Keith Arthur

TELEVISION’S TOP FISHING COMMENTATOR – EVERY WEEK IN AnglingTimes

TideFest teases then beats me!

...BUT 19lb IS NO SLOUCH ON THE THAMES

I DIDN’T have the best of draws on TideFest, but some were far worse off than me! My peg was downstream of the railway bridge, and pretty shallow.

When I started with a 6lb-plus Thames bream on double corn I thought I might be in with a chance. Then I remembered that often an early bream is a lonely bream, and it wasn’t until three hours later that I put the second one in my net.

I ended up with four, all on different hookbaits, plus a single dace for nearly 19lb, and missed one other bite.

Top weight came from the bay four pegs downstream, and second was the peg above the bridge, that had a lovely crease coming off an island. One angler also had two small carp.

The Barnes section wasn’t as good, worse off than me! My peg was on tideFest, but some were far better next year, and as a few people

year, get in early if you fancy it. It looks like Sunday, September 11, 2016 will be the date.

One disappointment was that several anglers turned up with breakfast and coffee from the local McDonald’s and left every bit of wrapping and their cups on the wall at the draw. But don’t worry, lads, the organisers cleaned up after you.

On a drop shot learning curve

DROP shotting has become the ‘next big thing’ for sure, although in my experience some anglers are using the term to describe all soft-lure fishing. I have learned a great deal watching fish react to the lure.

However, I now tend to be more selective and carry two rods with me – one for the drop shot, the other with a jig head.

It was Sam Edmonds, currently on duty with the England Lure squad, who gave me the tip to find the fish using retrieved lures – soft plastics on jigheads (my preferred tactic) or crankbaits, occasionally spinnerbaits, then a switch to drop shotting.

My main education has come in the need to match weight to lure. A weight that is too light won’t allow the lure to be worked correctly, while too heavy a weight will make it work too fast when it’s moved.

Paddle tails will usually need a heavier weight but my favourites are the Ecogear Power Shirasu type. I still find it hard to believe the amount of vibration provided by a minute movement of the rod-tip, and when fish are tight to cover and little or no horizontal movement is required, these lures are the kiddies! I’m looking forward to learning even more this autumn and winter.

So long skip – and thank you

AWFUL news has just reached me that Chris Caines, one of the truly great skippers from the wonderful charter fleet from Weymouth in Dorset has passed away.

It was only recently that Chris retired from his boat Tiger Lily, and although I never had the pleasure of fishing with him we had many chats both on the dockside and on the phone. Chris helped many anglers achieve their ambitions and his passing is a great loss to our sport.

Recovering waters come back stronger and better than ever before

ONE of my favourite phenomena is a river that ‘comes back from the dead’. Plant and invertebrate life invariably recovers first, providing a plentiful larder for fish when they return. The first species will usually be eels and sticklebacks, eels making their own mysterious way, and sticklebacks coming probably via herons.

Once gudgeon and dace arrive, by fair means or foul, they grow rapidly. They are short-lived, based on my experience of the rivers Wandle, Crane and Blackwater and the Pymmes Brook, a Lea tributary that was polluted by an old-fashioned gasworks. This water would frequently run so dark from coal washing, us kids christened it The Black Ditch.

Once the gasworks went, the fish spread and the dace were magnificent.

So, those lucky anglers who now have access to the Winstedt Drain near Hull (see pages 10/11) should be rubbing their hands because as a ‘water reincarnate’ that also happens to be tidal, they have a double whammy of great sport on their doorstep!