reverted to feeding at depth during daylight, only ascending the water column during darkness following the natural rhythms of their prey.



The Blue Shark displays classic countershading, with the ocean-blue topside blending into the ocean when viewed from above and white underside blending in with the light from above

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Whilst visiting our waters, Blue Sharks seem to feed no better at night than during the day, although, much like my cats, they are highly active at dusk and dawn. Their diet changes too, rarely do they actively feed on squid, but rather opt for the relative ease of capture and high nutritional value provided by small pelagic fish such as herring, pilchard, and mackerel. They will not refuse carrion whether from the discards of trawlers or a whale carcass. Despite this preference for the upper layer of our seas benthic fish, such as whiting make a formidable bait for the species.

Blue Sharks can transform between lethargy and rapidity almost instantaneously although they prefer the former. They are capable of speeds up to 25 mph (some say 60) but cruise at less than a fifth of this value. On calm days they often lounge, almost immobile at the sea surface, setting aside the notion that all sharks need to swim to breathe, as the Blue Shark retained the ancestral ability to pump water over their gills independently of forward motion.



An inquisitive Blue shark inspecting a camera lens. The shark has no swim bladder and is denser than seawater so has evolved large pectoral fins and flattened belly to provide lift. Additionally, sharks store the low-density compound, squalene, in their livers

Whilst traversing the vast deserts of the open oceans, Blue Sharks segregate according to both age and gender, the latter being a prudent move given the viscous nature of their courtship. In an evolutionary response to the advances of amorous mates, females have developed thicker skin and a tolerance of lower water temperatures than their male counterparts, allowing both spatial and physical protection for much of the year.

Mature fish briefly congregate to mate in the deep ocean far from land, Tagging has revealed that the area north of the Azores, where the divergence of continents fractured the seabed sees large concentrations of mature Blue Sharks during the winter months.

Mating is brief but brutal, and before long before the urge to travel and the females desire for safety segregates the sexes once more. Since the inception of Blue Shark fishing in the UK in the post-war years the dominant gender of sharks in our waters has been female, to the extent that the capture of a male shark was noteworthy. However, in the waters west of the Mid- Atlantic ridge where the Gulf Stream carries waters warmed by the tropical sun northwards, male sharks are ascendant and are common as far north as Nova Scotia during the late summer.

In recent years males of all sizes have appeared with increasing regularity in our waters, perhaps influenced by a changing climate or natural cycles. Given the presence of fresh bite marks on female fish, mating of Blue Sharks in our waters is highly probable and the capture of several new born fish suggest that at least some females choose to birth here as well.

We are fortunate that that these sleek indigo travellers choose to make our waters their home during the summer months, despite the vagaries and obstacles of such extensive migrations. Despite continuing commercial exploitation and the worldwide reduction of many shark stocks, the Blue Shark is a conservation success story and the numbers reaching our coasts are likely at a historical high.

Every year I look forward to the first glimpse of their white belly as they roll near a float, the tip of a fin half

sighted in the slick, or the anxious scream of a ratchet as the first Blue Shark of the season, a fish who has crossed oceans to get here, signals its arrival.

Bluefin 2022 - an update from Steve Murphy

A lot has happened regarding UK Bluefin since our Q1 Newsletter update.

Much of which you will be aware of from our postings on the public and private Club FB pages.

So.... I won't dwell too much on the key developments, but summarise them here and then talk a bit more about the important stuff! As usual, feel free to discuss this with non Club members but please DO NOT cut and paste or quote us outside of the club membership.

English CHART 2022.

We received Ministerial sign-off for English CHART 2022 at the end of April, at a productive meeting with the Fisheries Minister Victoria Prentis. The Minister gave us her personal encouragement for our efforts to deliver a Recreational Fishery for 2022, and offered her support in clearing some of the technical and legal obstacles. We'll touch a bit more on that below.

We suffered a serious delay after this in progressing the programme, following some unhelpful intervention from some pursuing a personal agenda which was against the advice of a majority, and supported by CEFAS until rejected by consensus on the Steering Group but after another 4 weeks was lost. Many thanks for the technical support and expertise provided by Dave West and Chris Flower in addressing that issue.

Applications for 25 places opened 25th May, and closed 6th June. The initial decisions will be made by 17th June. In July document and vessel checks will be made and the training workshops will be held, (a one day refresher for 2021 Graduates who get on the programme again, and 2 days for the 'newbies').

All being well, fishing will get under way mid August and run for longer this year, until mid December.

Regarding the involvement of the RSA Stakeholder Representatives in English CHART, we have decided to limit our technical support for some aspects of the programme this year following a longstanding dispute with CEFAS over sharing of data and the ability of the programme to meet all of the commitments we jointly made during the design stage. We are supportive of the skippers who will participate in CHART this year and will once again provide all and any support and advice if required and requested, but it will be directly and not via the CEFAS framework.

Our focus is already beginning to shift towards 2023 and the opportunities that presents. We have two tasks to complete this year to deliver a recreational fishery for 2023.

Firstly there is a wide-ranging consultation on the use of the UK's ABFT Quota. Options range from no fishing of any kind, through to recreational and/or commercial fisheries. We will need to make the case that the Recreational Fishery is justified and deserves the required share of Quota to operate.

Secondly we need to work with DEFRA on a 'scoping project' to set out what a Recreational Fishery might look like IF the go ahead were granted for it.

Work begins on that in days and covers a wide range of topics. I know some of our members are keen to see private boat owners granted access to such a fishery. Rest assured that this has been an objective of our campaign since 2018 and we will be arguing for a combined Charter vessel and Private Recreational vessel fishery. Just bear in mind that any recreational fishery WILL have to be subject to some form of licensing, monitoring and reporting, whether you are a Charter Skipper or a private vessel owner.

Private vessel owners amongst the Club's membership should contact myself, John or Simon to discuss how they can help in this scoping project. We cannot do this alone gents.

Rest of the UK.

It was also announced in the last month that the Welsh Government had given the green light for a Welsh Atlantic Bluefin 'CHART' programme to go ahead this autumn. This is the culmination of a several years of campaigning by the former Welsh Federations of Sea Anglers, (WFSA), now known as Angling Cymru Sea Anglers (ACSA), supported by our skipper member Andrew Alsop and the BFT UK team. Details of the programme are being finalised in meetings between stakeholders and various Welsh Government departments, and it is anticipated that the application process will open in July, with training workshops for skippers and crew being completed in time for fishing to begin in mid to late August, and extending into December. Up to 10 vessels are to be authorised to participate in the programme.

Discussions have also been underway in Northern Ireland for some months with a view to operating a small scale CHART programme there too this autumn. The political commitment to a programme has been given, but there have been some delays in starting the process. We are hopeful that Northern Ireland's DAERA can move things forward swiftly now to ensure this can go ahead in the autumn.

The three 2022 programmes outlined above have all largely followed the model set out in the 2021 English programme. The Devolved Administrations have a degree of discretion over how they operate such programmes and some small differences are expected.

Bluefin Tuna UK has been involved in the campaigning for these three programmes, and the subsequent design and delivery process. DEFRA and CEFAS, responsible for the English programme, have provided advice and support to Wales and Northern Ireland as and when requested.

In the case of Scotland, the competent authority there, Marine Scotland, has taken a different path and designed and delivered their own Bluefin tagging programme for 2021 and 2022. Weather conditions and other factors in 2021 did not favour that programme, and the seven vessels caught and tagged very few fish. We hope they have more luck in 2022.

It is worth highlighting that this year may see an opportunity for an adventurous Club member to seek a Home Nations 'Grand slam' of catching, tagging and releasing Bluefin in English, Welsh, Northern Irish and Scottish waters. This will be just 12 months after the first legal fishing opportunity was established under the CHART banner.

We were hoping to bring you some more news regarding a new body specifically designed to represent RSA interests re Atlantic Bluefin in UK waters.

We are running a month or so late, but for good reason. The original remit for the Association has grown along with support from other organisations and encouragement from key parts of Government. We should be in a position to announce the news in the next few weeks.

Day to day, the ongoing efforts to deliver first CHART, across the UK, and then a Recreational fishery, can seem like banging your head against a brick wall. Without the support and encouragement of many I probably would have abandoned this project a year or more ago.

Of special mention are the direct efforts of JohnMac, Simon Thomas, Dave West and Chris Flower, but the words of encouragement from many Club members over the last few years have been the extra fuel in our tank we needed.

We don't get everything we ask for, when we ask for it, but the big picture is positive.

We helped deliver an English CHART platform last year that skippers and anglers used to show just what we have on offer here, and what we can do with it.

We have a bigger, (but still not big enough!) English CHART programme again this year, and have helped secure and design CHART programmes for Wales and Northern Ireland this year.

We are now in with a real shot at a world class recreational live release Bluefin Tuna fishery in our waters in the next 1-2 years.

The best thing you all can do to support that vision is to get on a CHART vessel this autumn. It is a 'research fishery', not yet a proper recreational fishery, and some of you may not like spreaders bars etc!, but your support will underpin the argument for that recreational fishery.

Get out there! You may even see myself, John and Simon on board with our 1,000 yard Toona stare.....

Notable Fish Report by Dave West

Well the impact of earlier Covid restrictions have finally disappeared in the 'rear mirror' only it appears now to be replaced by concerns and frustrations over disrupted air travel. In part there appear too few authorised air-side staff, plus now some of those employed threatening strike action over the impact of inflationary pressures on their living standards. Then we have skippers globally having to factor in what are ever escalating increases in the costs of fuel. It doesn't seem to get any better!

Still the 'doom and gloom' to one side some of our members are managing to get overseas and, within the UK, we have both the sharking and Bluefin seasons to look forward to. In the case of the latter, and that's reported separately, we've in terms of the English CHART program both more vessels participating - up to 25 - and an extended season. Additionally smaller programs are being initiated in both Wales and Scotland. With regards Northern Ireland what do they say - "the spirit is willing" but unfortunately with politics we're destined to another year of 'inaction'. Frustrating.

Moving on though I'll summarise details of our members' overseas trips but before that detail some exceptional freshwater captures in the UK by Karl Bird: a Perch and a fly-caught Pike.



Karl's 4lbs 6 oz Perch

Karl's Perch came, as you can see from a rather windy Grafham Water, during a Zander only competition. But having detected a shoal in the shallows on the fish finder Karl couldn't resist the temptation of a cast with a deep diving crank-bait. The result, a fish of 4lb 6oz.

And the Pike? Well that came from Chew Valley - the 1200 acre lake - during similarly English Summer 'conditions', this time with water temperatures down after a significant 'blow' and, in Karl's words, rain of "biblical" proportions. Still at least it stopped for the image! Karl had managed a Jack and his boat partner a 17 pounder when his 'big' fish took the fly; a fish weighing 31lb 12oz, a bit over 43 inches (110cm) long. They completed their day afloat with two other decent fish - 19 and 22lbs for Karl's friend - and a few Jacks. Wow, impressive! Quite a day's fishing!



Karls magnificent 31lbs 12oz Chew Valley Pike

Now to overseas trips.

Cape Verde. Looking back I guess I first heard mention of this island chain in what would have been the late '70s.

Dick Wakeford, who I first met in Gran Canaria, had commented that a small 'flotilla' of game boats had earlier ventured the more than 700 miles South to briefly explore its potential. Marlin weren't even mentioned, just loads of Wahoo. However subsequent reports of significant numbers of Blues started to filter back through game fishing circles from some of the visiting mothercraft operations with, I recall, the Hooker (and her accompanying Madam) releasing 20 in one day in 1990.

Eventually over time more vessels arrived basing themselves primarily at Mindelo on the island of Sao Vicente to the point now that it has to be one of the premier venues in the Atlantic for Blue Marlin. It is not just 'numbers' though with consistently an array of bigger fish - the five to 700 pounders -through to 'granders' being recorded, with this year Smoker taking what I believe is the second largest ever Atlantic Blue, a fish of 1370lbs.

But to our members, and starting with Andy Atkins who captained an English team in the three day Penn Challenge tournament at the beginning of May. They ended up with a 'mid-table' finish - where in the end, boat draw proved crucial - releasing four from the seven fish they raised, the best in the 450lb range. Interestingly in the tournament's format, bonus points were awarded for releases on 'pitch baiting' together with those on lighter tackle.

Andy did also note that the larger fish were notable by their absence, but not the case for our two other members who fished there in June.



Robert Clarks "conservative" 900lb plus fish

Fishing with Ryan Williamson on Smoker Robert Clark released a Blue that was conservatively called by the crew at "900 plus". That tends to be 'code' for "it might have possibly made four figures"; a tremendous result. Well done Robert!

And Richard Wooding got to fish with Marty Bates on La Onda Mila taking seven fish with the best, 'pitch baiting' on 50s, estimated at 700 and 800lbs. Again, well done Richard!



Richards 700lbs estimated fish

Several of Richard's other fish came on lures which Marty has set up with these new ['Sta-Stuk' hook rigs](#). The two elements of the hook - connected by a short chain of three welded rings - are designed to separate once more than 20lbs of pressure is applied to reduce rotational torque - leverage - during the fight. Patently they work, but they do come with a 'not insignificant' price tag; up to 95\$US for two hooks and a quantity of clips.



Richards 800lbs estimated fish

However is this development a 'break-through' or merely effective marketing? If I look back to my first Marlin capture - over 40 years ago - that was on a lure - a Butler Jet - equipped with a 'free swinging' single at the end of a pink squid skirt. But in the intervening years we've seen the evolution of 'stiff' rigs with single or double hooks and, with the doubles, either in-line or offset placements. Then, and more associated with technique, we've had in some cases that replaced with light initial settings - just adequate enough to maintain the lure's positioning in the spread - with the drag only pushed to strike after five seconds or so when the fish has turned away from the boat.

It will be interesting to get others views on this particular topic and

perhaps include an analysis in a subsequent newsletter?

I guess what any development or refinement will never impact on is the frustration of the 'bill wrap'. This sub-surface [video compiled by Gerard Aulong](#) - a 'larger than life' French gentleman who several of us know - perhaps perfectly illustrates how frustratingly some apparently 'well fed' Marlin in the calm conditions encountered off Ghana respond to lures.

Cuba. In May Stephan Kreupl flew from Frankfurt to Havana via Madrid before, after a day's sightseeing in the capital, undertaking what was a 14 hour trip - road and boat aboard the mothercraft, Jardines III - out to the world famous Jardines de la Reina archipelago. The archipelago comprises of 250 pristine islets ranging over 100 miles on a major coral reef and has been a national park since the mid-'90s with all commercial fishing activity banned.

The group Stephan was part of landed two fly inshore 'slams' - Bonefish, Permit and Tarpon - on the first day but then conditions changed dramatically with the large shoals of Tarpon 'disappearing'. Still overall during the week Stephan registered 10 Tarpon from 22 hook-ups together with a variety of other species. As always with his trips there's [a fuller write-up on his web site](#), liberally illustrated with images. There's even one of Stephan alongside a seated statue of Ernest Hemingway, with a photograph of a rather youthful 'Fidel' in military fatigues in the background.

(Should you like me have an interest in the history and development of our sport there are [some archival images and brief write-up of Pilar](#), Hemingway game-boat, on that link. She's currently preserved in a Hemmingway museum at Finca Vigía, close to Cuba's capital city, Havana.)

Mallorca. Each summer, supplementing what is virtually a year-round presence of smaller Bluefin, the big fish - the 500 plus pounders - arrive in Mallorcan waters. Vince Riera's biggest on Mad Max had been a fish taped out at 2.6 metres - a bit over 8 1/2' - but this year his clients, after a five hour battle, released one that was 3 metres long. That's approaching 10' in length and would have possibly 'tipped the scales' at close to 1000lbs. Absolutely massive! There's an interesting image of the fish taken by someone in the water on [this link](#).

But as well as the Bluefin Vince targets a range of other species - mainly pelagic - for his clients none perhaps more of interest, especially for those keen to complete a Billfish Royal Slam - all nine billfish species - than a Spearfish. There's a [link to a scanned article](#) here from a recent Fishing & Travel magazine. (Press the 'arrow' on the righthand image to see subsequent pages of the article) As to those other species Vince encounters - and Mallorca only just over two hours by plane from the UK - I'd suggest you look at [his web site](#) or some of the [videos on this link](#).

Concluding Comments. We had planned to incorporate articles - full write-ups and images on three more of our members recent trips to Grenada - in the Caribbean - plus Fiji and Papua New Guinea (PNG) in remoter parts of the South Pacific in this newsletter. Unfortunately time ended up against us so we'll hold them over to the next edition.

Hopefully not too much of a 'spoiler' - bits already been posted on Facebook - but two of our members in PNG landed what are potentially World All-Tackle record Wavy Line Grouper. Also another released a Malabar Grouper that, from the image I've seen, looked to have been around three times the weight of the existing record. It's certainly remote, as was the tented lodge in Fiji, but appears to have incredible jigging and popping potential. As to its billfish a case of wait and see at this stage.

Finally, and I guess it's not just for those fly fishers amongst us, could I point you to the latest digital edition of the [In the Loop magazine](#). (It's just over 300 pages long!) From a personal perspective I find the quality of its contributors articles and their supporting images exceptional. And it's well worth a 'flick through' for the quality of the images alone. This edition covers in freshwater articles on Trout, Salmon and Pike from European destinations together with Tarpon and Bonefish from the Caribbean. Additionally there's an article on an iconic spring-fed creek in Idaho; a venue that 'Papa' Hemingway enthused about. No 'monsters' but superb wild Brown and Rainbow Trout.

P.S. And 'hot off the Press'. It's just been confirmed that a Cape Verdean boat - My Victoria, a 45' Bertram based in Mindelo - won the Blue Marlin World Cup with a fish of 950lbs. That's the THIRD year in a row now that the winning fish has come from Cape Verde! In last year's tournament Blue Hunter captured a 'grander' - 1053lbs - and the previous year the winning fish of 964lbs was captured aboard La Onda Mila captained by Marty Bates with Olaf 'the Grimmel' Grimkowski in the chair.



