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TELEVISION'S TOP FISHING COMMENTATOR – EVERY WEEK IN **AnglingTimes**



The CLA Game Fair is no more. Perhaps it's simply run its course?

Game over for a country institution

IT CAME as a genuine shock to learn that the Country Landowners Association Game Fair is to be no more.

Apparently the event has been loss-making, and that can't be allowed to continue. For a few years, along with other coarse anglers, I was there to promote coarse fishing, encouraging more retailers and manufacturers to exhibit and enhancing and enlarging Fisherman's Row.

After three years I had to drop out, and a couple of years after that the CLA committee upset me when they stopped using Ian Heaps, who had supported the event for 27 years, while retaining the services of anglers that came for free with their sponsors.

Recently the event has been used as the launch of National Fishing Month but often the available water was completely unsuitable. I've argued that the perfect launch date is Fish O'Mania, where at least the majority of visitors would have an interest in coarse fishing.

The CLA is hoping to find other organisers to take on the Game Fair. I wonder if it has run its course or just outgrown itself.

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, thanks to the dace going missing for some reason, but there were some notable captures, including small bass, a decent flounder, and what Angling Trust Regional Officer Danny Williams described as a gudgeon so big it looked like it had eaten three normal-sized gonks. He estimated it at over 3oz.

TideFest promises to be bigger and better next year, and as a few people who tried to book in late missed it this



Twickenham MP Dr Tania Mathias was clearly most impressed by my Thames bream fishing skills.

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 shooting 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 shooting.

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 Winestead 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!



The little-known Winestead Drain near Hull is fishing its head off after years in the doldrums.