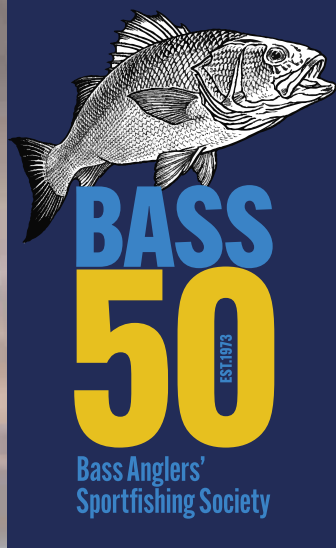


BASS

SPRING 2023 - ISSUE 178



Chairman's Chat

SEAN JUKES

How things change in 50 Years

MIKE LADLE

First Bass

DAVID WILSON

50 Years of BASS

CLIVE HODGES

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Since summer 2017 all new member renewals are on the anniversary of the joining date. All others on 1st January each year. Juniors (17 years and under) may join as part of Family Membership. See BASS Rules at www.ukbass.com for details.

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FROM THE MAGAZINE TEAM

There's certainly plenty to enjoy in this edition of the BASS members' magazine. Celebrating the 50th anniversary of BASS covers a good few pages in this spring issue; whether it's Clive Hodges looking back to our founding fathers or Mike Ladle recounting the lures that inspired sea anglers 50 years ago. What's more, Richard Baker's new book (reviewed by Phil Arnott) on the writings of Anthony Pearson, presented Richard with an opportunity to explore the memorable work of both Anthony Pearson and Clive Gammon.

David Wilson writes about his first bass but would rather not say exactly when that was! The magic of BASS Fish-Ins is recalled by Roger Lee, who has a particular passion for Shell Island. Jon Williams explores the popular myth that the best bass must require the longest casts, while Ian Sefton has cracked the code of his local hotspots using the Two Zone Theory.

We welcome our new chairman, Sean Dukes, who has put pen to paper to outline his recipe for the Society's future success.

February saw the return to in-person AGMs, so there's a report for all those who missed it, including an opportunity to order some 50th Anniversary clothing and celebrate in style.

Last but by no means least, there are a host of nuggets buried in the regular columns of the Science Report, the Bass FMP update and the Catch Reports.

See you on the beach!

Rob & John



Time to go lure fishing

**FROM 1 MARCH – 31 DECEMBER 2023
RECREATIONAL ANGLERS MAY RETAIN A MAXIMUM
OF TWO BASS PER ANGLER PER DAY WITH A
MINIMUM LANDING SIZE OF 42CM.**

See www.gov.uk/government/publications/bass-industry-guidance-2023/bass-fishing-guidance-2023

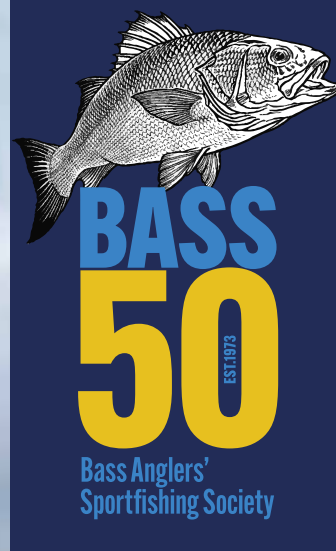
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Cover Photo:
Shell Island Fish-In 2012 ©Dave Collison
Back Cover: A good Dorset bass ©Bill Fagg
Contents: Waiting for a bite ©Mark Prout

Chairman's Chat

SEAN JUKES
APRIL 2023

A bit about me

It's a great privilege for me to be voted in as chairman in what is an exciting year celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Bass Anglers Sportfishing Society. A huge thank you to everyone that has made this possible, I'm certainly looking forward to the future in what I believe will be interesting times for bass anglers and the Bass Fishery Management Plan.



As for me, my journey to BASS began as a teenager back in the late 80s, casting out Tobies from the shore with any tackle we could get our hands on in hope of finding that silver fighting fish. This progressed to fishing from the family boat and a new found love (obsession) of bass. The present day hasn't seen much change in that regard, I'm most at home fishing from my boat or stalking the shoreline during the twilight hours, in hope of finding that one special bass.

In recent years, spare time has been utilised fundraising in support of recreational bass sea anglers. Like many of you with an addiction to this wonderful species comes the desire for knowledge, which I believe, brings us down the path of conservation. Bass conservation led me to the doors of BASS and into the Save Our Sea Bass team and ultimately onto the BASS committee. Our society remains one, I believe, that can and will make a difference.



Thanks all round

With the change of guard, I would like to thank those standing down from the committee for all their hard work and efforts over the last few years, especially our retiring chairman, Steve Pitts. It was an honour to present Steve with a wonderful bass oil painting by David Miller at the recent AGM, as a way of thank you on behalf of all the members of BASS.

Having been a member of BASS for several years I've only ever known Steve as that father figure of our Society, whether that was driving the committee targets, replying to messages on the forum, taking calls on Sundays and even standing in as peacekeeper on the rare occasion! On a serious note, Steve's efforts during his time as Chairman have been undeniable, especially while taking on a leading role in the Bass Fishery Management Plan team in addition. So, on behalf of all at BASS, please accept our thanks and gratitude for all the amazing work, time and effort you have spent on the society during your tenure as Chairman and a huge thank you to Mrs Pitts for allowing you to do so.



Also standing down from the committee this term but remaining in supporting positions are – Rob Pope, who has carried out the membership secretary role and run the BASS shop. Michael Rescorle from exhibitions, John Pritchard from

marketing and finally Steve Richardson from membership support and analysis. Please stand with me in applauding their efforts and support during their time on the committee.

Planning ahead

For the future, our first tasks as a committee will be reviewing the processes and activities that have propelled the society to where we are today. Reaching and celebrating our 50th Anniversary is a magnificent achievement, so we must ensure all the necessary aspects are in place for the next 50 years and providing a society for future generations to enjoy.

You, as the member, play a very important part of BASS and we will be ensuring we retain membership by means of quality content and increased engagement, either on the forum or out on the shore. Further marketing effort through other platforms could also be an option to encourage membership growth.

The magazine will also be reviewed in the light of increasing print and postage costs, as mentioned at the AGM. The magazine is an important part of BASS membership and we will explore all avenues during these difficult financial times to ensure it continues for all of us to enjoy and read for years to come. The BASS shop will also come under scrutiny with the aim to continue providing the membership with a range of quality clothing, tackle and memorabilia.

The Science team have really begun to gain some traction with various projects over the last few years and it's been especially exciting to witness the results of these activities during the AGMs. Science and education play a leading part in the future of our bass stocks and we want BASS to continue leading the way by supporting future projects whether that's by sampling, tagging, collecting bass fish heads or by means of financial support.



With the BASS conservation team heavily involved with the Bass Fishery Management Plan alongside the Angling Trust, we recognise the need to also keep on top of other conservation matters such

as future fishing opportunities and bass restrictions. BASS plays a leading role in UK bass conservation, so creating and maintaining working relationships with fisheries managers is also vitally important. This in turn will see the resurrection of the Restoration team in some form or other during the coming months.

These are just a few of the reviews that we plan to action, so please keep watch in the forum for further updates and requests over the coming weeks and months. To help assist us with the daily running of the society we are wishing to hear from anyone who can join the team offering support. Anyone holding skills relating to Marketing, Financial, Editing, IT, Social Media, Procurement or anyone wanting to be involved with Bass Restoration/Science, please step forward. Again further details will be announced on the forum during the coming weeks and months.

Let's work together to achieve a sustainable, exciting future for BASS and Bass

Sean
Bass Anglers' Sportfishing Society

50 YEARS OF BASS

by Clive Hodges

I did join BASS briefly in the 1980s but joined a second time in May 2002 aged 42. By this stage in my life I had learnt the value in forming friendships, sharing hard-earned knowledge and wanting to get more involved in BASS business. I started to attend the AGMs and made my first steps in getting to know other members. Kind souls befriended me and then volunteered me to help with stuff like taking on the BASS Treasurer's role for 5 years.

When I stepped into the role of Treasurer, the late Peter Macconnell entrusted to me two logs of membership details that dated back to the very start of the Society with words along the lines of 'they may come in useful at some point'. 50 years on from the very first entries that were made in those logs I've decided to have a look at who stepped forward to help champion the humble bass at a time when there were the first concerns about their future in our waters.

Member number one

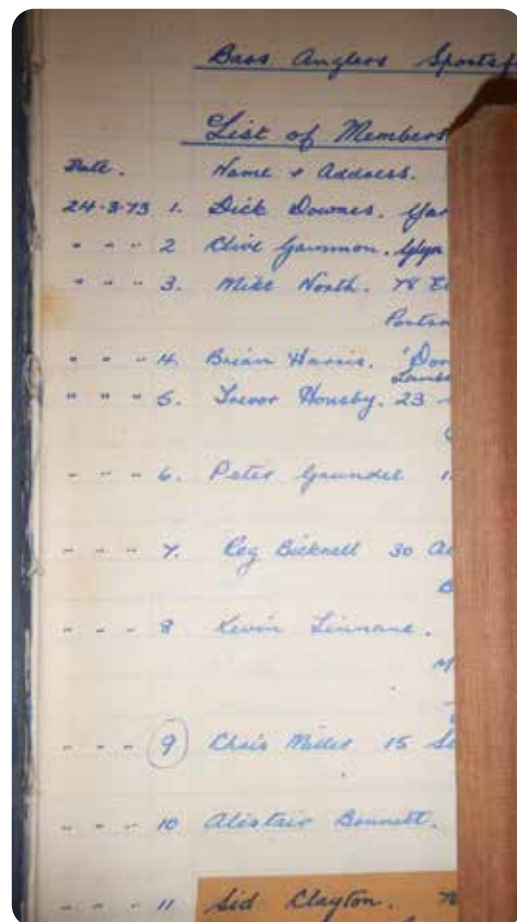
The first entries were dated 24th March 1973 when a group of like minded people came together in the name of BASS in Weymouth. BASS member number one was Dick Downes, a shark boat skipper from the Isle of Wight who is credited with coming up with the initial idea for a national bass society. It was reassuring to hear from Steve Pitts at the recent AGM that Dick is still with us and had written to wish us luck with the Society on its 50th anniversary.

Number two on the list and the very first chairman of BASS (the role was initially taken on by Brian Harris just to get things rolling) was Clive Gammon. John Hockaday a tackle dealer

from the Weymouth area is also listed and he was the initial driving force behind membership recruitment which saw the Society grow to a membership of 400 within the first 18 months or so. John was succeeded by Roy Davis as Secretary who was also at that first gathering.

Famous names

There were 55 names added at that initial meeting in Weymouth. Even though I was just 14 years old at the time, some of those names in the hand written log jump out at me as I was already an avid reader of anything that was published about sea angling. Mike North from the NFSA who was the first Vice Chairman, Brian Harris author and editor of *Angling* magazine, Trevor Housby author and international angler with a soft spot for shark fishing, Kevin Linnane from the Irish Inland Fisheries Trust, Phil Cheeseman and Jim Churchouse who were renowned shore anglers in the Weymouth area, John Darling noted author and bass angler, Peter Collins the long standing editor of *Sea Angler* and David Hill who is the man credited with the first version of the BASS logo which shows a picture of a bass over the letters BASS. Keith Linsell, a professional illustrator later refined the image of the fish and gave the Society the rights to his image which is still in use today.



The precious BASS Membership Log from 1973

And there's more

A little later in April 1973, Alan Baker joined BASS with a membership number of 61. Also in April 1973 Alan Vaughan joined BASS with a membership number of 104. Alan co-authored with Mike Ladle the book *Hooked on Bass*, a ground breaking book about shallow water shore bass fishing that has inspired so many bass anglers. Tony Viles joined with number 121 in May 1973 and Donovan Kelly joined around the same time with the number of 129. Nigel Hester, a man I have often heard mentioned in BASS circles joined a week or two later with number 159. Malcolm Brindle, one time fish recorder for the Society that I had several hand written exchanges with in the past, joined in 1974 with number 294.

It is reassuring to know that Alan Baker, Alan Vaughan, Tony Viles and Malcolm Brindle are all still members today. In my book this is a fine endorsement for BASS membership and the longevity of its membership!

A rare photo from the era was forwarded by Steve Pitts which features three of the founder members. (L to R: Jim Gibbinson, Ian Gillespie, Dennis Darkin, John Darling, Clive Gammon & Brian Harris).

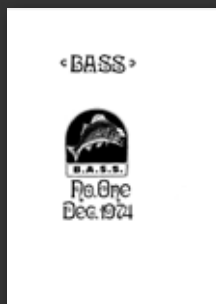
BASS MAGAZINE *through the ages*

THE MAGAZINE TEAM

Being the 50th Anniversary, it seems the perfect time to have a quick look back at the BASS Magazine and see just how it evolved into the action-packed thriller that it is today!

A dip into the archives and a big tip of the hat to Geoff Gonella (he did all the hard

work ten years ago, see BASS 144), reveals that the first magazine was published in 1974. The sharp-eyed will have spotted that the Society was



founded in 1973 and the first newsletter-style publication followed a year later.

Just look at that funky typeface! BASS was certainly the hip place to be in the Seventies! Ten years later and BASS 27 looked much the same. Apparently after Clive Gammon and Jim Churchouse sorted the first few issues, Harry Parnham took over in 1977 and worked on BM6 through to BM50. His wife did the typing and the local church duplicator provided the print. It wasn't until near the end of his tenure that word processing came along to speed things up.



By 1993 a main photograph was in place on the cover and the familiar faces began to appear – in this case John 'Mountain Goat' Morgan, but then he was joint editor at the time!

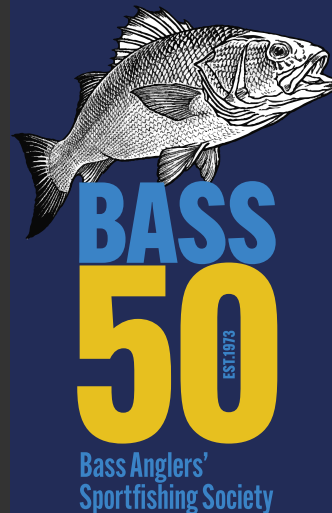


Twenty years ago, the magazine was still a monochromatic affair with a single photograph on the front. This was during Peter Macconnell's first stint as Editor. Another familiar, if youthful face, Steve Pitts graces the cover while fishing in a cold and wet Dorset. A colour cover only appeared just over a decade ago. In fact, editor Steve Binckes is credited with moving the magazine to a permanent colour cover a few years before Tony Hooper and Jon Williams took over and were jointly and variously in the hotseat. The cover of BASS 145 features another fishing favourite, Bill Fagg, returning the same Jurassic bass he's holding on the back cover of this issue, ten years later (wink!).

As the Magazine Team, if we are ever in any doubt of the history and heritage we have to follow, we simply turn to the opening paragraphs of BASS Magazine 1 penned by the then Chairman, Clive Gammon...

Dear Members,

I feel that you ought to be writing this letter to me! This year, every time I have tried to mount a serious bass trip, something has intervened. The whole of the June peeler crab fishing, or nearly all of it, I missed because of having to be in Germany for the World Cup. Catching small silver bream in a lake in the middle of Hamburg isn't really a good substitute. Then, when I was just off to the Kerry beaches for a long trip this autumn – two hours in fact before I was due to leave the house with the car laden with tackle for the ferry to Cork – I got a 'phone call telling me to go to Zaire to interview George Foreman and Mohammed Ali. From the look of it, the Congo River, which is two miles wide where I was at Kinshasa, ought to yield some sport. Unhappily, I wasn't able to test it out, not even to do a little live baiting for crocodiles.



THE PETER MACCONNELL MAGAZINE AWARD 2022

Many thanks to all those members who voted for the best magazine article in its inaugural year. In the event, there was a dead heat between Mark Drewer and Matt Hooper for their respective words. In the spirit of the occasion, both writers were awarded a trophy and Mark was on hand at the AGM to collect his 'silverware' in person.





First Bass

DAVID WILSON

Memory is an unreliable thing in some ways. I'm going to refer to my fishing diary in a minute but originally this piece was written completely from memory. Only when it was finished did I check what my diary actually records. You'll have to wait till the end for an explanation. But to begin...

I caught my first bass on my 18th birthday. It was very small, a pound or so, and to go with it I also had a couple of little mullet. Four of us had tried a shore mark we had never fished before, rather untypical of the kind of ground we normally encountered, hoping maybe for some flounders or plaice. To catch bass - and mine was not the only one on that first visit - was astonishing. Anglers in the South and South-West of England and in Wales caught bass and I was already in thrall to the magical beaches of Ireland, so lyrically described by Gammon, Pearson and Brennan. But they were hundreds of miles away in another angling world. Nobody caught bass in the Firth of Clyde.

Beginners luck

As beginners we need luck in fishing don't we? Otherwise a combination of our clumsiness and ignorance would deny us any chance of a catch. Without luck how would we ever get hooked on the sport? So these first lovely little fish were all cheerfully taken on a 4-6oz beach rod, 25lb mono, and a 5oz lead. After all, this was the gear we used for all our fishing. On our rocky, weedy Clyde beaches light tackle was suicidal; it was always a lottery beaching a fish, so certainty topped sport any day.

Still, knowing the reputation of bass and mullet as hard-fighting fish, hauling them in on gear like that felt rather excessive even then. Also, where we took them actually didn't require such heavy artillery; a shallow sandy beach between rocky reefs that left easy fishing in a sheltered cove. Maybe there was a better way.

It took some months before I could fish there again and as I had - wonder of wonders - passed my driving test, I could now borrow the family car. I have often wondered how my poor parents felt when their fishing-mad son came up with yet another reason to risk life and limb and even more so, their family car, on some trip

that just *had* to be done. They must have loved me very much, I think...

Anyway, I could argue that this trip was OK, only about 20 miles, easy parking and a safe beach. There was of course the small matter of permission to access the beach - it was amazing how often the Govt. seemed to control good marks in our patch, but I assured them I wouldn't risk arrest by slipping surreptitiously down to the beach and instead would ask politely at the security gate.

In those days I kept fishing diaries in old school notebooks, so I know precisely that this trip happened on 31 December 197* (sorry but some things I keep under my hat). It was a cold day and there was snow on the mountains on the far side of the Firth. Fortunately the lie of the land behind the beach gave decent shelter from an insidious little easterly wind; you know the sort - it starts off bearable and in an hour has thoroughly chilled you. Also, I highly prized this mark and was determined to keep it secret as long as possible. In those days if you caught it, you killed it and I had already imbibed the C&R principle for bass. However, on this day I could almost guarantee there would be no-one around - it was a mid-week New Year's Eve, and in Scotland, that meant prep day for the annual all-night party.



Powerful memories

And so I did, a few minutes later a beautiful thick bass lay on the beach. Is there anything quite like your first decent bass? I felt vindicated, privileged, wonder-struck. I quickly weighed it (no bass tapes in those days) at 3½lb and for the first time ever, returned a good fish alive to the water. It is always pleasant to fish in company but moments like that, when it is just you and the fish, make powerful memories.

And now the diary...it told me there were loads of mullet around as previously and I did *not* fish on my own but with 3 companions. To go with my bass I had 3 mullet around 1.5lb each and my friends had 6 bass and mullet between them. So why tell you this?

I think we all feel we need to be able to trust the fishing stories we are told but precise accuracy is not, thank God, the heart of fishing. It is an experience, not always precisely remembered or even precisely recounted. Maybe in recalling that day, I conflated other sessions with this one, times when there seemed to be no fish in the water. Maybe I filtered in later years when my friends lost interest in this fishing and I was determined not to let the secret go any further if at all possible.

So yes, some of the details may have got a bit confused, but one thing is undeniably true. The bass. Subsequently I had many more and bigger bass from that mark and I did have a totally solitary moment a few years later with my PB that was more than twice the weight. But the image in my mind's eye of that first lovely chunky fish still has a savour that is, of course, unrepeatable and therefore quite unique.

A lighter approach

This time I had brought more appropriate tackle, a 10ft salmon spinning rod capable of casting about 2oz, matched with 10lb line on my favourite Mitchell 300 (still going strong I'm pleased to say). My first fish had been taken on rag so I had some good lively worms with me. Still, if I'm honest, I'd admit that I went more in hope than expectation because my first fish were taken in the height of summer and this was the depths of winter. Still, there was a secret factor in my favour, that might just swing things my way.

So on this cold December morning, I found myself back where I had stood 4 months previously, better equipped and optimistic. My polite request for access worked and I arrived on the beach at about half flood. With a moderate tide my 1oz lead would roll gently left to right, slowly covering the width of the cove between the reefs.

The first hour there was nothing, which was worrying as previously we had been amazed at the numbers of mullet that scattered in panic when the lead hit the water. This morning there was no movement at all and I wondered if my first catch had been a fluke of summer not to be repeated in winter. However, the secret factor was still in play and I had the

whole day in front of me. I can't recall how long it took before there was first a hard tug on the rod tip and then it was hauled round in a glorious unmissable take. The salmon rod took on a lovely deep curve and line pulled off the Mitchell in a series of short stabbing runs. Whatever this was, it was not a one-pound anything; it was fighting more gamely than anything I had previously taken from the shore. As the water in the cove was shallow, I was wading thigh deep, maybe 30-40 yards off the beach, so the fish had acres of space in which to perform. And so it did, running not just away from me into deeper water but moving left and right and even at one point circling between me and the beach. I was loving every minute of it and somehow being surrounded by water made me feel very confident I'd land this one, all had to do was stay cool, let the fish do the work and I'd have him.



How things change - fifty-odd years of bass on lures and 'flies'

BY MIKE LADLE

In 1983 (Yes – I am **that** old), with my pals Harry Casey and Terry Gledhill, I published the original book “Operation Sea Angler”. Our idea was to describe how we’d re-learned to catch sea fish since moving to Dorset about fifteen years earlier. To our surprise the book was an instant success and one of the main attractions to other sea anglers seemed to be some of our (then) novel and very successful approaches to sea angling success. A major source of improvement was the application of lure and fly-fishing tactics to saltwater situations, particularly from the shore. A further forty years have now passed, and all sorts of dramatic changes have taken place since then.

Firstly, I’ll just outline where we were in the 1980s by illustrating the lures being used at that time. My **normal** spinning tackle was a 12ft, 1.75lb T.C. ‘carp’ rod (now, due to changes in carp fishing gear, regarded as a ‘barbel rod’ I suppose) and 8lb, clear nylon right through to the lure. **Lots of big bass** were caught on this setup and very few were lost, although there was a considerably higher loss rate for lures caught on rocks and kelp than there is today. The old picture illustrates the lures in use at the time.

1 & 2: Pirk/wedge and Toby Spoon (used in early days and in deeper water)

3: ABU Killer (one of our first floating plugs. Bass up to 11 pounds were taken on these lures)

11: The ‘Tesco Special’ (this cheap, foreign made, floater was very effective for bass of all sizes)

12: Rebel J30S (for years this was a favourite. Responsible for many large bass including one of over 12 pounds)

4 & 5: Home-made floaters (Number 4 took bass of over 10-pounds and number 5 proved to be effective in sizes up to 12” long)

14: Rebel crayfish (this was useful for bass and was a very good wrasse lure. Shallow divers and weedless soft lures also work well for wrasse)

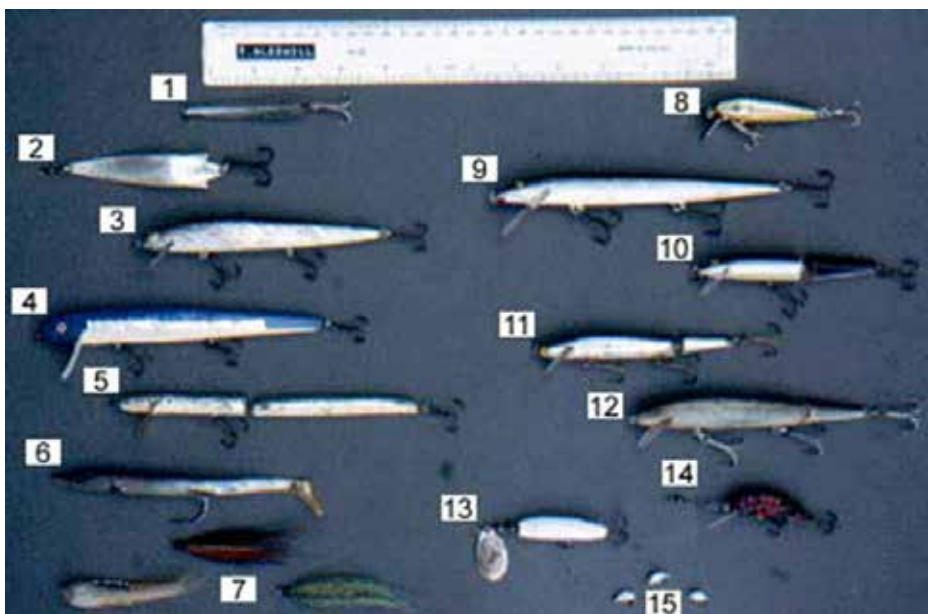
9 & 10: Rapalas (until recently this was the most consistent shallow working ‘floaters’) STILL ONE OF THE BEST PLUGS, EASIER TO CAST ON BRAID THAN NYLON

8: Small Japanese slow-sinker (used for fry-feeders) SMALL PLUGS ARE ALWAYS HANDY FOR FRY FEEDERS, AS ARE MEPPS SPINNERS

6 & 13: Redgill and balsa-bodied Mepps (both were found to be useful in dirty conditions amongst bits of floating weed)

7 & 15: Streamer flies and floating maggot-flies (used with a fly rod for bass and mullet) MAGGOT FLIES, PLUS LIVE MAGGOTS, ARE STILL EXCELLENT

We started off using traditional Toby spoons and similar lures and, to be honest, although they catch fish, the places where it’s possible to use them are seriously restricted by tackle losses on snags. The introduction of buoyant plugs, which fish close to the surface, was a major improvement. “Bassy ground” kelp, wrack, rocks, and shallow water could be fished with reasonable confidence and once you got to know the places you were fishing lure losses dropped, on average, to one or two per season. A lot cheaper than bait for a season’s fishing. The best of the buoyant plugs are still very effective bass catchers and in recent years they have been joined by a vast range of “Japanese” and other models, which sometimes incorporate moving weights to improve casting distance. To be fair, distance was never really a problem for bass and, with the introduction of gossamer fine braided lines, it is rarely worth considering these days. The introduction of surface popping and sliding lures (one of several USA innovations) largely solved the snagging problem, although **there are times** when the bass seem more interested in sub-surface feeding than smashing into a popper.



A good fish caught on a Toby spoon adorned with a single hooked streamer fly



A modern 'Japanese' plug – often a good bet for bass



Surface poppers are still good particularly in calm, snaggy conditions with no drifting debris

Of course, any lure with hooks which hang below the body, even a surface slider, is tailor made for catching loose, drifting weed and this can make many places virtually unfishable. Catching bits of weed on every chuck is very frustrating when big bass can be seen grovelling in the “soup”. Our first, partial, solution to this problem was a Redgill fished behind a swivelled trace, so that the swivel picked up some of the weed and gave a bit more fishing time. Also, we found that the spinning blades of home-made, balsa-bodied, Mepps lures (see the first montage picture) would sometimes deflect weed from the lure, and had the benefit of tempting a few mullet.

WEEDLESS SOFT PLASTICS

More recently, the introduction of weedless soft plastics (again from the US of A's black bass anglers) has practically solved all the problems of loose weed and for that matter of most snags. The only possible downside of these lures is that they may (although I've no evidence of it) fail to hook a few more fish than lures with exposed hooks. Since these weedless lures can be fished totally weightless (my usual preference) or with nose weights of any size, there is scarcely a need for any other type of lure. Some of them have proved so effective that a number of bass anglers are almost “addicted” to their use. In general, the softer and more flexible the plastic the better the action (and probably the easier it is to hook fish) but the downside of this is that the softest lures can be fragile and need frequent replacement (like every one or two fish), which can be expensive and doesn't appeal to my Yorkshire genes. All of these lures are likely to tempt wrasse as well as the target species and, on flood tides over beds of wrack, wrasse can at times be the most frequent catches.



A homemade, weedless, hybrid Slandra – durable and pretty good for bass and wrasse



A bass nicely hooked on a weedless soft plastic Slandra



An Evo Stix Redgill with a nose weight – could ideally be a bit larger, but consistently catches bass of all sizes



A Fiiish Black Minnow – good but delicate



A good ballan wrasse on a soft plastic

Spinning with lures is far from being the only way to catch bass and of course many other species are liable to be caught, even when bass are the target. One of the major early improvements in our sea angling tactics was the use of ‘dry flies’ to tempt surface feeding mullet. In my many years of experience, there is little doubt that floating, poly-maggots, with the added attraction of a few live maggots, are the best way to catch maggot-skimming-thicklips. Perhaps surprisingly, bass will also gorge themselves on *Coelopa* maggots and at times can be a real nuisance to the dedicated mullet angler (they do exist). However, it is possible to selectively catch bass on the fly gear, from among shoals of surface feeding mullet, by using fry imitations and streamer flies. Trial and error has shown that small plastic eels with waggy tails are **as good as or better than most traditional flies** and have caught, not only large numbers of bass but also pollack, mackerel, scad and garfish. Even the occasional mullet falls to these ‘flies’, although it is always doubtful whether they actually took them or were accidentally mouth hooked.



A big mullet caught on a maggot fly



Into a bass on the fly



Not bad for six-pound nylon cast and a tiny Delta eel

The Two Zone Theory

IAN SEFTON

I had been spinning for two seasons on a small spate stream in West Wales for sea trout and was yet to catch one. Although I'd seen a lot of fish and had plenty of follows I was beginning to get disheartened, not helped by hearing the tales of other members' catches and full bags in the local pub. I'd read all I could, gleaned whatever scrap of information I could from the regulars but could not tempt one of these elusive trout.

It was nearing the start of a new season and I stumbled upon a copy of *Trout & Salmon* magazine and read an article titled 'The two zone theory'. It was written by an angler fishing a West Country river and struggling to land sea trout, despite constant follows and near misses. 'Sounds just like me' I thought. The angler in question, Bob Mountjoy, went on to describe how in a chance encounter with one of the 'old timers' of the river, he was told how the sea trout have two distinct zones, a strike zone which remains fixed, believed to be roughly three and a half feet (but depended on the size of fish and how long it had been in the river) and a visual zone that varied widely with changes in residual light and water clarity. The trick to tempt the fish was to get your lure into the fish's strike zone, where it has less time to think, moderate its behaviour and will just attack it. If the lure is seen in the fish's visual zone it will often just half heartedly 'nose' the lure or just follow it.

Watching the water colour

This was my 'light bulb' moment, after 2 years spent casting and retrieving and seeing a sea trout following my lure, I now had a theory as to why. Suddenly everything made sense. From this article I watched the water colour very carefully and adjusted my lure size, weight and colour to suit and also targeted known 'lies'

with accurate casts and sure enough my catch rate increased. The optimum time to be on the river was when it was fining down after a flood, 'the colour of a fine malt'. At this point the fish's visual zone had contracted down closer to its strike zone, the Holy Grail, the lure passing the fish was appearing in the strike zone and positively attacked. In high, coloured water I would use a bigger, brightly coloured lure fished slow as the fish's visual zone had contracted right down. Then as the water cleared, lure size would drop, colour chosen to be more natural to blend in and fished at a faster speed.

I have fished for bass in the surf and estuary with bait since a very early age but at this point the lure bug had just bitten. I began fishing my local shallow rocky areas of coast and muddy creeks armed with my first weedless soft plastics and started to adapt the 'two zone theory' for bass. I was surprised how similar the two fish species were in behaviour, especially targeting the bigger fish in their 'lies', waiting for a meal to wash by. Every submerged rock, pool, gully or patch of bladder rack would be fished just like a pool on the river. I quickly discovered that the optimum time for daytime lure fishing was 'green water' just like the 'fine malt' colour on the river, this was when the bass's visual zone had contracted closer to the strike zone.

Stealth in the strike zone

During a southwest storm the surfcaster would be deployed with a big smelly bait, as the water colour started to fine down to a 'grey' colour and the rocks safer to fish, a hard-plastic plug or a big soft plastic with lots of vibration, water displacement and bright colour would be used, fished slowly. In these conditions the fish's visual zone may have contracted right down, so more casts must be made and closer

together. As the water fined down again to a more green colour and the fish's visual zone grew, so the lure size would drop, colour would go from a white/bright to a more natural green/ayu and a paddle-tail to a stick bait or surface plug, fished a bit quicker. With greater stealth and camouflage clothing on the rocks to blend in, the lure would and suddenly appear in the bass's strike zone or better still if possible, hover and hang in the strike zone - like holding a paddle-tail lure in the back flow or allowing a stick bait to wash around in the current in one place. Finding the best lies and accurate targeted casts into these is also vital, if a fish is lying 20 yards out and you cast 50 yards and retrieve, the bass is likely to see the lure in its visual zone and only follow it, if you cast 25 yards in the bass's strike zone and retrieve, the chances of a take are increased. On a new piece of water as well as fanning casts out left to right, it's important to start in close with short casts and gradually expand outwards so as to not disturb too many fish until a lie has been found. Practise casts to certain rocks at low water has got me many strange looks from passers by but has helped casting accuracy. The first couple of casts into a new area are often the most important. Once a fish has been disturbed or followed a lure and seen the angler and turned away, they have sensed danger and go to ground and will often be hard to move again. Then the water must be rested.

Looking for lies at low water



When finally the water has cleared completely, with the bass's visual zone now very large and the fish wary, this is the time to wait for the residual light to drop. The reduced light of dawn, dusk and night offers ideal fishing conditions, as the bass's visual zone has contracted closer to the strike zone. When the next low pressure rolls in, the whole process starts again. If I had an afternoon free and conditions were calm and clear I would occasionally 'fish for follows', the visual zone would be big, fish wary and chances slim but by walking and fishing a large area of reef with polarised sunglasses you could find where the fish would be by them following your lure. Then when conditions were more favourable, such as at night or green water, you knew where to target first - saving time and tough walks in the dark over rocky ground.

In my muddy estuary, after studying the water colour closely, I found the ebb tide often to be clearer than the flood. This was particularly true of neap tides and especially if the wind was going the same way as the current. I concentrated my lure fishing mainly on the ebb and found the bass would often fall back to a favoured lie and wait facing the current for a meal to be washed to them, until the water level dropped and they dropped back to the next lie. I even made my own lie out of a pile of stones which held fish. Targeted casts at these lies often produced fish on the first cast, but I was also very aware not to overfish a productive spot, allowing it to rest for weeks or months.

Yellow feet inspiration

A relatively recent newcomer to our estuaries is the little egret. In clear water it

moves quickly along the margins stabbing at anything that moves, in coloured water the egret moves slowly, lifting its feet and encouraging small prey items to move so they can be seen and caught by the bird.



A little egret's lure colour of choice

Little egrets have bright yellow feet to aid them. This encouraged me to use chartreuse/fluo yellow/white lures in coloured water to stand out in the reduced visual zone of the bass and I have done well, especially fishing an area known to hold fish. My PB bass, a very chunky 76cm fish fell to a fluo yellow Fiiish Black Minnow in murky, brackish water at dusk.



A fine fish on fluo yellow from coloured water

Another example of the 'two zone theory' in action in the natural world that I have seen first hand involves the top woodland predator, the sparrowhawk. It will often have its favourite perch (lie) on the woodland edge and just wait. I once put up a woodpigeon and it flew towards the sparrowhawk, it was spotted a long way off in the hawk's visual zone, like the bass and sea trout it's a sprinter. It didn't want to waste energy chasing down the pigeon, it took off half-heartedly, came out with a lunge towards its prey as if to say 'get off my patch', missed and was quickly back to its perch. On another day when an unsuspecting thrush made its way past the hawk's perch but closer, in its strike zone, it was attacked and killed at breath-taking speed and with a look of anger in its eye, only matched by that of the sea trout and bass when they have been triggered to strike at a lure.

I have found the two zone technique to be great aid when searching for fish in their lies, it can be very different when encountering a feeding shoal, when matching the hatch is important but as a general guide, studying the water colour, altering lures to suit and predicting strike zones and visual zones has really helped me. I often wonder where my lure fishing would be if I hadn't read that Salmon & Trout article many years ago. So next time you are walking to your chosen mark I encourage you to think, 'how can I get my lure in the bass's strike zone, before it sees me or my lure in its visual zone'. And if you are like me, you'll see your catch rates improve.

The 'Two Zone Theory' is fully explained in the great book, 'The Sea Trout Diaries' by R.W. Mountjoy

Bass FMP Update

BY STEVE PITTS

STAKEHOLDER SHENANIGANS

You may recall that the Bass FMP update of the previous magazine ended with a bit of a cliff-hanger:

Policy Lab had extended the period of the Co-refine Survey and only informed commercial fishing interests, handing the sector an unfair advantage in terms of encouraging their responses, but not ours.

Having rumbled their ruse I sent an email to Policy Lab, asking for clarification on the reasons for the extension to the Co-refine survey: *"You will probably be aware of concerns that, it appears a certain collective of commercial fishing interests were notified of the extended period, but that the extension was not widely shared with other stakeholders. We have yet to find a single sea angler or representative group who were specifically advised that the survey duration had been extended."*

The initial reply was that the survey was extended to allow more time for "underrepresented stakeholder groups" to complete the survey. Several emails later and not much in the way of further explanation, Policy Lab and Defra suggested a Zoom meeting to discuss the concerns that the Angling Trust and the BASS Bass FMP team were persistent in expressing.

Policy Lab opened the meeting by saying that they were aware of concerns over the Co-refine Survey extension and the reasons why - they apologised for the confusion and oversight on their part in not circulating the information to extend the survey by email. The reasons they gave were that on the 5th December (the survey close date was the 4th) the survey responses were 70% recreational and about 25% commercial (the two main stakeholder groups).

"We tried to listen equally to both major sectors and feel that by the close of the survey on the 11th December the balance was 53% recreational / 40% commercial, which we feel gave a more balanced set of 'insights' from the two main sectors, to take forward our recommendations to Defra."

Our concern was that commercial exploiters were considered to be under-represented and then targeted for more evidence and more responses. It appears irrefutable that the commercial fishing sector has been shown a certain amount of bias and that's how it appears to the recreational sector.

Defra commented: *"This is the beginning of bringing different sectors together for the best possible product and build on it. The oversight (of not informing all sectors) was an admin error and not true that one sector was favoured over another. If the boot was on the other foot, I'm sure your members would agree with the extension."*

So, despite the undeniable bias shown towards the commercial sector, we still ended up with 53% of the responses to the survey being from the recreational sector ... it was 70% before the survey deadline was extended! If nothing else this shows that we are serious about the Bass FMP. The fact that we found out about it and challenged them, resulting in an admission and an apology would, I hope, ensure that they realise that we don't appreciate being sidelined and won't be tempted to pull a similar stunt in the future.

BASS PRODUCES THE EVIDENCE

In addition to Policy Lab's work, a separate work stream has been commissioned into a Bass Evidence Review, which is being conducted by a team from Bournemouth University, under contract to Cefas.

The three main topics for the review are:

- **Bass Biology – Stock Structure**
e.g. genetic, isotope, microchemical analyses
- **Bass Ecology**
- **Bass Fisheries – Commercial and Recreational Fisheries Catches**

We established contact with the Bournemouth University team and were encouraged to send them reports, data and survey results that BASS has accumulated over the past 25 to 30 years. In all, we provided approx. 70 documents that we identified as being of potential benefit to the bass evidence review.

Professor Britton, who leads the review team commented: *"The literature aspect of what you provided was very helpful – there were a few reports in there that had not been picked up through other channels and so they were very useful in a few areas (e.g. on bass fishery economic values)."*

We appreciate that there is a good deal of scepticism with regards to Defra's motives and methods, so we are trying to ensure that the considerable amount of evidence that supports our ambitions for the Bass FMP is not overlooked. Thanks go to Robin Bradley and David Curtis for their assistance in this aspect of the Bass FMP work.



PREPARE FOR SUMMER ACTION

We hear that the Bass FMP is being drafted and that a Public Consultation will take place this coming summer. No specific date has been announced, but as soon as we hear the details we will let you know. It is therefore important that we have an up-to-date email address for all members, so we can send out BASS newsletters with regular updates. It is hugely important that all BASS members participate in the consultation, as this will be the culmination of many hundreds of hours of work, put in by the BASS Bass FMP team. If you can find an hour or two to complete the consultation, when called to, it will make all the time and effort worthwhile. Thank you in advance for your support.



30 years of BASS data provided

Standing on the shoulders of giants



Photo from BASS Magazine No. 50, February 1989. Campaign leader Bryan Meade on right

With the Bass Fishery Management Plan public consultation being launched sometime during the coming summer, I've been reflecting on how far the campaign for a better deal for bass has come since BASS was formed 50 years ago.

I was reading an old BASS blog: **Bass legislation – A Summary**, and it is clear that 1988 was a turbulent year in the history of legislation relating to bass management and the fight to protect immature fish from the rampant exploitation that was occurring at the time.

Mind-boggling amounts of bass were being caught and transported to the continent (as there was little demand for bass here in the UK at that time), such as one boat alone that had taken 85,000lb (38.5 tonnes) of bass in a few months and two lorries a week were regularly travelling from Wales to France with an estimated £700,000 worth of bass.

Initially, there was hope that this slaughter could be halted with the proposed introduction of a Minimum Landing Size of 36cm for bass and the banning of gillnet meshes between 61 and 99mm, to protect immature bass, along with the creation of 24 bass nursery areas where juvenile bass would be protected from angling and commercial fishing.

But, by the middle of 1988, the Minister for Fisheries had back-tracked on making any changes to mesh sizes, to suspend the introduction of the nursery areas indefinitely and to defer any change of MLS legislation until 1990.

Undeterred, the angling groups of the day pressed on with the fight and one man, Bryan Meade, stood out as the driving force for change.

Bryan Meade was a humble but determined man. A machine operator from Holyhead, Anglesey, he made it his life's work to not only badger the politicians and fisheries authorities with hard evidence regarding the carnage which was taking place to bass stocks, but to enlist the support of sea angling groups across Wales and England in a common goal. That was no mean feat in itself!

Despite suffering from Hodgkinson's disease for a twelve-year period, Bryan's campaign work on the bass fishery was taking up an average of nine hours a day.

On the 30th November 1988 Bryan Meade, the machine operator from Holyhead, stood in front of an all-party group of Welsh MPs and delivered a case for the proper management of the bass fishery of the UK. The message that he and his colleagues from the Welsh Federation of Sea Anglers and the North West Association of Sea Angling Clubs presented was so strong that the proposals received support from 92% of Welsh MPs and it was decided to make the proper management of the UK bass fishery the official policy of both Plaid Cymru and the Labour Party.

Eventually, Bryan's persistence was rewarded with the introduction of legislation to remove gill nets from rivers in Wales. He also played a big part in the Irish ban on commercial fishing for bass, and his dogged pressure forced the Ministry of Fisheries to conduct a five-year research programme. This resulted in 36 bass nursery areas being established, most of which we are familiar with today.

But these victories didn't come without a heavy price for Bryan. As mentioned, for twelve years his life was consumed with campaigning and at a personal cost of

nearly £30,000 (over £80,000 today). He received death threats and, as reported in *The Independent* at the time, the brakes on his motorbike were tampered with - twice. Perhaps, unsurprisingly, this also put a tremendous strain on his marriage, so the personal cost to Bryan cannot be overstated.

If you look at the edge of a £2 coin you'll see the words STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS engraved into the side.

The source of this phrase is attributed to Sir Isaac Newton, who generously conceded that much of what he had achieved in the world of scientific discovery had been due to those mathematicians and astronomers who had gone before him: Galileo, da Vinci and Copernicus and in recognition to his forebears, he once wrote: *"If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants"*.

Today, we are still fighting for a better bass fishery and for anglers' rights. We continue to lobby Governments in the UK and at EU level and the achievements that have been made are in no small measure because of the work of Bryan Meade - A true giant of bass campaigning.



The 50th Anniversary AGM Report 2023

BY ROB POPE



And how nice it was to be back at Oxstalls after too many years of digital meets! Is it 3 or 4 years since the last time the Society gathered in Gloucestershire? It matters not, it simply felt right to be back in the familiar surroundings, with the usual faces and some new ones to meet and assign real people to forum names.

Like most anglers, I have an unhealthy interest in looking at and buying fishing tackle and good god, did Danny from High Street Tackle put the motherload of temptation right in the belly of the AGM. Having spoken to Danny in the pre-meeting build-up, I knew that temptation would be close by for the duration, but the array of goodies on display was truly something to behold. Top job Danny and his team!



High Street Tackle temptation

I am sure that the Society's business has been covered elsewhere in this magazine, so I will just say well done to all those that won awards, and many thanks to those that have served and stepped down (self excluded, obviously!).

The presentation by Tom Cameron and Howard was, as one would expect, excellent, informative and a brilliant example of the kind of genuine cutting-edge bass-science that BASS is getting involved with and helping fund. Whatever happens or doesn't happen with regards to the BFMP, the Society's standing is only going to be strengthened by these contributions to the collective understanding of bass and bass habitats.



Tom Cameron in full flow

This session was followed by Robin Bradley talking about our in-house science with

BASS merchandise went like hotcakes



an equally informative presentation on the data amassed from the BASS Catch Recording Scheme. Although still in its early days (or years), it is clear that this is going to be a valuable dataset, so please do get involved if you possibly can.

And then the raffle. It works, to a degree, it's a tradition now I am sure, but most of all it's a good laugh and a fitting end to the day. I understand around £900 was raised which is brilliant and in large part due to Andy Davies who turns out to be quite the charmer when it comes to extracting prizes from folk!



Raffle prizes galore!

Finally, many thanks to all those that visited the BASS Shop which was hiding away amongst the tempting booty. It was great to catch up, put names to faces and to adorn individuals in some BASS branded goodies! I had a good time, see you all in 2024.

Treasurer's Report

These accounts cover both the BASS and BASS Restoration finances for the year ended 31st December 2022. My thanks go to Clive Hodges for reviewing them in advance of their presentation at the AGM. The accounts summaries set out here also include 2021 figures for comparison. Key points of note:

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Membership subscriptions unfortunately declined from 2021 and at the date of writing stand at 525. This resulted in a reduction in subscription income of £1,500. The Society continues to encourage new memberships via attendance at shows - for which my thanks go to Michael Rescorle - and other marketing activities.

MAGAZINE COSTS

These increased significantly in 2022, due to price rises in both printing and distribution costs. The situation is currently being reviewed by the committee. I would like to personally thank John Pritchard for co-ordinating the magazine and managing the supplier relationships.

RESTORATION EXPENSES

Expenses increased in 2022 as a result of significant activity on the Bass Fishery Management Plan. We supported the work of the Angling Trust in this area and printed and delivered the FMP. In addition we paid a small bursary to an MSc student to support his research.

MERCHANDISE

Income from sales was consistent with the previous year, as was expenditure on the goods sold. As Rob Pope relinquishes his duties on the Bass Shop, I would like to thank him for all his efforts during our time working together.

DONATIONS

Donations decreased significantly in 2022, although we have already seen an upturn in 2023. Sincere thanks go to all of our donors who make both one-off and recurring donations.

Bri Kerley

BASS Treasurer

BASS ANGLERS SPORTFISHING SOCIETY INCOME & EXPENDITURE STATEMENT AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2022

	2022	2021
Balance b/f	20,402.70	13,908.10
INCOME		
Membership subs	13,021.87	14,573.21
Sundry Income		
Interest	47.61	1.59
	47.61	1.59
Total Income	13,069.48	14,574.80
EXPENDITURE		
Postage	(80.25)	(36.35)
Stationery	(38.48)	(240.60)
Magazine Production & Post	(8,456.66)	(5,710.43)
Travel & Subsistence	0.00	0.00
Affiliation subscriptions	(1,030.00)	(963.50)
Trophies for AGM	(192.00)	0.00
Trf to RP	0.00	0.00
Conference Facilities	0.00	0.00
Web	(1,326.82)	(1,129.32)
Total Expenditure	(11,124.21)	(8,080.20)
Total Income Less Expenditure	22,347.97	20,402.70

BASS ANGLERS SPORTFISHING SOCIETY RESTORATION PROJECT INCOME & EXPENDITURE STATEMENT AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2022

	2022	2021
Balance b/f	52,490.46	38,714.76
INCOME		
Donations	619.57	12,382.41
Restoration Project Sales		
Regalia Sales	85.55	71.77
Raffles	494.48	1,130.79
RP funding from main ac	0.00	0.00
Books	0.00	0.00
NSC's	0.00	0.00
Mugs	0.00	98.72
Clothing	1,607.74	1,035.07
BASS Tapes	1,000.26	1,436.62
Lure Box sales	247.84	545.90
	3,435.87	4,318.87
Other income		
Interest	103.36	3.65
	103.36	3.65
Total Income	4,158.80	16,704.93
EXPENDITURE		
Cost of Goods sold:		
Lure Boxes	(603.26)	0.00
Bass Tapes	0.00	0.00
Clothing	(1,593.28)	(1,934.28)
Travel	(254.17)	(153.60)
Show costs	(585.60)	(66.00)
Angling Trust (Fisheries Mgmt Plan)	(2,860.00)	0.00
BFMP	(2,057.91)	0.00
BASS Bursary	(990.00)	0.00
Postage	(564.80)	(775.35)
Total Expenditure	(9,509.02)	(2,929.23)
Total Income Less Expenditure	47,140.24	52,490.46

TWO FAVOURITE BOOKS

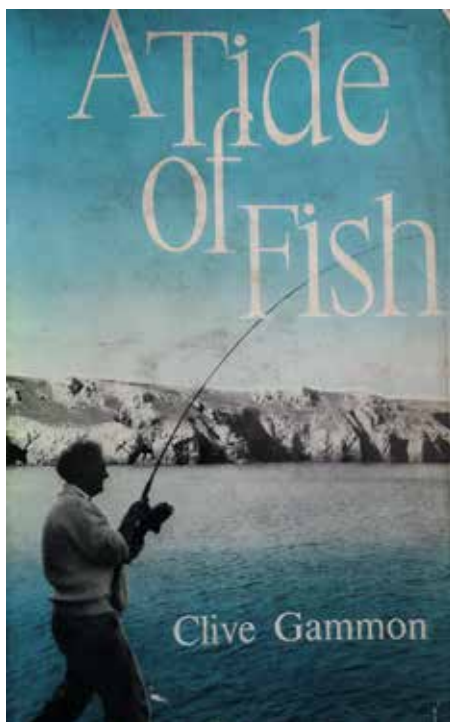
BY RICHARD BAKER

Richard has a passion for angling literature and, as a prelude to writing his new book, looks at two of his favourite titles and the stories behind them.

Most of us buy books about sea fishing, and the majority of these will be manuals on how to catch fish. These are essential for anyone starting out in the sport, and also for experienced fishermen wanting to try a new method such as fly fishing. However, the books we grow to love are not the how-to manuals, but those that consist of fishing stories, and the reasons why we fish. Two books of this type stand out if you fish from the shore, and both deal in the main with bass. These are Clive Gammon's *A Tide of Fish* and Anthony Pearson's *Successful Shore Fishing*. Clive Gammon's name will be familiar to most readers, particularly as he was one of the founding members of B.A.S.S. and its first Chairman; Anthony Pearson's less so. Both books were written well before the popularity of lure fishing for bass, so concentrate mainly on bait fishing.

A TIDE OF FISH

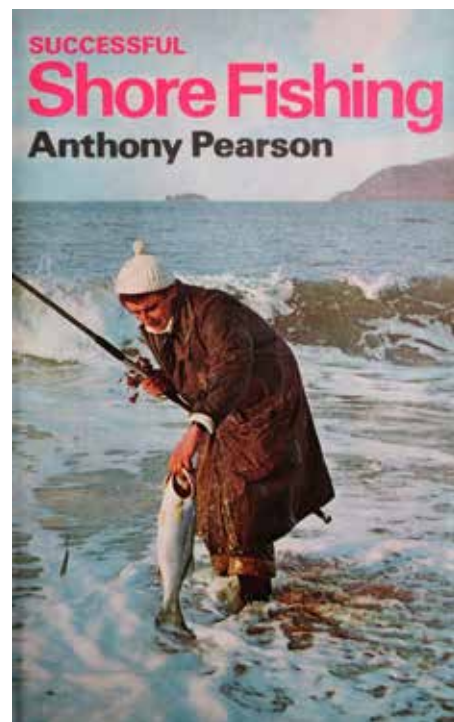
Clive Gammon's *A Tide of Fish* was published in 1962. It includes 13 pages of black and white photos, and the cover is a black and white photo, tinted with blue, of the author playing a tope at Barafundle. The 167 pages of text describe Gammon's experiences of shore fishing along the South Wales coast; mostly for bass. He starts in the west, with the superb surf fishing at Freshwater West, and finishes at



Swansea, taking in Milford Haven *en route*. The chapter on fishing the famous surf beach, Freshwater West, is excellent, and describes a quality of fishing we can now only dream about. Gammon describes one particular night when the entire beach was filled with fish, with bites coming every 15 minutes from a range of 15 yards from the shore out to maximum casting distance. Although the book is mainly about bass fishing, for me the stand out chapter is that dealing with catching large tope from the rocks at Barafundle. This, I think, is probably the most exciting writing ever produced about shore fishing in the UK. The thing that strikes you most about this book, and much of Gammon's other work, is the quality of the writing. Gammon never went into much detail about the technicalities of fishing, and so this book could be read by anyone interested in the South Wales coastline.

SUCCESSFUL SHORE FISHING

Anthony Pearson's *Successful Shore Fishing* was published in 1967. It includes 32 pages of black and white photos, so more than twice as many as Gammon's. The cover is in colour, and depicts Pearson landing a large bass at a surf beach. It is possibly the best cover on any fishing book. The text, at 188 pages, is slightly longer than Gammon's book, but includes some preliminary chapters on subjects such



as tides, beach types, tackle selection, and camping gear. The main part of the book covers Pearson's experiences whilst fishing the east coast, and north-west coast, for cod, and Wales and southern Ireland for bass. It is difficult to select a stand-out chapter, as all are excellent, but that relating to the Dingle Peninsula is particularly interesting, as it, like Gammon's chapter on Freshwater West, describes a quality of fishing that is long gone. At one point, Pearson is fishing with Eammon Doyle at Castlegregory. Pearson's first bass weighed 11½ lb., followed by two weighing 9 lb. and one weighing 8 lb. Between them they caught 31 fish, with one of Eammon's just below 13 lb. The smallest weighed 5 lb.

There is a very limited amount of information available about Pearson, and it is often speculative or incorrect. The following is based mainly upon information revealed by Pearson in his books and articles. Pearson was born on 28 April 1941 in Marple, a leafy suburb of Manchester. He was the son of a stores clerk, who was a keen fisherman. The family moved to Hawk Green, and Pearson was taught to fish by his father on the nearby Macclesfield Canal. The family moved again to Bolton, and this provided the young

far left: Clive Gammon with a Caldy Sound bass from the cover of Angling Guide to Wales.



Anthony Pearson with 11.5lb bass from the mudflats, Wales (from *Successful Shore Fishing*) with permission of Soline Pearson.

Pearson with opportunities to fish for trout in the local streams. Every year his father would take him fishing to southern Ireland, and it was here that Pearson caught his first bass. He was also travelling alone by train from Bolton to Blackpool to fish for cod.

Pearson did not do well at school, and left in 1957 with few, if any qualifications. He went to live with his much older brother, who was a senior police officer in Nairobi, Kenya. Here Pearson became a reporter for the *East African Standard*, and fished the local rivers and lakes for the introduced trout and largemouth bass. He also got involved in big-game fishing at Malindi. He returned to the UK around 1961/62 and got a job as a reporter with the *Hull Daily Mail*. This gave him an opportunity to fish the east coast for cod in winter and bass in summer. Around 1963/64 he moved to Manchester for a job with the *Guardian*. He became the paper's fishing correspondent and appeared to have an arrangement whereby he could travel all over the UK, Europe and Africa to fish at the newspaper's expense. He spent a lot of time fishing North Wales; the nearest piece of quality coastline to Manchester,

and also southern Ireland; the beaches of Brandon Bay in particular. He recorded his fishing exploits in a fortnightly column in the *Guardian*, and also wrote articles for a number of magazines including *Fishing*, *Creel*, *Angling*, and *Trout and Salmon*. It was during this period that Pearson wrote *Successful Shore Fishing*, a remarkable feat for someone only 26 years old.

Pearson's life started to unravel in the late 1960s. He was constantly broke. *Fishing* magazine, in which he wrote a monthly column, folded in December 1969, and it would appear that his arrangement with the *Guardian* was terminated, although he continued to write occasional articles for them for a few years more. He also appears to have lost his enthusiasm for shore fishing. Eventually, in the late 1960s/early 1970s he moved to London where the opportunities for freelance writing were presumably better. He stopped writing about fishing, and became a specialist in reporting about terrorism and the Middle East. He wrote a book, *Conspiracy of Silence* in 1978 about an incident that occurred during the Six Day War between Israel and a number of

Arab nations. I wish I could report that his interest in surf fishing returned, and he had a happy retirement on the Dingle Peninsula. The sad truth is that he died unexpectedly in London on 28 July 1984 at the age of only 43.

WALES AND IRELAND

Gammon and Pearson had a number of things in common. Both were fanatical about bass fishing, both wrote about fishing for magazines and newspapers, and both wrote books about fishing (Gammon about 20, and Pearson 4). They each produced a guide to fishing in Wales; Pearson in 1968 with *Sea Fishing North Wales and Anglesey*, and Gammon in 1974 with *Angling Guide to Wales*. They were also both responsible for opening up the bass fishing in Ireland; often fishing with Des Brennan and Kevin Linnane of what was then the Inland Fisheries Trust. Finally, they were both lost to UK angling readers, albeit for very different reasons. Did they ever meet? In a 1965 article in the *Guardian* newspaper Pearson describes fishing with someone called Clive at Castlegregory, and this is confirmed by Gammon in the January 1968 issue of *Angling* magazine.

So, who was the best bass fisherman, and which is the best book? I don't think that there can be any doubt that Pearson was the better bass fisherman, particularly if we judge it by the size of fish caught. Most of Gammon's bass fishing was in Pembrokeshire, and although he was fishing in the 1950s when the bass population was at its peak, average bass sizes were known to be small in this area, and according to Phill Williams (*You Should Have Been Here Yesterday*), he only caught one double figure fish – from the Gower Peninsula. Pearson fished mainly in North Wales, where the average bass size was higher. In *Sea Fishing North Wales and Anglesey* he records catching 18 double figure fish in one year, including a 14 pounder, and this was despite him fishing in the 1960s, when the bass population was declining due to recreational fishing. Pearson took a fanatical approach to fishing, often fishing five or six tides a week, some sessions lasting 10 hours, and sometimes in weather conditions that would send most people home. It should be mentioned, however, that Gammon fished with more finesse; using light rods and leads, whereas Pearson fished with powerful beachcasters and heavy leads, necessitated, in part, by the powerful lateral currents he experienced on beaches such as Dinas Dinlle. Regarding which is the best book, I have to concede that although my favourite is *Successful Shore Fishing* because I know the North Wales sites it describes so well, *A Tide of Fish* is superior. It benefits from describing a smaller stretch of coast in detail, and Gammon was a superlative writer, which is to be expected given that he had two English degrees and a Welshman's love of language.

As far as availability and price are concerned, *Successful Shore Fishing* is the commoner of the two, with prices starting at around £30 to £40. *A Tide of Fish* is scarcer, with prices starting at around £140 in shops, but occasionally much cheaper on eBay.

Shore Fishing with Anthony Pearson (ISBN: 978-1-904784-45-6), introduced and edited by Richard Baker, consists of a biography of Pearson and all 103 of his shore fishing articles published in *Fishing* magazine, *Angling* magazine, and the *Guardian* newspaper during the 1960s and 1970s. It is available from Coch-y-Bonddu Books as a flapped paperback of 477 pages, with a limited edition of 250 numbered signed copies. Price £30.

NB. Due to space constraints, we have had to shorten Richard's article, including omitting a biography of Clive Gammon. Please see the BASS website for the full-length piece. www.ukbass.com/category/blog/
The Magazine Team



THE PILGRIM

aka
Roger
Lee

I have been fishing for over 60 years beginning with a bent pin and bamboo cane. Some would say my tackle has not progressed very much since then, but I like it. I journeyed through coarse, sea and game and when living in South Wales, inevitably my angling journey led me to bass fishing. I have always enjoyed bait fishing; I do not like the term “dirty bait” that must have been conjured up by someone with a penchant for rubber and plastic. So, bait fishing it was and the joy of collecting many different types was only surpassed by the pull of a bass.

It was about the beginning of my bass fishing that I was introduced to BASS by John Morgan which led to the discovery of “Fish-Ins” and the meetings with people almost as and more crazy than myself... what a revelation. I attended several different “Fish-Ins” but then I attended SHELL ISLAND and was completely

blown away...not literally as some but metaphorically. I had never been to North Wales before and the drive to get there was breathtaking and standing in the sea, fishing, facing the sunset over the Llyn Peninsula cannot be summed up in words, only pictures as taken by my great friend and angling buddy Dave Collison.

Nothing stands still and I moved from South Wales and eventually ended up back in my home village in the North East of England, where my home rivers of the Tees, Wear and Tyne are now once again my domain.

But there is still a longing in me for SHELL, so every year I make the Pilgrimage to the Shell Island “Fish-In” to be amongst good friends, fantastic scenery and occasionally unbelievable fishing.

Photo: The Pilgrim ©Dave Collison

The BASS Fish-In Calendar

There's an excellent calendar of Fish-Ins up and down the country which offers a chance to meet other members, go fishing, talk tactics and generate plenty of hot air too!

Visit the BASS Forum to discover the venue specifics, more details and who is organising each Fish-In.

Cornwall:

Fri 30th June – Sun 2nd July 2023

South Hams:

Fri 15th – Sun 17th Sept 2023

Manx Bumble:

Fri 29th Sept – Sun 1st Oct 2023

Menai:

Fri 6th – Mon 9th Oct 2023

Shell Island:

Fri 3rd May – Mon 6th May 2024

BASS 50th Anniversary clothing exclusive to the BASS shop!

To celebrate our 50th birthday, we commissioned an anniversary range of top-quality caps, sweatshirts and hoodies. They are now in stock and selling like hot cakes.

Visit the **BASS shop** to place your order, today!
www.ukbass.com/product-category/clothing/

All garments are navy blue, unisex design, have excellent environmental credentials and feature our commemorative logo.

To avoid disappointment, please email the shop at ukbassshop@gmail.com with your requirements.



CAP..... £16.50

This casual yet stylish headgear has a curved visor, contemporary lines, 100% cotton fabric and a snapback closure for the perfect fit. It's the ideal companion for the serious beach or boat angler!

One size fits all.



SWEATSHIRT..... £30

Celebrate our birthday with a classic sweatshirt, or two! Sporting the anniversary logo on the left chest, this well-designed garment with its durable twin-needle top stitching and herringbone neck tape is made to last. The fabric is 85% organic ringspun combed cotton and 15% recycled polyester, for a finer feel and extended durability.

Choose from:

M 38/40"
L 41/43"
XL 43/45"
2XL 46/47"



HOODIE..... £34

The iconic hooded sweatshirt in premium brushed 350gsm fleece of 85% organic cotton and 15% recycled polyester is perfect for any fly, lure or bait bass angler! The double self-fabric hood lining is sturdy and hard-wearing, plus there's matt silver metal eyelets and drawcord tipping. The classic kangaroo pocket design is great for cold hands by the sea or on the street!

Choose from:

M 38/40"
L 41/43"
XL 43/45"
2XL 46/47"

If you have any queries or questions please email Danny at ukbassshop@gmail.com

Is she really that shallow?


BY JON WILLIAMS

Once I left home and was fishing 'unsupervised' from the shoreline rather than when with my father in his boat, I had that typical schoolboy approach in that big fish (the females) were always the furthest away from where I was fishing. Into the back of a drawer went the spinning reel and boat rod and my early wages were spent on multiplier reels and beachcasting rods as now I needed to get out to where those big female bass would be, and at distance, or so I thought.

For several years I would walk down to the shoreline with my baited hooks and fling the four or five ounce weights as far as I could, I confess I was never a competition caster but I could get it out a good 80 to 100 yards (in old money) with wind assistance, any attempt to get it out further meant either a snap-off (despite a heavyish leader) or a mega overrun which then required a steady backwards walk up the beach/rocks/cliff until it was gone

and I could rewind and take up my fishing position and spend the inevitable hours waiting for the inevitable blank.

Now, I am not the slowest learner (but probably not the fastest either), but after a while I realised that my catches were not as rewarding for the amount of time I was putting into the sport, plus odd events pointed to the error of my ways, such as a tidal flow across a beach which brought my lead and bait into shallower water where I would sometimes get a bite... as the penny eventually started to drop, I realised I needed to try out something. I walked down to a rocky mark just after low water, it was pitch black when I loaded a frozen sandeel onto a size 3 Aberdeen and with a small ball weight just above it I flicked it no more than 15 feet out over the smooth rocks, I had not cast the bait more than 10 minutes before the rod was virtually pulled out of my hands by a fat and feisty bass, the penny is now dropping.



I knew that the biggest bass were at distance...



A short while later when out in my boat, and instead of fishing in the more traditional way in deeper water (but rarely over 20 feet deep) I started to fish quite shallow water when on the drift. The outcome was a surprise and also very rewarding, especially due to one exceptional day!

It came about when a friend and I were fishing a mark from the boat in a stiff north westerly breeze, my friend asked if we could fish a particular mark where we had previous experienced very good fishing, but it was not one to fish with such a wind. After thrashing the water for a long while and not seeing any sign of a bass, I said "Okay, let's give it a go". Thank goodness I did.

We motored over to what was lumpy and very coloured water, I needed to stay awake here as this was rough ground with big pinnacles rising from the bottom at 16 feet in depth up to about 2 feet from the surface, so not for the faint hearted. I made a few casts towards the shore where the water was lapping the sand. Casting at almost ninety degrees across the wind was difficult, resulting in one cast landing on the stony beach rather than in the water, when dragging the lure back into the shallow water everything suddenly locked up, first off I thought I had hooked a rock but quickly knew this was a fish, with my elbow I knocked the engine into forward and lifted my rod tip as high as I could, literally towing the fish out of the pinnacles and into deeper water.

There was no real resistance except for a really heavy weight until we were in deeper water when the fish shot off away from under

the boat and my clutch screeched against the strength of the fish. After more than four or five runs where I thought everything would come apart and we would say goodbye, she gave up and I reeled her to the surface. "Wow" was the reaction from both me and my friend when we saw this massive slab of a bass rise into view through the murky water and lay on her side on the surface. I knew this was the chunkiest bass I had ever caught.

A quick measure on my BASS tape showed 82 centimetres which suggested a weight of about 12lbs 4ozs, but a quick weigh on my Boga showed an average of 10lbs 12ozs (due to boat movement) which confirmed this was a PB for me by a long way. With 9lb 12ozs being my best weight previously, this was at least a full one pound heavier.

Repeated visits to this mark when the water had enough colour saw me 'lock up' on two or more fish in water less than eighteen inches deep, but unfortunately given the amount of pinnacles, I got snapped off before I could get them out of the many snags that were part and parcel of this mark and therefore have never managed to land another one from there.

In later years when fishing in Ireland, I have fished shore marks with more sympathy to shallow water, and have hooked, landed and also lost big bass from literally under what would have been my feet, but now I know better, yes, those big girls really are that shallow, trust me.

The scheme continues to grow and develop since its first run in 2021. The improved catch recording sheet allowed us to capture both blank and productive trips in a format that is easier to complete and provide statistics and charts from. An additional mandatory field was included for trip duration (hours fished), and new optional fields provided for location type (open coast/estuary) and number of fish retained. Fish caught per hour is arguably a more comparable and robust indicator of productivity (number of fish caught per unit of effort) than fish caught per trip (which can be of varying duration). Being able to show the number of hours required to catch fish of various sizes is very powerful. Improved advice on measuring fish and taking scales was provided in an attempt to make these activities easier for people.

Annual returns were submitted by 27 members fishing in the United Kingdom (UK), the Channel Islands (CI) and the Republic of Ireland (ROI). A total of 2,459 fish were caught during 3,368 hours fishing spread over 1,091 trips. Lure fishing dominated both trips made (79%) and fish caught (74%). 8% of trips were made by boat, which was more productive than shore fishing (1.12 cf 0.69 fish per hour). 62% of trips were on the open coast, and these produced 69% of the fish caught; estuary fishing accounted for 33% of trips and 27% of fish caught.

The overall monthly average number of fish caught per hour peaked in August at 1.03. The overall average number of fish caught per hour in 2022 was just 0.73.

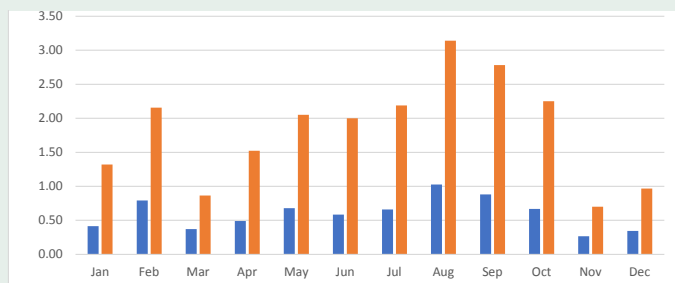


Fig. 1 Fish per unit effort ■ fish per hour ■ fish per trip

Dorset had the highest annual average number of fish caught per hour (1.63) and Dumfries & Galloway the lowest (0.37). The highest annual average number of fish caught per hour by a participant (3.04) was by a fly fishing member from Dorset.

July to October were the most productive fishing months, particularly August and September.

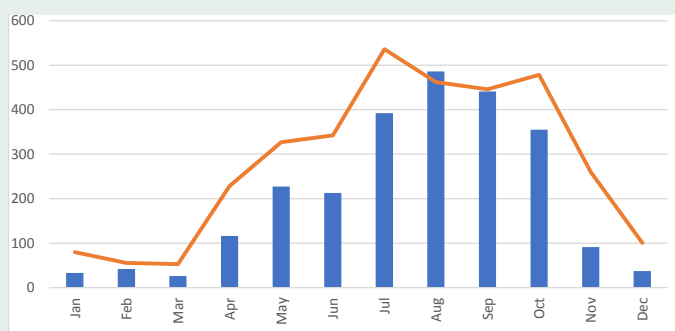


Fig. 2 Fish caught ■ and total fishing hours — by month

For the months when more people were fishing (April to November), June and November had the highest percentage of blanks. Traditionally, these have been considered good fishing months, so it will be interesting to see if this trend continues, and what the reasons for this might be. Cornwall had the highest annual percentage of blanks (55%), followed closely by Devon. Dorset had the lowest annual percentage of blanks (20%).



Fig. 3 Productive trips ■ and blanks ■ (with percentages)

Fig. 4 shows the length of all fish caught in the scheme. The mean was 40.9cm. The sudden drop off in numbers of fish over 50cm is a concern. Fish of 60cm and over made up just 2% of catches (UK & CI). On average, it took 69.0 hours to catch a fish of over 60cm, and 247.4 hours to catch one of over 65cm in the UK & CI. A specific strategy is required to increase the numbers of these larger fish, accompanied by measures to ensure that they survive when returned. Measures are also required to increase the average size of fish caught, for the benefit of all stakeholders and the species itself.

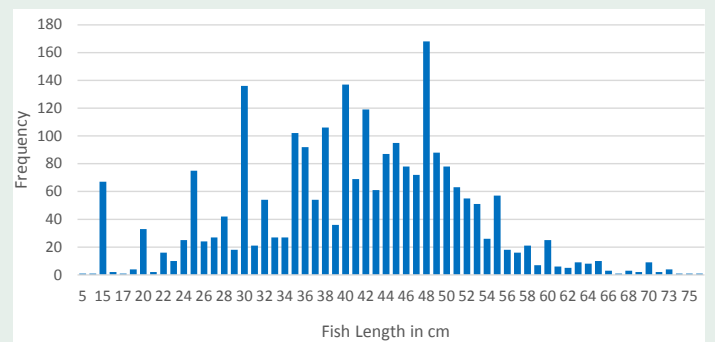


Fig. 4 Fish length and frequency of capture (all areas)

Areas included	<40cm	40-49cm	50-59cm	60cm and over
All, inc. ROI	40.8%	39.6%	15.9%	3.7%
UK, CI only	43.8%	40.8%	13.5%	2.0%

Table 1 Percentages of fish caught in angler-relevant length groups

Six of the monthly maximum fish lengths were caught by one angler fishing in Cork (ROI), including the longest fish of the year (79cm). The same angler caught 43 of the 90 60cm+ fish recorded by all participants. Perhaps a glimpse of the quality of fishing possible in the absence of a commercial bass fishery.

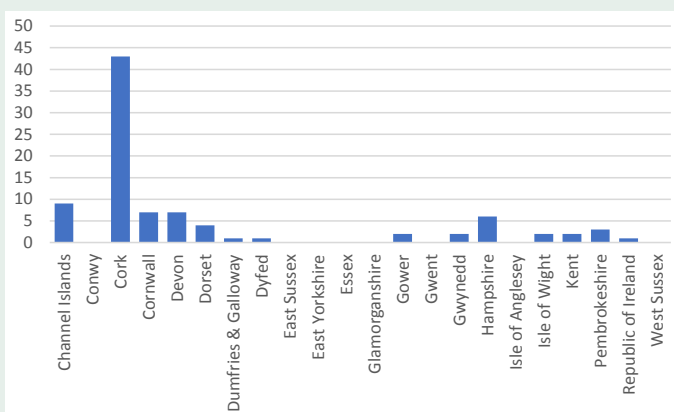


Fig. 5 60cm fish by area

It is encouraging to see younger fish coming through against a background of generally poor recruitment since 2008. As can be seen from Fig. 4 above, fish of around 30, 40, 42 & especially 48cm are well represented. There are limitations with this data, but these peaks probably tie in with the 2019, 2016, 2014 year classes, which were the better ones in recent years (although nothing like the really good year classes of the past). Data from scale samples received confirms the dominance of the 2014 class. The peaks in the 35 – 38cm range are probably from the 2017/18 classes, which may have been better than expected in some areas.

The fact that only 1.5% of fish caught were retained is ample demonstration of the importance that members place on restoring bass stocks.

2022 saw a near doubling of the number of returns received.

Most of last year's participants have already signed up for 2023, but we'd like more members to get involved. We'd welcome members from any area, but in particular from Wales, Essex, Sussex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Lincolnshire, the North of England and Scotland. Having catch information from members living or fishing in other countries, such as the Republic of Ireland and France is invaluable for comparison purposes. Also, more boat anglers, and those who fish with bait or fly would be useful.

I'm very pleased with what we've managed to get out of the data submitted. One participant wrote: "I am very happy that you and Danny have linked the statistical trends to problems BASS are trying to fight and expressed them succinctly – the summary definitely grabbed my attention! When I signed-up for catch reporting, this is what I was hoping my records would be used for so thank you for your effort."

Hopefully this information will be helpful to BASS members with regard to their fishing activities, and useful as evidence for the Bass Fisheries Management Plan.

A huge thank you to all the members who took part in this important scheme. Special thanks to Danny Bowering for his considerable and indispensable time and skill in preparing the statistics and charts used in this report, and for his useful insights, and to Patrick Ashton for his help with running the scheme. Thanks also to Richard Strudwick, BASS scale reader.

Further information about the scheme can be found on the BASS website under the Science Group tab. If you'd like to take part, please email sciencegroup@ukbass.com.

Robin Bradley
BASS Science Group

SCALE READING

OK, I'm guessing it doesn't sound too thrilling to a lot of you out there, shutting myself away in the spare room and peering down a microscope at bass scales, but I'm a lab rat by trade and, wanting to give something back to BASS, I volunteered to take on this role. What does it actually involve? Each winter the growth rate of bass slows, and their scales show an annular ring once the next year's growth starts, very much like you see in trees. By counting these you can age the fish. Again, not exactly riveting, but it provides very valuable information.

Person X is catching plenty of fish, but all of a similar size. A few carefully taken scales and we are able to identify a strong year class, hopefully backing up other information from within the Science Group such as catch return reports and seine net sampling of estuaries.

Person Y catches a double, a fish of a lifetime to the vast majority of us. Again a few scales and you can get an age for this superb specimen. It could easily be 20 years old or more.



My 'work' area, after evicting all the junk

But of real interest, to me at least, are the outliers, the fish that don't fit into the norm. Occasionally you find fish that are either fast or slow growing, but why? Do female fish grow faster than males? Are they fish from further north that have migrated down to southern climes? Are some just different due to genetics? Why are fish in the mid 40cm range, bread and butter fish to a lot of us, taking 10 years to reach this size, when others make it in just 5 years? Is that fish at 60cm really more than 15 years old? So, if I come back to you with questions, you know why.



I can't answer these questions (yet) but can use the data I generate to identify trends. Maybe with more scale samples received and read, the trends would be easier to

see. So come on all you fellow bass anglers out there, do your bit for bass and BASS. Drop me a message, request some scale packets and labels, take a few scales from that next fish, if conditions are safe to do so and get them back to me. The more information we have, the better.

All the scales are retained after reading and provide a valuable, and possibly unique, resource that is starting to get the interest of academic institutions. A digital record would be the ultimate goal, but this is a long way off at present.

Richard Strudwick r.e.s.strud@gmail.com
BASS Science Group

BASS Certificates & Awards

2022



CERTIFICATE

First bass over 6lb
DAVE MORTIMER

CERTIFICATE

First Bass over 8lb, shore, bait
RICHARD LANE

AWARDS

Heaviest bass – any method
SIMON FROBISHER Shore, Bait 11lb 8oz

Heaviest bass – shore bait
SIMON FROBISHER 11lb 8oz

Heaviest bass – shore lure
BILL FAGG 8lb

Heaviest bass – shore fly
STEVE RICHARDS 7lb

There were no boat or Junior awards for 2022

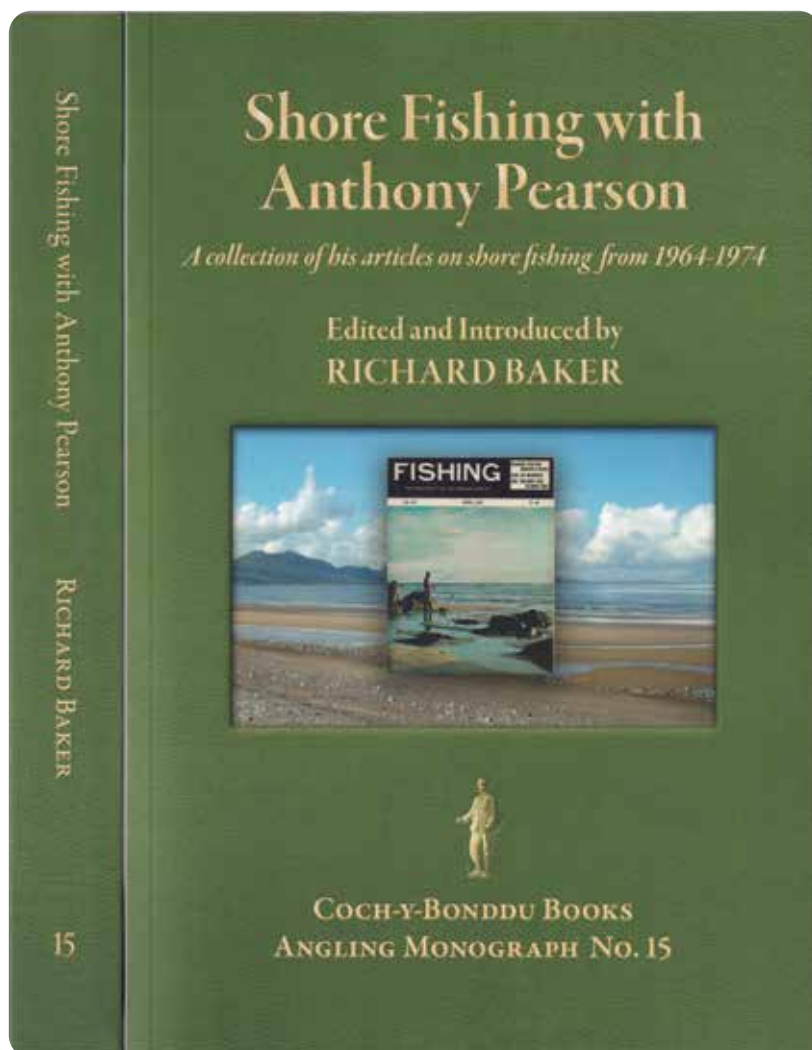
2023 Awards

Please remember to check out the categories for the 2023 Certificates and Awards in the members' section of the website at www.ukbass.com/trophies-and-awards. Entries should be made by 31st January 2024 to qualify.

JOHN LEBALLEUR RESTORATION AWARD

ROBIN BRADLEY was honoured with the Society's most prestigious award at the 2023 AGM. Robin's tireless work to secure a better future for bass, especially through numerous Science Group initiatives, was recognised as an exceptional contribution.





BOOK REVIEW

by Phil Arnott

Shore Fishing with Anthony Pearson

Edited and Introduced by Richard Baker

Many anglers of today are unlikely to have heard of Anthony Pearson and this book will certainly address this issue. Pearson was a prolific and skilled angling writer, also a thinking and skilled angler. He was fortunate to experience the shore fishing before stocks were seriously depleted by ineffective fisheries management. He also travelled to many places in Britain, Ireland and further afield at a time when few had the opportunity to travel so freely. His book "Successful Shore Fishing" is rightly regarded as a classic.

To have simply reproduced a collection of articles by Anthony Pearson would not have been enough without knowing more about the man. Thankfully, the author's introduction relates the results of his researches into the life of this enigmatic character. The author's no-holds-barred description of his character is also included, which I feel is important, as Pearson was certainly a controversial writer.

As stated on the cover, the book contains a collection of articles on shore fishing between 1964 and 1974. These are articles on the subject of shore fishing which originally appeared in *Fishing* magazine, *Angling* magazine and the *Guardian* newspaper. Articles regarding other fishing disciplines such as coarse fishing and boat fishing have been omitted as Pearson was mostly known for his shore fishing. Following the introduction, the author describes these publications, all the articles written by Pearson, the selection criteria and also includes a useful table displaying this information.

Then follows just short of 400 pages containing articles from *Fishing* then *Angling* and finally the *Guardian*. Each article is accompanied by the author's notes and comments which I found very useful. There are some photographs but the photographs which appeared with the articles are mostly described in the

notes. This is no doubt due to the lack of original photographs and the difficulty of reproducing them from the original printed magazines.

There is an appendix describing Pearson's books and other appendices that contain interesting information which I'll let the reader discover for themselves.

Many young anglers in the past were inspired by Bernard Venables's wonderful cartoon book *Mr. Crabtree Goes Fishing*. As they matured, those drawn to the seashore were inspired by the writings of the likes of Clive Gammon, Des Brennan, Hugh Stoker and Anthony Pearson. Pearson's contribution to the literature of shore fishing is significant. While the veracity of some of his stories have been questioned, he was after all a professional journalist under pressure to produce, he certainly fished a lot, almost certainly more than the other well-known authors of the period and hence undoubtedly caught many fish and some very big ones. There is also little doubt that Pearson was an interesting and thought-provoking writer who wrote entertaining and inspirational tales.

The author has done an excellent job of researching Anthony Pearson, collating his shore fishing articles and also in putting both Pearson and his articles in context. The book is fairly substantial containing 477 pages. It is of a format that can be read a little at a time if desired also, and importantly, it will stand to be re-read every once in a while. The result is a very interesting book that will sit comfortably alongside Pearson's *Successful Shore Fishing* and other classic books on shore fishing.

Phil Arnott

Published by Coch-Y-Bonddu Books it is available from www.anglebooks.com and retails at £30.

Please send your reports to
catchrecordersouth@ukbass.com

Many thanks to the contributors for the following catch reports. If you'd like to see details of your catches in the South of the country in the next magazine, please drop me an email to the above address shown above and I'll get that sorted. Thank you.

Sussex but a local club colleague did manage to catch one of 9lb 8oz in January on a three hook scratching rig. That bass skilfully avoided the angler's large mackerel bait that was being fished just 20 yards away on his second rod!

But Bill's first trip in March put an end to the run of blanks with a 2.5lb bass caught. He was fishing in deep water from boulders and actually watched the fish swim up from the depth and grab his lure. His second trip in March was the stuff of dreams.

Bill fished for an hour or two, in a 20mph westerly with a big swell. He caught a fish of 2.5lb on an Albie Snax, switched lures then caught a lovely fish of 60cm on a Guffer Slayer. On his next cast Bill hooked a fish that he couldn't stop before it took him around a boulder, unfortunately resulting in losing the fish with the lure still in its mouth. Luckily Bill still had plenty of leader on his line so he quickly tied on another paddle-tail and caught a 63cm bass a few casts later.

Things went quite for a while and he wasn't fully concentrating when he hooked another fish which just took off. When he eventually got it close to the shore Bill caught a glimpse of it and thought OMG! He slid it up onto the beach and it was a whopper, 74cm on the tape and very fat. He did get a 4lb 15 minutes later but that seemed tiny compared with the big one!



Bill Fagg

KENT AND SUSSEX

Simon Thurgood reports that his bass season normally begins in mid-March with a cold, windy session or two at a local estuary. March 17th seemed optimistic this year after a very chilly first half of the month, but morning showers soon gave way to unbroken sunshine, lifting the temperature to a very springlike 15C in a light southerly breeze. He had planned to use large ragworm baits, but managed to scratch together a few peelers which he decided to save for later in the session.

Simon's first few casts using ragworm attracted no interest at all, so he switched to peeler and within 15 minutes registered his first decent bite of the year from a chunky bass of 53cm. An hour later the only other bite of the session, again on crab, produced a thin fish of 50cm. After a long winter, Simon said that it felt great to see a bass again.

Clive Hodges had the embarrassment of catching an 18cm bass whilst fishing for herring from Brighton marina in February. Very few bass have been reported from

DORSET, HAMPSHIRE AND THE ISLE OF WIGHT

Bill Fagg is very much the star of the show from the catch reports Clive has seen. Bill reports that December 2022 was one of the best December's fishing he can remember with plenty of fish caught, he even had some in the snow. One of his most memorable was a 58cm caught in blustery conditions in heavy surf.

Conditions remained the same so he went back to the same spot a couple of days later and caught two cracking bass one of 64cm and another of 66cm which turned out to be his last fish of the year. The last week in December saw back-to-back gales which put paid to all of the fishing he'd hoped to do over the Christmas period.

The start of the year wasn't so good; Bill had a total of six trips in January and February and failed to catch a single fish. He doesn't expect much in the first couple of months of the year but was a bit disappointed that he couldn't catch a bass on lures from the shore in every calendar month of 2023 (he did in 2022).



DEVON, CORNWALL AND SOMERSET



Stephen Aldrich from Plymouth who fishes flat beaches these days since suffering a stroke and being blind in his right eye since 2010 reported a lovely bass from the South Hams area. Venturing out in February he connected with a bass of 8lb 15oz on a squid and sandeel wrap presented on a light leger set up. Stephen used a Zziplex Pro-am match coupled to a Penn 525 Mag 3 reel.



Mike Killick shared that he and **Simon Kenny** had been finding quite a few fish down in South Devon. In one session alone they managed a joint catch of 50 bass! Mike explained that he'd never experienced a January like it and 10 years ago he would never have even contemplated fishing for Bass on lures in the depths of the winter months!

The fish came on a variety of lures; metals, soft plastics and top waters. Although they had a lot of fish around the 40cm mark there were a few between 50cm and 60cm. Mike was disappointed that his longest fish didn't quite make 60cm because a seal had chewed its tail!



Robin Bradley shared that his winter fishing has been limited as a result of disappointing catches and his busy schedule of other commitments. He did find a bass of 50cm in December, which he caught on a Guffer Slayer when he was fishing with Simon Willey who took the photo.

Unfortunately for Robin he has not had a bass this year yet despite trying proven marks. He is currently reappraising his fishing practice and is planning a more focused approach for 2023.

ESSEX Nothing to report.

SUFFOLK AND CHANNEL ISLANDS

Nothing to report from Suffolk but see a separate report for Guernsey overleaf.

As we go to press and the weather is warming up, the catch reports are beginning to come in more frequently from up and down the country...

Simon Kenny in Devon ventured out in April for a first session since late February and landed this one just before high tide. Caught on a Gravity Stick Pulsetail in a lively swell over shallow reef after thrashing the water in various locations for the previous fruitless 5 hours of the making tide.



A small one to beat the blank from **Michael Killick** in South Devon which he had spotted swimming in the closest breaker.



A quick visit to Cumbria for **Rob Smallbone's** first session of 2023 resulted in a slim 58cm that gave a decent tug. No other fish, but a cracking day to be out and about.

Geoff Tomkinson reports 7 bass on crab over the last couple of days. Nothing huge but all between 2 to 3.5lb.

Although late April is very early for SW Scotland, particularly lure fishing, 7 degrees water temp, 25 mph easterly really limited areas to fish. **Philip Williams** tried a new area he's planning to fish more this year. Arriving just before dark an hour into the flood, he did find a couple of recently peeled crab which kept him at it. Philip managed a 52cm and 48cm bass around midnight, both quickly measured for the catch recording scheme, both on a very slow retrieved floating needle. "Bit of surprise to catch anything and my first April bass on lures where I fish", he said.



Mark Prout has been out getting a few tips from Jim Wiltshire in Mid Wales and then using them further north on the Lyn to good effect. It seems razor is the bait of choice with several fish including this one of 55cm while in the company of Jim. Mark kept the faith and then fished home waters at low tide in daylight to land a couple of bass to 50cm.



Mid Wales also saw **Sean Jukes** out in April. The new chairman is getting in the excuses already, claiming that his family holiday held back his fishing! It didn't seem to stop him though, with Spindle Worms and Mishna Eels finding the fish to 54cm, including these two.



Catch Reports ^{NORTH}

from mid-December to early April 2023

NORTH REPORTS FROM STEVE BUTLER

Please send your reports to
catchrecordernorth@ukbass.com

All reports most welcome and Steve would be delighted to hear from more members with reports and photos.

NORTH WALES

During January **Jim Wiltshire** had the opportunity to fish one of his beach marks with bait. He was not really expecting to catch anything so early on in the year. It was a nice day, light winds though cold, typical for January. Low water was around midday. Jim's first bite resulted in a 3lb bass that he was over the moon with. Just 15 minutes later Jim had another bite and another fish. This bass was 58cm and around 4lb to 4 and a half, not bad for a January midday tide.

After struggling to find good conditions for bait fishing during February and early March Jim got the opportunity in mid March on a medium building tide with favorable winds. Not long after he cast out his bait, he had a bite and the fish was on. When landed, it was a 4lb bass. As the tide turned things started to pick up. Over the next 2 hours Jim landed another 7 bass. Three of them were around 3lb, three of them smaller, with a nice fat 5lbr as the best fish of the session. Great fishing for March. Jim only packed in because he ran out of bait.

YORKSHIRE

Shaun Sorenson baitfished the Holderness coastline during January. No rain, light winds and hazy sunshine, casting into a chocolate coloured sea. Shaun was hoping for a nice cod that never materialized but he did land his earliest bass of the year ever from the Holderness coast, along with 3 whiting.

NORTH WALES

During March, **Mark Prout** made his way down to the Llyn Peninsula to do a spot of bait fishing. With a good forecast on Magic Seaweed and a 9pm high tide, Mark was all ready and eager to fish. His first cast was made at 7.45 pm but that only resulted in a big chunk of weed. Mark made a move along the beach of about 100 yds. Within 3 minutes of the move mark had a bite and landed a 45cm bass. Another cast, another bass, this time 48cm. After 15 minutes Mark made another move along the beach. The next bite resulted in a 55cm bass. Razor fish had been the bait. Mark was very happy with the fishing. After 10pm the bites stopped coming so Mark packed in and made his way from the beach in the pouring rain.



IRELAND

Robin Rowe opened his 2023 lure account with a new PB at 69cm. The fish, a real beauty, took a Fiiish Minnow replica and was a cracking start to the warmer months.



**YOUR CATCH REPORT
GOES HERE!**

Please send your words and photos to
Clive or Steve by June 20th 2023 for
inclusion in the next magazine.



GBASS members have had a pretty productive start to the season down here in Guernsey. We are 'lucky' that we can find fish all year round and 2023 has been no exception with near on 50 qualifying fish (3lb minimum) weighed into the club by the end of March.

Best of these was a lure caught 74cm fish that tipped **Rodger van Heerden's** scales to 8lb 2oz. Even better was this now stands as his personal best shore caught fish. Rodger was fishing just after the tide had begun to flood and casting 30 – 40 yards over shallow water (3-4ft), rock ground with no wind and bright clear sunshine. He navigated his Chartreuse Sasuke lure between two heads and 'fish on'. He reckons his legs still wobble now when he thinks about the take and the scrap the fish put up in those conditions.



Rodger Van Heerden's 74cm – 8lbs 2oz PB weighed and released.

Yours truly went over to fish on Herm with a few other GBASS members and had a cracking session on the lures with fish aplenty on the Friday. They had literally disappeared the next day and we went and dug some Sand Gaper Clams and live Sandeel at low water and fished the tide up. At half tide, I lobbed out a whole fresh clam (they are big and meaty) on a pennel rig with a 4/0 circle as the top hook. Within 5 minutes of my mate Nige missing a massive bite, I managed to hook into this fish of 6lb 11oz. This was not one of those tentative enquiries you sometimes get. It absolutely smashed my rod over and was not keen to come and see me. We both concurred that it looked like it should have been heavier, but the scales wouldn't shift any further. Still, a good scrap and I was well chuffed.



Bryn Le Poidevin's 6lb 11oz

Another Herm fish, and a new personal best was junior angler **Sam Cox** with a fish of 3lb 7oz caught on verm on Shell Beach. What he lacks in experience he makes up for with enthusiasm and it was one of my (and his) best day's fishing when he snared this bass. I don't know, it felt as good as me catching a double I reckon, and it is brilliant we have a few juniors in the club who are mad keen on their fishing.



Sam Cox 3lb 7oz – Personal Best

Back on Guernsey's Northeast coast **Chris Topping** was braving some pretty hefty south westerlies but with the wind at his back, he got to a low water mark (1.1m rising to 9.2m that day) where he had an hour to fish on the flooding tide. The mark is a shallow reef with deep gullies either side and Chris tempted this 5lb 4oz fish on a Savage Gear V2 Sandeel in white/pearl/silver before he had to beat a retreat before getting flooded off the mark.



Chris Topping's 5lb 4 oz

Dave and Nige Du Jardin and I and **Simon De La Mare** and his mate have had a couple of very good sessions. Dave, Nige

and I had one session where we literally lost count of the bass we caught but a conservative estimate would be 70 in about three hours between the three of us, all on lures and mostly 2-3lb stamp of fish. I even managed to snag a 5lbish thin-lipped mullet on a Tobis lure and it went like a submarine. We have even had a few decent Gilthead Bream when targeting the bass with bait.

Simon and his mate had a session on the lures and managed 24 bass between them. Simon was being out fished by his friend and noted, "...he was using the all-white Hound Glide fishing on the edge of the tide rip and started to hook into fish, so I joined him on the edge of the tide. He seemed to be hooking into fish after fish where I was only getting one to his three. I put it down to white lure and I was using a very beat up Hound Glide in Bora. It wasn't till after I found out he was casting into the tide and letting the lure come around in the tide and just holding it there swimming in the tide where I was casting out and retrieving it".

FOOD FOR THOUGHT...

It was great to welcome one of our UK-based GBASS members over for a long weekend. Now **Daniel Ferguson**, it is fair to say is a lure angler. I'd explained my preference for bait over lures this time of year/conditions etc and he looked about as convinced as the most unconvinced of unconvinced things. The weather was wild Fri & Sat and he and his mate Matt braved it. Met up with Chris but blanked and we managed to meet up on the Sunday. He must have been desperate as he let me rig him up a bait rod with some fresh king rag. Two minutes later he had gathered a bit of weed on his line and a bass of around the 3lb mark. A first bass caught on bait with his first cast! I think he was a bit shocked...

Come and enjoy the fishing and visit us for the 42nd GBASS Open Festival on 31st August – 4th September 2023.

Bryn Le Poidevin



· *Fighting for more and bigger bass since 1973.* ·