

Heriot's Angling Club Outing Reports

2001-2008

2001

Lindores, day session, 25th March

A bit of a nip in the air! It was snowing for a while! And your secretary had a fish first cast of 2001! An odd assortment of flies and methods worked, including my boat partner and I getting 2 each on buzzers on the slime line. Most of the top bags came from the bottom end, where we fished, but we never really got a handle on it. Meanwhile, fishing the top end, one of our rods had 8 for the day, but others struggled up there, and the fishery management seemed sure the bottom end was best. The rest of our top bags went 7s, 6s, 5s, 4s, 3s, 2s, 1s and a blank. Oh, and our top rod... He had 13: 5 more than anyone else!!! -- Hi-D all day in the shallow water down the bottom end. What really threw us though, was boat 11 (not our club), who sat in the one spot all day, chucking out slime lines, slow F-of-8-ing and taking fish after fish. These guys must have had 30-odd for their boat. We saw a white lure going out (which was one of our successful flies) but heard them telling their mates they were getting them on Diawl Bachs. We weren't sure how much kidology was going on, but it's not impossible they were telling the truth. As usual, in these situations, we tried to copy them and got nowhere with it!!! Our club return was 14 rods weighing in 54 fish for 99 lb 4 oz, with 22 more returned.

Lake of Menteith, day session, 14th April

The Lake is in full swing, despite the Foot and Mouth restrictions (you will need to drive in over disinfectant mats). The day was milder and much more blustery than during the week leading up to it. It also rained all morning, clearing up later. A few fish fell to typical early season tactics in the first hour, but very quickly changed their behaviour. Those who stuck to Hi-Ds and lures struggle as the day went on. There was a reasonable hatch of black buzzers coming off, and although many anglers concentrated on intermediates or medium sinkers, our top rod by a long way got his fish on a couple of black size 12 wet flies. These were fished on the Hi-D, even though the fish were high in the water. Why change when you are having success? His hefty bag of 8 for 17 lb 8 oz plus 2 returned was 5 better than the second placed rod. The latter fished a damsel on the slime line over at the area of the pike nets. This area was a hot spot for many, while the other catching areas were the road shore and hotel bay. The Club's return was 12 rods weighing in 32 fish for 64lb 9 oz.

Two anglers had a scare when their boat capsized, turning into the wind. Fortunately they were in relatively shallow water near a downwind shore, so they

were able to scramble ashore and most of their gear washed in after them. A point to note... One of the anglers was wearing a non-automatic, inflatable life jacket, the thinking being that if you fall in, you just inflate it by blowing into the mouth tube. Forget it, he said. When the cold of the water and the shock of the situation hit you, you cannot even draw a breath, let alone inflate a life jacket.

Lindores, day session, 22nd April

A dreich day, from start to finish, but the fishing was lively enough.

Early action to lures (eg black taddy) put fish in the boat for several of our members, but the fish soon changed their preferences, and it was nymphs, nymphs, nymphs after that. Sorry, one of our members who loves to be different took his fish on dry fly. Claret Shipman was the killing fly for the surface feeders on the go in the top left corner. It was a decent hatch of black buzzer that got them interested, and the best way for most folk was to anchor up and swing a team of nymphs. Epoxy buzzer, Diawl Bachs, standard and holo, and PTNs, pearly and shagged-out after a long squack, did most of the damage.

Alan M. with a bright rainbow, taken swinging the buzzers.

Best bag for the club was a limit 5 for 11 lb 3 oz plus 9 returned, although there were also bags of 13, 12 and two 9s in the total. Fish were taken all over the water, but the top end (harbour) saw the heaviest activity. The club's total was 18 rods weighing in 56 fish for 101 lb 2 oz, with a further 38 returned. The heaviest fish went 3 lb 8 oz; a resident at that, as were several others including some overwintered fish.

Linlithgow Loch, day session, 29th April

Conditions were good: warm, with a soft, variable breeze and broken cloud and sunny intervals. A trickle of Scottish blend buzzers was coming off all day, and the water was gin clear. Catches were generally good, with the usual sort of spread from bumper bags down to 1s and 2s -- and no blanks! The town bay had taken a hammering, but one of our rods still got more than half his catch there. For most, however, the east end was more productive. The only problem with Linlithgow these days is it has far too many boats on it for the size of the water: about 22 on a water of 100-odd acres. That means when the fish are concentrated in one area, things get very tight, with boats fishing only yards from one another. It only takes the one boat to drive right into the centre of the congregation to make tempers frayed ...and there always seems to be the required one boat on hand!

Swinging the nymph proved the top method, with buzzer pupae in black, red and olive proving most effective. Top bag was 8 for 20 lb, including the day's heaviest

fish, a cracking resident of 5 lb 12 oz, plus a further 7 returned. In all, the Club's 17 rods weighed in 82 fish for 151 lb, returning another 18.

Carron Valley Reservoir, day session, 6th May

The day started promisingly, with a light easterly and decent cloud cover. In the first hour there was a decent rise to Scottish blend buzzers, and one of our members had 3 wildies on a shuttlecock CDC in Carron Bay. Unfortunately, the cloud then burned off to give us the killer conditions of Carron: bright sun and an east wind. The fish went down, and it was a case of find the depth AND find the place if you wanted fish: and that was quite a tall order. Flies seemed to follow the Henry Ford philosophy: any colour you like, as long as it's black. Notably, a quick bag of 3 stockies was taken on DI-7 off the spit beyond Carron Bay, on the way to the top dam. Successful flies were black tadpole and bibio (photos). Everyone else toiled for a wildy or two, which being only a half-pound average, were nearly all returned. One member had 4 on a black Howwood. At the end of the session, the Club's 11 rods weighed in a lowly 7 fish for 5 lb 1 oz, although a further 23 were returned.

Two days later in identically sunny conditions, a green-tailed zulu (or a viva palmer if you like) was the killing fly for our competitor in the national heats. His boat landed 3 powan in the course of the day, a sign that they are doing rather well in their new home!

Lindores, evening session, 12th May

This was a superb evening, even if it was very sunny. The sun didn't matter: it was just great to be fishing, in the evening, in shirt-sleeves, after such a long a gap since the last time! We were always concerned about the north sea haar coming in, but it stayed in the north sea, thankfully. The wind was light and variable all evening, allowing everyone to fish by whatever method they preferred. We had 2 boats that stood out from the rest in terms of catches: one with 16 and one with 13.

The former got their fish by anchoring and swinging epoxy buzzers in the middle bay on the right. The latter got theirs by drifting out in open water, changing methods several times as the fish in that area changed their depth and mood as the evening progressed. That included slow figure-of-eighting nymphs on the slime line, static nymphing on the floater, and dry fly. Successful patterns for them included black tads, buzzer tads, Diawl Bachs, claret Shipmans and Leadbetter suspenders.

Top bag for points was 5 for 10 lb 13 oz plus 2 returned, and in all The Club's 8 boats weighed in 42 fish for 76 lb 7 oz, with a further 9 returned.

Carron Valley Reservoir, day session, 21st May

This was a cracking day, weather-wise. It proved that whenever the conditions are good, Carron will perform. Our 4 boats headed for 4 different areas and all found fish in numbers: at point of Burnhouse Bay, in Bins Bay, Carron Bay and the far dam. Early doors there were not many fish showing on top, but rods trying out a nymphing rig had success with such as a GRHE and buzzer tad. The boat in Carron Bay continued for most of the day with sink tip and Kate McLaren (now you don't need a photo of a Kate McLaren!) and had continuous sport. The others switched to dry fly as more and more fish showed on top, and fish were taken with various flies, mostly black, but also claret hopper. The other successful patterns included a simple black spider, black Shipman's buzzer, an emerger that was a cross between a comparadun and a Klinkhammer, a black bits and a black raider.

The rises were mostly oncey, but if covered often produced a response. Some found that fish had to be covered to get a chance, while others found them willing to come out-the-blue as well. The fish were the usual mix of wildies and stockies, although the newer stockies were top notch quality, a testimony to the aquaculture of Howietown hatchery. Some of last year's stockies showed in the catches as very long, thin, silver fish, and we wondered if they may be having trouble competing with the large shoals of powan that are now prevalent in the water???

The total for 8 rods was 26 fish weighed in for 25 lb 14 oz, plus 61 returned. Great sport!

Loch Leven, evening session, Wednesday, May 23rd

The first of our outings to the Loch this season, and with the whole of the country basking in the middle of a mini-heatwave we were probably all anticipating a pleasant evening out on the water, fishing in our T-shirts. To say that we were surprised to see white horses rolling down the Loch, pushed along by a cool stiff easterly wind is perhaps an understatement! Recent reports were saying that the fishing had been quite good, with numbers of this years stock of rainbows providing the bulk of the sport. Indeed there had been a boat out on the day session that came in with a catch of 31 fish. Not bad going in what must have been very difficult conditions. However, this outing turned out to be a disappointment for most of us and we recorded many blank rods.

Everyone headed upwind to fish around St Serfs, but the trout proved to be either scarce or difficult to tempt, with only a few being caught from this area. Eric B did best out of these rods, with 2 rainbows for 5 lb on a soldier palmer (red woolly worm, surely? - *Ed.*) fished on the Leven floater (aka the DI-7). No matter how tough it seems though, there is usually somebody who manages to come in with a bag of fish. On this occasion, it was one of our boats who found some trout that

were willing to co-operate. They took 13 between them out of a quiet little corner at the top of the Vane Dyke. Firstly, the trout showed their preference for a Black Cat and a Dunkeld variant, fished on the Hi-D. Later in the evening though, a Jungle Cock Viva accounted for fish, as did good old standards the kingfisher butcher and the invicta. these were fished on the intermediate or fast glass.

It was sheltered in there, with lots of small buzzers coming off, but the trout were ignoring the buzzers and were stuffing their faces with daphnia, clouds of which could be easily seen in the unusually clear water. All the fish spooned were full of the stuff.

So, there it is, 4 of our boats came back with a total of 7 fish for 13 lb 8 oz, and our 5th boat had 12 for 23 lb 4 oz plus one returned. But that is how fishing should be: the where as well as the what and the how. Best bag was Jimmy M with 5 for 9 lb 12 oz.

Portmore Loch, evening session, 1st June

We had an evening outing to Portmore, therefore we had crap weather. It was a storry wind this time, but I guess it could have been worse. We had a nice ceiling and it wasn't Baltic like it was, same outing last year. We still had a pair threaten to pay their money and go home: what a pair of wooses! Not to worry, tales of the water having just been stocked with loads of 7 pounders and one at 28 lb soon had them tackling up!

And so it was the usual dilemma: fish down the dam end for stockies, or up the top end for something slightly more residential? As it turned out, the rods with most fish numbers-wise were the ones who went up the top end. More big fish probably came from down the dam end though. You paid your money and took your choice, really.

Some hefty bags were taken on the good old cat's whiskers. Muddlers were also working and one took what is probably now a club record fish of 11 lb. In addition to that, we had 7 others weighing in at between 6 lb and 9 lb.

The gusty wind never settled, and there was only a very brief late flurry in the way of a rise. Not to worry, though. Those who prefer the subtler tactics had plenty sport. Stewart B did well at anchor off the forestry shore, fishing a floater and a goldhead Prince nymph. Jimmy and Ken had 11 to their boat, drifting with slime line and a combo of Diawl Bach on the dropper and goldhead damsel on the point. The same method saved my bacon after Jim passed on the message. Most takes came very subtle, on the lift. Only problem was setting the boat up to drift at all with the swirly wind doing its best to spoil things. To make matters worse, boats were coming in and dropping anchor right in the middle of the drift. We gave them the benefit of the doubt with respect to thinking that we were anchored too. **BUT WE WEREN'T!!**

Weirdest claim of the night concerns Eric B's that he caught his fish on a pink Wickham buzzer.

Catch return for 10 boats was 67 fish for 197 lb 4 oz with 14 returned. Top for numbers was Jimmy's 5 for 9 lb 12 oz plus 4 returned. Top for weight was Adrian's 4 for 22 lb 14 oz with 3 returned. A good night was had by all, and thanks must go to the fishery management for providing such good sport in really quite poor conditions.

Frandy, day session, 10th June

Here we were on a new venue, a water that could obviously be wild and woolly in the wrong conditions... and it was a glorious day! The wind was, as the weather forecasters say, light and variable, with the accent on variable. The ceiling was about 50:50 sun and cloud cover, and when ever the cloud came across, the fish were up and rising in a flash. The ones we spooned had only daphnia in them, but we saw plenty of black terrestrials being scooped. We also saw some interesting insect life coming down the water, including some huge stone fly and large brook duns. Both were probably hatched on the river Devon upstream and blown down onto the water.

Early on, the sun had the upper hand, and the only rod to get going then had fish to static nymph technique and a black Howwood. Once the cloud started to get a hand in, it was dries, dries, dries. The colour was black, black, black.

Successful flies included black hopper, black ethafoam beetle and black, pearly wing bits. The fish tended to be up once-ing from a deep lie, which made covering risers a hit-miss affair. You were often better off looking to put your flies into generally fishy water and let them find it, O-T-B. Not to be outdone by all this dry fly stuff, Lenny took 5 fish on top of the water pulling gear.

Top bag on the day was 5 fish for 6 lb 6 oz, plus 11 returned. In all, the club's 16 rods weighed in 48 fish for 58 lb 7 oz, plus 20 returned. There were a few nice brownies included in the "returned" section, as was a rainbow of about 3.5 lb.

Linlithgow Loch, 17th June

Conditions were good, with a light and variable breeze, and mainly cloudy conditions. Whether it was because the underlying wind direction was east to northerly, or some other reason, who knows, but sport was unusually slow. The boats that managed to get a position in the zone between the weedy shallows and the drop-off into the deep hole had the best of it. Ian Mac had best bag, taken in this area, on yet another variation of what is becoming our club's top fly of the season, the Diawl Bach. Ian's was the jungle cock version. Other rods reported catching fish on standard Diawls and holo-Diawls as well. Spoonings revealed a

good assortment of stuff, including hog-louse, *Corixae*, micro buzzer, big *Daphnia*, and weird green aquatic moth larvae.

Ian's bag of 7 for 13 lb, plus 2 returned, was 3 better than anyone else. There was action to be had elsewhere, but boy, did you have to work hard for it! Steve G, fishing up the east end, did best of the rest. Figure-of-eighting dry flies, Steve took 6, with a hare's ear hopper being the stand out fly. Steve had a cracking resident in his bag, and nobody thought to tell yours truly to get a photo of it (yours truly being too dozy to think to do it himself). Sorry Steve -- just have to catch another one. Jimmy M, in the boat with Steve, had best fish with a 5 pounder. Also up the east end, John M took 4 to Diawl Bachs. Elsewhere, there was an odd half chance at fish moving across the west point area with dry fly... and... eh... Diawl Bachs. The club's total for 19 rods was 48 fish for 88 lb 12 oz plus 2 returned.

Only 2 rods stayed on for the evening, but those of you who went away at 6 missed nothing. It turned Baltic later on, and there was no rise whatsoever.

Loch Leven, evening session, 27th June

It seems the Loch is fishing better during the day just now. Certainly, those of us who have been fishing days and evenings have found much better sport during the day. Everyone found the going hard on this session. It started with a bang for Adrian C, though. He was into a rainbow an ounce short of 5 lb within minutes. Not only was it our most notable fish since Adrian's big fish on Portmore, he even caught it on the same fly, an orange muddler. Adrian was on the Leven floater, between Kelson and Reed Bower at the time.

The evening had started looking quite good, but the sun came out and the wind got up and it just didn't amount to anything. The black-headed gulls made much more of the fly life than the fish did. Steve G and Derek K in our boat had a fish each to a silver invicta on DI-3 and floater respectively. And, eh, that's about all there is to report! The club's 4 boats weighed in a meagre 5 rainbows, albeit for an impressive 14 lb 9 oz (with a few assorted brownies all returned).

Portmore Loch, evening session, 6th July

A group of us had just arrived back from a trip to Chew and Blagdon, where we had been battling sunburn and heatstroke with temperatures in the eighties every day. What a shock to the system to be out in Baltic weather on Portmore the next day -- cold and breezy off the north east! To make matters worse, here is a view across the water...

What else could make it worse? Well, the water was much warmer than the air and full of algae.

It was perhaps not surprising that the fishing was poor. In fact, it was very poor. Every method was tried in every area in the course of the evening, but our 20 rods caught a total of just 3 fish.

Guest Mike P had a nice resident on a shuttlecock after just 5 minutes, while Eric S had one on dries late on. In between, Stewart B took a 5 pounder (above) off the forestry shore on a black booby on a WetCel II.

Loch Leven, evening session, 15th July

The Loch seems to be taking it's own sweet time in getting going with the best of the evening fishing. The weather can't be helping, and we had another wonderful assortment of conditions to cope with. It started with a fresh easterly, the Forth having been like a millpond earlier in the day. We started at the sluices: Get to the head of the wind!. And immediately the wind dropped. Let's get into the breeze, we thought, and headed out to the east point of St Serf's. No sooner were we there, but fish were rising all over the place, and John was into a good rainbow, first cast.

Get the dries on, thought I. As soon as I was tackled up, the sun came out and the fish went down. Ah well, back to pulling! The sun went in and the fish came back on the go, and we added 2 rainbows, both to fast glass and size 10 wets: Dunkeld variant and black/green/gold. Other boats in the area were into fish as well, and we saw rods on hi-viz floaters into fish. But, the activity soon waned, and all went serene. We took the plunge and headed down the loch to look for surface activity. No sooner had we dropped in on Paddy's point, than the portents of doom loomed over the horizon...

The wind turned to the north to bring this stuff in, and went Baltic in the process. It looked so much better where we had just come from that we decided to head back up there! We stopped off to get shelter on the deep side of St Serf's, between west point and Dunlop bay. That took us on a course out towards the shoulder between Carden Bay and Duncan's Corner. Here, all of a sudden, were feeding fish. John lost a good one that ran under the boat before jumping out the back and throwing the hook, while I took 2 rainbows; one to the black/green/gold and one to a red muddler. We missed a few chances as well out there, some of which were doubtless wee brownies. All the fish we caught were on the same stuff: green micro buzzers, green water mites, green copepod/daphnia type thingies, wee green eel worms, green weed, everything was green apart from a few big Leven buzzer pupes.

It wasn't a great total for the club. We had only 7 rainbows and 2 browns for 19 lb 9 oz to 13 rods. I would add though, that the quality of the rainbows was quite simply trout perfection.

Loch Leven, evening session, 29th July

Having had rubbish weather for our last Leven outing, we had had loads of cracking good fishing weather since then, and hopes were high in the lead up to this outing. Oh dear, we should have guessed. Strong westerly wind and bright sunshine until the sun went down, at which point it turned bloomin' cold. At least the wind dropped later, giving us a half chance. We needed it too, as early on there was very little doing, no matter how deep we tried going.

Only 4 rods weighed in more than one fish, although many small brownies were returned. One of those rods took his fish on a Diawl Bach (sorry, didn't catch where). The other 3 rods were in different boats, but all were drifting from Scart Isle outwards and upwards towards the north deeps/north shore direction (you know the way a westerly bends as it goes round the corner!).

Rod two took his 2 fish very late on to a neutral density suspender buzzer, a type of dressing that has been taking a lot of fish at Leven (many of the fish taken in the Hardy competition the week before fell for them). Most were probably a little prettier than Dougie's successful claret one (OK, they do lose their looks when they've caught one or two fish).

The other 2 rods had a frantic half hour of sport *ca* 9:30 to 10:00 p.m. One was figure-of-eighting a set of Shipman's buzzers, with claret and fiery brown the stand-outs, keeping 3 of 6 brownies landed, for 4 lb. Top rod on the night was Jimmy M who weighed in 4 brownies for 7 lb with 2 others returned. Jimmy was fishing snatcher type buzzer pupes, when a need to pull his line out of the way quickly resulted in a take. This put him onto the method. Strip with buzzers! Doing it deliberately from that point on brought him his bag. Jimmy's stand out colour was claret yet again.

The club's return for 20 rods was 5 rainbows for 10 lb 14.5 oz, plus 11 browns for 18 lb 4.5 oz, and all brownies under 12 inches returned (quite a few).

Portmore Loch, day session, 5th August

The loch was still heavy with algae, although it was now collecting into areas. Strangely enough, the clearest area, The Laird's Bay, seemed to be devoid of life. Top areas by far were the Big Bay, from the Alders down towards the Lonesome Pine, and round the corner going towards the dam. The latter area was very bad with algae and everybody avoided it until late in the day. By that time, however, the wind had blown the algae tight to the shore, and 40 yards out it was not too bad. The lack of fishing pressure probably contributed to it coming good. However, as soon as a few boats had been in for an hour or so, it went off very quickly there too.

Those who persevered with dries found the going hard, although the odd fish was taken with a daddy-long-legs. Up at The alders, Fraser G and JWR had best boat,

with 8 between them. Fishing floating lines at anchor, Fraser had 3 to this season's hottest fly, the Diawl Bach. Late on, a hatch of sedges tempted him to go to dries and he took 2 to an elk hair sedge. JWR had all his fish to a Montana variant, also on the floater (photo to follow), including a big 'un of 8 lb 14 oz (below, right).

Stewart B repeated his successful method from the last outing fishing a black booby under the algae, taking 3, including another big fish: 7 lb 6 oz (above, left). Another bag of 3 (including one of 7 lb 14 oz) was taken by guest, Derek K, and it was a shout to Derek's boat to get the gen that put yours truly onto the right track. Derek was figure-of-eighting lures on a slow sinker, and a change to that put me into fish. Hard to believe, but I ended up getting mine on a large sparkler (The Rescobie toby), on the bob, on the hang, at the end of a figure-of-eighted retrieve... of the slow glass!!!

Other big fish were taken by Eric B (8 lb 14 oz) and Dougie G (7 lb). In all, the club's 21 rods weighed in 30 fish for 103 lb 10 oz.

The Ballo, day session, 19th August

The US commentator and general wag, Bill Bryson, writing about his visit to Scotland, likened it to living inside a giant Tupperware box: every direction you look is a uniform gray. Well Bill, this was the day for you!

The morning consisted of drizzle and low cloud. In the afternoon the cloud lifted to give, eh... heavy rain! Not to worry, these conditions were still preferable to the killer of Ballo: a hooly. In fact, it was almost flat calm at times.

The fish were rising all over the place as we headed out of the harbour, and some rods were straight into them. Others struggled a.m., only to put a bag together in the afternoon -- by which time the early catchers had run out of steam. There was loads of fly life to get the fish on top, and dry fly was very much the order of the day, with all our top bags coming to dries. Catching patterns, in sizes 12 to 16, included black CDC F-fly, black raider, black PW bits and black beetle. Top bag on the day was taken by Tommy S, fishing a size 14 sedge pattern.

Fish came from all over the water, with no area outstanding. The main hatches were an assortment of sedges, but there were one or two big buzzers coming off and some terrestrials falling too. Strangely, although there was no sign of any lake olives, the fish I spooned contained large quantities of lake olive shucks. The other regular item in them was small sticklebacks. It might have been that when the heaviest of the rain drove the fish down they turned to the sticklebacks, because they were very hard to interest in nymphy stuff.

The rainbows were a nice range of sizes, up to 3 lb, with the emphasis on fish of about 1 lb 4-6 oz. This is too small for many anglers these days, but it is the ideal size for a water like Ballo: the ones that survive the early stockie bash are not too big to make a living off the amount of food available. That allows the

establishment of a resident head of feeding fish. And before you know it... hey, a real fishery!

Tommy's bag was 8 rainbows for 9 lb 10 oz with one good brownie returned, while the club's total for 15 rods was 38 fish for 50 lb 7 oz plus 7 good brownies and many smaller brownies returned.

Loch Leven, evening session, 14th August

Hopes were high for a cracking night. John W and Jimmy M had been out the previous Thursday and had had 11 brownies for well over 20 lb, all taken to top of the water stuff: dry fly and lightweight buzzers. Tonight was breezier but otherwise very similar: warm and very dull overhead. But, this being Leven, just when you think you are making friends with the place, it reminds you who is boss.

Within just 10 minutes, we realised that the fish were not responding the way they were last week. Further down the drift we started to wonder about where we might go to find fish... or should we stay and wait for them to come up. We toughed it out, waiting for them. A mistake, as we ended up with a pittance of offers and just one fish and one lost for the boat. There was a noticeable lack of fly life until it was really too late to be of much use. And yet, one of our boats fishing in the same area recorded loads of chances... but they ended up clean (worse, their outboard cut-off switch broke and they had to row from the north shore to Reed bower before they got a tow!)

At the weigh in, the tale was much the same for most folk, with only 4 rainbows and 4 browns being weighed in for 17 rods (plus 5 browns returned). The 4 rainbows were a good weight, mind: 11 lb 6 oz. Fraser had 2 of them, the better at 4 lb 2 oz, taken on a hare's ear CDC shuttlecock. These were got drifting from Kelson towards Reed Bower. John M proved there's life in the old butchers yet, with a 3 lb plus rainbow and a 2 lb plus brown taken to kingfisher and bloody aforementioned (you don't need photographs of these!) . John's fish were taken on floating line in the Carden Bay area. Elsewhere in the bags, a couple of fish were taken to claret hoppers.

Butterstone Loch, day session, 25th August

This was an excellent day, conditions-wise: mostly overcast, with the odd sunny spell and the odd shower, warm, and with only light breezes or flat calm all day. It was the sort of day that you could choose your method to catch your fish. Other clubs were out and spent the day pulling and one boat was seen to bag-up by lunch time on slime line and goldheads. I heard mention of Kate McLaren's, and black seems to be the best colour at Butterstone in general just now.

The conditions were really ideally suited to dries and our fishers concentrated on them. There was plenty fly life on the surface to get the fish up. Over much of the loch the fish were very oncey, and we had to work hard to get them. Tommy S and Grant W fished down near the harbour though, and they came in reporting having had loads of chances to dries. They took their fish to a variety of flies including an elk-hair emerger and a Royal Wulff (very exotic!). Trevor G found fish on the right hand shore, anchoring and figure-of-eighting a team of CDC emergers. Out in the open water Jimmy M took his fish on PW heather fly and PW bits. Other successful flies for our members included this claret CDC-come-hopper-come-bits, plus black hoppers and black CDC F-fly.

Spoonings revealed mostly black terrestrials, micro buzzer pupes and bottom stuff such as hog louse and wee green bloodworm.

When the sun turned up the candle-power a bit too much and put the fish down, they were do-able on static nymph. A (sort of realistic) damsel and a black and pearl nymph took a brace each.

The club's total for 12 rods was an impressive 54 for 90 lb 3 oz, including 5 limit bags of 6 fish.

Lake of Menteith, day session, 1st September

A warm, overcast day, wet at times, with a light wind (as opposed to the hooly the forecasters claimed!) made for cracking conditions. The fish obliged as well, to give us a very heavy catch: 16 rods weighed in 73 fish for 197 lb 13 oz.

Tommy S had a bag of 8 for 22 lb 4 oz, with 8 more returned. He fished in hotel bay and took his fish on dry fly, mostly to his emerger from last week at Butterstone. Alan D's 8 fish were even heavier, at 23 lb, taken on cat's whisker in Gateside Bay. Tanto had a bag on a bibio, though I'm not sure if it was fished wet on a floater, or dry on a sinker, or some other combination! John M had another limit bag, taken on dries, mostly to a fiery brown Bob's bits.

...and thanks go to Eric S for looking after the outing in the secy's absence. Eric had a good day too, taking his fish on a variety of flies and methods, including the interesting mini-tadpole shown above.

Loch Leven, day session, 9th September

The loch has been treading a precarious line recently. Get a good day, and it has fished well: there were over 300 fish weighed-in in the national final. Get a bad day, however, and it has been its old self of days gone by, when you wonder if there are any fish in there.

Eh, needless to say, we got a bad one... Blowing a wee bit of a hooly; turned cold all of a sudden; and bright. It was optional, but do we ever learn to turn round and go home? Of course we don't!

So, what did we have to show for our day? Well, not a lot. Save for a few small brownies being returned, Stewart B weighed in a rainbow of 2 lb 1 oz, taken on an orange sparkler, on Wetcel II, while grounded on Reed Bower. And that was it: one fish for 15 rods!

Lake of Menteith, day session, 17th September

After 2 weeks of very autumnal weather, we had all put the sun-tan lotion away for the year. Big mistake, as our September holiday trip to The Lake turned out to be a scorcher!

With the fish still very high in the water, a cloudless, windless day made the catching of same a very tricky business. A day on the dries might have been the answer, but the fish were very oncey, and few and far between. Nevertheless, that was still a partial answer.

Fish were taken to dries, fuelled by the continuation of the heather fly activity, well past its usual end of early September. In addition, we found shield bugs in the stomachs of the fish we took in International Bay. Tommy S took a bag of 4 in Gateside Bay on his deer hair emerger pattern that has been going a storm over the past few outings.

Dougie S took all of his 3 to dries. Elsewhere, Stewart B took a brace to this season's hot method at Menteith, the washing line: a booby and 2 nymphs. Top bag was 5 for 12 lb 12 oz, taken on a 3-2 split to nymphs on the slow glass (Diawl Bach and semi-realistic damsel) and dries (pearly-winged heather fly).

Given the very awkward conditions, the Club's 13 rods weighed-in a highly respectable 20 fish for 48 lb.

Portmore Loch, day session, 30th September

Sorry if you have been waiting for this report. It didn't happen. The weather was fine down here at sea level, and the Forth looked like ideal fly water for a drift! I noticed the trees blowing a bit by the time we passed through Howgate, however. By the time we reached Portmore, it was clear that it was too rough on the downwind shore to be safe for launching the boats. Match abandoned! When I got back home, it was just as it was when I left: perfect conditions. Later in the day, just as the wind was picking up here, Stevie 'phoned regarding another matter, and added that it had calmed down lovely up at Portmore. Ah well...

Lake of Menteith, day session, 13th October

The rustic tones of autumn met with weather befitting a summer's day, as a warm, light westerly breeze accompanied sunny spells and otherwise good overhead conditions. We needed the good conditions too as The Lake, as often is the case, turns a bit tricky about this time. The stockies are thinned out and dispersed. The residents are feeding on very small stuff or weed shoots or, as of now, strange fairy shrimp things!! Our fish came from all over: International bay, the road shore, Lochend, Tod hole, Gateside bay, The Rookery and Hotel Bay. They were right up high, as they have been all season, and all our bags came to floaters, intermediates and slime lines.

There were plenty black gnats about, but dry fly was a risky business, with risers few and far between. Dougie S had a bag of 5 on claret Shipman, though, casting at risers right in among the reed beds. John R took 5 more on wets and Ian Mac had 6 on the micro-booby and 2 nymphs rig -- the nymphs being a Diawl Bach and jungle cock Diawl Bach. Best bag by far was Jimmy M, who took 8 for 16 lb 6 oz, plus 1 returned. Jimmy fished a Kelly green intermediate, figure-of-eighting 2 trads above an imitative damsel. The trads were, at various times, a soldier variant, a green-tailed Kate and a pearly orange palmer. He didn't appreciate it at the time, but Jimmy's last fish, taken with 5 minutes on the clock, swung the club's championship in his direction.

The club's total for 18 rods was 43 fish for 92 lb, plus 2 returned. One other fish rates a mention: Tommy S caught a 20 lb pike on a yellow booby!

2002

Lindores Loch, day session, 24 March

Off to a cracking start in 2002, with the outing being just 2 fish short of a limit bag for everyone. We were helped with our traditionally good conditions for it (going to get a horror one of these years). It was a uniform gray all day, with a light breeze that picked up in the afternoon and reminded us that it is still cold in March!

Fish were being caught from early doors, although many of our members took a while to get going, and the middle of the day and afternoon seemed generally more productive. Fish were taken along the top shore, from Milanda Bay, round the road shore and the right hand bays, down to the big house. Many were caught very close to shore, although some rods found that after those fish had taken a bit, they regrouped further out.

For pulling, slime lines and slow sinkers were all that was required depth wise, as the fish were in mid-water, feeding mainly on daphnia. Retrieves that worked best were slow pulls or figure-of-eight. Myriad flies were successful. Derek K took 12 mainly to a slim damsel while Alan H had top bag with 13 to goldhead black tad and Kate McLaren. Elsewhere a sparkly Dunkeld was mentioned by more than one successful angler. Another took his fish on the good old cat's whiskers. Another had success with the dreaded orange blob!

Although there were a few fish rising early, they disappeared when the breeze picked up and dries were not an option. Nymphing was though, and flies with a touch of orange, such as this battle weary hot-spot cove PTN, picked up a fair number of the daphnia feeders.

The Club's catch for 14 rods was 68 fish for 138 lb 10 oz, with 33 more returned. Although many were clearly early season stockies, some nice residents were caught and some genuinely overwintered fish featured in the catches. It was, all in all, a great start to the new season.

Lake of Menteith, day session, 13 April

This was a lovely spring day. Bright sunshine and dead still early. Later on we got some cloud and a light breeze to improve the fishing conditions generally. The wind had been out the east for the past couple of weeks, and we thought the fish may well be pushed towards the likes of the shooting butts or the Malin shore. This seemed to be borne out by the fact that by mid day a look towards the usually crowded road shore revealed not a single boat. In fact, the early fishing was hard going everywhere, with not many getting caught. When the breeze got up it was from the west, and suddenly the road shore started to fish for the boats that ventured back there. This proved decisive for Alan H and Trevor T who landed 20 between them. Flies and lines didn't seem to matter much, as one was on Hi-D and the other slime line, and they caught with things as diverse as a black fritz tadpole and an olive booby.

Elsewhere, Dougie G found an obliging group at Hotel bay, and he took 8 to a mini viva and a claret palmer (well that's what it looked like it was at one time!).

There was a good hatch of buzzers on the go, and the odd fish was up for them. One group composed entirely of jaggy-tailed residents put in a brief appearance in that area such fish seem so fond of, about 100 yds shy of the gap between the island and the heronry. Alan M managed to put a dry fly in front of one and was rewarded with a large overwintered fish that was packed with buzzers: pupes and adults. Steve G found another group of fish feeding close to the reeds between hotel Bay and Sam's point, and he took 3 on a claret snatcher.

The stockies are of a very good order and averaging over 2 lb each. In all, our 6 boats weighed in 44 fish for 99 lb 2 oz, with 6 more returned.

Lindores Loch, day session, 21 Apr

Things looked a bit ropey, weather-wise on the road north, what with the strong wind and heavy rain. However, we pretty much escaped and had nothing worse than a dreich day with a fresh, mild southerly breeze. And the fishing was as good as ever. Catches were more spread numbers wise than last time, with a wide range of scores recorded. What was very consistent throughout our rods this time was the extent to which everyone was catching with nymphs.

Jimmy M and Steve G had best boat by some way (Jimmy being best rod on the outing). They concentrated on fishing in open water between the home end and the railway shore. They took the majority of their fish quite high in the water, fishing a double strength leader set-up. While they had some to the good old Diawl Bach their stand out fly was Jimmy's flash-back melanistic PTN. The fish they took had been feeding on greenish blood worm (note for later: they live on the bottom).

Also up that end of the water, Leon J was dead chuffed to get his first bag of fish with the swung nymph technique. Leon was using a black buzzer pattern.

Meanwhile, down the far end at the big house, Ian Mac got into the fish with the same technique, using a mini-damsel and a JC Diawl Bach. however, Ian was using a 24 foot fluorocarbon leader. That would suggest the fish were lying deeper than the ones at the other end that Jimmy and Steve were catching. However, we fished right beside Ian and the fish we spooned had been feeding in mid water, on scrotty buzzer pupes and daphnia. So, at one end we have bottom feeding fish getting caught high in the water, and at the other end we have midwater feeding fish getting caught at depth. More stuff to do your head in with! Here's yet more... Our boat sat in between Ian's and Tommy S's: they were also catching fish swinging nymphs. We spent about half the day swinging nymphs -- assorted patterns, assorted leader set-ups, assorted presentations, assorted anchorages. Between us we caught 4 large perch... and not one single trout!

We could only put up with this for so long before we tried another tack. We picked up the other rods with the slow sinkers on them. After a bit trial and error, we found that a moderate paced figure-of-eight through midwater with 2 nymphs (Diawl Bach and damsel) behind an orange blob was as good as anything for catching fish. And we got more residents on the blob than on the nymphs! What's all that about, then?

The club's total for 18 rods was 75 fish for 152 lb, with 66 returned.

Linlithgow Loch, day session, 28 April

Not an ideal day, by any means, but better than the forecast was trying to make out. It was a bit four seasons in one day. The wind started south easterly and gradually swung round to westerly. It picked up every time a squally shower came over, including one of large hailstones. Not a good day for taking photographs with an automatic digital camera, as you can see by the dodgy exposures!

The fishing was a bit iffy. There were a few big buzzers coming off in the morning, then a huge hatch of scrotty wee black buzzers got the sand martins on the go in the afternoon. But we struggled, in the whole. We did have 2 boats who got plugged in to the action that was to be had. Jimmy M and Stu B got going in the bay at the far end of the north shore.

The fish were running so tight to shore that Jimmy and Stu had to take turns at being the inside rod in order that both got a share of the action. They reported that they found the fish high in the water, taking all their fish swinging nymphs, predominantly green-headed hare lug and melanistic flash-back Cove.

The other boat that found fish, did so in front of the trees below the Palace bank. A few other rods got in among them later on in the day, but Derek G did by far the best, catching on an assortment of patterns fished on the floater: Diawl Bach, orange blob, black epoxy buzzer and green & black goldhead tadpole.

Jimmy and Derek both had a limit bag of 6 fish plus 4 returned, with Jimmy's bag going a total of 14 lb 8 oz. The club's catch for 9 boats was 38 fish for 86 lb plus 11 returned.

Carron Valley Reservoir, day session, 5 May

Our Club Secretary knows when to miss an outing and go elsewhere. He must be making a fortune giving Carron dates to weather forecasters, travel agents, sun-worshippers, etc. Yes, Carron again meant clear blue skies and flat calm. Colin's sub. for the day wasn't made to feel better by a boatman who claimed we hadn't paid for the outing and that we hadn't ordered any outboards. Eventually things were sorted out, that is except for the sun and flat calm.

To be fair, the weather did improve somewhat, later in the day. A breeze blew up and occasional cloud cover helped, but the consensus of opinion was that it was a hard day again. The total catch for 6 boats was 12 fish weighed in for 11 lb 9 oz with 24 others returned to fight another day. Stewart C and his dad did reasonably well with Kate McLaren and black/gold wets on slime lines. Their catch included a very nice 1 lb 6 oz fish. Adrian C was successful with a yellow-tailed priest (whoever he was) and the acting secy was shown up by his boat partner Alan M, who took 6, mainly on a Di5 with tadpole and wets, but including one on the dries.

Not unusually Jimmy "what difficult conditions?" M showed his class with 9 on buzzers and CDCs.

We will be lucky with the weather some day on Carron - surely!!

S.B.

Lindores Loch, eve session, 11 May

A stiff westerly breeze and very bright overhead conditions took the edge off the sport for a good bit of the evening. As soon as the sun went down, however, the switch was thrown and the fish started rising. Unfortunately for many, the risers were in tight, localised groups, and anglers who were not among them missed out. Just what could be achieved with those fish in the last wee spell was highlighted by Jimmy M, who had but a single fish for the whole evening to that point, but who took 7 on a dry, size 12 claret Shipman in the fading light.

Earlier on it had been hard going generally, although Allan H put a bag together on buzzers, and Steve G and I also got fish to swinging buzzer patterns, including Jimmy's PTN pattern, epoxy buzzer and buzzer tad.

We got the dries on at the end as well, and had some frantic last gasp sport to such as a size 14 sparkle gnat, black Shipman and Adams hopper. All this had been down at the harbour end. The 2 Allans, M and E, had the top end by Lindores House pretty much to themselves. They had sport at the start to buzzers (black epoxy and diawl bach) and later to dries -- F-fly in the slicks/claret snatcher when the wind got up.

The club's 20 rods weighed in 41 fish for 85 lb, with 19 fish returned (some folk preferred to fish catch and release from the start).

Lake of Menteith, day session, 20 May

Conditions were near to perfect, if you didn't mind it being a bit damp -- a moderate south easterly and 100% ceiling all day. We witnessed about the best hatch of claret duns we've ever seen. Add to that a smattering of mayflies, olives, alders, hawthorns, black gnats and other assorted terrestrials, and we had all the makings of a good day's fishing for feeding residents, rather than pulling lures for stockies. (Not that we didn't have a go at that as well, but the stockies seemed to be taking the day off!)

Four of our 6 boats had success with imitative tactics. Steve G and Tommy S took 13 between them on dry fly, up at the plantation. Steve's hare's ear hopper was their stand out pattern. Meanwhile, Dougie S and Stu B were stalking rising fish in

the butts bay, also on dries, and they had 15 between them, their stand out pattern being a claret Shipman.

Jimmy M and I found a group of fish feeding in a food lane that developed in the lee of Inchmaholme Island. We focused on the claret duns that were being taken and got into the fish with small, dark CDC F-flies. This group proved to be composed almost entirely of overwintered fish and long-term residents. And when they have a full tail and no excess body fat, they go a bit!

Most interesting development of the day was that with the way things panned out, catches-wise, between us and the other clubs that were out, you wouldn't have given tuppence for the chance of putting a bag together on subsurface tactics. And on nymphs? No way! So, just to put a spanner in the works, Allan E took 9 fish on a pair of olive and hare's ear snatchers! They were fished on the slime line, on the drop, in shallow water, from Lochend to International Bay.

The Club's total for 12 rods was 53 fish for 116 lb 12 oz, plus 2 returned.

Loch Leven, day session, 1 June

Not a bad day, to start off with at least, though we felt pretty frazzled by 6.00 pm. This was our first trip of the season, having given up on early season evening outings. It was a small one too, with an already low demand being exacerbated by 3 of our rods having to call off when they drew the same date for their Scottish Clubs' Heat. So, just 3 boats set out for our club outing.

The water was nowhere as clear as last season, with quite a bit of green to it. There were a few buzzers hatching -- good sized ones too -- and a scattering of big pupes showed in stomach contents.

We made a decent start, with Jimmy M taking 2 fish at the Sluices, fishing DI-3 and a damsel and an Oakham orange. When that action ceased, we could see there were many boats working the Hole of Inch area at the back of St Serf's, so we went over to investigate. We could see fish being caught and we managed to squeeze in. We were soon catching them ourselves too, picking up 9 between us. Alan M and I had all of ours on the hang (DI-3/DI-4 and assorted black tadpoles), while Jimmy M continued to catch pulling the Oakham Orange. The fish averaged 1 lb 8 oz to 1 lb 10 oz and were very bright and lively.

The situation quickly became ridiculous, however. Here we were on a water of 3,500 acres and there are 20-odd boats trying to fish an area of about one acre. We moved away and tried our luck elsewhere, but drifts at the Black Woods, Carden Bay, Kelson Strip and Thrapple Hole all provided not an offer.

One of our remaining boats did have success later on at the Kelson Strip, and Ian Mac and Stuart S picked up fish there. Ian's successful flies (fished on DI-6)

included an orange blob and a black and green mini-lure. Stuart had a fish on a natty wee trad!

Our total for 9 rods was 15 rainbows for 24 lb, plus 2 more returned. Jimmy had 6 to his own rod, which was exceptional, given how awkward the day had proved.

Portmore Loch, evening session, 7 June

We had a wet, windy evening for our outing to Portmore -- as we do for all our evening outings to Portmore! However, better than bright sunshine, and the temperature was OK. Things were made easy for us by the water having been recently stocked, and the fish had run down the easterly wind and were lining the west shore, only a few feet out from it. The problem for a couple of our boats was that we had forgotten to bring anchors. It was a struggle, hooking a 4 lb plus rainbow just as the boat is being blown ashore, having to bring in the drogue, start the electric outboard, get turned, run the boat out to open water, walking the fish as we went, before finally getting a chance to play it out and land it! It all added to the fun, though.

Unfortunately, a couple of boats fished too far upwind and missed out, but those who got in to the shoreline activity caught plenty. All sorts of flies and tactics worked. Orange/coral/sunburst was a repeating colour range, as was black, and white (no surprises, really). Stewart B (black) and JW Robertson (coral) both went with boobies. JW fished a washing line set up on the Hi-D. Most others seemed to be on slime lines, and things like orange blobs and black tads seemed to work fine.

Many of the fish were of the very highest quality, but it was a tricky matter to get a photograph of one of them, as it was pissing down for most of the evening (plus the other problems of always being in a 2 and 8 with the boat when we hooked one!).

The fish got a lot trickier in the second part of the evening, and Trevor and Al (who had been late in getting into the action and were playing catch up) were one of the few boats to catch fish later on. They reported getting most of their fish on small white lures. Guest Mike P changed to more traditional stuff and picked up 2 on a Wickham's. Meanwhile, Tommy S and Adrian C found fish away from the main group, taking theirs on sunburst tads in the top bay.

The heaviest bag of 5 was weighed in by Alan M, at 20 lb 4 oz, while Alan D had the biggest fish, at 5 lb 6 oz. The Club's total for 10 boats was 71 fish for 252 lb 12 oz, with 42 others returned.

Frandy, day session, 16 June

A good looking day for it -- near 100% ceiling, mild, with a moderate south westerly breeze. Before the breeze got up, there were signs of rising fish at odd spots all over the water, though they disappeared before we even got the chance to wet a line (as usual!).

The anticipated dry fly action really didn't materialise for most of our boats who fished from the narrows on down. However, Tommy S fished the corner between the car park and the dam and had consistent sport with a heather fly, taking a total of 10, which was 4 better than anyone else. Tommy's fly proves if there was any doubt that the more shredded and battered a fly gets, the more attractive it is to fish!

The fishery manager reckoned the lack of surface feeding fish was just the result of the continuously wet weather we've been having -- it stops the terrestrials from getting up and out over the water. Certainly, the fish we spooned had very little in them apart from daphnia, and there was very little sign of fly on the water throughout the day. Alan H made the most of the sport at the top end, however, taking 6 on traditional wet flies, mostly this special.

Elsewhere, two rods took bags of 5 apiece to dries, predominantly a black hopper variant. Several good brownies were weighed in, averaging 1 lb 8 oz. In total, the club's 12 rods weighed in 21 rainbows for 25 lb 14 oz and 6 browns for 10 lb 5 oz and 12 fish were returned.

Linlithgow Loch, day session, 23 June

The picture above, taken late afternoon during a wee calm bright spell, belies the fact that the day was rather spoilt by the seemingly perpetual stoory wind that is driving us all round the bend at the moment.

It was an interesting day, just the same. Our boat was into fish right from the off. We anchored up on the edge of the drop-off into deep water so we could swing nymphs without bother from weed. Starting on double-strength, fish were coming to middle and tail (jungle cock Diawl Bach and mini-damsel). When things slowed a bit, a switch to fluoro got them back on the take and the anorexic hare's ear on the bob came into play.

We slowed up after lunch, but that was when Alan M got into fish round the Palace bank, fishing double strength and skinny buzzers. Maybe we should have gone back to double strength? Aye, but Tommy S took his fish in the afternoon on fluoro! Spoonings revealed that they were on very little other than baby *Corixa*.

It wasn't all nymphing either. Young Euan C took a bag on wets, the stand out pattern being this claret bumble-type-variant-sort-of-thing.

The club's total for 8 boats was 33 fish for 60 lb plus 14 returned.

Loch Leven, eve session, 26 June

Yet another wild day, this one. The boats on the day session had been competing in the National semi-final, and the quality of the field told as there were plenty fish caught, despite the hairy conditions. We were out after them, the wind dropping to make things reasonable. The main problem was that the temperature dropped as well, as the sky opened up. Late June, and it was baltic!

Despite the stiff breeze, there was a good hatch of *Caenis*. Unfortunately, the only creatures we saw feeding on them had feathers, not scales, as a swarm of swifts clouded the sky across the north deeps.

Whether it was the Arctic temperature or the tendency for Leven not to fish well both day and evening, we had a tough old time of it. Adrian C took a bag of 3 rainbows, on DI-7 and an 8 longshank Viva at the west point. John Miller had a rainbow and the only brown, both to bloody butcher and DI-3 in the north deeps area. In all, 10 rods weighed in 7 fish for 12 lb 3 oz, plus one returned.

Portmore Loch, eve session, 5 July

Cap'n F away... Tommy S reports...

Conditions looked good as everyone motored out - with a gentle breeze from the south east producing an ideal dry fly ripple - and before leaving the shore Alan E notched a 5lb plus rainbow on a small olive dry. He had seen it rise very close to the bank and could not resist the challenge! (The fish was returned.) Sadly as is often the case with our Portmore outings, conditions soon changed, with the wind suddenly swinging around to come in cold from the north east.

Nevertheless, John M did well and stuck doggedly to the dries to take the best bag of four for 16lb 2oz, on size 12 hoppers. Various other methods worked to catch baskets of 3 fish, including bright yellow tadpoles fished on a slime line on the drift, and Diawl Bach and buzzer pupae on floating lines, fished drifting or at anchor.

The evening grew quickly cold and many rods left early, despite the fact that there was a late rise of fish near the head of the wind. However, these resident trout proved very choosy and hard to interest as they fed on a variety of adult sedges including some very large species.

The 17 rods weighed in 23 fish for 83 lb 10 oz, with a few others returned.

Loch Leven, evening session, 14 July

Hopes were high leaving Edinburgh, as they often are! This time we were really going to get perfect conditions. It was 100% ceiling here. Surely it must be the same up at Kinross? Oh, dear me, no. By M90 Junction 3, the sky was breaking up and the sun came out to knacker it up, as it just about always does (if other things don't).

We ran in to our other perennial anomaly as well. When we are there for an evening, the place has fished its head off during the day. But if we go for a day session, we get a grueller. The day boats (having had good conditions) came off with bag loads of fish. All this had happened a couple of weeks ago and we could see the same thing teeing itself up here. Oh, well, nothing ventured...

Derek K and I tried the north to start with, but that was like death warmed up. We decided to cut and head for the west point, but as we approached, we saw a few boats concentrating on the east buoy. Curious, we dropped in and were soon into fishy action. Derek started catching on **this fly**, which he assured me was a wee soldier palmer. I thought it looked more like an orange blob, so I put one on and soon caught a fish on it. Derek also had a couple on a wee Viva, and I had one on a minkie. Our lines were DI-3 and DI-4, respectively. After 3 or 4 drifts over the area, the action dropped away as the wind picked up to a fresh WSW and the boats moved away. We followed suit and went upwind to take a drift out from Gairney mouth towards St. Serf's.

This proved a good move as we had fresh sport, though we didn't really stick to our chances, boating just one more apiece. The last of these was a covered brownie, which gave us the impression that there might be a late chance with some browns, and that kept us out till the 11.30 deadline.

When we got in, we discovered we were the coo's tail, and so I don't have much more to report, as most of the others were away. Alan M had 3 brownies, taken on intermediate at the deep side of St Serf's and later at Scart, taken to a cormorant and a "thunder and lightning". Fraser G had 2 rainbows for 5 lb 10.5 oz, the larger being the best fish of the night, at 3 lb 7.5 oz.

Derek K's bag of 5 for 9 lb 11 oz was by far the best. The club's total for 14 rods was 11 rainbows for 23 lb 5.5 oz plus 4 browns for 5 lb 10 oz.

Loch Leven, eve session, 28 July

An amazing change in weather again, as we left Edinburgh, dry, with a stiff breeze blowing, and arrived at 'Tombstone' to find it soggy wet and mirror calm. We had another poor turn out, with only 3 boats out for the 3rd time this season. We all concentrated on the St Serf's area, and Dougie S was soon into a good fish on suspender buzzers. Our boat went with nymphing tactics too and had some early offers, without connecting.

That kept us on what turned out to be the wrong tactics. We reckoned the numbers of rises did not match the amount of fly, the latter being prodigious, with *Caenis*, buzzers (bright greens and yellow owls) and sedges covering the water.

After too long with nothing, Alan M took the plunge and switched to dry flies and was broken first cast! A few casts later and he was in again. A quick change to dries for Cap'n F, and it was all go in our boat for a frantic half hour. Key fly was Tommy S's half-hog from last season. We were now seeing plenty risers, including a group of 3 or 4 fish in the 8-10 lb class! I had just got in nice position for one of them and a wee rainbow came from nowhere and took me. Next time....

Alan got straightened out by a brownie we estimated at 4-odd. We were really getting somewhere now... so, a cool sea breeze came in from the east and put the whole lot off the top! Oh well, good things come in small measures. At least it left us with nice pulling conditions, albeit with fast-failing light. Stu B got into fish late on and put a bag of brownies together with the floater and a Dunkeld variant. Jimmy M had one on dries and one on a totty wee butcher muddler.

Our total for 8 rods was 7 rainbows for 15 lb 2 oz, plus 6 browns for 10 lb 10 oz and 2 others returned.

Butterstone Loch, day session, 3 August

A real dreich day, mirror calm at times and never more than a very slight ripple. The rain was never really off, though mostly it was just a mildly annoying smir. And it was muggy as well. Too warm to sit with your coat on, and too wet to take it off!

Just about everyone caught a fish in the first ten minutes (it seemed like). Thereafter, it was a different story, as it got harder and harder. Our boats kept to the drift in the main, though that might have been a mistake, as the other club that was out had boats anchored up, fishing boobies on Hi-Ds and catching steadily.

Our best boat was Ian Mac and his young son, Gavin. Ian was the only one of us to bag up, and Gavin had four to his own rod.

Ian reports, "I had one fish on dries and the other five on slime line with two size ten Diawl Bachs and a small olive booby on the bob. Four fish took the nymphs and one the booby. All Gav's fish were on the Diawl Bachs. The retrieve was a slow figure of eight. The DB's had jungle cock cheeks. I dropped another three fish and had loads of follows and plucks. Gav's line was a Steve Parton intermediate."

The JC Diawl Bach was my best fly as well, fishing it in the middle of a nymphing team on the floater. Elsewhere among our catches, we had odd fish taken to nymphs, dries, wets, lures and boobies, on floater, intermediate and sinker. But, looking back (Ian's boat apart), we never got tuned in with anything,

really. Spoonings revealed little more than small amounts of daphnia, and the fish caught, even those on nymphs and dries, though a good size, and fit, were not what you would call residents.

Our club total for 14 rods was 37 fish for 91 lb 13 oz.

Loch Leven, evening session, 13 August

As has become customary, the weather in Edinburgh and the weather in Kinross were completely different. This time it was chucking it down when we left Edinburgh, and bright sunshine when we arrived in Kinross. However, the clouds soon arrived, giving us an odd shower, some dramatic skies, and, by and large, cracking conditions for evening fishing.

We had a light south westerly and it was warm and muggy, so no excuses allowed for not catching fish. So, how come we managed 11 fish between 14 rods? There were some localised pockets of activity, but it was your Donald Duck if you landed in one of them. Our boat found a group of fish on a line between metal Mickey and the west point, crossed with Reed bower and Paddies Point. We had sport from the off to wets on fast glass, coming up to ghost tip, coming up to floater, and to dry fly, though the fish refused to stick to the latter. Successful flies were a Dunkeld variant, red muddler and hare's ear palmer, all size 10. Spoonings revealed what they always seem to these days -- very little.

Eric B picked up a good brace of brownies at the west point, taken on slime line and Invicta. Late on, John W picked up 2 brownies (both returned) on dries at Scart I.

John F had the fish of the night, a 3 lb 6 oz brownie, taken on a silver Invicta on floating line. The Club's total was 8 browns for 13 lb 3 oz and a single rainbow for 2 lb 4 oz, plus 2 returned.

The Ballo, day session, 18 August

The weather forecast that predicted a hooly was thankfully laughably wrong. We started off with cracking conditions, very dull, with a light NE breeze. But, just as the fish started to rise, it started to rain, and that put them down. Having started off with dry fly (usually the best bet at Ballo) you now needed a pulling rod set up while the rain was on. Of course, as it is now chucking it down, the last thing you feel like doing is getting everything soaked while you put up a pulling rod. So, the rain goes off, and that is when you should put up a pulling rod, ready for next time, but of course you don't because you are busy looking for the fish starting to show. And, start to show they do, and you start to get somewhere, then the rain comes on and puts them down! And you should have a pulling rod to go to, but you don't...

The bailiffs reported that many anglers had been reporting fish rising and going for their flies but with no connection: the dreaded fresh-air shot, as we call it when we are fishing dries. And in due course everyone came off at the end of the day reporting having had loads of offers to dries, but having fresh-aired the vast majority.

We did have success. Alan M was getting the fresh airies to a half-hog and changed it for a hare's ear hopper, being rewarded with half a dozen rainbows. Alan H had 5 rainbows and a returned brownie to hoppers and an orange lure. Ken Mac and I fished dries all day and had success with half-hog (size 12) and various hoppers, including this black variant (size 10). We had some from covers, some "out-the-blue" static, and, when the rain was at its worst, some from figure-of-eighting the dries.

The fish were all over the reservoir, were high in the water, and were there for the catching. We got the impression that fly size and profile was not the issue, as we were getting them to take size 10 hoppers. We wondered if it was that old nylon visibility thing again. Our fresh-air shots were nearly all out the blue jobs. If you got over a rise quickly, it was usually keen and wasn't a freshie. Perhaps these were fish up high in the water, lying horizontal and not seeing the nylon against the background of the water. Added to which you were not giving them time to scrutinise the nylon. The fresh air shots were coming from fish with time on their hands and the chance to see the nylon against the sky on their way up for a look. Maybe? Who knows, but one further point supporting this idea was that in the absence of a pulling rod, we just figure-of-eighted our dries when the rain was too fierce for surface action, and, with being on fine nylon, we seemed to score better than those having a pull on courser stuff.

Spoonings revealed mostly shucks: sedge and lake olives, with the odd adult sedge, sedge pupa, beetle and stickleback thrown in. We saw odd fish attacking the sticklebacks down the home shore.

The club's total for 14 rods was 29 fish for 42 lb 6 oz, with 15 returned.

Portmore Loch, day session, 25 August

Plague of locusts, plague of frogs, what were the other ones? No mention of a plague of sticklebacks, was there? That's what is up at Portmore just now. It's worth a visit to get involved with the phenomenon, if you haven't experienced it. There must be 10^8 of the little critters, and they are right across the entire surface of the loch. "Takes a mess of them to fill a skillet!" (Sylvester).

No one seems to be quite sure what the effect on the trout has been. Have they been filled to the point of becoming stuffed? Have they become confused to the point of going off the feed (sticklebacks are spiny and tend to run away, after all)? Whatever, the trout have been very difficult to interest. But, there's a challenge there to anyone who is up for it. There was certainly a number of fish

that were on top and visibly worrying the 'backs whenever it was flat and dull. (It seems that the sticklebacks only gather on top when it is flat and dull). However, to get a trout to engage you, it seems that you have to drop a fly, of sufficient allure, almost into its mouth when it appears, or else you just don't get a look. This was working to an extent while it was dull, but the second half of the day was bright and it was all a waste of time, as both 'backs and troots disappeared to the depths.

What constitutes sufficient allure? Well, any kind of stickleback imitation was useless and the only success we had was with either a dry fly (including the half hog), left static, or a pearl blob, stripped away fast.

However, there were other ways to get a fish or two. John W R fished a tiny (size 14) white booby on the Hi-D (pulling) to take 2 big fish (4lb 10 oz and 3 lb 10 oz) early on. Stu B had tried everything except a booby on a DI-7, when, for the last hour, he tried an orange booby on a DI-7 and took 4 fish on it, out in the middle of the water. Could be there's a load out there, lying deep?

So that was it. Strange day -- one rod had 4, one rod had 3, one rod had 2 and 13 rods were blank.

Lake of Menteith, day session, 31 August

Not ideal conditions, with a gusty, swinging wind and bright overhead for the best part of the day. There were odd lulls and odd dull spells along the way, however, and the club put together an impressive catch in the circumstances, averaging exactly 4 fish per rod.

Asking around the successful anglers, just about every line in the kit got a mention, though there were more Hi-Ds than floaters in the mix. It was probably a case of slow sinker when dull, fast sinker when bright. Just about every colour, size and style of fly got mentioned as well. No magic flies needed! And fish were taken from all over the water as well. The early action was at International bay and along the road shore, if you had the stomach for the combat zone fishing that ensued, as something like two thirds of the fleet started off there.

Tommy S instead went up to the plantation and took advantage of the calmer conditions that prevailed early. He had sport on dry fly, taking 4 of his 6 fish bag on the half hog (the others being on boobies after it went too windy for dries).

Elsewhere, pulling prevailed. Best total was 8 plus one returned to Jimmy M, taken on a hot head damsel and a hi-tec Texas rose muddler. Alan M had 6 in the same boat on a variety of flies including the blob and a cormorant variant. Alan D and Trevor G had a hefty total as well, taking 8 and 6 respectively on assorted tadpoles, including Alan's cat's whisker variant. Alan's 8 fish weighed in at a mighty 21 lb 12 oz.

Elsewhere, Steve G and Dougie S discovered that the roly-poly retrieve was required to get them takes, and they went on to take 10 between them, Dougie's mini minkie being their top killer.

The Club's total for 16 rods was 64 fish for 174 lb 8 oz.

Loch Leven, day session, 8 September

Not to be outdone by summer being one of the wettest on record, autumn seems to have started out in similar vein. We had the leftovers of a night of thunder and lightning at the start, accompanied by a stiff north easterly. And those were the better conditions. Later, the cloud gave way to bright sunshine, which really killed off our chances of sport.

Not surprisingly, the few fish we had were caught mostly early in the day. Alan H and Trevor G had 3 between them, to boobies and DI-7 at the sluices. John M had one at the west point to a Dunkeld and DI-3, while Tommy S had a brownie nymphing up the north. Stu B had a good brownie to DI-7 and black cat, notably later in the day when it was all but a lost cause.

Top rod by a country mile was Alan M, who fished in the north to take 3 good 'bows to fast glass and DI-5 on a black muddler and a butchery-Dunkeldy minilure.

The club's 15 rods weighed in 9 fish for 18 lb 3 oz.

Portmore Loch, day session, 28 September

A cool, but otherwise perfect day for a bit of autumnal fishing. Thankfully the stickleback hordes had fragmented into small pockets and the fish seemed to be over their fascination with them. Most of our boats concentrated on fishing the top end, where there were chances to be had with dry flies, but not a lot else, despite some lovely big buzzer pupes being found in the stomach contents. A hatch of olives in the afternoon got a few fish on the pop, but they were no mugs.

Some of us struggled, going smaller and finer and still fresh-airing and jaggging the few chances we got. And just to get a chance, it had to be a cover. Nothing was coming out the blue. Meanwhile, Jimmy M was doing by far the best, taking 9 fish to a set of size 10s. They *were* nearly all out-the blue shots, but Jimmy found he had to fish fluoro. When he went onto double-strength, the chances stopped, and that was despite there being a ripple and good overhead cover. Jimmy's successful flies were a pair of CDC/stimulator/hopper hybrids in black and red, and a ginger hopper.

Next after Jimmy was Steve G with 6, and these were taken to small Shipmans fished on co-polymer. Many of the fish taken on dries were superb residents that had been in since early season and they went like stink.

Meanwhile, down the other end, Stu B had found a different group of fish that responded to pulling tactics, and he made the most of them. Many flies worked, on his slime line set-up, but the stand out one was a black blob.

The club's 17 rods weighed in 37 fish for 80 lb 10 oz, with 18 more returned.

Lake of Menteith, day session, 12 October

Having rained all day Friday beforehand, hopes were high that the band of rain would clear away by Saturday. Alas, it rained all day Saturday as well. Having stayed overnight in Callander, the Forth was a sight, driving back on Sunday morning -- very near the point of bursting its banks. Never mind, the brownies will be getting an early chance to get up the spawning burns. The other feature of the Met Office forecasts was the strong to gale force winds predicted for Saturday. Aye, right! We had a corduroy ripple all day, verging on flat calm at times (thankfully!).

Last outing of the season times, and the Lake was setting a bit of a test. There was clearly a good head of fish, but few easy stockies to be had. Furthermore, the fish were divided into groups behaving differently in different areas. What was doing for one group was not doing for another. Top areas were Lochend, Heronry, Dog Isle and International Bay. Stu B (7) and Fraser G (4) found fish in the Heronry responsive to snatchers and hare's ear palmer, fast figure-of-eighted on the slime line. Stuart C took 4 on wee wets including this red palmer, again on slime line. Stuart's bag included the day's best (and probably the season's best from Menteith) at 3 lb 12 oz. He reported loads of good residents rising in the area he fished: around Dog Isle/Malling Shore.

Jimmy M (7) and Capn F (4) employed intermediate and ghost tip with all manner of washing line combos... booby on the bob, booby on the tail, boobies on bob and tail... generally with the idea of keeping the flies high in the water while fishing slow. Our fish came from Lochend and international Bay, with Jimmy's wee black tadpole on the tail being top killer.

Late on, the rain eased a bit and a hatch of black buzzers got a good rise going and there was a chance with dries. A wee dark F-fly produced some chances and in fact John M took 2 of his 3 fish on dries.

Congratulations go to Jimmy M on winning the Marr Bowl for the second year running. Like last year, it required his very last fish to do it!

The Club's total for 9 boats was 37 fish for 93 lb 8 oz.

2003

Sunday, 23rd March

Lindores Loch, Day Session

What an unbelievable day to kick off our season -- yet again! Middle of March and we were rolling up our sleeves and slapping on the sun-tan lotion. Lindores had been open all winter (except when it was frozen), so we were expecting good sport with residents on nymphing tactics. Whether the flat calm and bright sun made that a bit difficult, we're not sure, but there were not many on the feed, despite a decent hatch of buzzers throughout the day.

Nevertheless, many stockies fell to nymphing tactics, while many more fell to pulling with slime lines.

Trevor started off catching with his Cat-Balou, then went onto buzzers in the afternoon, taking 5 plus 11 returned. Lenny went the other way round, catching 5 plus 7 returned on a bloodworm imitation (albeit a bloody big bloodworm!) in the morning, before getting them on lures in the afternoon.

Jimmy M returned his bag of 15, taken mostly to a Dunkeld and a damsel on the slime line. Alan H, fishing with Trevor, came into his own in the afternoon, boating a total of 11. Alan mostly fished a long line downwind and slowly figure-of-eighted his buzzers back. Alan M and I wasted our time up the far end for the first couple of hours, before coming back to where all the action was -- all over the near end. We couldn't get going with pulling stuff at all, but ended up getting our sport swinging buzzers when a slight breeze got up. The buzzer-tad caught a few.

Dougie S was another who did much better with nymphs than pulling. John R and Allan E had a good boat, with 10 weighed and 17 returned. Allan submitted his much-chewed buzzer for the camera, and it was noticeable when it was put alongside the other 2 Alans' successful flies that there was very little difference between them.

The Club's 14 rods weighed in 58 fish for 111 lb and returned a further 61.

Saturday, 12th April

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

Another glorious day, and we are starting to wonder if this might just be a year of good weather. On the other hand, it will likely go pear-shaped in May and June, as it usually does! The only problem from the fishing perspective was the almost

unbroken sunshine. It didn't stop fish from getting caught downstairs, but it put to total waste, a fantastic hatch of buzzers. The sand martins hadn't arrived yet either, so there were thousands of them going uneaten -- the Lake fish never seem to get going on the pupes, only the emergers and they wouldn't poke their noses up for them in the bright conditions. Jimmy M and Stu B took one or two wintered fish by trying here there and everywhere. Jimmy had one on his flashback Cove PTN.

So, it was a case of going after stockies, and there were 4 main groups that our rods found. Early on the fish in international bay obliged, but as they took a bit of pressure, boats peeled off to Kate's Brae and found fresh sport there. Needless to say the fish at Kate's took a bit as well, and the last area to get tapped into was in front of the hotel. The hotel fish must like a long lie -- many boats started there in the morning and did nothing, but the boats that returned there late in the afternoon had plenty sport. The fourth area was around the burnmouth in Gateside bay.

Most of our bags were taken on black minilures and black tadpoles, although Trevor G and Alan H reported taking their hotel bay fish mostly on white. Lines, didn't matter too much, as Derek K caught with DI-3, Tommy S and Bob N with UFS. Mike P and I had them on Hi-D and later, when we sensed they were higher in the water, slime line and even ghost tip. In addition to those caught while doing standard retrieves, we found takes coming at all manner of odd moments: dropping in, during a pause in retrieve, while reeling in, flies hanging over the side of the boat, etc! Mike did well with Jimmy's black tad, while I found the fish almost exclusively picking out my middle dropper, a wee sparkler type lure based on Ronnie Robb's Kate McLaren booby!

The club's total for 12 rods was 42 fish for 79 lb, with 4 returned.

Sunday, 20th April

Lindores Loch, Day Session

We got away with the nasty weather that was forecast, although it was a bit brighter than ideal and the easterly breeze was a bit stoory and veering at times. The water clarity was superb, and everything added up to a day of nymph fishing. Early fish were found by the spread of boats over the harbour end, although they went off after an hour or so, and the boats started to spread. From then on, the majority of the fish came from a line from the top of the road shore, all the way down the bays on the right, to the bird hide round from the big house.

As usual, when it is a case of nymphing, catches fluctuated from blanks to bumper bags, depending on whether you got tuned into how the fish wanted the fly presented to them. The overall impression was that the fish were lying quite deep, possibly as a result of the daphnia being driven deep by the sun -- that was pretty much all that showed in spoonings, in addition to small buzzers. The trout

were, on average, much more residential than on our March outing, and many nice fish were taken.

There were 3 stand-out catches, all well into double-figures. Jimmy M got most of his fish on his melanistic flashback Cove PTN. The majority were taken with it on the middle of a long flouro leader with a bit of weight in the tail fly. Trevor G got most of his to epoxy buzzer patterns, including this red-arsed one, fished by putting a long cast straight down the wind, dropping in deep, and then slow-figure-of-eighting back his team on flouro. Derek K took top bag fishing Diawl Bachs on the swing.

Elsewhere, Alan M returned a dozen fish, taken on the same buzzers that worked a month ago, and John W took 10 more to buzzers on the swing. There were catches of 7s, 8s and 9s for Steve G, Mike P, Dougie S and Stu B, taken on buzzers, Diawl Bachs, including holos and JCs, and hare's ears.

The club's total for 20 rods was 59 fish for 116 lb, with 76 returned, a commendable average of over 6 fish per rod.

Sunday, 27th April

Linlithgow Loch, Day Session

Cap'n F away trouting up the Tay and Tummel, so Alan M reports:

After the glorious weather of the last few weeks and the first outings, we got some real Chew and Blagdon weather - sun and wind, with a bit of rain thrown in for good measure! Actually, when we arrived, things were looking pretty good with a steady-ish westerly.

The early conditions, combined with excellent water clarity - caused by the recent daphnia bloom - gave great hope that good sport would be had to nymphs and buzzers.

We also had to contend with the 2003 rule changes, which meant that boats could no longer be beached in front of the car park. The fishery did though provide a trolley, which was of help to transport the electric outboards, batteries, seats, *etc* that we all seem to need these days.

Trevor and Alan H had some early sport to buzzers, fished off the deep hole at the palace bank, and ended up with twelve to their boat. Ian Mac and Richard G stayed up at the head of the wind at the east end all day, picking up fish steadily on jungle cock Diawl Bach and Richard's red/claret buzzer pupa.

Tommy S and Bob N picked up nine quite late on, anchored off the palace bank on buzzers -- Tommy's red bloodworm being their standout fly, taking five of his six fish.

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The acting secretary and the rapporteur for the day shared a boat and were toiling (it must have been the shared responsibility deputising for Colin) for most of the day. We hit a purple patch with twenty minutes to go, however, netting a further six and losing a few before being counted out by the gun.

Successful flies were black epoxy buzzer, bloodworm and Jimmy M's flashback Cove PTN.

The club's 15 rods weighed in a total of 36 fish for 83 lb, with a further 5 returned.

Sunday, 4th May

Carron Valley Reservoir, Day Session

Recent years have seen our Carron outings blighted by conditions you would not choose for wild brownie fishing: cold east winds plus bright sunshine, or flat calm plus bright sunshine. As you will see from Alan M's shot above, we had something more like the kind of weather normally associated with catching brownies. However, it didn't come cheap. It was very wet. The wind was also off the most awkward direction for Carron: south. The feeling among a lot of our rods was that it had been a struggle, given the conditions. However, as is always the case, some rods did well.

There was a good hatch of scrotty wee buzzers, plus some decent sized ones, and the odd dun. Dry fly was an option, even in the rain, and Tommy S had half his bag on dries, most notably a wee black bits. Tommy's own half hog pattern caught a couple for Cap'n F. Tommy's other fish fell to black lures on UFS and were taken in Burnhouse and on the west shore of Binns bay.

Alan M and Jimmy M had best boat, returning 17 takeable fish between them. Most fell to pulling tactics on intermediate lines, their best patterns being a clan chief and a mini-shuggy. Their fish came from the far end of the road shore and Carron bay.

Stu B and Cap'n F caught fish on a Dunkeld variant and black tads on fast glass and Hi-D, again in the usual sort of places: Carron Bay and Burnhouse frontage.

No sightings of ospreys, cuckoos, or red kites to report. There was however an early sighting, from afar, of a pair of Wayners. Their boating skills scored nil points from all who witnessed their display.

The club's return for 12 rods was 21 fish for 16 lb 9 oz, with 30 returned.

Saturday, 10th May

Lindores Loch, Evening Session

Poorest fishing conditions of the season so far this one, with a strong blustery west wind, bright at times, and cold when the sun went in. Given this, it might have been a better bet than the usual buzzer fishing to go with pulling tactics. And yet, that just didn't seem to work. Perhaps it wasn't so surprising, given that the water clarity is currently superb, and the residents are now feeding well.

I took a shot of the stomach contents from a couple of fish when gutting them. The full image (28 inches wide at 72 dpi) made for interesting viewing, but unfortunately at 1 MB it was just too big to put up on the site. Here's a chopped down version.

In there (see below), there are buzzers: big black ones and smaller green ones... in all stages, bloodworm, pupae, emergers, shucks and adults. There are nematodes and a leech and water mites (still alive when I gutted the fish next morning!). There is assorted vegetation, including their favourite grass shoots and some *Elodea*. There are also *Dixidae* (meniscus midges).

With the fish feeding, nymphing was the best bet in the early part of the evening. The bays on the downwind (road) shore, were where the fish were, although the strong wind made getting a steady anchorage near impossible at times. Tommy S had the evening's top catch to red buzzer patterns, and Dick L fishing with him, showed you are never too old to change to modern tactics as he took his first three fish ever on buzzers.

Mike P also did well in the same area, taking fish on the flashback melanistic cove PTN and Diawl Bach.

Some big stockie brownies showed up, although with a 20 quid "fine" for chapping one, they were all returned! They were good looking fish, in the 3 lb to 6 lb class.

Almost unbelievably, given the conditions, there was a cracking late evening rise (albeit localised), and a switch to the dries saved the bacon for Cap'n F and Ron McC, with fish taken on the half hog and a size 14 Adams hopper. Bert B was another who scored with dries, catching on an elk hair sedge. The best of the rise took place up the far end, just outside the "hidden" bay, and every rainbow we took there was a full-finned resident (sorry, no time to stop for a photo!).

The Club's total for 24 rods was 46 fish for 94 lb with 26 returned.

Monday, 19th May

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

Not a bad day for fishing... mostly cloudy, with scattered showers and bright intervals and a mild, moderate south westerly. There was plenty fly life too, with claret duns, mayfly and a gazillion tiny buzzers. It was extremely disappointing then, that there were very very few rising fish to be seen all day. Perhaps the water clarity contributed, as it had obviously taken a nose-dive after all the recent heavy rain, but whatever -- dry fly was a waste of time.

So it was down to pulling and nymphing to put some fish in the net. Most folk had the bulk of their sport in the morning, with the afternoon being much slower, although one or two rods had a late burst.

Jimmy M and Stu B found willing participants along the road shore and at Kate's brae a.m., catching to Texas rose muddler and black cat on intermediate lines. Later in the day they found the fish had gone deeper and switched to DI-3, taking more fish at the pink buoy (the one that isn't there any more!)

Mike P and Alan M took their fish mostly early on in International bay, on intermediates. Their best patterns were the Kate lure, claret dabbler, Dunkeld and black tad. Claret dabbler and Kate lure also got fish for Ian Mac and I, along with a standard mini cat. We were on slime lines in International bay and from Sam's point to Hotel bay.

Hotel bay proved to be a good area for JSB and Tommy, and after some early fish pulling, they switched to fishing buzzers on intermediates, such as this Blakeston's, giving them a slow, twitchy retrieve mixed up with figure-of-eighting. Buzzers also saved the day for Alan H, who took 3 in the last hour to this pattern, down at Lochend.

The Club's total for 16 rods was 36 fish for 69 lb 8 oz, with 28 more returned.

Saturday, 31st May

Loch Leven, Day Session

Prior to our first visit of the season to Leven, we had heard tales that it was fishing absolutely terrible. Then with a week to go, the word was it was fishing its head off! Checking up with the locals it did seem to be the case that big big catches were coming off all over the place. Needless to say, all it needs is for the Heriot's boys to turn up to put a stop to all that sort of thing. Word was that smallish flies on DI-3 to DI-5 were doing the biz, anywhere from the sluices, hole i' the inch, black wood, north shore and the mid and elbow buoy areas.

It was a good looking day, maybe not for the usual pulling tactics, with warm, misty, almost flat calm conditions at the start, giving way to a light south easterly and real shirt sleeve weather later on.

One look over the pier wall revealed the reason for the recent improvement -- the water was gin clear! There were buzzers coming off as well, and a first stop at the west point had us thinking that we were on the wrong tactics -- pulling on fast sinkers -- as there was the odd rising fish and only a single follow came to the pulling stuff. The second rods went up and we went for nymphing set-ups on floating lines. A move to the east point saw the first fish, a rainbow, come to the static nymph approach, as it took a black spanflex buzzer on the tail. Spooning it revealed buzzers and corixa.

One more rainbow followed, before we tried a move to the sluices. That proved pivotal, and we added 10 more rainbows, all to the static nymph. The takes were all subtle visuals and you had to be on red alert if you were to convert them. Great stuff! The fish were undoubtedly lying deep -- probably being driven down as it got brighter. We found that early on an 18 foot set-up on double strength was OK, but that dried up, and we only got moving again with a change to 22 foot of flouro.

Most of our fish came to buzzers on the tail position, with the black spanflex being the stand out pattern, though Jimmy M's melanistic Cove flashback was worth a couple on the dropper.

Back at the weigh-in, Dougie S and Stu B reported seeing a good rise at the north shore, though their most successful method was pulling a black cat on a DI-3. Forbes M, also fishing at the north shore, took 3 to a goldhead mini ace of spades on a WetCel II. Tommy S cashed on on those deep lying fish by taking 3 to a yellow booby.

The Club's total for 13 rods was 20 fish for 32 lb with 11 others returned.

Friday, 6th June

Portmore Loch, Evening Session

Having had nearly 2 weeks of calm, balmy weather and plenty of cloud, it just wouldn't have been right if it had held for our evening do at Portmore... and sure enough it didn't. A stiff south westerly -- that one that comes straight down the valley -- and straight down the water -- was coupled with a clear sky. And the fishing, not surprisingly, was a struggle. There wasn't much fly around, which didn't help, though late on, in the shelter of The Laird's bay, there was the odd buzzer, and even a few Caenis.

Early doors, the one boat to get into action was Adrian C and his guest Donald, who, not having a motor, stuck to anchoring on the home shore (while most others

went for shelter up the top -- and not much sport!). Donald had a bag of 5 plus 2 returned, nymphing with a goldhead hare's ear on the floater. They did well to get fish with such delicate tactics in such a stiff breeze (so stiff that some of the boats who tried to join them couldn't get a secure anchorage and had to move away).

Photo taken while waiting for the sun to set... and for an evening rise!

For most of our anglers, the catches read like a text-book definition of "scratching around". Stewart B... one on a dry, 2 on a Viva; Dougie S... one on a dry, one on a booby; Ron McC... one on a buzzer, one on a dry. And so it went on. Del K and I had 5 between us: one on a Diawl Bach (which also scored for Tommy S), 2 on weighted damselfly, one on a black hopper fished wet, and one on a dry half hog (photo below -- sorry about the poor quality, but the light was just about goosed!).

Del boy with a cracking resident, taken on dry fly

Star performer among club members was Steve-O, who caught 7, all to dry Shipmans', some static from covered rises, some figure-of-eighted blind. Steve's later fish came from a fantastic late rise that took place locally (so locally that most of us knew nothing about it until after we came off the water) in the area off the old car park shore. They were tricky residents -- some rods got in among them and didn't catch any -- which underlines Steve's achievement.

The club's total for 24 rods was 33 fish for 77 lb plus 4 returned.

Sunday, 15th June

Frandy, Day Session

Not quite the 5 mph winds the Met office forecast, but a stiffish westerly that blew for the whole day. The bit they got right was that it would be a mixture of cloud and bright spells. It was more sun than cloud, although thankfully the sun didn't put the fish off rising to dry fly.

That was just as well, because they didn't seem to be interested in much else, as very near 100% of our catch was taken on dries. Spoonings revealed very little... of anything. A small amount of *Daphnia*, and that was it. It was noticeable that there was very little fly on the water all day, but the fish must naturally look up for their food, as they responded so well to dries.

Best area was the same as 2002 and 2001, namely the road shore from the car park to the dam, and along the dam. Alan M and Greg M fished this area, taking fish to assorted black and claret hoppers, including Alan's good-looking black half hog/hopper hybrid. Tommy S and Ken MacL also fished the area, and their stand-out pattern was a heather fly (even though the first heather flies are a month away!)

Yet another boat to fish the south shore/dam area was myself and Ian Mac's eldest, Callum. Our fish came to half hog, black hopper and Adams hopper.

Although there were very few risers all day, early doors the fish were taking a static dry out the blue, no bother. About mid-day this changed, however, and p.m. they were very hard to interest until Alan started having success figure-of-eighting the dries. A switch to this method got things moving again for us, although in the last hour they came back on to static presentation.

Several of our boats headed up the water, and they found fish as well. Ian Mac and No. 2 son Gavin spent the whole day doing 2 huge drifts from top to bottom, and they scored with a black hopper variant, though they kind of spoiled the dry fly theme by taking a couple on the dreaded blob!

Stu B and Richard G fished the top end, taking fish to black and claret CDCs. Meanwhile, Jimmy M and Dougie S concentrated on the middle section, north shore, taking fish to black/red combo flies, such as Jimmy's CDC and Dougie's Shipman's.

The Club's total for 16 rods was 37 fish for 51 lb, with a further 39 returned.

Sunday, 22nd June

Linlithgow Loch

A superb day conditions-wise, but a bit of a struggle for the majority of our club members. Having said that, there was another club out and they got tuned in to a big group of fish lying just downwind of The Rickle. They roly-pollied their way to success. As for us, there were only 2 boats who made much out of the day. Gordon G caught five of 7 on a green bodied Fritz booby with a white tail fished on a D18. The other two fell to size ten buzzers. Ian Mac in the same boat took three to buzzers. (They were off to the pub early, so I couldn't blag any flies.)

Trevor G 'tached everyone around him, taking 7 plus one returned, mostly to his brown buzzer and his black/red/black.

Dougie S had nothing to show for a lot of hard effort until very late in the day, when he tapped into The Rickle group to take 4 on a buzzer. Dougie G had fish of the day at 5 lb 2 oz, plus another: one on buzzer and one on booby.

The Club's total for 18 rods at the 6 p.m. weigh-in was 29 fish for 71 lb 4 oz plus 5 returned.

After hours, only 3 of us fished on. We had sport in a flat calm to dry fly, notably a claret Shipman's, although nothing really got going in the way of an evening rise.

Wednesday, 25th June

Loch Leven, Evening Session

A cloudless sky and a fresh easterly sea breeze? Heriot's must be at Loch Leven! Oh well, nothing else for it but to head up to Hole i' the Inch/sluices direction, which as things panned out was an OK place to be... and it was a cracking evening to be out. The water was still of a very good clarity, if a little more coloured than on our last trip.

Jimmy M and Dougie S fished the sluices, and after a short spell pulling they realised there were fish on top to be shot at. A turn at the nymphs did nothing, but a switch to dries got them into action straight away and they caught and returned 4 rainbows each. With the breeze dropping back all the while, a moderate *Caenis* hatch came on in that area, and it was claret Shipmans and that most reliable of flies for *Caenis*, a sparkle gnat, that worked for them.

We arrived in the area a bit late in the day, but also picked up one on the sparkle gnat. That gave us 4 to the boat, when added to the 2 John M took on an orange blob and DI-3, and the one that fell to a Kate lure and Hi-D, all at Hole i' the Inch earlier in the evening.

David E was another to put a brace together with a wet/dry changeover, taking 2 rainbows on a goldhead Viva and a black Bob's bits.

There were loads of undersized brownies feeding on the *Caenis*. Derek K returned 4 of them, while Tommy S took their boat's only rainbow, on an epoxy buzzer.

The Club's total for 11 rods was 8 rainbows for 15 lb with a further 8 rainbows and assorted wee brownies returned.

Friday, 4th July

Portmore Loch, Evening Session

Good conditions for once, with light variable breezes and warm enough for shirt sleeve fishing. Unfortunately, the water is getting its familiar algal bloom, which is bound to reduce visibility for the fish in the upper layers.

There were fish rising at the dam, which we took to be fresh stockies sporting, but which turned out to be residents feeding on black terrestrials. Meanwhile, up at the Laird's bay, olives were hatching and Dougie S got into them on dries, taking 3 on a comparadun. David E fished dries all night and took as many as anyone (5): 4 being on this well-teased-out claret bits.

Back down at the dam, it was a mixture of nymphing and dries that caught: Ian Mac had 1 on a Cove PTN early, then 2 on dries later. Trevor had 3 'taching it. Eric S had 2 on a daddy. Our boat had 3 to washing line with a micro damsel booby buoying up a candy-stripe snatcher and holo-Diawl, then 2 later to black Shipmans. Stewart B went the same way, taking 1 on the washing line then 2 on black Shipmans. One of Stewart's fish was a wild-bred rainbow of 11 oz. John M, in the same boat, took 2 to dries.

Alan D had fish of the night at 4 lb 3 oz on a Diawl Bach variant. But it wasn't all nymphs and dries. JWR had a brace to Kate McLaren and a silver muddler, while Douglas D took 3 to an Alexandra and black pennell. When was the last time you had an Alexandra on your cast?

It was extremely frustrating to be called off the water by the management at 10.30, as there was good daylight and the evening rise was just getting started!

The club's total for 22 rods was 42 fish for 85 lb 12 oz.

Sunday, 13th July

Loch Leven, Evening Session

Although conditions during the day were appalling (cloudless sky and scorchio), the evening settled down quite nicely. Some cloud came in from the west to catch the dropping sun (though as soon as we were out on the water, the westerly was replaced by a 180 degree turn-round to an easterly sea breeze!). The water was still clear and there was a fair bit of fly about. Things looked pretty good, although there was a disappointing number of boats out to try to take advantage of it all.

First of our boats to get into action was Alan M and Stu B, who fished at Kelson Strip. Some early offers pulling were shelved in favour of getting onto dries, and Alan took a thumper of a brownie, estimated at over 4 lb (the fish was returned alive), to a Shipman's buzzer.

By mid evening, most of our rods had gone onto dries (in our case it was after drawing a complete blank with both pulling and nymphing), as the wind dropped to an oily calm. That got a semi-serious *Caenis* hatch on the go, but it brought about a completely different response from the fish, depending on your exact whereabouts. Jimmy M and JSB fished at Dunlop bay and the fish there were in *Caenis* mode, making them typically difficult to distract with artificial offerings.

Less than half a mile west, John W and I fished at the south deeps buoy, and although we had the *Caenis*, the fish were ignoring them, making them much easier to tempt with our dries. Black Shipman's, ginger Shipman's, claret half-hog and orange raider were top patterns, with claret F-fly and ginger hopper all taking fish. A further discontinuity we found was that west of the buoy it was all just 8-

inch brownies and we had to go back upwind to the east side of the buoy to get into better sized fish. The move paid off when John's last fish tipped the scales at 3 lb 12 oz.

Elsewhere, John G took a good brownie to a big, skated deerhair sedge. Eric B took 2 good rainbows to Dunkelds, fished on intermediate over the south deeps. Also fishing wets, John M took a bag of 3 for over 6 lb on Kate McLaren, and bloody and kingfisher butchers. John was fishing an intermediate from the west point to the south deeps.

The club's total for 12 rods was 8 rainbows for 17 lb, 3 browns for 4 lb 3 oz, plus 8 sizeable fish and many small brownies returned.

Sunday, 27th July

Loch Leven, Evening Session

Looked like being another bright and breezy evening, but no sooner were we on the water, but a lovely big bank of cloud came over and gave us cracking conditions for the best part of the night. From fairly early-on, we reckoned you wanted to be fishing the south-westerly to come on to St. Serf's midway between the west point and Dunlop bay. That's where the armada assembled, and there was a fair bit of sponging went on in that area through the middle of the evening, with the fish well up in the column and chasing bright stuff.

Later, a change to dry fly proved a good move, as the light started to fade and the fish went a bit tricky, but that got knocked on the head as the previously dropping wind picked back up and went cold. And so it all kind of fizzled out around back of 10.

Most of our boats fished the south deeps to Dunlop bay area, although Jimmy M and Alan M stayed back at Kelson and Scart, taking a couple each to dries, such as stimulator, claret Klinkhammer and ginger Shipman.

The rest of our crew concentrated on the St. Serf's area. Bob Norris had 3 for 5 lb on a black and green minky. Sadly the fly was lost, so no photo available! Bob's boat partner, JW Robertson had a 3 lb rainbow on a green tag stick. Tommy S and Steve G had sport to blobs, silver Invicta muddler and orange booby. Fraser G likewise scored with sunburst blob and gold sparkler. In our boat it was the Kate lure and Gold-headed Dunkeld early on, and a dry half-hog later, which did the trick.

The club's total for 12 rods was 15 fish for 30 lb 6 oz, with 4 returned.

Saturday, 2nd August

Butterstone Loch, Day Session

Cooler than of late, with a fresh westerly, but nice overhead conditions for most of the day. The water was in fine fettle, with the surface littered in buzzers shucks, with various odd terrestrials, even the odd heather fly putting in an appearance. There were signs also of occasional fish chasing *Caenis* nymphs high in the water.

Top spot to be from the start was the east shore, on the edge of the deep water. Dougie S and Tommy got into just the right spot. Dougie got tuned in on a washing line rig, on slow glass, with a 12 second count down -- although the fish were only interested in the booby he put on to buoy up the rig. Dougie tied up the nameless creation on a whim and it worked a treat. I think Santa's beard will do as a moniker.

Tommy was slower to get into action, but he made up for numbers with size. His second fish of the day was a season's best for the water, and in all probability a Club record. On seeing buzzer shucks in the stomach contents of the fish they were catching, he put on a fly he does well with, the tail of which he reckons resembles a shuck. Called a shuck muddler, he fished it on a Cortland camo line and lured the lunker, which went 13 lb 12 oz.

Fishing in the same area as Dougie and Tommy, Dougie G and I caught fish on a variety of methods and flies, including a wee goldhead black tadpole on the slow glass and boobies on the UFS, but the most successful was swinging nymphs on the floater (flashback Diawl Bach, melanistic flashback Cove).

Those who fished other areas of the loch found it a bit more of a struggle. Dry fly proved as successful as anything. JSB took 2 on dries, and Trevor and Al had 3 between them on buzzers. Later in the day, Tommy got into a group of fish in the top bay, completing his bag on boobies.

The Club's total for 10 rods was 28 fish for 77 lb 14 oz.

Tuesday, 12th August

Loch Leven, Evening Session

Ah-ha! An evening of 100% ceiling at last! I am fast discovering that the light that is perfect for fishermen is no use to photographers. Fishermen love a flat, grey light with little contrast. The only thing that's good for for photographers is macro shots. I sneaked in the shot above when there was a brief glimpse of sun for 2 minutes at the start of our first drift, and the rest of the shots went in the bin (save the one below). How mixed up does that make me? I'm looking for perfect

fishing conditions, and when I get them I'm complaining that I can't get a decent photo!

We heard the water had coloured up, and it was undoubtedly moreso than on previous trips, but was still reasonably fishable. We also had the ubiquitous easterly breeze that gets drawn in when there are no isobars to speak of.

With these conditions, we expected sport from the start, and so it proved. For many, however, that sport proved to be restricted to undersized brownies. Alan E and I set up to fish the same area that has been the mainstay for outing after outing this year: west point to south deeps. A good rainbow on our first drift to a size 12 minilure on slow glass, plus missed chances, gave us confidence. As things progressed, we switched to dries, but we only took (and missed and missed) small brownie after small brownie. We did, however, see the 2 biggest fish we have ever seen in the loch. The smaller of these, we put at about 12 lb (seriously). It rose within casting distance of me, but having seen it, my casting arm turned to jelly, and my attempt at a cover was a tragedy.

Meanwhile, Dougie S and Bob N fished further up at the sluices and reported there being large rainbows up there, Dougie being broken twice, before landing 3 brownies (all returned) on red Klinkhammer and heather fly. Stu B fished the west point area, taking 2 plus 3 returned, to DI-3 and wee doubles. Ian C and John F had a rainbow apiece in the same area, while Tommy S returned 3 brownies, taken mostly on dries.

Our one boat to buck the trend of the St Serf's/south deeps area, Jimmy M and Derek K, fished Carden Bay. Their gamble paid off, as Jimmy landed and returned 7 takeable (ca 12 oz to 1 lb odds) browns on a Cortland intermediate and wee wets: Wickham muddler, and black and gold spider (Alec Reid, where are you now?). Derek fished dries, taking 2 rainbows and returning a decent brownie, mostly to a half-hoggish emerger pattern.

The club's total for 16 rods was 7 fish for 12 lb 3 oz with 20 takeable fish returned.

Sunday, 17th August

The Ballo, Day Session

What can one say? An absolutely perfect day for fishing. Calm and overcast to start, with a gradually strengthening southerly breeze picking up throughout the day -- without it ever getting stiff -- and only the odd blink of sun to add a bit variety and warmth.

It must be said that there was some trepidation with respect to the new management at Ballo. We have been fishing the venue for several years and when we saw the new signs saying "Bait Fishing and Spinning Welcome", we were not sure if it was going to be business as usual for us fly fishers. However, our fears

were unfounded, as the bait fishers did their thing on the banks, and we did ours out in the boats.

Ballo is one water where almost irrespective of what the conditions and recent history are like, we end up doing best with dry fly. So, given that we had overcast conditions, a light wind, and a huge fall of black gnats, it was business as usual. However, while it seemed to be plain sailing for some, there was a bit of working out to do for others. Alan M and I got into a line of fish down the dam shore that were feeding well on the gnats, plus black beetles, and assorted other black terrestrials. These guys proceeded to give us the worst dose of fresh-air shots we have had for a long time. Over the piece, we caught our share, on such as pearly wing black bits, ethafoam beetle and wee dark CDC, but we knew we had not made the most of it.

Jimmy M reported having similar problems with "freshies", until he followed the lead of his boat partner, Ian Mac, and switched to bigger flies, such as red Klinkhammer and heather fly. Ian had been getting into them on black/red and claret hoppers in 10s and 12s. Ian and Jimmy were further over, towards the home shore, and the majority of our boats ended up in that area, where there was a fantastic spell of action in early-mid afternoon that resulted in many double figure catches (most fish were returned). Another interesting variation on the "How to convert chances?" theme came from two individuals in separate boats who found that figure-of-eighting the dries -- and not lifting at all, but letting the fish turn and hook itself -- was required. Stars of the Butterstone web page, Tommy and Dougie S were the protagonists. Tommy took most of his fish on a sedgy emerger pattern.

Other good catches came from Leon J, who was on black hoppers and dry bibio, John M who fished Bob's bits and hoppers, but changed to pulling wets when the breeze got up later on. Ivor also had fish to wee black wets, and John G had fish to size 10 muddlers.

Top boat was Stu B and John W, who between them netted 39 fish on dries (vast majority returned). Their successful flies were hoppers, pearl wing bits, CDCs and heather fly.

The club's total for 18 rods was 57 fish for 58 lb 10 oz, with a staggering 125 more returned. That must be the first time we have broken a 10 fish per rod average!

Sunday, 24th August

Portmore Loch, Day Session

A game of two halves as they keep saying. The morning gave us a misty start and then some nice cloud cover. Just after the boats went out the fish started rising... right where the boats were. A fall of black gnats got them going, although

stomach contents showed more buzzer shucks than anything else. That and sticklebacks.

The 'backs were back all right, and the fish were having a square go at them. As usual, the 'back feeders were not easy to tempt. They would chase a figure-of-eighted dry, but would not commit to it. We found that the best bet was to fish the dries static and get an odd gnat feeder to take out the blue. Our success came to black hopper and dark CDC F-fly.

Unfortunately, there seemed to be no fish at all over the rest of the loch, as all the boats that headed out came back to the dam, having caught nothing. They reported seeing no rises, despite there being plenty fly on the water. Unfortunately, just as they arrived back where the action was, the sun came out, the north easterly breeze got up, the fish went down, and that was it until 4 o'clock. Many different things were tried, including going deep, but nothing worked.

In the last hour, the fish finally got on the fin a bit, and we counted a total of 7 getting landed. Stu B took 2 to boobies (red and orange/white), fast-retrieved just sub-surface. Jimmy M also realised the answer was to come up in the water, and he took 2 on fast glass and green tag stick/hot-head damsel.

John R and Eric B had a brace apiece, but left early, so their successful methods remain a mystery.

The Club's 18 rods recorded a disappointing 16 fish for 54 lb 11oz, plus 2 returned.

Saturday, 30th August

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

A truly idyllic late summer day, this one... so much for the forecasters call of a sharp northerly breeze! It was never more than a zephyr, although unfortunately for the chances of settled fishing conditions, it came from every point on the compass several times over. The early sun even gave way to reasonable cloud cover. The water had a brown tinge to it, but visibility was good. There were odd buzzers hatching and black gnats and shield bugs on the water, but very little inside the spooned fish.

Our boat started at International bay, and we were into fish from the first cast. I was on a fast glass and washing line set up, figure-of-eighting a candy-stripe snatcher, a Diawl Bach and a small black and gold booby on the point. The booby got the lion's share of the action. Stuart C also fished a slime line and his successful flies included this March brown/coch-y-bondhu cross and a buzzer. However, after a couple of hours, someone threw a switch and the fish went off very suddenly. There was still the odd oncer showing, and a change to dry fly proved successful, although it was very much a case of sitting patiently,

waiting for a take out the blue. The oncers were far too widely spread to get in among them and there were very few steady risers to get a bead on. Nevertheless, any fish coming across the flies seemed happy to come up and take them -- very positively! Successful patters were a CDC heather fly, and a fiery brown hopper (to imitate the shield bugs).

The fish were of a good quality, as this one of standard stamp shows. We even had a blue, although the blue colour of the back doesn't show up well in the photo (the silver flanks, do, however!)

Elsewhere on the water, Dougie G also found the washing line set up the most successful method, and also found the booby was the one to take the fish. Dougie fished the heronry and when the fish there put the shutters up on the washing line, he kept the action going by switching to booby and UFS. Ron McC was another to have success with booby, taking a brace to this orange/fritz pattern on Hi-D at the hotel shore. I don't know if Ron realised the hook was opened out really badly. The photo was taken *after* I had a go at shutting it! Leon J took a couple to PTN and hare's ear nymphs up at the plantation.

Richard G fished the hotel shore and the road shore, taking fish early to viva and cat's whisker on medium sink, before switching to dries later. Richard reported a heron flying out from the side to have a go at his fish while he was landing it, not once but twice. We also witnessed this confused bird attempting to have a go at a fish being landed. What did it think it was going to do with a 2 lb rainbow? Maybe it was a young bird that hadn't got things quite worked out, or maybe it has been watching the myriad cormorants and fancied what it has seen. We saw a cormorant with a 2 lb plus fish, which it was clearly having difficulty in swallowing. All in all, it was a day of problems for the bird life. We witnessed an osprey dive and grab a fish that must have been just over the maximum limit for osprey payload. Three attempts to get airborne later, it had to admit defeat and let the fish go.

The club's total for 15 rods was 28 fish for 56 lb 4 oz, plus 3 returned.

Sunday, 7th September

Loch Leven, Day Session

Another nice day to be out. Flat calm at the start, with a steadily rising light to moderate breeze, coming from variably an east, then south, to south westerly direction. A misty start gave way to bright sun for a while, though increasing cloud cover gave good conditions in the afternoon, albeit with a marked drop in temperature.

We had noted the results on the notice board from the previous day's international match. Yet another win for Scotland! (Get it right up yez!) But, the catches were not great... a fish and a bit per man... and that was after the practice days!

I'll cut straight to the chase. At the weigh in at 6:00 p.m., well, there was no weigh-in. Poor Stewart B was wandering around looking for people with fish. We had word that Eric G had landed a fish, but he was away early. Stu B had returned 2 smallish brownies, taken at Kelson (one on a goldie and one on a cormorant, both to DI-7). Incidentally, Stu and Stewart B reported loads of fish showing at Kelson, but they couldn't catch them. Alan H had lost a fish at the back of Castle Island, on a Wetcel II and an orange cat. We had returned 2 smallish brownies ourselves, taken at Old Levenmouth on dry fly, after seeing a bit of late surface activity.

But... there was absolutely nothing for the secy to weigh. A rare event in our annals! A 'phone call the following evening confirmed that Eric G had indeed landed a fish, a rainbow, of a whole 1 lb 2 oz, on a green blob, off the west point, on a Hi-D.

And that was that!

Monday, 15th September

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

A look at the Menteith reports sent out by Quint shows that catches have been averaging around 8 fish per boat recently. Given the 100% ceiling we enjoyed we should have expected to equal that, if not do better. However, a flat calm for the first two thirds of the day meant that no one was covering water and it was very much a question of dropping in on fish in a taking mood. That was by no means easy. The stock method at Menteith these days -- a washing line set-up on a slime line or similar -- was again the best thing to be on. Fish were taken on that early and late, mostly at the pink buoy (that's no longer there -- would someone please return it!) and International bay. Dougie S was one to follow this route, catching on his Santa's beard with crunchers and slow glass. Steve-O, fishing with Dougie similarly caught on booby and Diawl Bach.

Our best boat by a long way was Tommy S and Alan M, who stuck to the pink buoy area all day, cashing in on late activity there. Tommy went with 2 snatchers (a black and silver and a kind of soldier palmer variant) and an orange booby, figure-of-eighting them on a Cortland camo, while Alan had fish to all sorts of stuff, including boobies, Diawl Bachs, a black hopper and this claret dabbler, fished on a ghost tip.

For Stu B and I, the lure of a few rising fish was too much to resist, and we thought we should be able to make a bag from what was on the go on top. Alas, it was one of those days when you have to work your socks off, just to get your fly in front of a fish that is up more than once, and then what does it do? It swims straight past your fly! A lot of work went into trying to put this problem right, including changing size, colour, profile, footprint etc of fly. All with little success. The final straw was getting the light conditions just right to see a fish swimming along, check when it saw the fly above, come up for a look, then swim away without

making any mark whatsoever. The conclusion was reached that they were seeing the nylon.

Experiments with flourocarbon and an ethafoam beetle showed that this may well have been the case. Pity flouro is such a problem with dries! Spoonings showed the fish were basically taking whatever they came across, reinforcing our idea that it was the leader, not the fly, that mattered. Anyway, that was our day about shot by the time we had all that sorted out. Fraser G was another who went down the dries track and found much the same problem with the fishes' policy of non-cooperation. Like both of us, he managed a brace for his efforts, both to a claret Shipman's.

The Club's catch for 16 rods was 24 fish for 45 lb 10 oz, plus 12 returned.

Saturday, 27th September

Portmore Loch, Day Session

The forecast showed not an isobar within 100 miles of the country, so it was little surprise to anyone that we were greeted by a stiff, southerly breeze. It was a bit baltic as well! However, we had superb ceiling all day and the breeze gradually dropped throughout the day, giving a nice corduroy ripple by the end. The cool, grey conditions were ideal for an olive hatch and there was a cracking one in the afternoon. The residents got onto the olives, but were a bit tricky-dicky, with many anglers reporting fresh-air shots and refusals, while others had less trouble converting takes.

Early in the day, a few boats fished down the water, and Alan H had success anchored out from the lonesome pine, taking a brace on slime line and a pair of cats: orange and white. Stu B and Alan M also had a brace apiece early to pulling, Stu's to a mini-shuggie and a hare's ear snatcher (left of photo), Al's to claret dabbler. Lenny N was another to take a pair on intermediate, his coming to a Goldie and a shuggie. Tommy S had some early sport on a booby.

The rest of the day was all about dry fly, though some of those who fished up the top end from the start were on dries the entire day. Dougie S had the day's heaviest bag, a 4 fish catch for 16 lb, which included two 6-pound residents. Dougie's fish were taken mostly in the Laird's bay area, on an elk hair emerger. Jimmy and Fraser were on dries all day and Jimmy's 8 fish (all returned) were taken on a pair of size 14 F-flies: bibio and hare's ear. Fraser's fish came to a bibio bits. Tommy S and Alan M both joined in the afternoon olive dun action, Alan taking 4 on this F-fly type imitation.

JSB did a bit switching between dries and washing line, taking 2 on dries and one on the 'line'. His boat partner chipped in with a brace to black hopper, plus one on yet another olive f-fly variation.

The club's total for 23 rods was 29 for 81 lb 8 oz, with 16 returned.

Saturday, 11th October

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

After it blowing a hooly for most of the previous week and a half, it all settled down unbelievably well, just in time for our last official outing. The morning was flat calm with bright sunshine and the layers were peeled off, one by one as temperatures soared (well for mid-October anyway). In such tricky conditions, most folk struggled early on, though Ian Mac had 2 in the first half hour on the washing line in international bay. Jimmy M had a go on Hi-D and boobies, and picked up 3 at the drop-off to deep water at the pink buoy (that isn't there).

By mid-day, the cloud cover was building up though. A look around as the cloud came over showed us that fish were starting to rise, and that was our cue to get the dries on. It was hard going, with almost nothing coming out the blue. That meant you relied on covers, and the majority of fish were only showing once. There was a wee spell of a corduroy ripple and during that 5 minutes you were guaranteed a fish, as the fishes' wariness of flat calm diminished and your own cover for your flies improved.

Then there came an interesting spell when a proper breeze got up for half an hour and pulling seemed the best bet. However, again, nothing came out the blue -- but cover a rise (which were still going) and the fish would lock on and chase. Unfortunately, we both went with slime lines and it was noticeable that as the flies were pulled under, the fish lost interest and broke off their chase. A change to pulling on the floater resulted in our only hook up during the spell (albeit it fell of!).

After that, it went calm again and it was back to covering risers with the dries for the rest of the day.

We managed a total of 5 each on dries, with Jimmy taking his fish mostly to a size 14 Hare's ear shuttlecock (fished as a single). The other fly worth a mention was a size 14 candy stripe shipman, which caught for both of us.

Dries featured heavily among the catches. John M had 5 of 6 on a claret Bob's bits, mostly in the heronry. Dougie S, fishing with John had 4 on Klinkhammer and comparadun emerger.

Trevor G had a bag of 5, mostly to a carrot fly, fished wet/dry in International bay. Stuart C and Stu B had most of their fish to dries, with an odd fish to snatchers, as did Fraser G, Tommy S and Steve-O.

Only boat to buck the trend was Alan M and JSB. After a bit of trying around, they ended up in the hotel bay area watching 2 guys sconing fish big time. After making

enquiries, they went with Diawl Bachs on slime line (and later floater). That did the trick and they took 6 apiece.

The Club's total for 18 rods was 42 fish for 85 lb 1 oz, with 19 returned.

After the fishing, we enjoyed a cracking meal at the Creity Hall Hotel, where the Club's Champion for 2003, Tommy S, was presented with the Marr Bowl. JSB was presented with the Singer Senior Trophy, as the inaugural Seniors' Champion.

Saturday, 25th October

Linlithgow Loch, Day Session

A decent day for the time of year, albeit a bit cool, and a tad bright and breezy at times. The water was strangely coloured in places, though the underlying clarity was good. Spooned residents in our boats were stuffed with *Corixae*.

Ian Mac and younger son Gavin took 8 for 16 lb between them, mostly down at cormorant island, and mostly to orange blobs on the slime line. Ian's elder son, Callum, fishing with guest, Adam C took 3 to yellow boobies and slime lines. Tommy S and Ivor returned 4, mostly taken along the north shore. Trevor and Alan returned 3, taken to buzzer and minky.

Dougie S fished boobies all day, returning a total of 9 fish, taken between a cat/minky style and a yellow & gold. Dougie fished his way along the north shore, from the bridge to the east end, finding that a WetCel I was the best line to fish the flies just above the weed. Fraser and I scratched around, taking a fish here on this and a fish there on that. At the end, when we totalled it up, most our catch had been on Diawl Bach variants: a couple swung on the floater, the rest F-of-8ed or tweaked on the slime line. We convinced ourselves that the DBs were being taken as *Corixae*, even to the point of choosing to fish a pearl-thorax DB and taking a couple on it. (Just indulge us!) Fraser's top variant was his own red holo thorax one.

The Club's 13 rods weighed in 21 fish for 43 lb 7 oz and returned a further 20.

2004

Sunday, 21st March

Lindores Loch, Day Session

We were all thankful that our outing was on Sunday, so we avoided the gales on Saturday, and avoided seeing Scotland getting thumped at rugby... again. Conditions were ideal at the start, and again at the end, with a rather squally breeze somewhat spoiling the middle of the day. Water quality was a *little* on the murky side. The fish were well spread, although a majority of our catch were taken along the home shore area. An extraordinary number of jack pike were caught, and many anglers lost flies to the toothy critters. John W got his thumb chomped to boot!

There were a few buzzers hatching, however those who fished nymphs found it hard going. Slime lines and weighted damsels were the stand-out combination among our better catches. Ian Mac was typical, taking 7 this way. Alan M had the day's top score with 10. Having taken a few to epoxy buzzers early on, Alan switched to slime line with a damsel and cormorant combo in the afternoon and this led to a furious spell of action.

Alan H was another to give up on nymphs after scant reward in the morning. He switched to slime line and technocat in the afternoon to take a total of 7. Best boat was Stu B and Fraser, who had 9 apiece. They stayed on the drift, and again caught with slime line, tin head damsel and cormorant, this time with Vivas in the mix.

The club's new scoring system was put to the test for the first time. This season, only number of fish caught will count. This allows fish caught and released to score the same points as fish weighed-in. All went well, and we hope the system will be a success. We will know by October!

The club's 14 rods landed a total of 71 fish.

Saturday, 10th April

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

A very calm, very overcast day. And with a superb hatch of early season buzzers (the ones we call Scottish blends -- this seems to be a bumper season for them) it looked on for some early season dry fly fishing. However, the number of fish on the go was always a wee bit on the scarce side, making the turning of dreams into reality another matter. The fish that were on the go (mostly way out in the middle) were very hard to tempt with dries and we had to try a few different ideas

with them. Jimmy M eventually sorted them out with a size 14 black Bob's bits, taking 3, plus another one on a dark F-fly. In between spells on the dries, we tried nymphy approaches, and we managed one fish to each of: damsel, black Howwood, Diawl Bach and suspender buzzer.

There were some big fish on the go, and we had 3 over 4 lb in our catches, 2 of them to dries. We had some nice overwintered fish as well, including this one to Alan M (photo by JSB). Jimmy had this pristine wee blue in his catch.

Elsewhere, there was a massive build-up of boat activity over where the pike nets used to be. We counted 16 boats strung out along the shoreline, very close in. We could see the odd fish getting caught, but we decided 16 was enough for one area and we declined to get involved.

Among our own rods, JW Robertson and Dougie G had 5 to boobies -- including coral and yellow/orange -- and fast sink lines in the hotel bay/harbour area. JSB had 2 early on to slime line and a wee Viva in the heronry. Trevor and Tommy seemed to spend the day pike fishing, taking several to 9 pound. Trevor did bag a couple of trout on lures, to slime line; one at the butts and one in Hotel Bay.

The club's total for 12 rods was 21 fish.

Sunday, 25th April

Linlithgow Loch, Day Session

Every year there is a day around late April when we find ourselves out fishing, and the sun is beating down, and it's more or less calm, with the reflection bouncing off the water, back in our faces. And we realise, by and by, that we are getting burned. And yet we have not brought the suntan lotion, nor have we brought the Japanese POW guard's hat. So, we fry. This was that day for this year. Having got it out the way, we remember to pack the necessaries from now on (hopefully).

The loch is in cracking nick, with water clarity more than 10 feet. There were a few big buzzers hatching and loads of beetles falling, although the bright light prevented any surface activity. So, it was down to fishing buzzers deep. The usual 2 schools of approach were in evidence: fishing a static team vertically under a 'tache, or swinging a team on a dead slow figure-of-eight. Both worked on the day. The major conundrum was working out just exactly where one wanted to be placed. Trevor and Alan H stuck to their guns up the west end all day, and took 16 to their boat. Tommy S and JSB gave up on the west end, and moved to the east. They plumped for the perfect position, just west of cormorant island, and they topped Trevor and Alan by one fish.

Tommy and Stewart maybe didn't realise it, but they dropped onto the eastern end of a line of fish that could be traced back westward by a good hundred yards or

so. Anchor on the line, and you were on top of fish. Anchor 30 yards off to one side, and you got not an offer.

It was buzzers, buzzers, buzzers all the way, for the best bags (plus the odd Diawl Bach and Cove PTN). No special colour or size stood out, but with the fish lying deep, long fluoro leaders were mentioned by most successful anglers.

Very few fish were caught on any other method. Bob N had a couple to booby and Gavin Macdonald took one to damsel and slime line. Many of the fish caught were of a good size (3 to 4 lb) and had been in for a good while. The club's total for 16 rods was 72 fish.

Monday, 17th May

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

The day was a real struggle, mostly due to the stiff wind, which blew up into a real hooly by mid-afternoon. There was a smattering of mayfly coming off, plus a few claret duns. Spoonings revealed just a few claret dun nymphs per fish, most of which appeared fairly residential.

All the action was from Kate's Brae, round by the Quarry, Lochend and Jimmy Nairn's, to Tod Hole. Although it didn't seem a day for nymphing, nymphy tactics figured prominently in our catches, such as most of them were. Most successful was a team of black nymph, red holo Diawl Bach and mini-tadpole, figure-of-eighted on a ghost-tip. Kenneth C and Eric S both had a couple to nymphs (Diawl Bachs again) on intermediate line. John M had another to Diawl Bach plus a couple on a PTN, all on the floater.

In the afternoon, the nymphing activity seemed to fall-off, and those pulling with lures on WetCel IIs got a bit more sport, including Dougie S, who took 3 to hairy stuff (including a flubrush), and Alan H, who had a couple at the shooting butts on a red and black lure.

Top rod by a good way was Stu B, who fished all day with a DI-3, taking 9 fish, mostly to tin-head damsel, black cat and a black and silver mini-lure.

The club's total for 12 rods was 32 fish.

Saturday, 8th May

Lindores Loch, Evening Session

A very calm, very overcast (spot the noisy photos) eventually very dreich night. The fish were rising all over, right at the 5 o'clock start. Alan M was straight into the ones up the middle of the loch on dries (claret Shipman). The ones at the harbour end were another kettle of... er, fish altogether. They flatly refused to take a dry. Spoonings of fish caught by other means showed they had been eating nothing but daphnia, so it could be the rises were to daphnia -- they were quite sub-surfacy boils.

Most of our rods found it a struggle. The loch was clearly full of fish and the water itself was in fine fettle. Maybe the calm conditions caused extra problems, on top of the fish being a bit finicky. After taking half a dozen on dries early, Alan M didn't get another fish all night. Cap'n F just didn't get a fish all night. Tommy S did well to take 4, again on claret Shipman, in the bay with the bird hide. Mike P had 2 to Shipmans and one on a shuttlecock. John M had a brace to buzzer and kingfisher butcher of all things. Ivor, Alan H and JSB all had a brace apiece to assorted methods and flies.

Fraser G chased some wary residents in the bay at the far end of the railway shore and was rewarded with one to Diawl Bach and 2 to black Shipmans.

Star of the show was Steve G. He sensibly gave up trying to catch the fish that were rising to daphnia and fished static nymphs on the drift in the harbour/road shore area. That got the fish coming in steadily to a red holo Diawl. After the light breeze dropped to flat calm, Steve switched to a hedged-bet rig of a black Bob's bits and a Diawl Bach, figure-of-eighting them so the dry bits got drawn just through the surface. This proved highly attractive to the rainbows and Steve's total at the end of the night was a superb (given how tricky it was for everyone else) 9 fish.

The club's total for 19 rods was 38 fish.

Saturday, 29th May

Loch Leven, Day Session

Cap'n F on Uist. JSB Reports...

The applications for Leven places have been very poor this season. This was no surprise considering the disappointing returns of last year. The situation was exacerbated by a number of club members fishing in Uist, hopefully with better results than today, and this unfortunately left us with one of the poorest club turnouts of recent years - 7 rods to be precise.

In early morning the weather was sunny and calm which didn't seem to bode well for the day. On arrival at Leven some 2 hours later, thankfully with no hold ups at the Forth Bridge, the weather had changed completely. It was dull, windy and much colder. It was questionable whether or not this was better. The word was that there were lots of fish up at the Sluices and Hole o' the Inch. This information, plus a strong East wind, meant that virtually all the fleet headed up to the far end of the loch. On arrival there we had at least some shelter, but this was cancelled out somewhat by a couple of hours of steady rain. The temperature wasn't too bad and the Sluices produced a few fish, but not for our boats. One of our number headed for the Hole o'the Inch, as did most of the other boats despite the pressure on that area. The weather improved, but not the fishing. Eventually, with a couple of hours to go, a second boat, fishless at the Sluices, joined the throng behind St Serf's.

This proved to be a good move as it produced 5 fish, which was equalled by the boat already there. Boat one succeeded mainly with white lures, while boat two took their belated 5 with buzzers on a DI3. The fish were mainly stockies, with a best of 2lb 4oz. The third boat decided to roam and went as far afield as the North Shore, another tipped area. However, their sole reward was one small rainbow returned.

Some other boats, which had reached Hole o' the Inch early, came in with good baskets of stockies. If one was to be kind, then it could be said that fish were there to be caught, but we are still far from repeating the Leven glory days of the past.

Sunday, 2nd May

Carron Valley Reservoir, Day Session

Cap'n F on his annual trip up the Tay... Alan M reports...

Well, we got our usual Carron weather, didn't we? Er, well no, as it turns out, but as we tackled up in the car park it was looking like it. With not a cloud in the sky, the sun was splitting the stones and there was a cold north westerly wind to add insult to injury: another day's toil on Carron beckoned. Oh, and in similar conditions the day before, only 4 fish had been caught!

However, as we motored out the harbour, the North Westerly started bringing in a bit of cloud cover and by the time we started fishing, conditions were pretty good, bar a bit of a swirly wind. Most of the boats seemed to set out for the head of the wind and the far dam end and Carron bay, although Ken Maclean and myself dropped into Binns Bay, where conditions were pretty good... and a few Scottish blends were hatching. We were into fish straight away, Ken on the intermediate and Kate Maclaren, and myself on the Hi-D, black tadpole and palmered coch. Most of our boats concentrated on Binns, Burnhouse and Carron bays and were rewarded with some decent bags in which stockfish featured prominently.

Ian Mac and son Callum had nine from Binns and Carron bays, JSB and Eric S had seven from Binns and Burnhouse on Leven Spider, Dunkeld and Kate Maclaren and Ken and I had nine from Binns and Carron bays. Jimmy Miller and Stewart Chirnside had twelve to black tadpole and traditional. Tommy Steven (just to be different) had two to dries (black Bob's bits) and reported missing a few more.

What was interesting was that the successful lines used were everything from slow intermediates -- such as the Cortland Blue and Wetcel Kelly Green -- to slime lines, Wet Cell II, DI-3 and Hi-D.

Friday, 4th June

Portmore Loch, Evening Session

Late May/early June evenings are a bit of a hit/miss affair at Portmore. We've had good ones when conditions have been right, but get an open sky that turns baltic as soon as the sun drops and it tends to be hard going. This was one of the latter. The loch had been stocked the previous day, but the stockies seemed not to be widely distributed and did not figure in the catches for most of our rods, who fished away from the dam area.

For most folk, if you were to get a fish it had to be early, before the temp dropped. Stevo and Alan D had a fish apiece in the first half hour, fishing close in to the west shore with nymphy rigs. David E also had an early fish in the same area, to a gold head hare's ear, as did Trevor, to a 'tached-up Diawl Bach. JW Robertson had one to a damsel, and Bob N had a brace (no details).

The evening's only success story was provided by Tommy S, who stayed anchored-up off the lonesome pine most of the evening, taking 4 to buzzers and Okey-dokey (sorry, I don't have one to photograph and my attempts to paint the head of a maggot orange resulted in a messy failure!).

Late on, there were a few oncey risers in the calm of the Laird's Bay, but they were so oncey that covers with dries were a waste of time and the best bet was to set the trap and sit patiently and wait for them to find the fly. "Two did that for our boat, which resulted in one nice resident landed (black Shipman's) and one screamer that led to an inertia break-off.

Our best boat, by some considerable margin, was Stewart Barclay and Dougie Skedd. They went to the head of the wind, to the two bays up beyond the spit near the far end dam. They immediately hit on a large concentration of fish. Fishing gold headed Dunkeld, Clan Chief, Hare's ear palmer and black tadpoles, on DI-3 and Hi-D lines, they took the majority of their 27 fish from this area (although they also picked up late fish in Binns and Burnhouse bays). Stu ended up as the day's top rod with a nineteen. By the time we finished (6 p.m. after a generous 2 hour extension by the new fisheries management) the westerly wind was so fierce that it was becoming a bit unsafe.

Yet another unpredictable day on Carron, but the new management seem to have risen to the challenge and the club enjoyed a pretty successful day.

The Club's total for 16 rods was 16 weighed in for 15 lb 4 oz, plus 59 returned.

Sunday, 13th June

Frandy, Day Session

New management at Frandy, a nice new lodge and new petrol outboards available for hire. Those who took one were thankful for them, as the westerly breeze was on the stiff side. Not the best of days, weather-wise, at least for rainbows. Not a bad day by any means for brownies though, with a mix of overcast and bright spells. Boats that went up the top looking for shelter came back disappointed, as it was rougher up there than down the bottom.

Many of us started on dries, which have become our preferred method for Frandy. It seemed slow going, however, with few fish keen to poke their noses out, and not much in the way of natural fly life to draw them. Some switched to pulling on slime line and DI-3, and one or two fish were taken, to the likes of orange blobs and damsels. However pulling was, if anything, even slower than dries, and we ended up going back to the latter.

Tommy S and Ken Macl spent the entire day drifting the last 100 yards of the south shore to the dam, taking 3 apiece to heather fly and claret hopper. JSB took a brace to hopper and sedgehog, drifting down the middle. My boat partner, George W had a magic spell to large hairy dries over on the north shore, which pointed both Alan M and I in the right direction, albeit with differing tactics. While our successful patterns were fairly similar: Big Vern, sedgehog and stimulator among them, Al pulled his across the top, while I found that movement didn't help and all my fish came to static presentation. Al's bag of 7 was the day's best.

Lenny N is always consistent on Frandy, and he again took a decent bag of 3 to floating line and Dunkeld, doobry and black pennell.

The Club's 15 rods landed 27 fish

Sunday, 20th June

Linlithgow Loch, Day Session

Not bad conditions, but very awkward. The light breeze came and went all day, and every time it came it was from a different direction. It made a nightmare out of getting the boat set up for nymphing. The water is gin-clear, despite all the

swansh*t. One spooned fish revealed some grousewing pupae, along with shucks, case-less caddis grubs, immature hog lice and some odd copepod-like creatures. There were lots of dead and dying grousewings around in the morning. Odd fish were rising (once only) all through the day. Might be worth a go in the evening?

It was a loch of 2 halves. Those who fished in the west found it very slow going all day. John G and I kept getting signs that we were getting somewhere -- we would make a wee move, or change tactics and get a fish on, or a few offers, and we'd think we were getting tuned in. But, every bloody single time it just died on us. It also didn't help that we were missing chances, getting fish on for a second or two, then off. Our most successful tactics were getting them to take a hare's ear snatcher (on the right) on a washing line set up, fished on a fast glass, plus boobies, also on fast glass.

We had thought the east end might be a bit too weedy by now, but it turned out to be fine. There is certainly plenty open water on a line west from The Rickle, which is where some of our boats found their fish. It was slow early on there as well, with Steve Greig making the most of what was going, taking 4 swinging bloodworm and Cove PTN. However, things started to pick up, later in the day. Tommy S stayed with nymphing (bloodworm and Diawl Bach) and took 5 of his 9 fish in the last 2 hours. Stu B gave up on nymphing after 3, changed to pulling (a result of George W in the boat with him catching 4 pulling with a Zulu/floater!) and caught a further 8 in the last 2 hours. Most of Stu's fish came to a tin-head damsel on floating line.

Other catches: Len and Ivor took a brace apiece in the bay east of the NW point, to sparklers. Ian Mac and son Gavin had 5 in the west end, to jungle cock Diawl Bach, damsels and boobies.

The club's 16 rods landed 48 fish.

Wednesday, 23rd June

Loch Leven, Evening Session

Loch closed today, due to bad weather.

Friday, 2nd July

Portmore Loch, Evening Session

Cap'n F away fishing Chew & Blagdon: Eric Singer reporting...

A good night, conditions-wise for once -- light winds and overcast, if a tad cool for July. And the fishing did not disappoint. There were sedges and olives coming off and the fish were rising from 21:00 h.

Our boats were very consistent, with scores of 8, 9, 9, 13, 6, 8 and 4 being recorded, and only one blank rod among 14. Successful methods were various. Tommy S took 5 to a dry sedge, while Eric S in with him had 3 to Diawl Bach and floating line. John M had variously 8 or 9, depending on the interpretation of the scorecard I have. John was pulling wets. J W Robertson took 4 to sunk line and boobies. Fraser G and George W split a catch of 9 taken on dry sedge patterns. Len and Ivor split a catch of 8 to lures. Dougie G had 4 to floater and buzzers

Trevor and Alan had top boat with 13, but didn't put any details on their cards!

The club's total for 14 rods was 56 fish (hey, we are making these round figures a habit!)

Saturday, 17th July

Lindores Loch, Day Session

Unfortunately, this outing was cancelled due to a booking mix-up.

Saturday, 31st July

Butterstone Loch, Day Session

A contender for hottest day of the year so far, at least by mid afternoon -- after the early mist had burned off. And very, very calm as well, with only the odd 10 minute spell of light breeze to stir things up at all. A cracking day to be out on the water, just the same, especially given the picturesque surroundings that Butterstone provides.

The water was very clear, with sparse hatches of good sized buzzer coming off, along with a few olives. One spooned fish revealed a load of phantom larvae, which may have been the "buzzer" seen earlier. There were also large squadrons of male damsel flies on the go. No females, though. "Whaur's ra burds?", they were probably thinking.

First of our rods into fish was John M, who had one first cast, and 5 by mid-day, including a whopper at 12 lb 6 oz. John was fishing on the left side of the loch. He took his fish to Diawl Bachs on the floater, with a gold head nymph on the tail to take them down a bit.

We were on the left as well, but our boat was struggling to get tuned in. There were a few very oncey risers on the go, but attempts with dry produced only one short lived contact. Meanwhile, the 2 anglers in the next boat were scoring fish on intermediate and washing line set up, taking their fish on a bibio on the dropper. What successes we had came again to Diawl Bachs, either on a hedged bet rig with dry fly, or just slow figure-of-eighted on the floater. Over on the right side, Richard G and JW Robertson took 6 between them: 3 to Diawl Bachs on the floater; one more to Diawl and 2 to boobies on sinkers.

Star of the show was Alan H. He didn't find fish until the afternoon, when a move to the deeper water beyond the cages gave him a chance to get the 'tache into action. Once he got tuned in, he made up for lost time, landing and returning 11 fish on Diawls and Cove pheasant tail nymph.

The club's 11 rods landed a total of 30 fish.

Sunday, 11th July

Loch Leven, Evening Session

Cap'n F away pike fishing. Alan M does the outing sheet and the report.

For most of us it was the first outing to Tombstone this season and the fact that we only had 3 boats and 7 rods out told its own story. We were greeted by pretty good conditions on arrival: V light winds from the north west and pretty extensive cloud cover. But by the time we got out it was pretty normal, i.e. a cool easterly had blown up - typical! We had heard that the day boats had caught a few fish around the East Buoy and horseshoe areas with brownies figuring predominantly in the catches.

Stu B and I started at the East Buoy, and Stu hooked and landed a rainbow on his first cast! Perhaps a red letter evening beckoned? The wind dropped and a huge hatch of grouse wing sedges and *Caenis* ensued, but the fish never really got going. A change to slow slime line and snatchers brought me two nice rainbows in quick succession, one of them to a cover. Stu changed to similar tactics on the Kelly green, and picked up a nice brownie. Four in the boat by 9 p.m. we felt was not bad going.

However, as always seems to happen on Leven, the wind changed again. This time it was to the west and it got fresher... and colder. A move to the head of the wind and Factor's Pier saw me pick up another rainbow and a subsequent move to the Green Isle brought another brownie for Stu. We finished up with three each for the evening. Our motor back to the harbour was entertaining, as there was a huge firework display from the nearby "T in the Park " concert.

When we got in, all our other rods were blank! John Miller, Tommy Steven and Eric Begbie reported having one offer from a very small brownie as the only

activity they had seen all night. They fished around the sluices area and the pink buoy. Dougie Skedd and Fraser Gault were also clean but reported a bit of late activity around the Factor's Pier.

The Club's total catch was 2 brownies and 1 rainbow for 5 lb 5 oz plus 3 rainbows returned. Successful flies included hare's ear (on the left) and soldier palmer snatchers and claret dabbler.

Sunday, 25th July

Loch Leven, Evening Session

A better night for pointing the camera at the sky than pointing the rod at the water. Bright early, with the temperature dropping like a stone later. Not having been in touch with Leven, it was a guess as to where to fish. There's no armada to follow these days -- a sorry state of affairs! Stu B and I tried our luck with sinkers, running the SW breeze from the west end of the strip across to Metal Mickey (Stu hit Mickey from 500 yards!) Stu brought up 2 fish at once. Then he hooked 3 at once - all brownies in the half pound class. Then I hooked 2 at once - more wee brownies. That was it for that area.

A move to the Scart area saw us try a change of tactics. We went with Margarets on the slime line and, eventually as one or two fish started to show, the floater. Stu took a brownie of 1 lb 9 oz, and I hooked 2 at once... again. "No use", says Stu. "Three of a kind beats 2 pair!"

The temperature continued to drop and it went dead on us. That was it.

Back at the weigh-in (such as it was) Tommy S had returned a brownie at 2 and a quarter, taken on a buzzer pupe at the Green Isle on Wetcel II, while John M had a brown at 1 lb 10 oz, taken on kingfisher butcher and intermediate at Hole 'i the Inch.

The Club's 8 rods landed 6 brownies over 10 inches.

Sunday, 15th August

New Ballo, Day Session

A good enough day. Given the weather we've been having, you would certainly have taken it. It was a lightish westerly, mostly overcast in the morning, the odd shower, but breaking away to bright from mid afternoon on. We had some additional entertainment, in the shape of a microlight, which buzzed us a couple of times.

The fishing was either good or bad, depending on whether you got into the run of rising fish along the north shore. Those who did had good sport to dry fly. Dougie S and JSB had 14 to their boat. Steve G had 9. Alan H, although only landing 2, had a grip of at least another 10. Elsewhere, however, the pickings were very slim, with most rods struggling for a couple.

The one common factor was that the fish we landed were all caught on dries. Usually someone comes in with a brace on wets or lures, or nymphs, but every single fish we caught was taken on dry fly.

Why this should be is anyone's guess. The water was reasonably clear, there were loads of sticklebacks roaming the open water, the one fish we spooned had been feeding on corixa and black leeches. And there wasn't even much fly on the surface.

We gave it a go with nymphy stuff and had a go pulling with wets, but it was like fishing without flies on.

The fish we caught were mostly well-conditioned rainbows, of about the right size for the water (though a big one was hooked and lost), plus assorted brownies, from wee scrotters up to a nice fish of around the 2 lb mark.

Apart from Adrian C and Donald W taking a brace apiece to wee flies, the predominant size was a 12. The killing patterns were hoppers in claret, black and brown, plus heather fly, pearly wing black bits, red bits, black and red Shipman's and half hog.

The Club's 17 rods landed a total of 44 fish.

Sunday, 22nd August

Portmore Loch, Day Session

It's stickleback time, and while there are maybe one or 2 million less than the last couple of years, there is still a serious number. There were a few trout (and some perch) going after them when it was glassy calm, early doors. As usual, they were very tricky to catch.

Best chance of a fish or two came early on. After an hour or so, the sun got fierce and a fresh south easterly got up. That put the sticklebacks down, the rainbows went with them, and it got very, very hard. Even the odd cloudy spell later did nothing to help. The large majority of what few fish were caught were taken in the middle section of the loch, often out in the centre.

Back at the start, Dougie S ignored what was on top and picked up 2 early fish on DI-4 and Santa's beard. That was it for his day. Fraser G caught a fish 3rd cast, and that was it for his day. Cap'n F covered a stickleback chaser with dries, caught

it, and that was it for his day. John M took one on a yellow booby and DI-3 and that was it for his day. JW Robertson did a little better, getting opened out by a very large fish on a white booby, but later taking one on a muddler and losing another.

Mike P didn't take an early fish, but picked up 2 for 6 lb, later in the day, fishing a hedged bet rig of 2 dries with a Diawl Bach on the tail. Both took the Diawl Bach. Star of the day was Alan H, who took 4 fish, 3 of them browns, also on a hedged bet rig, but fished washing line style, with a dry on the tail and nymphs on the droppers. Al had 2 each to a red/black buzzer and a black hopper.

George W was about the only one to save his bacon late in the day, picking up a fish to dry fly in the last hour.

Hard going, though! The Club's 23 rods landed only 13 fish.

Tuesday, 10th August

Loch Leven, Evening Session

Good conditions for fishing (hence the shortage of photos). Warm, a steady easterly breeze, 100% ceiling (though a tad wet at times). Hopes were high. Alas, hopes were dashed, as Leven yet again failed to fish. Of our 4 boats, 3 headed up to the east end, while we ventured north. We did see a fish come to the next boat early doors. But nothing to us. We saw 2 or 3 move, back of 8 o'clock, and, as nothing had come to pulling on slimes, we switched to floaters and nymph/dry combos, only to see the breeze immediately swing to north and get up, so killing any chance we had.

The light then grew dimmer and dimmer, prompting an early bath at around 10 p.m. Not an offer between us! The other 3 boats had fared marginally better. By that, I mean they had caught a fish and had a couple of offers between them. The fish was a rainbow, and it had fallen to JSB, on a DI-3 and a shuggie, off the east point of St Serf's. JWR and Bob N reported a couple of chances over at the sluices, and... er, that was it. Nine rods. One fish.

Monday, 20th September

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

With severe gales forecast (like it hadn't been windy enough the last couple of weeks!) there was an air of inevitability as we drove through at 08:00 h. And so it proved, as fishery management called-off fishing for the day soon after we arrived. The annoying thing was that, after a lot of folk had gone off, those of us

who hung back for a natter found it dropping away to nothing more than good pulling conditions by about 10:00 h! Oh well, let's hope it blew up again later!

Saturday, 4th September

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

Decent conditions for the main part, if a tad bright at times. Light-mod westerly, warm, and the water had cleared from the colour put in by all the recent rain. Only problem for those of us who come to expect some good dry fly sport at this time of the year was that the surface of the water looked like it had been Hoovered clean... then polished. We saw about 2 rises for the day. Maybe the culprit was all the rain -- long wet spells do seem to stop terrestrial insects getting into migration mode.

The day started with a bang. It was like we dropped in on the fish having breakfast. Many of our rods reported fish caught in the first few casts. But, very quickly, they put their tin helmets on and it became much harder going. Top marks for early action were Kate's Brae and Lochend. Later, Butts Bay, Gateside and the hotel shore produced fish.

The fish were high in the water, and floater, ghost-tip and slime line were all that were needed. The fish seemed to respond best to white. In our boat, the majority of the catch came to small cat's whiskers and the same in boobies, figure-of-eighted, either on fast glass or ghost tip.

Going round the other boats, here's how it went...

Kenneth C had 3 to Diawl Bach, ace of spades and black pennell. John M and George W had fish early, in International Bay, to Diawl Bachs, and later to dry fly (ginger hopper) in the Butts Bay. Eric S took 5 to floater and a goldhead white lure. Alans, M and H, had 8 in the boat from the Lochend area, to floaters and slime line, with boobies, Diawls, cats and damsels getting a mention.

Stu B and Fraser topped that by 1, taking 9 to slime line and damsels, concrete bowls and Clan Chiefs. Their early fish came again from the Lochend area, but later they tapped into a few in Gateside Bay.

Leon and Ron McC had the best of their sport later in the day, in the hotel bay area, with Leon catching 4 to a pearly bugger on a sink-tip and Ron two to a white booby on a sinker.

The club's total for 18 rods was 57 fish.

Saturday, 25th September

Portmore Loch, Day Session

Dreich, breezy conditions at the start of the day quickly gave way to what were really ideal conditions for late September. The breeze dropped back, while the 100% ceiling let some hazy sun through to get temperatures up to modest levels by mid-afternoon. There was no sign of the accursed sticklebacks so, all in all, it was disappointing that there were so few fish caught.

Early doors, there were a few stockies on the fin, and a few fish were taken to boobies, predominantly white, on intermediate and washing line tactics. That activity very quickly died away, and in the mid session, the only person to make much of things was Jimmy M, who picked up a few fish to dry fly, notably a claret Klinkhammer. Jimmy commented that there was very little showing on top, but that anything that did show was a chance. Meanwhile, there was always the occasional one coming OTB.

A quick round up of the score cards shows that fish were also caught on the following: a dry hopper, one to dry and one to buzzer, damsel, Diawl Bach (2 anglers), Montana, 2 on buzzer pupae. Dougie S tried ringing the changes and had quite a bit of interest pulling popping bugs on the floater. He even landed one on this version! Meanwhile, Dougie's boat partner, Alan H reverted to good old wet flies, and took a brace to muddler and Kate McLaren.

Later in the afternoon, a wee flurry of lake olives got themselves airborne. This got a few residents on the fin, though there were again very few breaking surface. Attempts with olive nymph tactics drew no response, but a return to dry fly did get a bit of success, with comparadun and... er, halfhog (well, who said it had to be an exact imitation?) taking fish. Spoonings revealed a few olive nymphs, a few adult duns, plus a few black terrestrials and a few buzzer pupes.

The club's total was 30 fish to 19 rods. Although not a big total, the fish were of the very highest quality, and, if anything, the stockies outclassed the residents on looks, though the residents had the upper hand on fitness (one went 60 yards!). The best of them were in the 4 lb to 5 lb class.

Saturday, 16th October

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

When I got out my scratcher and looked out the window, across the Forth estuary, I thought here we go again... another outing blighted by bad weather. It was coming in from the north east -- a strong wind and horizontal rain. However, when we got the Lake, it didn't look too bad -- it does pick up shelter from the hills on the north side, after all. Better still, the rain had eased to a drizzle. As the

morning progressed, the wind continued to drop (now there's a novelty!). In our wildest dreams we would not have thought that by lunch time we would be wishing for a wee bit more breeze, just to move the boat over fresh water! Unfortunately, when it did pick up, it was straight north, and a tad baltic, and it did seem to put the fish off a bit.

Up till then, they had been pretty much on the fin the whole day. Our boat caught fish in 7 different locations: hotel bay, the pink buoy (that isn't there), out in the middle, the butts, Kate's brae, Lochend and Sam's point. We had the majority to slime line and a basic set-up of one white one, one orange one. We varied the depth a wee bit by changing the tail between a booby, an unweighted and a goldhead, and the retrieve between tugging and figure-of-8. Some came on the hang, some came high in the water, first pull.

We were a bit desperate to get a some late season dry fly action, and we were on the look-out for possibilities. There were a few -- though not easy, as, despite there being a selection of foods available to the trout, they seemed to be preferring the tiny aphids that were about. We managed 3 to dries, including a nice resident for John W that, judging by the dark colouration, slim profile and jaggy tail, had been in for the best part of the season. John had a nice blue as well. My most satisfying success was the last of the day, which came to a long range cover and a size 18 black scrot.

The club's catches were excellent, with a rod average of 4.6. Tommy S had a bag to orange and yellow boobies on Hi-D, mostly around the pink buoy (that isn't there) area. Four 7s were recorded, including Trevor and Alan, who caught on slime line, Dunkelds, mini-lures and buzzers, mostly around Kate's brae and Lochend. Ian Mac had a 7 to washing line (slime), Diawl Bach and olive booby in international Bay. Stu B and Alan M got into a group of fish off Stable point, taking a dozen between them to slime line and yellow and cat boobies, and tin-head damsels. Four was another popular score, with Dougie S taking on buzzers in the rookery, Steve G taking on Connemarra black and slime line at Stable point, David E on orange and damsel (med sink) at Sam's point and Bob N on orange lures (med sink) at Lochend.

The Club's total for 17 rods was 79 fish.

Afterwards, we retired to the Bridgend hotel in Callander for a good meal and the presentation of trophies. Stu Barclay was presented with the Marr Bowl as Club Champion, Tommy Steven pipped Alan Morrison by a single point for Tam's Trophy as runner-up. Alan Holbrook took the Seniors' trophy in his first year of eligibility, and John Miller lifted the Cronies' Quaich for the season's heaviest fish, a rainbow of 12 lb 6 oz from Butterstone.

Saturday, 23rd October

Linlithgow Loch, Day Session

If we thought we were lucky with the weather last weekend, then we had 6 numbers up in the lottery for this one. Again, the previous couple of days were dire, but come Saturday it was idyllic.

In the morning some of us struggled while others caught fish. This turned round in the afternoon to the point where those who were catching dried up, while those who were not, caught up. Apart from one early one, our boat spent the morning changing and changing again, without so much as a sniff. Meanwhile, one of the boats from another club spent the morning right next to us in the town bay, sconing fish. They seemed to be pulling on blue Cortlands.

Eventually we got tuned in, mainly thanks to guest angler, Boyd S, who started to pick up fish to figure-of-eighting size 10 buzzers, floating line and 16 foot of fluoro. I had been getting nowhere swinging buzzers on a long leader. Going over to Boyd's set-up, the figure-of-eighting didn't really help, but going up to size 10s did, while shortening up to 16 foot really worked a treat -- even though nearly all the fish came to the tail fly! Our successful patterns included Blakeston's, orange thorax Cove and black Spanflex.

Harry P was one who had the best of his sport early, taking 5 out from the north west point on orange booby and DI-7. Trevor and Alan had the best of their sport in the morning as well, 'taching it with assorted buzzers in black and brown. Ivor had a good day, taking 4 of 5 fish to this yellow lure. Ivor fished off the north shore with an intermediate. Ian Mac and son Gavin had a brace each, Ian to orange thorax Cove, and Gavin to boobies. George W and Allan E had their sport to Diawl Bach and brown snatcher.

The Club's 13 rods landed 41 fish.

2005

Sunday, 20th March

Lindores Loch, Day Session

Our good luck at getting good conditions for our first outing of the season held for yet another year, as we were treated to a calm, overcast, albeit very misty day. The temperature wasn't quite what many other parts of the country were enjoying, but there were no complaints. Andy Mitchell reported that the fish had been getting caught almost exclusively on floating line and buzzers. Music to our ears! However, many of us didn't find it that way. Ian Mac did OK early doors,

catching half a dozen to Diawl Bach and bloodworm. Dougie S also caught early on orange thorax Cove, and Ivor took 7 to assorted buzzers and nymphs. Generally, though, many found it hard going with nymphing tactics. A change to slime line and taddy/damselly/mini-lurey type stuff worked wonders.

Len Newby took 10 to a cat's whisker tadpole, and John W was top rod with 11, taken to 2 mini minkies in black and white, and a damsel. Dougie S took fish later to black and yellow booby, while Allan E and Stewart B were another 2 to catch to slime line and damsel. Stewart reported seeing one boat do exceptionally well across on the railway shore. When asked, they reported catching to sink-tip lines and goldhead Viva. The bulk of our own catches came from the road shore, all the way from the top corner, down to Lindores house. Trevor and Alan, however, didn't venture beyond Milanda Bay, and they 'tached a creditable total of 16 between them, to black and brown buzzers and a black snatcher.

There was plenty other wildlife on offer. Some nice Scottish blend buzzers were hatching and an odd fish was seen to rise to them. A red kite was spotted, some good sized perch were caught (though they seemed in rather poor health?), and Cap'nF finished the day with a 5 lb pike on his last cast.

The club's total for 16 rods was 77 fish.

Saturday, 9th April

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

A better day than many predicted, given the wintry conditions and gales over the past couple of days. The north wind turned west, it got a bit milder and although on the damp side at times, we had good cloud cover (and some spectacular skies) for most of the day. The odd blink of sunshine was quite welcome, when it came. There was evidence of big buzzer hatches, by way of loads of shucks in the water. There was little evidence, however, of feeding fish.

The fish were well spread and came from Hotel Bay, right round the road shore to Lochend and on towards the butts. They seemed to be well spread depth-wise as well, as fish were taken to many lines, from ghost tip to DI-7. We started in Hotel Bay and John R was into a fish straight away on a red holo Diawl Bach. This was one of 4 fish John took to nymphs, the others coming to an orange thorax Cove and an orange snatcher.

Boyd S and John G took 7 to their boat in the Quarry area, mostly deep to orange tadpoles. Alan M had 3 early at Lochend to a black cat and DI-3. Later in the day, he got into fish well up in the water, out from international bay. Slowing it all down and going more imitative, Alan took 4 more to ghost-tip and snatchers. Alan D and Dougie G shared half a dozen in Lochend and International Bay. Our secretary had a good day, taking 8, mostly to damsels with a couple on a Viva. Stewart fished slime line in the Lochend area.

Top catch of the day went to Tommy S and Euan C, who boated 16 to DI-3 and fast glass, fishing damsels, Dunkelds and cats in the Lochend to Tod Hole area.

The Club's total for 19 rods was 75 fish.

Sunday, 17th April

Lindores Loch, Day Session

Another case of being happy with the weather we got, when compared to what had been for the past week. It was, however, decidedly baltic! It was a bit on the breezy side in the morning as well, though it dropped away nicely in the afternoon. There were some nice buzzers coming off, and cow dungs on the water, but it was really too cold to get the fish to poke their noses out, save for the odd one in the most sheltered bays. The fish were, however, high in the water, feeding on *daphnia*. It took a while to appreciate quite how high they were, and some switching from sinkers to floaters, and from fluoro to nylon was required to get tuned in.

The fish were well spread. There was a good group in the bay out from the bird hide that Steve G made the most of. Steve fished a fast glass, taking 8 to black and green fritz tadpoles, Diawl Bachs and snatchers. Guest Bob Allan took 2 of his 3 fish in the same area. Bob was one of the few to have success with a fast sink line.

There was another run of fish, right up the centre of the loch, but the only boat to get tuned in to them was with another club and we didn't find out their answer.

Len and Ivor found their fish well out from the road shore, catching with yellow dancer and sparkler on intermediate and floater. Alan and Trevor sat it out in Milanda Bay all day and had top boat by one, taking a dozen under the 'tache, mostly to a size 10 black and red buzzer. We ended up fishing the railway shore, where we found the fish were in small fast moving groups. We had difficulty getting tuned in, as we only had fleeting encounters with them. Two fish in 2 casts, then nothing for half an hour, or a double-up, then nothing... Swinging a team of nymphs worked reasonably well, mostly with JC Diawls and a wee damsel. Dougie took 5 fish to 5 completely different flies, 3 different lines, 2 totally different methods, and 2 different leader materials!

Ken McL and Bob T did very well to get tuned in to the roving groups along the railway shore by repeatedly drifting down the shore, picking up fish whenever their paths met. Ken had top equal bag with 8. He fished an intermediate line, with a small goldhead Montana being his stand-out pattern.

We were entertained throughout the day by a pair of ospreys, who worked the water hard. As hard as us! One posed overhead for a photo -- on the day I left the 300 mm lens at home and just brought the 135! Doh!

The club's 13 rods landed a total of 56 fish.

Sunday, 24th April

Linlithgow Loch, Day Session

Cap'n F away up the silvery Tay. JSB reports...

Fly fishing is very much seen as genuine “sport for all”. Rarely can there have been a better example of how true this is than at our April outing to Linlithgow. The youngest and oldest competitor, while not quite stretching from the cradle to the grave, gave the rest of the field a real lesson in how to catch rainbow trout.

Gavin Macdonald, a guest rod, fishing with his father, boated 13 L'ithgow rainbows. Gav changed cleverly from swinging buzzers, diawl bachs and snatchers to figure of eighting a yellow fritz booby. His father, grinding his teeth at the other end of the boat, managed only five, and when asked what the catching pattern was for Gavin, replied rather sourly, “everything”. Gavin and Ian, not surprisingly, stayed put in the centre of Town Bay. Big brother Callum, no mean fisher himself, could manage only three (although one of these weighed in at 5½ lbs) and wasn't looking forward to having to listen to a blow by blow account on the way home.

At the other end of the age scale Honorary Member Eric Singer showed that he was still a force to be reckoned with, taking 9 rainbows on a green and black fritz pattern fished on a floater. Not “short of stock” here then Eric? Between them, the “old and the new” netted exactly one third of the total club catch for the day - more power to their elbows.

Other success stories included the every steady Tommy Steven, who managed 6, again swinging his buzzer pupae at the East end of the loch. Tommy often seems to contact the better fish here and his best was a cracker of exactly 8 lbs. Although not such regular rods on our outings these days, Gordon Grant and Harry Paterson can still do the business and managed 13 between them from Town Bay using a variety of methods, including bloodworm (which had been tipped as a good bet), diawls and boobies - Harry's best going 6½ lbs. Derek Kilgour returned a lovely fish in the 5 lb category.

The weather was reasonable, considering some of the days we've had for this outing. It remained dry, but the wind being from the East kept the temperature down and it was quite blustery at times. The quality of trout varied a bit but the few overwintered fish caught were lovely specimens. A total of 36 fish for 89 lbs, with 30 returned, meant a pretty good day overall.

Sunday, 1st May

Carron Valley Reservoir, Day Session

The forecast was for some rain on Saturday, followed by brighter weather, and mixed sunshine and showers on Sunday. Wrong, wrong, wrong! Saturday was the warmest, sunniest day of the year so far, and Sunday, at least through Carron Valley Reservoir way, was wet, wet, wet. However, when it comes to fishing for wild brownies, you would settle for that if the alternative was sun, sun, sun. You just have to be up to taking a drooking. Wind, in the west on Saturday for a single day out the last 30 or so, was back to east! Not quite so cold, thankfully. So, were the brownies up for it? Yes.

Good buzzer hatches were in evidence, and the fish were obviously tuned in, with spoonings revealing plenty of pupae, a few adults, and some bits and pieces including stone flies and snails. Depth an issue? Well, yes and no. For most of the day, the fish seemed deep to me, as a change from DI-3 to Hi-D increased the catch rate considerably. However, others caught with slime line and even floater. Later in the day the rain eased, the wind dropped to almost calm, and a huge hatch of buzzers got the fish right up top. We played it out up the far end and so committed to spending the whole last half hour motoring for home. We ran past riser after riser, way out in the middle, the whole length of the water.

Three areas came to the fore for catches. These were the home shore, from the harbour to gull island; Binns Bay; and Carron Bay and the shoreline beyond, though George W and Steve G bucked the trend, by getting their fish along the south shore. They fished slime line and damsels during the rain, and went to size 16 dry flies when the rise came on.

Ian Mac and son Gavin boated 26 between them (dad getting a slight upper hand after last week's showing up at Linlithgow). They fished the home shoreline, with slime lines, pulling with snatchers, claret hopper and clan chief. Ivor and Len fished the same area, catching to Connemarra black on floating line.

Dougie S and Alan M went up the top, as did we. Alan had the best of his sport in Carron Bay, pulling wets, while Dougie had most of his catch to dries. Adrian C and Allan E fished the same area, catching to WetCel I and floater, with black spiders, bibio, hare's ear in size 14s. Our fish came to Hi-D and size 12 Kate variant, size 10 hare's ear palmer and a black Howwood.

Tommy and JSB matched the Macs' 26 to the boat. They fished Binns bay, pulling earlier with jungle cock Viva and trads on WetCel II and DI-3, and going to dry fly (black Bob's bits) in the later rise.

The Club's 18 rods landed a total of 129 keepable fish, of which 108 were returned to fight again another day.

Saturday, 7th May

Lindores Loch, Evening Session

Since we started this early evening outing a few seasons ago, we have been fairly lucky with the weather. That luck kind of ran out on us and we got a cold, blustery evening, with a sky that opened up, making it too damned bright as well. Strange we weren't on Loch Leven!

The water was fantastically clear, making it a good proposition for fishing imitatively. Despite the cold, bright, blustery conditions, the fish were high in the water. There were loads of micro buzzers coming off and spoonings revealed the fish were feeding well on the pupes. Only problem for the nymph fisher was the size: about a 28! Reports were that small black and green lures were working well, in addition to buzzers.

Most of the fish came from around the home shore area (the downwind shore). John M and Boyd S had 6 and dropped quite a few between them just out from the lodge. They slow-fished nymphs, such as pheasant tail and black epoxy buzzer on floating line. In the same area, Trevor took 5 to 'taching tactics, while Alan H had 7 to 'tache and blue buzzers (well that's what the writing on the card looks like!). Len took a brace to snatchers in the same area.

One boat to try further afield was Steve G and Euan C. They ended up in the bird hide bay, which was catching a bit of shelter. However, they found it slow going until late. A few oncery risers started to appear and a switch to dries (black hopper) picked up 3 of their 5 fish.

We ended up in the same bay, and Dougie S got some late action to dries (size 14 black Shipman), while a team of Leadbetter suspender buzzers worked for me.

The club's total was 36 fish for 16 rods.

Monday, 23rd May

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

When we left Edinburgh for the Lake, the forecast was not too promising, with rain expected throughout the day. As it happened, apart from a brief shower, we remained dry. From a fishing point of view, a fair bit of blue sky and strong sun was to prove more of a problem, particularly in the morning. However, while the wind had a bit of an edge to it at times, we had reasonable weather for the time of year over a large part of the day.

Unfortunately, the fish seemed to have other ideas about the conditions. The lake has been a very productive venue for the club in recent years, but on this occasion

the rod average was disappointing, considering the weather, with 12 anglers netting only 22 fish. Judging by the number of boats moving about, other anglers were having similar difficulties, and the large percentage of boats back at the boathouse before 5.30 was another negative indicator. Our top rod was Tom Steven, who persevered with mini lures on a DI 3 to catch 6, although strangely his fish were all caught in the morning, a time when most others struggled. Viva and damsel tadpole were his successful patterns, and the fish were found at the head of the wind at the Malling Shore.

In second place was Eric Singer with 4 on his trusty white lure, losing 2 others into the bargain. Eric always fishes this pattern on a floating line. While a few other fish were caught on lures, Boyd Scott and Steve Greig managed 5 between them, figure-of-eighting buzzers and dries in Hotel Bay.

Whereas some of the stockies seem to be of a smaller variety this season, being in the 1.5 to 1.75 pounds range, there are some over-wintered beauties in the 3-4 pound class. Eric Singer had two of these that gave him a merry old time. There is a school of thought that believes that the smaller fish may afford more "top of the water" sport, but that wasn't really obvious on today's showing. As the club doesn't return to the Lake for another 3 months, the jury will have to remain out until then on this issue.

Saturday, 28th May

Portmore Loch, Evening Session

On our 4.00 pm arrival at Portmore, we were met by what has been an all too frequent sight in recent years - large white capped waves crashing against the dam wall. An earlier 'phone call had given us the information that the high winds were dropping and that there were some boats out. This may have been true at the time, and certainly there were a few boats tucked up in Laird's Bay which had obviously gone out in easier conditions, but it was now clearly too dangerous to try to launch further boats. At 4.30 pm the management agreed that the outing was a non-starter.

The secretary had brought his waders as a back up and, having a) driven a fair distance and b) heard that fish were being seen, decided to take out a catch and release bank ticket. This encouraged another couple of hardy (foolhardy?) souls to do likewise. Parking in the other car park we walked up the far bank towards Laird's Bay. It was not a cold wind and, nearing the bay, a few fish could be seen moving within casting distance of the shore. Our courage (stupidity?) was rewarded, by 8 fish caught and several others lost in the next two hours, to dries and buzzers.

Unfortunately, the hoped for calm didn't materialise and indeed the wind continued to get stronger and colder. Common agreement led to a cessation of hostilities at 8.00 pm, however we were all pleased that we had made the effort and were very impressed by the quality of fish caught. Let's hope that the July outing affords us kinder conditions.

Saturday, 4th June

Glencorse Reservoir, Day Session

This was the Club's first outing to Glencorse, after last year's change in management, when Scottish Water divested themselves of all interest in running fisheries at their reservoirs. It was for many of us, our first visit to the water since we were laddies! We left wondering why we had neglected it.

It was a day of sunshine and showers, with a moderate, sometimes gusty and changeable westerly wind. Despite the rather iffy fishing conditions, the fish were well up in the water and prepared to take a dry fly, with many oncey rises in the quieter corners. The fish were of a superb quality, comprising good quality stock rainbows, perfect-finned, slimmed down resident rainbows and small wild brownies.

There were 3 main areas that produced fish: the main basin out from the dam, the bays midway along the north shore, and coming down both sides from the top end. Two boats concentrated at the main basin. JSB and Bob Allan took 13 between them, with JSB figure-of-eighting an intermediate, with hot head damsel and Diawl Bach, while Bob fished a DI-5 with damselfly and lures. In the other boat, Tommy Steven and Boyd Scott took 15, with Tommy stripping a damselfly, Viva and Dunkeld on a DI-3, and Boyd fishing damselfly slow on a floater.

Steve Greig and B Whyte took 11 to their boat, fishing the bays on the north shore. They fished lures, including cats and orange fritz on intermediate and DI-3. Kenneth Cockburn took 6 in the same area to Goldhead Viva on a slow intermediate, plus a late one to dries at the dam end. Fraser Gault took 5 to dry fly, fishing down the north shore from the top end, and our boat had 15 to dries, the best pattern by far being this size 12 black hopper variant. We took our fish coming down the south shore from the top, before crossing over to fish the bays on the north shore. Spoonings didn't reveal much, but there were buzzers and terrestrials on the water, and plenty chances to throw at a riser.

The club's 14 rods landed 68 fish (not including the small brownies), many of which were returned.

The new management laid on coffee and bacon rolls on arrival, and put up a bottle of whisky for the best bag: a superb gesture that is being offered to every club outing.

Sunday, 12th June

Frandy, Day Session

This was the archetypal 'four seasons in one day' affair. At times the wind was gusty, at times it was flat calm. At times it was from the north, the east, the west, and all the points in between. At times it was sunny. At times it was raining heavily. At times it was chucking down hailstones. At times it was quite warm, but most of the time it was baltic. Chilly for June? ...it was June!

Given all this, no experienced angler will be surprised to hear that the fishing was hard going.

This was a disappointingly small outing, with only 6 club rods and 2 guests out. Our boat spent the morning up the top end, drifting down the sides with the split wind (trying to be north, it was east at the top end, west at the dam end!). We saw several risers and we concentrated on fishing dries, which is the norm for us on Frandy. We drew up plenty fish, but very few went back down with the fly between their teeth.

Ken Maclean and his guest Alastair Inglis came down the same end, and they picked up a fish to a mini-muddler and intermediate, but by mid-day, the wind had become impossibly changeable and both boats headed back down the water. Our other 2 boats had stayed down the dam end. Tommy Steven and Adrian Coats worked away with dries on the south shore drift from the harbour to the dam to take 7 to pearly-winged heather fly and Shipmans buzzer. JSB and guest Les Harris also plied away in the same area and had a bit of a response with damsels, but only one to show for it. Their only other fish came to a heather fly.

On arriving down at the dam, Ken and Alastair picked up 3 to dries -- claret Bob's bits and black Klinkhammer. That backed up our findings, having had limited success with a claret Klinkhammer. The club's total for 8 rods was 15 fish.

As we packed the gear into the cars, the conditions were improving significantly, and fish could be seen rising in the calm, right across the dam end. Sigh!

Sunday, 19th June

Linlithgow Loch, Day Session

A perfect, warm, overcast day with a light westerly. What more could you ask for? Er, well, a more even distribution of catchable fish would have been a bonus for a good number of us on this outing. It seems that the fish had all headed for deep water. Not sure why. The weather hadn't been particularly warm in the lead-up. The water was crystal clear. The weed growth was normal for the time of year. Whatever... There was another club out, and they had obviously been

fishing the loch regularly, as, at the gun, they all headed straight for the deep water off the Palace bank, dropped anchor and got stuck into the fish.

That is not to say that there wasn't room for us to get involved. It was more a case of several of our boats heading for quieter water and expecting to get *some* fish. However, it did seem to be that the boats who got tuned-in, in water of at least 20 foot depth, got fish, while those who looked elsewhere struggled. Really struggled!

Of our 8 boats, 3 got tuned in and had 36 fish between 6 rods. The other 5 boats had 7 fish between 10 rods -- 3 of them to one rod. So, to the 3 boats that did catch... In no particular order... well, OK, having already put their mug-shots on the page, I'll do them in the same order. Tommy Steven and John Gibson had ventured up the east end, but gave up on that mid-day-ish and came back down to the town bay area. They stopped in a good depth and John started to get fish to DI 7 and a washing line set-up. Fishing deep with a slow figure-of-eight retrieve, most of his fish took a size 14 anorexic hare's ear nymph. Tommy gave up on the floating line approach and followed John down to the depths with a washing line, taking fish to a size 12 hare's ear booby and nymphs.

It looked to me that Trevor Gibson and Boyd Scott stayed in slightly less deep water, but Trevor assures me they got their fish in 20 feet. Boyd was the first to get tuned in. After losing several to damsels, he started taking fish on a weighted black fritz tadpole on a floating line and long flouro leader. Trevor gave up on the 'tache and buzzer approach (no your eyes do not deceive you!) and followed suit, figure-of-eighting 25 foot of flouro with a black dancer on the tail.

Last but not least, Ian Macdonald and number two son Gavin had top boat with 13 fish. Ian was the only one of our number to make a success of swinging nymphs, albeit over deep water. Ian took fish to Diawl Bach, hare's ear and bloodworm. Gavin ended up fishing assorted boobies on a fast sink, and had a superb spell in the afternoon.

The club's rather skewed catch totalled 43 fish for 16 rods.

Wednesday, 22nd June

Loch Leven, Evening Session

A look back at the outing requests from our members shows that in 1990, no fewer than 35 of them applied to go on the corresponding date. Back then, we could not get any more than 6 boats, so had to ballot 18 names and give the other 17 a knock-back. How times have changed! All we could muster for this one 15 years later was 6 club rods plus one guest. Where had all the others gone? If the Loch Leven management were to be believed, they all prefer to fish small waters, full of easy to catch stockies. A look at the missing names showed that this was simply not the case. The guys concerned were all away looking for sport, not easy to catch stockies. Some were salmon fishing, where one might expect only a few more chances in a day than one would expect at Leven. Some were away to the

wilds of the Highlands and islands. Some were away to Rutland and Grafham, waters of equal size and complexity to Leven. None were away to howk stockies out of puddles. If Leven is too difficult for them, so be it, but that must make it too difficult for about 99.9% of anglers. If the management are happy for it to be an "experts' water", that is their prerogative, but they can hardly be surprised when only a handful of experts (plus miniscule groups of die-hards) turn up to fish it.

So, what of this evening? As usual (whenever we go there), it was far too bright. However, there was an early fish for Secretary, Stewart Barnes. A rainbow -- a survivor of last year's final stocking of the breed. It tipped the scales at 2 lb 12 oz. Stewart took it off the Graveyard bank, on a hot-head damsel and DI-3.

Our boat started on fast sinkers, but ne'er an offer. We tried the north shore first, then the elbow, then the east, by which time the SW breeze was dropping away and a moderate *Caenis* hatch took place. We saw a fish rise! Dougie changed to dries, while I went to slow glass with size 12 trads. Still no joy. We made a move to Factor's pier. With the sun setting and the temperature plummeting, it was now or never. As it began to go glassy, an odd fish appeared on top, often showing several times -- probably at the remains of the *Caenis*. Covering these with the trads actually started to produce some interest. First a couple of follows, then a jag, then a fish! It took either the mini-muddler or the doobry, but fell off and fouled-hooked itself on the black-and-gold spider on the tail. It was a good brown -- one of the large, cormorant-proof stockies, a little over 2 lb.

That seemed to be about it, but very last knockings another good stockie brown took the black-and-gold. And that was it. There was one other fish taken, a brownie, by guest Gary Wright, on a DI-3 and cat's whisker in the thrapple area. The stockie browns were off excellent quality, and those that survive will be hard to tell apart from wild fish by next year. With luck they will bolster the breeding population as well. We hope the new policy works!

Club total for 7 rods: 4 fish.

Sunday, 26th June

Lindores Loch, Day Session

Heatwave time. Bit of a body blow, when we arrived and were told by Andy that the loch had been fishing its best ever... right up until last week... whereupon it had just turned right off... totally dead. Oh dear! Andy kindly reduced the price to us, substantially, there and then. He also asked us to kill everything we caught so he could reduce the numbers of fish in the loch. They were obviously stressed, as they were hurling themselves across the water all day long. The other major problem -- apart from the temperature of the water -- was its clarity. We didn't have a Secchi disc, but sticking the rod tip with a Hi-Viz orange line under the surface showed it had disappeared inside of 2 feet down.

Very difficult to go out under such circumstances and give it ones all. We made a concerted start, trying first one method, then another. There was a bit of cloud cover before the sun took over, and an odd fish showing had a few of us trying dries (a method recommended). We also tried swinging nymphs, and that got Fraser Gault a nice resident rainbow of 2 lb 2 oz, to a bloodworm pattern, fished at the far end of the railway shore. We tried boobies slow and deep, we tried washing lines, suspender buzzers, blobs, you name it. Andy had told us not to waste our time on big fluffy stuff... and we didn't.

As the day wore on, we fell by the wayside, one by one. It was hot, there was nothing happening, spirits flagged, the number of heads showing in an upright position got smaller and smaller. Eventually we too gave up, as the option of a kip seemed a much better bet.

There was a fish to be had, though. John Robertson took one in the mouth of the hideaway bay at the top end. John fished a washing line set-up on a slow sink, taking the rainbow on a hare's ear nymph suspended between 2 boobies.

When we trickled in at the end of the day, we discovered that a boat, not of our club, had taken 8 fish. That stunned us. By all accounts, they had been pulling with buzzers on floaters. Maybe there was something in the idea of keeping the flies moving within the top couple of inches, so the fish could see them in the minty water?

One to take away and have a think about!

Friday, 1st July

Portmore Loch, Evening Session

Another case of *nearly* with the weather. The previous 2 evenings had 100% ceiling but, as usual when we turn up, the sky opens and we got the bright early/cold later scenario. If we thought the activity at Linlithgow the other week was localised, this was on another level. In the early part of the evening, the only rod catching was the one on the left of the third boat along in the big bay. Then he stopped and his mate on the right was the only one catching for the next half hour or so. What was going on there? There was an odd fish to our rods in the big bay - John Miller had one swinging buzzers -- but our boys never got tuned in. Tommy Steven found some mid-evening action to dries drifting out of the Laird's Bay, and that seemed the best option, though a switch to dries ourselves found far more fish giving us the dreaded fresh-airies than actually hooking up. Tommy took 3 to a half-hog.

Most folk went to dries, and scrambled around for a fish or so. John Miller added a couple to his bag. There were sedges and olives about, and a brief hatch of *Caenis* got a few fish up and nebbing, but they were very well spread and the leccy

outboard was needed to track after them. Mike Phillips had 2 well into the shallows of the Laird's Bay on a hare's ear F-fly.

Eric Singer fished of the bank, and found some sedge feeders in the area of the old car-park, taking 2 to a sedgehog. Late on, Dougie Skedd came down the same area and found the same sedge feeders. Dougie bagged 6, figure-of-eighting a stimulator, while everyone else was doing nothing!

The Club's 12 (or was it 13) rods landed 20 fish.

Sunday, 10th July

Loch Leven, Evening Session

Another disappointingly small turn out for Loch Leven -- 9 rods. The evening started a bit bright, but quickly developed 50% cloud cover. It was certainly warm enough... 20-odd degrees and holding up well enough to fish in shirt sleeves right through to the 11.30 finish. The breeze was perfect, a light south westerly, dropping to near calm late on. The water clarity was good, though the temperature was understandably high. There wasn't much fly life early, but later there was a wee *Caenis* hatch, followed by a big sedge hatch, followed by a few big buzzers.

Michael Wilson recommended trying Kelson, West Point, Factor's Pier and Scart Isle, and all were given a good going over by our 4 boats. He also recommended a clan chief, a particular favourite of Dougie Skedd's. And Dougie fished it and took a stockie brownie on it out from Kelson, early doors on a DI-4.

And I'm afraid that is about all there is to report. Stewart Barnes caught a big perch. Eric Begbie had a swirl to his bob fly at St Serf's. Alan Morrison and John Wastle both covered a rise between Scart and Green Isle. I had one chance all night to cover a rise and my rod got so excited it flew apart at the middle joint! Just about the time an evening rise should have got going, it went deader than a dead thing.

Saturday, 30th July

Butterstone Loch, Day Session

A day of near perfect conditions, which helped to compensate for this outing falling during the dodgy period in the season (note the last Lindores, Portmore and Leven reports!). The only things not perfect were the breeze, which came and went from just about every point of the compass, and the temperature, which was fine except when the breeze was from the predominant direction of NE,

whereupon it had a right sharp edge to it. The water seemed like it had cooled down a bit from the recent heatwave, and clarity was OK, if short of gin-like.

There was a carpet of buzzer shucks at the start of the session, which gradually got taken away by some oncey risers, assorted ducks, and the breeze. After that, there were damsels (below), a few stone flies, sedges and the odd genuine mayfly on the go throughout the day. The fish were high in the water and the bailiff reported that nymphing tactics were doing most of the damage. We found plenty fish in the course of the day -- indeed high in the water. Only problem was that they were decidedly indifferent about committing to solid takes. This resulted in fish missed, fish lost in play, and fish coming short to the fly. Sport, though! Those that were taken came from all round the water, though few folk ventured right out into the middle. Apart from a couple that fell to slime line and WetCel I, all our fish were caught on floating line.

Adam Marr (below), over on holiday from Hong Kong, hadn't wet a line for 2 years. However, he soon showed that he had not got too rusty, taking 3 to Diawl Bachs and one on dries (hare's ear F-fly). Adam's 4 fish weighed in at 9 lb 4 oz. He would have had 5 for about 35 lb if the huge beast that took his dry late in the day had stuck. It shifted about a bathful of water on the take! John Gibson was the only other 4 fish man, taking 2 on buzzer pupes and 2 on dry fly (balloon caddis). John's partner Tommy had 3 to a green buzzer.

John Robertson had 3 to a goldhead brown stone fly nymph (not a bad likeness of a mayfly nymph). John Miller and Eric Singer took 5 between them, all on Diawl Bachs. Dougie Skedd had a brace to dry sedge and claret buzzer. After getting only one to washing line tactics, your correspondent went on to a team of Leadbetter-style suspender buzzers (tied to float, but failing and being labelled "neutral density"). They got quite a lot of interest, though only 2 hung on, both to a (highly frotered) hare's ear one.

The Club's 9 rods weighed in 24 fish for 45 lb 6 oz (no C&R on offer due to the stressed condition of the fish in the warm water).

Note to anyone going to Butterstone -- leave your nets, drogues and anchors at home. Nets and anchors are supplied by the fishery. This is to combat the spread of parasites. You can take your electric outboards, but must dip them in the barrel of disinfectant before putting them on the boats.

Sunday, 14th August

Glencorse, Day Session

This outing was originally scheduled to take place at Ballo, but the management there took the majority of the boats off the water to concentrate on bank-based bait fishing! Oh, well... Having had a good outing at Glencorse in June, we sought

refuge same. And we were glad we did, as we got a cracking day... again. It was a pity there were only 8 of us.

Many other waters have been struggling to provide sport in August due to high temperatures and stagnating water. With several water inlets, and a good depth over much of the reservoir, Glencorse seems to have managed to keep sport going at a high level.

A weather system ran its course over the day, starting cloudy, turning to rain, clearing up early afternoon, and ending up bright sun. Wind was light and variable, and the water was in good nick. Not much real fly about -- possibly due to the damp, but there was a fall of tiny black scrots that made the fish tricky while they were on the go. Essentially, everyone fished dry fly and everyone caught fish, our 8 rods averaging 9 per man -- really excellent, given the tales of how other waters have been struggling. The fish were a healthy mix of stockie and resident rainbows and blues, plus wild brownies. Several nice browns over 10 inches were caught and returned.

Everyone fished around the water a bit, but the bulk of the catch came from 2 main areas: the bays half way up the road shore, and the narrow top end. The Macdonalds, Ian, Gavin and Callum, Tommy Steven, Adrian Coats and m'self concentrated on the bays, while Dougie Skedd and Trevor Gibson had the top end to themselves. (Apart, that is, from when 2 Irishmen rowed all the way up, only for them to row back down 5 minutes later. What was that about? -- must have seen Dougie and Trevor!)

Flies used by the 8 rods reads quite conservatively: heather fly (12 + 14), claret Klinkhammer (10), black/red Shipmans (12), hare's ear F-fly, black F-fly, half-hog (12), Adams Klinkhammer (12), daddy-long-legs (10).

Dougie Skedd just pipped the others for top bag, with 15. Dougie commented, *"The fish in the morning were mostly from covers to tiny dimpling rises. In the afternoon they were mostly to figure-of-eighted flies. The fish came pretty much equally to the two flies that I was using. The blues seemed to favour the Klinkhammer and the rainbows seemed to favour the shippie! The browns all came to the klinkie."*

The Club's 8 rods caught 72 fish. (Thanks Ballo!)

Sunday, 21st August

Coldingham Loch, Day Session

The Weather Gods were having another laugh at our expense. Frazzled all session long, it was just starting to cloud over nicely as we headed up the road. Just to rub salt in, I got soaked unloading the car when I got home!

This was our first Club outing to Coldingham, and we found the loch in fine fettle, with the water gin-clear and well-oxygenated, despite the August temperatures (due in no small part to the aerator -- one of very few on Scottish waters -- see pic below). Hatches seemed to consist of a just a few sedges although, this being heather fly time, those who fished dries and went for heathers caught fish on them.

Reports were that the loch was fishing well, however the weather caused a downturn in that reckoning! As well as almost unbroken sunshine, we had a blustery south wind build up as the day progressed -- never a good direction at Coldingham in my experience.

Just about any method and any fly was worth a fish or two, but not many more than that. Most were taken on floating line, though. Eric Singer and Walter Mowat had 5 to lures. Ian and Callum Mac had fish to dries -- F-fly -- and Diawl Bach. Stewart Barnes and Gavin Mac also had fish to dries -- heather fly, red sedge and daddy -- plus one to a snatcher. Tommy Steven slow-fished buzzers and Diawl Bachs for the top bag of 6, while boat partner Euan Cluness took 4 to a dry heather fly. Adrian Coats and Greg Milne took fish on good old wet flies.

John Robertson and Richard Goddard had 4-apiece in their boat. John's secret weapon was this goldhead hare's ear nymph, tied on a mayfly hook. Richard had fish to Diawl Bach, black hopper and a borrowed copy of John's hare's ear. My sport came in 2 short bursts, the first fishing a team of neutral density suspender buzzers, and the second figure-of-eighting nymphs on a slow glass.

Most of the fish taken on dry flies were taken while anchored. Coldingham is a bit small to do much drifting, so anchoring is the norm. However, unless there is a supply of fish to throw at, dries are at a bit of a disadvantage in an anchored boat. There were really only a few sporadic oncers to throw at. Nevertheless, Stewart and Euan reported catching their fish mostly from covers.

The Club's 15 rods landed a total of 41 fish.

Saturday, 3rd September

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

Weather forecast wrong again, but we were most glad it was. Instead of the unbroken sunshine and stiff southerly they predicted, we had about 50% cloud cover, with a light easterly, a.m. turning to a light to moderate southerly, p.m. The Lake had been fishing well, and was full of fish, so no excuses if we couldn't catch some. The clarity looked good as well, and there was evidence of large hatches of *Dixa spp* buzzers: loads of shucks on the water. The fish had also been feeding on shield bugs and various other terrestrials, including daddies.

The main spread of fish seemed to be from the rookery, out and round the reeds by Sam's point and down the hotel shore, right to the harbour, round by the launch pier and the pink buoy (that isn't there) and out from the shoulder of the road shore. However, top bag of the day, the 14 taken by Jimmy Millar, came from off the peninsula, the gap between the islands, and the heronry. Jimmy took his early fish figure-of-eighting a damsel on a floater, but switched to dries when he and boat partner Alan Morrison went into the quiet water in the heronry to look for risers. Jimmy reports: "You could have been forgiven for thinking there were none there unless you sat quietly and waited for them to appear. The fish further east seemed reluctant to take a dry properly, but the heronry fish were much more obliging." Jimmy used a claret klinkhammer to target the risers.

Many of the others echoed Jimmy's comments about the fish at the eastern end being difficult to take on dries. Earlier in the week, John Miller and I had been out and I found the fish ignoring my smaller, slimmer dries, while they wellied John's bushy hopper. With daddies and shield bugs about, they were maybe looking for a good mouthful when they got fed up with eating *Dixa* shucks. So... me and Steve Greig set out with size 10 bushy hoppers... and for a while it worked great. We took 5 each on our first drift -- a great long one from the hotel to the rookery. However, after our early success, someone turned the house lights up and after that we found we needed a switch to pulling to keep the landing net busy. A bit of trial and error produced the best combo of: floating line, figure-of-eight retrieve, slim nymphs on the droppers and a goldhead lure on the tail (yellow dancer was a good one). Eventually they went off all that malarkey and we had our last bit of action with dries and nymphs out from the shoulder.

Alan Holbrook was another to crack it with the eastern end fish and the dries, as he took 11 along the road shore on a claret hopper. John Gibson and Fraser Gault also fished the road shore, and along to the quarry. They had half a dozen to boobies and nymphs. The 2 Johns, Miller and Robertson took 7 at Sam's point and Gateside bay, to hoppers in claret, black and ginger... and orange blob and yellow dancer.

Poor Eric Singer broke his arm -- we wish him a speedy recovery -- so Ken Cockburn fished on his own. Ken stuck to wee traditionals and showed they still take fish, as he landed 4 and lost as many again, to butcher and Wickham's in size 14.

The Club's 17 rods landed 77 fish. I think we had about as many blues as rainbows. The blues are cracking fish!

Saturday, 10th September

Loch Leven, Day Session

Sadly, I missed this outing, as I was attending the funeral of Club Member, and life-long fisherman, Gordon Grant. A gentler, more easy-going man would be hard to find. Gordon was secretary of the Norhet Angling Club for 14 years and also had

long associations and official duties with the Cramond Angling Club. He will be missed by all who knew him. With others from our Club at Gordon's funeral, this outing was reduced to 2 boats.

Dougie Skedd reports...

On the way up to 'Tombstone', the weather was suitably dreich for what could turn out to be the last trip to the once famous venue by our Club. The word in the howf was that the loch was fishing *a bit*, with some reasonable catches being weighed in. The advice from Michael Wilson was that, given the wind direction (east), the ledge that runs from the elbow to the east buoy would be the best bet. An honourable mention was also given to the infamous pipe area.

My boat partner, John Miller and I decided to try the east buoy/horseshoe drifts. On each of our first two drifts, as we passed over the ledge, a fish took hold. Two drifts, two decent wild fish! Not bad for the 'Double-L' these days. Was this to be a red letter day? It was not. We had been seeing fish priming in the area since we started fishing. Now we were seeing nothing and were getting no interest from the trout. A move was in order. We motored along the line of buoys to the other end of the ledge and fished from the north buoy to the elbow -- without result. We saw a number of boats in the 'pipe' area and decided to see if we could get a bit of sport -- albeit from stockies. On our way over we saw our other boat and they revealed that they had caught only one fish. The reason for the boat activity immediately became apparent when we arrived. A large number of fish were running up the hatchery burn, probably attracted by the rise in water level brought about by the overnight rain. These fish had only one thing on their minds -- and it wasn't flies! However, a bit further out a few fish were showing. These guys refused the dry flies that were offered, but a few were prepared to grab at John's pulled trads. Three joined us in the boat. And that was it.

All things considered, the day was very disappointing. We would have expected better from perfect conditions: solid overcast, steady breeze and although it was a bit cool, it is September. At the end of the day, all our fish came to wets on a DI-3: two on a clan chief, one on a Kate McLaren and two on a Dunkeld variant. The other boat's fish is a mystery to me, although I know it weighed 1 lb 5oz.

Total for 4 rods: 6 fish

Monday, 19th September

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

If I was to list the 20 soggiest days fishing I've ever had (I would never remember them, but just go with this), I would bet money that the Lake of Menteith would feature in about a third of them. And this day would be a contender for a place. The feature of the forecast that everyone was talking about in the car park

was the southerly gales. Don't know what happened to them, but we were eternally grateful that we didn't have that on top of all the rain we did get! It started after 5 minutes fishing, and was steady until about 4 o'clock, whereafter it eased, firstly to a drizzle, then to a light drizzle, then to a smir, back to drizzle for a bit, then just as we were all heading in I could swear it was almost dry. Wind was a light south-westerly all day. Difficult to tell what the temperature was like when you are all hopped up to the nines.

The word from Quint was that Lochend and Gateside were the 'in' places. I was on my ownsome (last minute call-off), and I have come to really dislike fishing in Gateside these last few years (not sure why), so I headed for Lochend. There were quite a few boats right in Lochend bay, so I headed into the Todhole area. I had set up 2 rods: one with nymphs on a slow glass (been working well), and one with a set of biggish dries (same). Conditions looked good right at the start and I picked up the dries. I pulled off a few yards of line and cast the team out to wet the nylon before I ran it through my leadersink. Before I even got the sinkant out my pocket, a fish head-and-tailed the black Klinkhammer I had put on the bob. One cast: one fish! Good start. Before I even got the flies back in the water, the rain started. Normally at the Lake, rain spells disaster for fishing dries. However, buoyed by my good start, I stayed with the dries. I was glad I did, as I continued to get interest to them.

I was seeing a reasonable number of rises. Only ever oncurs, and apart from one cover that had 2 goes without nailing me, all my takes were out the blue. I fresh-aired a few, and there were a few others that splashed in that way that tells you you are unlikely to hit solid when you lift. The ones that did stick were cracking takes, though. S....L....O....W.... The sort that say that you can wait until October if you like before you lift the rod.

As well as the black Klinkhammer, fish came to fiery brown hopper, half-hog, claret hopper and daddy. However, all the time, the rate of offers was diminishing. By about one o'clock, sport had slackened off. I reckoned the rain was just too heavy and I picked up the other rod. That kept things going sure enough, and a figure-of-eight retrieve of the floating line saw steady sport throughout the afternoon to a mini white tadpole and a black snatcher.

The two Dougies, Skedd and Goddard, started down at Lochend, but not finding fish there they worked their way round the water, ending up in the rookery/Sam's point area. Dougie S eventually got tuned in quite late in the day, finding that the roly-poly retrieve was to the fishes' liking. Dougie took 8 to fast glass, Texas Rose muddler and minkie.

Fishing in the heronry, Tommy Steven and Stewart Barnes had 9 to their boat. Stewart fished a slow draw Diawl Bach and yellow dancer on an intermediate, while Tommy went with a washing line of yellow and damsel boobies either side of a red snatcher.

John Miller took 4 to Diawl Bach, goldhead PTN and white lure, all fished on the floater at Gateside and later at Todhole. Ken Mclean had 2 to silver invicta, while Fraser Gault had 3 to mini lures at Dog Isle and Lochend.

The Club's 15 rods landed 48 fish.

Saturday, 24th September

Portmore Loch, Day Session

A chilly, bright start to the day. The wind picked up a bit from the south later, bringing good cloud cover. The temperature improved a bit as well, but in the cloud the breeze had a really raw edge to it. The water was crystal clear, but still had a suspension of ball algae in the downwind areas. There were still shoals of sticklebacks in evidence and Stevie reported that spectacular fry-bashing sessions had been happening on the calm days. As the day progressed, a trickle of lake olives came down the water. Unfortunately, the fish were not interested in them. The reports coming in the past week or so all said that Portmore was fishing very well, and that dries, dries, dries were the answer. Alas, the marriage made in Hell that seems to be Portmore and the Heriot's club continued! Dries were a complete waste of time and effort. In fact, most things seemed to be a complete waste of time and effort.

The only spell of real action came late morning from the lonesome pine to the alders in the big bay. The several boats fishing there all seemed to pick up a fish or two, mostly to yellow or white boobies on medium sinkers, such as DI-3. The only fish caught by other means went as follows: Jimmy Millar had two on a hot-head damsel on floating line, mesel' one on a cruncher and slow glass, and Ron McCarron one on a silver muddler and slow sink.

Best bags were by Tommy Steven with 4, and Richard Goddard with 5. Richard took 2 in the early spell mentioned above, then had 3 rapid in the last hour, anchored off the home shore.

The club's total for 17 rods was 16 fish

Saturday, 15th October

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

A superb day for the last competitive outing of the season -- albeit of mixed conditions. It started cloudy and calm, went to sunny and calm, then to sunny with a slight ripple, then to cloudy with a moderate east/south easterly breeze, then to cloudy with a slight ripple. Douglas's top tip area-wise was the crannog to Sam's point -- and that's exactly where we found the most fish. The water was gin-clear and there were buzzers hatching (been loads and loads of buzzers on The Lake this back end).

Most of us gave dries a good go, but whereas in the past month or so they have been working well, there was something in the fishes' behaviour today that made them damned tricky to catch on dries. Ian Mac and I spent about a third of the day on dries for a total of about half a dozen assorted swirls, looks and fresh-air shots. Allan Everington and Bob Temple found plenty of risers on a run from the peninsula across the back of the islands, but like most folk they found them hard to take on dries. Eventually Allan found some success on a wee river spider pattern. Dougie Skedd and John Gibson found it equally hard going. As we were giving up on the residents in the heronry and took our leave, they came in at our back. At least they managed a couple to a size 14 claret Shipman. John Miller was another to persevere with dries, taking a brace to a claret hopper in hotel bay/Sam's point area. Jimmy Millar and Fraser Gault thought they had struggled with dries -- because they only caught 9 fish between them! I thought that was superb, given how tricky we had found them. Jimmy and Fraser got the bulk of their fish off Shear point, to claret Klinkhammer, size 14 black Bob's bits and size 14 black shuttlecock CDC.

The bulk of our fish were taken, as mentioned above, around the area of the crannog to Sam's point. Alan Holbrook and Trevor left it late to get tuned in, but they eventually took 4 each to orange blobs on slime lines. It was a similar late show for Steve Grieg and guest Bob Whyte, who took 6 between them to white tadpoles on intermediate and floating line. Ian Mac and I relied on the same area for our sport. I went with ghost tip and Ian went with a slime line. We tuned in to a method of 2 sombre nymphs on the droppers and a goldhead tadpole on the tail.

Now, for anyone with a view on whether rainbows and blues behave the same or different... our first 8 fish in the boat consisted of 5 blues and 3 rainbows. All 5 blues went to one rod, and all 3 rainbows went to the other. Maybe just coincidence? After that, the sequence broke for both of us. Our killing flies were black snatcher, white tadpole and yellow dancer. Ian killed 5 fish for a mighty 14 lb. No wonder we were thinking they were hard to bring to the net!

2005 Club champion Tommy Steven had to go off home at about 4 o'clock, as he was not feeling well -- no doubt the result of having been in quite a bad car crash just the day before. Tommy recorded 4 on yellow booby and Hi-D in the same area before he went off.

The club's total for 16 rods was 46 fish.

We retired to Poppies hotel, Callander, for our annual meal and (curtailed) prize-giving ceremony (in addition to being club Champion, Tommy took the Cronies' Quaich trophy for the season's biggest fish: an 8 pounder from Linlithgow). After an excellent meal, Club President John Gibson presented Dougie Skedd with Tam's Trophy, for runner-up, and Alan Holbrook with the Singer Seniors' trophy.

Saturday, 22nd October

Linlithgow Loch, Day Session

Wonderfully low light levels for fishing (not for photography -- all shots had to be done at ISO 400) and light winds. Temperature started good as well, though dropped as an easterly breeze developed later in the day. Anyways, perfect fishing conditions for late October.

The loch was clearing from a late algal bloom, the remnants of which were still there, but the underlying clarity was true. Spoonings revealed *Corixae*, and not much else. Signs of autumn were everywhere. Geese were arriving from up north. The leaves were well on the turn, and falling.

The best of the fishing was concentrated at the extreme west and east ends of the loch, with the north shore also scoring. Fraser Gault had 3 to a hot head damsel and one to an orange blob, fished on slime line. Trevor and Alan had 3 in the boat to boobies, including a 5 pounder that took all 3 of Trevor's boobies before he realised it was on! Ian and Gavin Macdonald had 5 to their boat (for 16 lb 8 oz!), taken on Diawl Bach and bibio snatcher.

Dougie Skedd (above) and I had 4 apiece, mostly taken by drifting with floating lines. Dougie fished his flies static, taking 3 to Cove pheasant tail and one to a soldier palmer, all size 14. I had a couple on a holo Diawl Bach, one on an orange thorax Cove and one on a white tadpole, all by steady figure-of-eighting.

The Club's 12 rods landed 21 fish.

2006

Sunday, 19th March

Lindores Loch, Day Session

A new season is upon us. After last year's mild spring, which led to many fisheries experiencing overheated water problems by late June, this year has given us a very cold March, which might help to avoid such problems. Time will tell.

In the week leading up to our first outing, we had baltic conditions, with bitter easterlies, snow, sleet, strong winds and everything else you just don't want to know about when planning a fishing trip. However, historically, no matter how bad the weather in the run up, this outing pulls it all together on the day and gives us decent conditions. And, what do you know, it did it again! It wasn't tropical: not by a long chalk. But, winds were light, we had overcast skies with a wee cheep of sunshine to lift the temperature a degree or so just when it was most

needed, and all in all it was very pleasant. Water clarity was decent and there was a smattering of buzzers hatching all day.

Unfortunately, similarities with this outing in previous years kind of ended with the good weather. Not that it wasn't fishing well. Trevor and Alan had been out just the day before, and had filled their boots -- as had most others by all accounts. And that's usually bad news. A fishery that's had a pummelling one day seldom takes another the next day. Maybe that's an excuse for our inability to make the most of it, but it's amazing how often that has happened over the years.

As often happens in such situations, it started off looking like a repeat of the Saturday, as it seemed like every boat was into fish straight away. However, the signs were ominous, as very quickly the fish put their tin helmets on, and the rods fell silent, one by one. After that, it was very very hard going. Only John Robertson kept the fish coming in, as he got into a group in Milanda Bay, taking 9 to yellow dancier and mini-cat to a DI-3 and slow retrieve. Unfortunately for John's boat partner, Bob Temple, he had to depart early, and missed the best of the action!

Next best boat was the aforementioned Alan and Trevor, who managed 3 apiece to mini cats and black lures on intermediates, plus an odd one to nymphs on the floater.

There were 2 other bags of 3. Allan Everington took all his to a coral mini-lure and intermediate, while the other went to mini cats and black lure again. Most of the other rods struggled for a single fish. Nearly all the fish came from the home shore area.

The club's total for 12 rods was a rather disappointing 26 fish.

Saturday, 8th April

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

After a mild spell at the end of March, it was back to winter in Scotland at the start of April. Overnight rain fell on high ground as snow, so peaks such as Bens Lomond and Ledi were quite alpine. All very picture-skew! The weather during the week had been wild, wet and windy, so we were really quite lucky to get what we did. As we arrived, so did the rain, although that had the effect of flattening the breeze, so we started off fishing in a near flat clam. As soon as the rain cleared, buzzers started hatching and the resident fish started rising -- a good, decent rise too. They were in the area of the pink buoy (that isn't there), with a second group just off the shoulder of International Bay! We were caught out, having tackled up only with pulling rods and lure stuff (which the residents were not having). John and I got a second rod set up with dries as quick as we could, and we managed to take 3, with another couple of fresh-air shots. John had 2 to a black Klinkhammer, with my one taking a black raider.

However, just as we were thinking, "Here we go!", a glaring, brassy sun came out, a cool breeze got up... and the fish went down -- to stay down for the day! Ah well, it was nice to get an early one to dries!

Apart from that wee cameo, we found it hard going. We tried a variety of lines, a variety of flies, and we fished all-round the water. We finished with 3-apiece, the others having come 2 to a black tad (one each on DI-5 and slime line) and a damsel on a DI 3.

What fish we found were in Hotel Bay, at Dog Isle and at Lochend. While at Lochend, John landed a nice wee pike of about 5 lb (not John's fault he looks constipated -- I only had the big telephoto lens, and I had to get him to lean back to get everything in the frame!) As the day wore on, the signs were that the other boats were also finding it difficult -- as many on the move as drifting, and not many repeating a drift. When we came in, our boys confirmed our thoughts. What success they had was with DI-3 and DI-7, and notably mostly with various damselfly nymphs. Hare's ear snatcher, orange tadpole and booby also got their names on the scoresheet. Tommy Steven and Dougie Goddard had a brace each from the Butts to Lochend area, and there were a couple taken in Gateside.

A disappointing total -- 15 fish for 15 rods.

Sunday, 16th April

Lindores Loch, Day Session

Disappointing lead-up No. 1 was that the day before, Saturday, was the warmest, all-round nicest day of the year so far, and looked like it would repeat itself for us on Sunday. Alas, we got a strong, cold wind, and more brassy sunshine. Disappointing lead-up No. 2 was when Andy informed us it had fished really well on Saturday. When that happened in March, we got a bad dose of 'after the Lord Mayor's Show' on the Sunday. Thankfully, there was no repeat this time, and the fish kept it going for the whole weekend.

With such a strong breeze, it was mostly a case of sitting at anchor. And there was one problem, which was that the fish were gathered very tight into the area around the harbour. The boats that went up the loch, or over to the railway shore really didn't do much. Even when they came back and tried to get in to where it was happening, it was all a bit of a squeeze, and some folk were left on the outside, looking in.

Although the fish were clustered in the home bay, they were not all stockies. There were some semi-residents in there, feeding on *Daphnia* (note the incidence of orange in the successful patterns), and a few buzzers. Ian Macdonald and I gradually tuned ourselves in, arriving at a best bet of: Floating line, slow figure-of-eight retrieve, pair of nymphs (Diawl Bach and damselfly nymph) on fluorocarbon, with a goldhead orange tadpole on the tail.

Takes were coming at long range, early in the retrieve. Many of them were snatchy, and some almost imperceptible. We missed and dropped far more than we landed, but it was good sport. Very late on, takes suddenly started coming at the end of the retrieve -- on the hang. We reckoned that might mean they had dropped down in the water. We both picked up the other rod with the DI-3, and were both into a fish first cast!

As mentioned above, some of our boats found it hard going -- not their fault -- just circumstance of the localised distribution. Of those who stayed local and caught fish, Trevor Gibson was top scorer, with 16. Trevor fished an intermediate line, taking most of his fish on a blob. Alan Holbrook and Bob Norris did well with Bob on sinker and ace of spades (there's a blast from the past!) and Alan switching between orange lures on an intermediate and buzzers on a floater.

John Robertson and Tommy Steven shared 11 fish, with John on floater and DI-3 with mini-lures and a Montana, while Tommy split his time between floater & buzzers, and DI-7 & orange booby. Dougie Skedd took half a dozen to a figure-of-eighted DI-3 and minkie booby. And a mention goes to Bob Temple, who did best of those who were left on the outside looking in. Bob took 4 to a slow-retrieved intermediate and yellow dancer.

In all, the Club's 14 rods landed a total of 86 fish.

Sunday, 23rd April

Linlithgow Loch, Day Session

Another cold, bright and breezy day, although as with last week, the fish were on the fin. Also, as with last week, they were decidedly localised. There seemed to be 2 main groups. The first group, comprising mostly stockies, was situated in a spread about 50 yards out from the Palace Bank. The second group, comprising mostly semi-resident and resident fish were up the north-east corner.

The water had a bit of colour/suspended matter in it, but was fair to middling in clarity. There was a smattering of buzzers coming off throughout the day. The stockies were fairly high in the water and could be picked-off drifting with slime line tactics. The residents up the east end were coming to swinging nymph tactics -- on all positions of the cast, suggesting they were not holding any particular depth. A slime line and a white tadpole was a good fall-back for both stockies and residents.

Top rod of the day was Ian Macdonald, who took a couple up the west end, before heading east, and getting tuned in to the more resident fish. Ian swung a floating line with a combo of Diawl Bach and hare's ear. His son Callum chipped in with a bag to snatchers, blobs and damsels on floater and slime line.

Second best boat of the day was Tommy Steven and Club Secretary Stewart Barnes, who 'came from behind'. They only had 3 in the boat going into the afternoon period, when they settled in on the other side of the island from Ian Mac. That proved to be a smart move, as they got tore in about them, adding 14 more before the 4 o'clock finish. Tommy and Stewart both swung teams of buzzer pupae, in green, black and claret (size 12). Another good boat was Trevor and guest G Heseltine, who took 16 to assorted buzzers.

The club's total for 16 rods was 69 fish, 51 of which were returned.

Sunday, 30th April

Carron Valley Reservoir, Day Session

With the club having kicked Loch Leven into touch, Carron remains the only brown trout fishing on our fixture list. It was therefore a bit disappointing to see only 12 rods on it. The stay-at-homes missed a cracking day for it. It may have been a bit cool yet, and a bit too calm at times, but any day offered to you at Carron with a promise of nearly 100% high ceiling, you are going to take! The other important factor was that there was a terrific buzzer hatch. The water is stuffed with fish, and they were rising, on and off, all day long. The fish were in fine fettle too, and fighting well, particularly the stockies, though that may just have been a result of being a bigger average size than the wild fish.

The results at the end showed that it had been a water of two halves. Our 6 boats just happened to settle on 3 fishing up the far end, around Carron Bay and beyond, while 3 stayed between the harbour and Binns Bay. The 3 from up the far end returned catches of 25, 20 and 24, while the 3 from the near end returned catches of 8, 11 and 6. We suspect the reason was not that there were more fish up the top half, simply that the fish up the top half were taking better on the day.

What were they taking? Well, with buzzers hatching, and fish rising, most folk concentrated on dry fly. Everyone who fished dries found it tricky going at times, and everyone had a try with other tactics. Most of those back-up plans were worth a fish or two as well.

Dougie Skedd and Dougie Goddard's fish on dries came to sparkle gnat, claret Shipmans and dry bibio, with back-up of Connemarra black on floating line, and figure-of-eighted dries. Ian Macdonald and son Gavin's fish on dries came to CDC F-fly in black and hare's ear, with back-up of pulling on intermediate or floater with snatchers, black tadpoles and yellow dancer (shame!). Bob Whyte and I had our dry fly sport to CDC, Shipmans and hopper (all in black), with back-up of figure-of-eighted buzzers on the floater, and pulling trads such as black pennell on intermediate.

Alan Holbrook was by far the best of the rods who stayed closer to home. He had a bag of 9 to snatchers on floating line, along the road shore. Tommy Steven had half a dozen in Binns Bay to dries -- hare's ear CDC and dry bibio.

Of the club's catch of 94 fish, 15 were kept, for 15 lb 4 oz.

Saturday, 6th May

Lindores Loch, Evening Session

Cap'n F away fishing the Tay all weekend. Tommy Steven reports...

Very poor conditions for our first evening outing of the season -- a cold, strong SE wind, overcast and misty, with heavy rain for the last hour and a half! (Glad I was up the Tay, it was lovely up there -- Ed.)

Only an occasional fish was seen to rise later in the evening. Tommy had nothing until 8.30, then by a pure fluke (Tommy's words) hooked 3 at once, landing 2. Guest John Levy had 2, one after the other, at the start of the session, then had not another touch all evening. Tommy and John both took their fish on the far side from the harbour, on floating line and very slow-fished buzzer pupae.

The only other fish caught were one each by Dougie Skedd (on a booby) and Alan Holbrook (on a buzzer pupae).

That was it: 9 rods, 6 fish.

Sunday, 14th May

Coldingham Loch, Day Session

Our club's uncanny ability to attract the worst conditions for our outings were typified by this trip to Coldingham. Perched as it is on top of cliffs overlooking the North Sea, really the only thing you need to avoid is a biting cold easterly... and preferably bright sunshine. Aye, we got both in spades. In the afternoon, it clouded over. Not sure that helped any, as it just made it colder!

The loch was in superb condition (crystal clear) as were the fish. It is a very long time since I encountered fish that fought as long and hard. Even when finally landed, instead of needing to be held while they recovered their breath, they were off like scalded cats! They were a good size too, with a standard stamp of 2 lb, and many in the 3 to 4 lb class.

Most of our anglers got off to a flier, with quite a few landed in the first half hour. However, after that, it slowed up for many. Douglas Aitken had suggested that with the water so clear, fine leaders and imitative patterns may well be required. Patterns that featured on the score cards confirmed that: hare's ears, buzzers, Diawl Bachs and snatchers predominated in the early part of the day.

Our boat had a few in the morning to swinging nymph tactics. Douglas had also told us the fish were high in the water. If you want the advantage of the low visibility of fluoro, but also want to keep it high in the water (it sinks like a stone), you can try a washing line. Wee booby (eg damsel) on the tail, 2 nymphs on the droppers. Swing it round. The fluoro is so dense it pulls the booby under, but it comes through at a nice depth and this tactic worked quite well for a while.

While it was still bright sunshine, we started to see risers along to our right, near the point on the south bank. We could see nothing on the water, but the rises were very enthusiastic -- like they were sponging something large and adult. Maybe a beetle? Beetles often lie like icebergs, with 90% below water. Whatever, we couldn't resist having a go. We moved over and put up dries. Although the rises dried up almost as soon as we started, the fish were still in the mood, and the response was instantaneous. For about an hour we had fantastic sport. We never did find out what they were on, as we were fishing catch and release, however, most fish came to a black ethafoam beetle pattern and a half-hog.

Fishing the water with dries from an anchored boat (as opposed to casting to risers) is a bit un-natural. Presentation can be a bit dead. Pitching them out at 45 degrees gave them a chance to be swung round -- not unlike a floating version of the nymphs. While we were getting tuned in to this, others were also latching on to the chance to get onto dries. David Ewart had fish to a dry beetle pattern, while Ian Macdonald and Boyd Scott went on the drift and had the whole of the west arm to themselves. They caught with black dries, including bibio hopper.

The club's 16 rods landed 76 fish.

Monday, 22nd May

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

Oh dear... another report where the pictures are going to occupy a lot more space than the description of the club's successes. Not sure where we went wrong. The Lake has been fishing well. Didn't get a handle on how well the other boats had done, really. We saw a few fish caught. Most of them were very, very tight into the shore, and in calm conditions with boats moving little, there was not much scope to manoeuvre in, unless you were of the persuasion that says that you just muscle-in regardless. Thankfully, most of our guys play the game. Unfortunately, an increasing number of others do not. Boat 16: you know who you are! May the fleas of a thousand camels nest in your armpits.

Anyway (ranting over for now), as mentioned, we did not do well. It was blummin' cold for late May, with the breeze horribly variable and always from the easterly or northern quarters. The water clarity was poor as well -- probably the result of a sudden flush of rain after a dry spell. Excuses, excuses. Here's some more. There was quite a bit of fly around (decent black buzzers, small bright green buzzers, claret duns and mayflies), which should have given sport with dry fly. Unfortunately, the fish proved very tricky to tempt with dries. I was on and off dries throughout the day, and only nailed a couple very late on, with maybe half a dozen other chances. Size 14 black hopper and dark F-fly were the successful patterns. The best chance came in the bay immediately to the east of Sam's point, where a tight wee group of fish started showing between 3 and 5 p.m. Very oncey, but do-able if you could get a throw at them.

Quint and Douglas had both told us that up the top end was doing best, and that we should stick to small flies, fished slow. Many of the boats headed up that way, and it was soon clear that those that favoured the southern side (over by the plantation and the silage pits) were doing nothing (all moving away), while those that chose the northern side (up the reeds inside of Dog Island) were catching fish. My boat partner, Ken Maclean, fished wee trads on an intermediate line (green-tail Kate, silver Invicta and black pennell), and would have done as well as anyone, had he not lost 3 fish well into play. I went with a washing line set-up on ghost-tip: black snatcher, holo-Diawl Bach and wee booby on the tail, figure-of-eighted. That was worth 2 fish, one to each of the nymphs.

Ian Macdonald fished the same area, and later Kate's brae and Lochend, taking 4 to slime line and orange and black cormorants and a white lure. Bob Whyte had a brace to cat's whisker on the floater, at Dog Isle and below Sam's Point, while Dougie Skedd also had 2, to a peach muddler on a DI-2 in Sandy Bay.

Our top boat was Dougie Goddard and Alan Duncan, with 7 fish. Dougie figure-of-eighted Diawl Bachs on the floater, while Alan did same on intermediate line. They had most of their fish between the hotel and Sam's point.

The Club's total for 14 rods was 22 fish.

Saturday, 27th May

Portmore Loch, Evening Session

A tiny outing of just 3 boats, this one. And we were the only 3 boats out. We probably were not helped by the fact that there had been a competition fished during the day session, so a lot of fish would have had their tin helmets on by the time we got after them. In addition, it was blowing a hooly from, well, it seemed like every direction at once, but was probably mostly westerly. We tried anchoring for a while, but with only one anchor, the boat was actually doing 360 degree turns about it! A few squalls came over as well during the evening, then

for good measure the temperature plummeted from about 16 degrees, to about 6. Not good conditions for evening fishing.

There were fish about though. The word was to fish the sheltered water around the Laird's Bay with small black dries. While most of us went with that and found it was no good, John Dewar went with a floating line and a team of black buzzers and quickly bagged a couple. We changed to similar, and, after getting one to an epoxy buzzer on the top dropper, I put a wee black booby on the tail to hold the other flies up in the water. That proved to be an accidentally good move, as 2 fish took the booby!

Tommy Steven also made the change and likewise bagged a couple of fish to buzzers. That seemed to signal the end of the fishes' willingness to take a nymph, as everyone went quiet.

It was coming up on 9 o'clock, and although there was hardly a fish to be seen rising, I thought it was worth trying a drift with dries. We gave it a go, and, surprise-surprise, two fish came out the blue to size 12 half-hog and CDC. Just before last knockings a couple of feeding fish appeared, and a cover got one of them. Meanwhile, John Miller had gone up into the top bay, out from the burn mouth, where one or two risers appeared. Attempts with dries failed, but John went back to black buzzers and took a couple of late fish.

A 2-fish per rod average in very poor conditions was not a bad result.

Saturday, 3rd June

Glencorse, Day Session

Cap'n F away up the North Esk. Tommy Steven looked after the outing and supplied the SP.

It was a very sunny, warm, and very windy day. The water was clear, and at 11 C. Hatches consisted of a few hawthorns and small buzzers. In these conditions, there were few rising fish to be seen. Tommy himself had a superb day, and had his best ever catch on a club outing. He fished close to home and above the island, onto the breakwater. Tommy's set-up was a DI-3 with a 20 foot leader of 12lb fluorocarbon. His team consisted of a Hot-head damsel (size 10), sunburst mini-nobbler and kingfisher (variant) lure. He fished a long, 30 yard cast, with a fast retrieve, interspersed with dead stops. A long hang at the end induced many ferocious takes. Tommy said that although many boats used a drogue in the strong wind, he felt he did better without one.

Tommy commented on the very high quality of the fish. His best of the day was a blue of 5.5-6 lb, which fought like a grilse!

John Robertson was another man to catch his fish on DI-3/fishing in the home area. Bob Whyte and Ron McCarron had an excellent day, taking 4 each and returning 10 more. They both fished DI-3 as well, which was obviously the line to be on (though Bob took some fish on an intermediate). Good old cat's whisker was their stand-out pattern, with orange blob and Kate McLaren also taking fish. They mentioned fishing slow and deep, and having fished the bay with the bridge and down the shore at the top end.

With all the sunk line and lures stuff going on close to home, a "good on ye" goes to John Miller, who bucked the trend to take a bag away up the west end, on dries and nymphs. John had 7 to brown and claret hoppers (*John -- you're colour-blind and can't tell brown from claret! -- Ed.*) and a brace to Diawl Bachs.

As usual, the club was given a generous and helpful reception, and was donated a bottle of whisky just for booking 7 boats!

The Club's 12 rods landed 74 fish.

Sunday, 11th June

Frandy, Day Session

Cap'n F away on leave. Alan Morrison reports.

When we arrived the weather was shaping up to be similar to the previous day, not a cloud in the sky and scorchio! The previous day had actually been bright and breezy with the East wind strong enough almost to stop fishing. However, we had a much milder wind, albeit with blue skies and temperatures in the seventies.

This didn't stop the fish though, and Dougie Skedd was into them straight away, taking 3 and losing another in his first drift across the reservoir. He took another four on a drift along the far side, from opposite the hut up to the little bay half way, leaving his boat partner (your humble scribe), who could only manage one at this stage, trailing in his wake.

Elsewhere, most of the Club's boats elected to fish at or around the dam area and were picking up fish steadily, mainly to dries such as claret and black hoppers. Later in the morning the wind got up a bit, changed direction, and the fish predictably went down. However, after an hour or two conditions started to settle again and the fish were back on. For Dougie Skedd and I it was any colour as long as it was claret, with Shipman's, hoppers and Klinkhammers all scoring heavily. For Tommy Steven's who was out on his own all day after a no show, black was the colour and a pearly bibio did the damage. Tommy stayed in the home shore area, from the hut to the right corner of the dam, all day and picked up 8. John Gibson and Ian McDonald picked up 16 between them from the same general area on balloon caddis and hoppers. Ivor and Lenny picked up 4 on dries in and around the dam. One feature that everyone noticed was how hard-fighting

the fish were. They seemed to be supercharged and there were a few lumps around which took a bit of getting in, particularly the blues (see photo).

Virtually all our fish were taken on dries which made for great top-of-the-water sport. The osprey put in an afternoon appearance, and curlews, wagtails and swallows were present all day long.

Dougie Skedd and I finished top boat with 27 fish (26 rainbows and a brown) with Dougie finishing up as top rod with 16 rainbows.

The Club's total for 11 rods was 27 fish weighed-in for 55lb, with 37 others returned.

Sunday, 18th June

Linlithgow Loch, Day Session

Stewart Barnes reports...

Regrettably, this report is missing any photographs, as our usual reporter has been enjoying the fishing at Blagdon and Chew Valley over the past week. Even more regrettably, the report is missing a lot of fish too, particularly from your substitute correspondent, who returned a resounding blank on his first outing in 8 weeks, indeed ending up without even an offer. The fact that Club Champion Tommy Steven was in the same boat, in both meanings of the term, wasn't a lot of consolation.

The day looked really promising - mild, overcast, steady ripple, exactly what you would have wanted on a June day at Linlithgow. When John Robertson's rod was seen bending seconds after he started fishing, hopes were high, particularly as he was fishing buzzers. However, this turned out to be a false dawn and his first fish also turned out to be his last. Gradually, the true picture started to materialise. Firstly, there were a lot of boats still tied to the jetty. Secondly there was a lot of boat movement about the loch, and thirdly, by lunchtime there were a lot of big zeros being signalled between boats. It is difficult to put a finger on the problem. The water was reasonably clear but was certainly very warm and a few distressed fish were seen jumping out of the water early in the day. Linlithgow normally carries a good head of stock so that shouldn't have been an issue. The general opinion was that the fish simply weren't in the mood, which, on what appeared to be such a good fishing day, was very disappointing. The fact that the afternoon turned into a very wet one didn't help matters, and, although this is the extended outing at Linlithgow, very few stayed the pace until 6.00 pm.

Some members deserve praise for their perseverance and did manage the odd fish. Top rod was Trevor Gibson with three trout. One was taken on a buzzer, but he stuck mainly to Hi D and booby tactics. His guest Gary Heseltine caught two on

DI3 and booby, making them by far the best boat. Euan Cluness managed two on what one might have thought was an unlikely tactic -- traditionals and floater. Other anglers managed one fish, but blanks were all too common. Needless to say no-one opted to stay on after the weigh-in.

Sunday, 25th June

Lindores Loch, Day Session

Having had plenty warm, overcast days recently, it was very frustrating to get a cold, stiff easterly, *and* bright sunshine, for our June trip to Lindores. The word was to fish dries, regardless of the conditions. I remembered that one of the reasons we had such a hard time of it on the ill-fated outing last year (when the club landed just 2 fish) was that we didn't fish high enough in the water. On that occasion the water was very coloured, and it didn't seem an option to fish dries. Perhaps we should have. On this occasion the water was beautifully clear, and Stewart Barnes and I both opted to go with the advice and we started on dries. I'm glad we did, as we didn't fish anything else all day. A fish landed, and another turned on the first short drift put our minds at rest regarding the cool, bright conditions.

Spooning the first one showed it had been feeding well, mostly on large buzzer shucks, but with some big pupae present, a few still kicking. I like a ginger Shipman for a shuck imitation, and I put one on, together with a claret Klinkhammer and an Adams hopper (12). Apart from a covered riser that took the Klinkie, it was the hopper that was getting all the action. Probably the shucks had all been mopped up at first light. The surface was pretty clean, with just the odd big buzzer hatching (the Adams was bang-on as a match). At the other end of the boat, Stewart was doing equally well. He had put on a hare's ear hopper and a half-hog (12), and was getting fish to both. As the breeze was stiffening all the while, I changed the Shipman for a full-on sedge-hog (10). Wow! Instant success. Should have changed about 3 drifts ago. The Adams hopper and the sedgehog shared the work from that point on. The sport was evenly spread throughout the day, with brief flurries when an odd cloud passed over the sun.

The fish were cracking quality residents, some of which let the backing joint see daylight. The offers we got were an amazing array. Some just sucked the fly down with barely a mark if you were not looking closely. Some did the classic, slow, rolling head-and-tail, as if they had all day to take the fly. Others came screaming in from across the ripple on an intercept course and hit the fly (or missed it completely) as if it was going out of fashion. No idea what they were on about. Our conversion rate was not very good, with many fresh-air shots, and others jagged, lost, pinged-off, etc. We finished with 20 to the boat (most returned), but if we had done better with our chances, it could have been nearly double that. If you like dry fly fishing, get yourself up to Lindores now!

Tommy Steven also spent the day on dries, taking 9 to Claret Hopper and CDC Daddy, both size 10. The fish were essentially right down the middle of the loch, with a couple of hot-spots: level with the island, and about 150 yards directly the far side of the island.

Others had success with alternative methods. Trevor Gibson had his fish to snatchers, while Dougie Skedd and Bob Norris both had a bag fishing Chew/Blagdon-style: floating line, with a team of Diawl Bachs, fished static on the drift -- just take up the slack as the boat moves forward.

Our 10 rods landed 45 fish. Excellent, given the rubbish conditions.

Friday, 30th June

Portmore Loch, Evening Session

One evening at Portmore we will get nice settled weather of a sort conducive to good fishing. One evening... maybe... but this wasn't it. It was quite decent during the day -- gentle breeze, warm and cloudy. When we arrived, the wind was blowing quite stiff, down the loch, as usual, but it dropped away nicely as the evening progressed. As we started out, the rain came on. Still not too bad. However, no sooner had the rain gone off, but the 100% ceiling dissipated in what seemed like seconds, until only the horizon had any cloud. All we had was a big orange arc lamp burning down onto us. The rain had cleared the air as well, so it was about as bright as it gets!

We had pretty much all decided to fish dries too. The reports were that dries were the best bet, and, even though the sun nearly ruined the middle part of the evening (there were one or two caught then), most folk seemed happy to sit and wait, rather than do much experimenting downstairs. The water was high, with a bit of ball algae building up, but the underlying clarity was very good. Fly hatches consisted of a few of everything -- terrestrials, buzzers, sedges and *Caenis*. Spoonings showed same -- a little of everything.

The evening's sport fell into 2 camps. One option was to stick it out all evening up the top, where there was no great rise, but there were little groups of fish popping up here and there throughout the evening. Mike Phillips and guest Colin McLean went with that and, after a slow start, they finally got going with black F-fly and black Klinkhammer.

The second option was to fish up the top until the last hour or so, and then to go down to the area from the old car park to the dam, and cash-in on the late rise of sedge feeders. Fraser Gault and Alan Duncan went with this, taking 9 between them to elk hair emerger patterns in golden olive and claret. They reported a terrific late rise out in the middle, up from the dam.

Dougie Skedd and Tommy Steven also went with the split area approach, and they had top boat with 11, taken on half-hog, claret hopper, claret Shipman and sparkle gnat. Cap'n F chipped-in with fish to half-hog, claret Klinkhammer and a big orange thorax Cove PTN (OK, not everyone was patient enough to avoid experimenting downstairs).

The club's total for 10 rods was 29 fish.

Friday, 14th July

Glencorse, Evening Session

A beautiful summer evening. We had a N-easterly at the start, no doubt just a sea breeze coming south, and it died away as the evening progressed, to be replaced by a very light westerly. Ideal conditions for *Caenis*, and, as often happens when *Caenis* are coming later, the fish went doggo soon after the start -- no point mooching about just now, when the banquet is being served in an hour or so!

Alan Morrison had some early sport to dry fly at the top end (big claret Klinkhammer), and John Robertson picked up a fish, down deep on a black and white tin-head. Bill Scobie took one up the top end on a Montana and floating line, and there were one or two others caught to a variety of methods. However, all this was the precursor to the *Caenis* activity to come.

There was no real blizzard of *Caenis*, and the number that hatched was about right to give you a reasonable chance to get a response from the fish. However, I and several others found it very hard going, getting ignored, or refused time and time again. Not sure about how much of a role the area played in proceedings. There were less *Caenis* and less fish rising in the middle zone. John Miller fished here, and took 4 fish to hoppers, in claret and orange. Eric Begbie was another to avoid *Caenis* imitations and he had success with a bibio CDC hopper. I also gave up on imitation before the end, and did better with a sedgehog. Ken Cockburn did likewise and took fish on a Klinkhammer. Ken and I had limited success earlier, when trying to use a sparkle gnat to imitate the *Caenis*.

There were only 2 rods who showed everyone else how to catch fish in a *Caenis* hatch. The area to be was right up the far end. When the rise was at its peak, there were more fish than that at which you could shake a stick. Alan Morrison found that lengthening his leader to about 18 foot (long for fishing dries) helped to avoid spooking the fish when covered. Alan's imitative fly was a hare's ear Shipman. Doesn't look much like a *Caenis*, but it looks a lot like the little floating rafts of shucks, stillborns and spinners that conglomerate on the surface. Alan caught and returned 8 fish.

Top rod was Dougie Skedd, who did exceptionally well, taking 10 fish, mostly on a sparkle gnat. I asked Dougie for details of his evening...

"I took eight of the ten fish on a sparkle gnat (the other two picked up a red Klinkhamer, in a twelve, and a claret Shipman's in a fourteen, but that was before the main event). Once the *Caenis* got going I set up a single size fourteen sparkle gnat on a sixteen foot leader, tapered to 2 lb 12 oz double strength (well, I was using my four-weight!). As long as I could see what the fish were doing and where they were going I felt I was in with a chance. The fly had to be right on the button, and a floating leader or bad presentation would spook the (intended) victim. I took most of my fish in the earlier stages of the hatch -- when the fish were still picking (rather than mopping-up). I was quite suddenly aware that fish were beginning to show, but hadn't seen any *Caenis* in the air so I hadn't changed yet. I put the flies on the edge of a slicky bit where a fish had moved a few times, and he found it right away. He took the red Klinkhamer. I began to see *Caenis*, so I rigged up with a claret Shipman's and a sparkle gnat, both fourteens. I cast into the slicky water again and had another right away on the Shipman's. Then they got trickier, refusing and spooking away. That's when I switched to 'extreme *Caenis*' mode, with the thinnest leader that I had with me and a single, smallish fly, on a fair length of leader too. That led to a bit of a purple patch and I got the bulk of my catch in that period. The fish were picking away steadily and weren't too much into the wallowing gurgles. Things got silly for a while after that, and the fish were just swilling like pigs at the surface. I jugged loads of fish and dropped a fair few as well. I think the leader actually pulls the fly out of their mouths when they're at that and you don't hook them well at all. One fish took some stuff off the surface where my leader was sitting. I ignored it, but was surprised to see my fly beginning to skate across the surface. I was even more surprised when the line went tight as the fish hooked itself. It had got the leader between its jaws and swam away with it. It fell off -- no surprise. I had another wee spell as the light went down, but a lot of those didn't stick properly either, since I couldn't really see what was going on and couldn't time things right. An interesting evening. *Caenis* hatches always provide a bit of challenge and make you work for your fish.

A distillation of forty-odd years of looking forward to -- and coping with -- *Caenis* hatches...

Don't try to match the hatch, it doesn't work since there's too much natural stuff and the fish will not pick out just another one of whatever it is.

Don't be fooled into fishing too small. My experience is that a fourteen is about right, size-wise and even if it's a copy sort of pattern like a grey duster it will need to stand out a bit.

Fish as fine as you can but if you can't sink it -- and that was a big problem on Friday -- don't be afraid to go a bit thicker to get it under.

Keep your leader as long as is consistent with full accuracy -- you must be able to hit your target with speed and precision.

Concentrate on fish which are showing a "picking" rise form since they are most likely to "pick" your fly.

Try to find areas where the fish are rising steadily but not gorging -- again they will be more likely to take you. Weedbeds are good since they will force fish into patrol routes where an ambush is easier.

Try to find brownies -- they will keep a straighter line.

Use a sparkle gnat.”

The rise at the top end went on and on, and although the fishery owner was happy for us to stay out late, I think we lost more than a few brownie points with the other club members when 3 of our boats came in at well past 11 p.m. And we still left rising fish (and another boat) behind us!

The Club's 13 rods caught a total of 33 fish.

Saturday, 29th July

Butterstone Loch, Day Session

Heatwave time -- and a good one too. Must be the hottest July in Scotland for some years. Many fisheries are starting to suffer, with temperatures going above the critical 21-22 degrees that causes trout to become inactive and/or head for cooler, deeper water. Butterstone was just about keeping it together. The word was to fish the deeper water with sinking lines. In fact, fish were caught in water of all depths, and by our boys on the following lines: Floater, intermediate, WetCel II, DI-3, DI-7 and DI-8.

There were a few genuine rises in the first half hour or so, and I put up a rod with dries and gave it a good drift of a try, but to no avail. There wasn't much on the surface to tempt them back, despite perfect conditions, and the only feeding reported was by Stewart Barnes, who's first fish was stuffed with *Corixae*.

As mentioned, conditions were to die for: dull and slightly misty, not too hot, in fact fresher than of late, with a light to moderate easterly breeze.

Flies-wise, boobies seemed to be the order of the day, accounting for at least 65% of our catch. Size and colour was about as varied as it gets. Our boat took our fish on small, 10s-ish ones, in black, orange and white, while Tommy Steven said he got his on a *huge* orange and yellow one (it must have been big!). Tommy stuck to anchoring in shallower water, and he and boat partner John Dewar took 6 fish, with John's successful pattern being an orange tadpole.

Dougie Skedd and Bob Allan had a brace apiece to boobies, anchored on the drop-off to deep water on the east shore. Adam Marr and I had 5 of our 6 fish to boobies as well, though we found we did much better drifting than anchoring, and we concentrated on doing long drifts straight down the middle of the loch, over the deeper water (18-24 feet). Adam had more success in the morning with a CetCel II, while I did better in the afternoon on a DI-8, so it seemed that the fish went deeper as the day wore on.

It wasn't quite all lurid stuff, though. John Miller had a fish on a buzzer, and Stewart Barnes took a brace to a small damsel on DI-3 and intermediate lines.

Although 6 was the best any of our boats could manage, the other club that was out had one boat with 9 and I suspect one boat may have had more than that, judging by the number of times we saw their rods go over.

Our 12 rods caught 20 fish.

Saturday, 12th August

Glencorse, Day Session

Starting to cool a bit. The easterly breeze saw to that. It was easterly for a while, at least. Then north, then west, then east again, then north again. That didn't help. The water looked in good fettle, but with very little fly life. The most predominant food item (if you could call it that) was dandelion seeds. They blew across the water all day, and quite a few got hit by the fish in the afternoon.

Rises were few and very oncey all day, though. Most folk struggled with dries, though Dougie Skedd took 4 to claret Klinkhammer and claret hopper, while Mike Phillips took 5, all to a size 14 black Klinkhammer.

The fish seemed much more spread than of late, and bags came from several spots, with the middle section of the road shore proving best on the day. However, many of our rods struggled to find a method that was worth more than a fish or two. Tommy Steven had 2 to dries and 3 to DI 3 and a hot-head damsel. Bob Allan had 4 to a DI-3 and orange lures and Diawl Bachs.

Best bags of the day by a good margin were the 9 taken by Ian Macdonald, and the 10 taken by Bob Whyte. While they both fished in much the same area (that centre section along the road shore), their successful methods were rather different.

Ian fished the Bristol reservoirs style: floating line, long leader, team of nymphs, cast in front of the boat and just take up the slack as it moves forward. Ian's catch was mostly to a jungle-cock Diawl Bach, with 3 to this wee damsel. Bob took 8 of his fish on this cat's whisker variant plus 2 on an orange fritz. All were taken on a DI-3 and slow retrieve, with the fish coming in 2 distinct spells, one in the morning, with a gap in the middle of the day, before they came on again late afternoon.

The Club's 18 rods caught 49 fish.

Sunday, 20th August

Coldingham Loch, Day Session

As you'll see from the shot above, the first part of the day was obscured by clouds. The second part of the day was the same, but with added rain. Eventually, the rain abated, and the cloud lifted, and it was really quite decent in the afternoon. The sunny spells were quite welcome, helping as they did both to dry things out, and to warm things up. The water was as crystal clear as ever. If you are wondering what the contraption is in the left of frame above, Douglas has invested in a weed cutter. As you can see, it has been busy, and yet there are still areas that are very heavily weeded -- that stuff does grow quickly. The top arm had plenty fish, but with all the weed about, conversion rates were often poor, with many being lost in thick salad. *Bob Allan, with the first of the day, taken in the pea soup*

Bob Allan and I started by drifting in the main basin, with Bob on floater and Diawl Bachs, and me on dries (Adams hopper and dark F-fly). There were plenty fish moving and we quickly went to 2 apiece -- pea soup or no pea soup. However, it kind of dried up on us after that. We stopped seeing rises too. After much fruitless to-ing and fro-ing, we went up to the top of the west arm. We were the only boat up there at that time, and we were seeing fish again. However, they did not respond to our advances. We noticed that a lot of the rises were of the enthusiastic, surging type. This occurred to us in conjunction with the fact that Bob had started catching loads of very small perch on his Diawl Bachs. Putting 2 and 2 together... well, we had to give it a try at least. I went with 2 pearly nymphs and a minkie, while Bob just replaced his tail fly with an orange tadpole. And we had success -- with the minkie and the tadpole. We even had fish covering the risers that had refused the dries. Were they full of perch fry? Don't know -- one of the downsides of fishing catch and release.

However, having got to 11 between us by 2 p.m., we ran out of steam -- apart from adding a keep-net's worth of perch to our catch. Some caught on the minkie were barely larger than the fly! There was another boat up the arm, with 3 fishers in it, not of our club, and they did very well, fishing at anchor. They certainly kept the score board ticking over after we stopped. The word was that they were on Montanas! Go figure (1).

We needed to get back on track. When I had been on dries earlier, I had noted that several times I had been lifting off to go into a back cast when a fish had rushed at the flies (on one occasion 2 fished rushed in tandem). Maybe they wanted moving dries. I went with it: a sedgehog, an Adams hopper and a black Klinkhammer, figure-of eighted across the top. Straight away I started to get follows, swirls, fish mouthing the flies... everything but a solid take. This continued right up to finishing time, without either of us adding to our score.

Now, about 3.30 p.m., Tommy Steven arrived up the west arm, having fished all day further down the loch for one fish. He had no sooner arrived than he was into one. Then another, and another, and so it went on. He would have had a great

catch had he not been fishing in the weediest corner of the loch, and he must have lost 2 for every one he landed. When we came in, I was curious to know, what had he been doing? Figure of eighting dries (half hog and pearly bibio) was the answer! Go figure (2). One difference I noticed from the scorecards was that Tommy was on fluoro, while I was on double-strength. Hmmm???

Other catches: Trevor had a brace to a black ethafoam beetle. Boyd Scott and guest Nicky Rivers had 4 to Blakestone's buzzer and dry daddy. Jim Tait had 4 to CDC, snatcher and perch fry.

The Club's 12 rods caught 26 fish

Saturday, 2nd September

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

A very damp, dreich day until mid-afternoon, when it dried up a bit. The wind was at first light easterly, then light southerly, then almost flat calm by the end. Ideal fishing conditions, and we expect to be able to fish dries all day in such at this time of the year. Unfortunately there was very little surface activity. True, there was little fly life until a few buzzers appeared late on, but we strongly suspect that the dry fly fishing has suffered as the average size of the fish has got larger. A 3 pounder just can't make a living out of what is available at the surface in the same way a fish of 1¼ lb can. Equally unfortunate is the fact that no one these days seems to be satisfied with catching fish of 1¼ lb. They also tend to go down the throats of cormorants all too easily. Having said that, many of our rods managed an odd fish here or there on dries.

It was a day of unusual occurrences in our boat. Jimmy hooked a rainbow just inside Stable Point, a fish around the 2 lb mark. As it came to the surface, it was attacked by a pike of around 20 lb. It only made one lunge, but did a fair bit of damage to the fish -- not life threatening, and Jimmy chose to return it. We were going to take a photo of the damage, but as Jimmy held the fish and I fiddled with the focus, the fish jumped out Jimmy's hands and over the side.

We did get a photo of the next one. A year or so ago, I caught a coarse fish on the Lake that I knew was not a roach, but I had no idea what it was. Today I caught another of the same species and Jimmy identified it as a dace. I had no idea they occurred in still waters. Quint has since informed me that they have been present in the Forth system for many many years, and in the Lake for quite a number.

Although the dry fly fishing was bit disappointing, the fishing generally was good. The club's 8 boats scored very consistently: 7, 8, 8, 9, 11, 11, 12 and 16 fish landed, making a very decent total of 82 fish for 16 rods. There were a couple of lumps as well: a blue at 5 lb 12 oz and a rainbow at 8 lb 8 oz. We could easily have had 82 fish on 82 patterns of fly, so don't go looking for magic flies here. What came through was slow retrieve on either a floater, a ghost-tip or a

slow intermediate. The other thing to note was that fish came from every part of the water, with no stand-outs.

Dougie Skedd and Fraser Gault struggled a bit until they found a good and willing group of fish at Lochend. Dougie scored with a figure-of-eighted booby and flash-back Daiwl Bach combo on a slow glass. Fraser had fish to dries (claret Bob's bits, claret Shipman's) and Diawl Bach on the floater.

John Gibson and Ken Maclean both fished floating lines, and had fish at the Malling shore and Lochend, on damsels, muddlers and dries (black hopper and heather fly). John Robertson and Richard Goddard fished floaters with a slow retrieve in the Malling shore and Dog Isle areas, catching on damsels, soldier palmer and orange goldhead.

Tommy Steven and Bob Whyte were all over the water. Slow retrieve of a floater was again mentioned, with successful flies including a fair old selection: booby, Diawl Bach, half-hog, orange fritz, cat's whisker and Kate McLaren.

Stewart Barnes and Eric Singer were our only boat to fish the International bay area. Again, a slow retrieve or figure-of-eight of floater and intermediate lines was successful, with white lure, cormorant, hot-head damsel and claret buzzer taking fish for them.

Alan Morrison and Allan Everington had the top boat of 16. They went into the heronry, and had it to themselves for much of the day. taking drifts on and down towards the plantation and the Malling shore, they caught steadily. They fished washing line set-ups on ghost-tip and intermediate lines, and had most of their fish on cat's whisker boobies (plus Diawl Bach and mini-cat). A slow figure-of-eight was the successful retrieve. Late in the day they had a few risers to throw at, and Alan Morrison picked up a few fish on dries (black Shipman).

Saturday, 9th September

Glencorse, Day Session

Just when we thought summer was over, it came back big time, and we enjoyed a glorious day at Glencorse. We were on the water at 8.30 a.m., which was early enough for sections still to be catching shade from the trees, and I (on my own due to a late call-off) found a group of fish rising great guns just off the back of the breakwater (directly above this text in fact!). Alas, they didn't last long, and by the time I had set up a dry fly rod, covered, hooked, played and landed one and got back into action, they were gone.

After that, it was off up the water to see what was going on. We had bright sunshine for much of the day, and the winds were that 'light and variable' way, which meant that the direction was forever changing, and making a set drift an impossibility at times. Actually, not all the boats headed up the water, and those

that stayed close to home found plenty fish in the dam area. Len Newby and Ivor Young landed 17 between them, fishing intermediate lines with damsels and yellow dancers. Fraser Gault and John Gibson fished there early and late as well, and, although they had a go right round the water in between, the 8 they landed were all caught in the dam area. Sparkler and cat's whisker were their best patterns, fished on a floater with a slow retrieve.

Further up the water, the going was tricky at times. If you set out your stall to spend a day on dries, it was very slow for a lot of the time, though there was a decent spell -- in the middle of the day -- just when it was at its brightest -- go figure. It was noticeable that when a cloud did come over, there was an immediate increase in the surface activity.

There was a slow trundle of daddies, plus assorted other terrestrials. Dougie Skedd saw some flying ants and heather flies. Quite a few fish were having a go at tumbling dandelion seeds. I had quite a lot of sport with a full-on daddy-long-legs, although conversion rate was poor. Other successful dries were Adams hopper and dark F-fly. *Dougie Skedd gives his butt section a work-out (not for the first time)*

The fish were lying in the central, widest section of the water. They were spread right across the deep water as well, though I suspect the only ones caught from the middle were surface feeders, caught on dries. Switching between nymphs and dries seems to have been a common tactic. John Miller and Ron McCarron had fish around the burn mouth that way. John Dewar and Bob Norris had half a dozen from the burn mouth back along the road shore, taken on floater and sink tip (daddy-long-legs and Montana).

While one or two boats struggled for a fish, Dougie Skedd and Ian Macdonald had no problems putting a big catch together -- they finished with 21 to the boat, all caught and released. Ian basically spent the day repeating the success he had on the last outing, by fishing Chew-style. Floating line, long leader, team of nymphs, cast in front of the boat and just take up the slack as it moves forward. Same as last time, Ian's catch was to a jungle-cock Diawl Bach, and this wee damsel. Dougie split his attention between fishing a washing line set-up, and dries. His washing line was a figure-of-eighted DI-2, with Diawl Bach and cat minkie booby thingy. Dougie's successful dries were sizeable black and red versions of a Shipman's buzzer and a Klinkhammer.

The club's total for 15 rods was 65 fish.

Monday, 18th September

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

The forecast was decidedly dodgy -- storms and tail-ends of hurricanes and things. However, although it turned very soggy in the afternoon, it was not bad at all for mid-September. In fact, at times it was absolutely perfect. It started flat

calm, and at times returned to visit. Not good when you are suffering a severe bout of tennis elbow! As last time, you were looking for feeding fish on top in such good conditions. And as last time, you weren't finding them. Just an up once rise over there, then another over there. Enough for a fish or two on dries over the course of the day, perhaps. Not enough to spend the day fishing dries, then, but when you got an odd chance at a riser, and you covered it with pulling stuff, you had a very good chance of a take.

As last time, fish were to be found all over the water. Between us, we had them on all manner of methods and lines. Tommy Steven and Dougie Goddard had 4 apiece, figure-of-eighting in Hotel Bay. Tommy was on Hi-D and boobies, and Dougie on a fast sink washing line, taking all his to Diawl Bachs. The two Bobs, Allan and Whyte, had 8 trout and a pike in the heronry and the plantation area. They fished cat's whiskers and pheasant tails with a slow retrieve on Di-3 and intermediate lines.

Most of our remaining boats fished International Bay, and out and round the shoulder, to the pink buoy that isn't there (Quint -- any chance of putting it back? - - It was a great mark). Kenneth Cockburn and guest Brian Lincoln had half a dozen, all in the morning before the juice came on. Ken was on intermediate and slow retrieve with a green marabou lure (*surely that's a damsel? Ed.*) and buzzers, while Brian was on a floater with good old trads: a black pennell and a kingfisher butcher.

Trevor and Alan had half a dozen in the same area, but didn't fill in the back of their cards -- again!!! Stewart Barnes and I had our fish on a variety of flies, with Stewart's tactics proving the best: a slime line and a 'f*ck-them-about' figure-of-eight retrieve. Stewart took 8 to hot-head damsel, yellow dancer, cormorant and sparkler.

Eric Singer matched Stewart's 8, fishing floating line and size 12 and 10 cormorants. Eric's boat partner, John Miller had fish to cormorant, orange booby and claret hopper.

Top rod was Dougie Skedd, who had a boat to himself (due to a no-show). Dougie fished Portend Bay and Lochend with a fast glass and a washing line set-up of these three flies: cat booby, HE stick fly and a woodcock and hare-lug. Dougie caught and returned 13 fish.

We had another couple of lumps in the catch: a 7 lb 10 oz and an 8 lb 13 oz.

The club's total for 13 rods was 64 fish.

Saturday, 23rd September

Portmore Loch, Day Session

Bright sunshine and a fresh breeze. Another routine day of rubbish fishing conditions for our club at Portmore. Word was that it had gone-off a bit of late (also routine for us). We were also told it had just been stocked, so that should have provided some sport. Alas, it was not to be. Don't know where the stockies went, but neither the bankies nor the boats found them. It was a nice day to be out, I guess.

As the day wore on, for many of us it developed into a case of avoiding the grannie... if we could! One exception was Alan Holbrook, who ended as top rod with 3 fish. Alan switched back and forth between drifting with lures and a slime line, and anchored up with slow-fished nymphs. One early and late on an orange blob, and one in between on a Diawl Bach did the damage. Alan's boat partner Bob Allan managed one to a cormorant on a sinking line.

Ken Maclean was never in danger of the grannie either, having taken 2 fish on the west shore early on to a damsel, but that was as far as it went. Ken's guest Andrew Mathewson took a fish on a silver Invicta. Dougie Skedd was the only other man to get past the figure 1. Dougie had a go at plumbing the depths out across the middle, and took a brace to DI-7 and boobies (black/yellow and white/green).

While a good proportion of what fish we caught came from the Laird's Bay, John Robertson and I drew a blank when we tried there. We also drew blanks from the west shore, the dam area, the lonesome pine, and the top bay... and out in the middle. The only place we hadn't tried was the big bay, so we went in there and dropped anchor off the alders. Two casts, and John was into a fish on a hot-head damsel. At last!

I stopped at that point. After the photography and what-not, I picked up my rod, cast out... and hooked a fish (hot head damsel again). Between us we had two fish in 2 casts. Found them at last, we both thought. We fished on with renewed confidence and enthusiasm. As the minutes passed, the renewed vigour diminished... and diminished. The suspicion that it was a flash in the pan slowly started to creep in. The creep became a stroll, then a gallop. Yep, that was our sport for the day.

John Miller left it till late, but eventually he took a fish on a Diawl Bach and slow intermediate in the Laird's Bay.

Stewart Barnes was the unluckiest man of the day. John told him about his late fish on nymphs, and he switched to similar. In the last hour, Stewart hooked and lost 3 fish.

The Club's total for 14 rods was 12 fish.

Saturday, 7th October

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

Conditions for the first 10 minutes of the day were very pleasant (see above). It was all downhill after that, as the westerly breeze grew and grew, and dreich, drizzly stuff turned into rain. That sucked the temperature out the air, and it got quite cool as the day progressed. Quint reported that fish had been getting caught on midge/ghost tip lines, but that had been in mild, less windy conditions. On the day, we had fish to everything from floater to DI-4. Given that spread, not surprisingly slime lines and intermediate got the most votes.

Fish were taken all round the water again. The butts and Gateside Bay/Stable Point were the top marks, with fish also taken at International Bay, the pink buoy (that isn't there), and the Rookery. Tactics varied. John Miller and guest John Levy had equal top boat with 10, all taken on floating line, Diawl Bach and buzzers at the butts.

Stewart Barnes and Bob Whyte took 9 to the boat on intermediates, with slow and figure-of-eighted retrieve. Stewart was on hot-head damsel and cormorant, and Bob on orange blob and cat's whisker. John Robertson and Bob Norris had another 10 in their boat. They got tuned-in at Stable Point, fishing DI-3s with a slow retrieve, and orange and black mini-lures.

Yet another score of 10 went to Dougie Skedd and your correspondent. Dougie was figure-of-eighting a DI-4 with a Santa's cat booby and cormorants, while I had mine pulling a DI-3 with a white Howwood, a black and green mini-lure and a hare's ear palmer. We scratched around all day, taking an odd fish or two from 6 different locations without ever finding a concentration. Alan Morrison and John Gibson found fish on the go on their second visit of the day to the butts, and they finished with 9 between them, with Alan top rod on the day. Alan and John fished slime lines and cormorant/booby combos, with a figure-of-eight retrieve.

The club's 14 rods caught 53 fish -- a very creditable total in such unsettled conditions. We had another couple of big fish in our catches: rainbows at 7 lb 12 oz and 8 lb 12 oz.

Saturday, 21st October

Linlithgow Loch, Day Session

Two reasons this is traditionally a good one for taking a few photos... For one, this is the annual outing that coincides with the autumn colours -- the reds, golds, oranges and chestnuts that make up for the fact that *winter drawers*-on. The other is that the sun is now so low during the day that you get quality light for free. Well, forget the first one this time... everything was still green! Cue more

murmurings about global warming and all that stuff... Got the quality light OK, but didn't get much opportunity to use it!

The weather was just amazing for late October... warm, sunny, calm. Also hard to believe was that the water was still badly affected by algae. The word was that it was clearer up the east end shallows, and that one of the regulars had been out during the week and had had a good bag up there on floating line and snatchers.

We headed up there, and had an early fish ourselves, to a static-fished candy-stripe snatcher. A guy out on his own had a couple of fish in the same area, so we settled in and expected to get some sport. Nothing else followed, however. We were patient... very patient. Still nothing more. We tried different stuff. There were a good half dozen boats up there, and no one was doing anything... except the guy on his own, who took another. He was slow figure-of-eighting a floating line -- nothing we (and those around us) hadn't been doing ourselves.

Time wore on. Still nothing, and the other boats started to peel-off and head west. The guy on his own took another. We decided we needed to try fresh ground, so headed west too. As we left, the guy on his own took another.

Up west, we ran into all the boats that had abandoned the east, plus all those who had stayed west. We checked in with Trevor and Alan, who had but one fish lost to their credit. They reported that most of the boats about them had had a few fish, and as we settled in, an odd fish was seen getting caught. Trevor was eventually rewarded for (biblical proportion) perseverance with the 'tache, as he took 2 fish in the last hour. A similar late grannie-saver was landed by Len Newby with his last cast of the day. Len caught his fish on a black lure on floating line off the north-west point.

John Gibson was the only other rod in our club to land a fish. He took one to a pink booby and DI-7 towards the north side of the west bay. And that was it, I'm afraid. Nine rods landed but 5 fish. And the guy on his own up the east end? We were told that after we left him, he continued to catch another half dozen or so. Probably a good point at which to hang up the trout gear for the season...

2007

Sunday, 18th March

Lindores Loch, Day Session

Outing cancelled due to gales.

Saturday, 7th April

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

After our aborted attempt to start the new season 3 weeks ago, we landed on our feet with this date. OK, there was barely a cloud in the sky all day, but it was nice to be out in the sun, which is now high enough to pack some warmth. There was a light breeze, which was a tad variable, and it was still cool on the odd occasion when a cloud did manage to catch the sun, but all-in-all it was just what the doctor ordered.

I was paired with our Hong-Kong inmate, Adam Marr, over on a spring break and not having wet a line since Butterstone in July last year. There was only one weekly report to date on the Lake's website, and it was suggesting that the fish were lying towards the southern marks: the heronry, the butts and Lochend. With that in mind, and a light westerly at the start, we decided to start in the heronry and work our way down and round the south side.

I mentioned to Adam (who had not fished early season at Menteith for many moons) that a feature of recent seasons was that you often had only one chance at a fish on a drift, and that was last cast before the boat was into the reeds. We seemed to be set for more of the same when my first fish came right at the end of a drift onto the back of the promontory. More of the same followed as Adam took his first fish as the boat slid down the face of the promontory. We let the boat drift on, and it rounded into the small bay (does it have a name?) on the east side. Now we were among other boats... and they were catching... regularly.

Needless to say, we hung about. Adam stayed all day on a Wetcel II (probably about 20 years old) and a cast made from nylon that may have been older, judging by the number of flies that disappeared off the end under mysterious circumstances. In the course of the day, I tried DI-3, Fast glass and DI-5. In fact, we saw other rods catching on every conceivable line, from floater to fast sinker. Every retrieve as well, for that matter. Adam was mostly figure-of-eighting. That did nothing for me, and I just pulled at pedestrian pace, while others around us were rewarded by putting a bit more welly into it.

We had 7 or 8 fish to the boat in that wee bay, before it went a bit slow -- We wondered about changing flies or tactics, but it didn't feel like the thing to do. Adam was on a yellow dancer and a hothead damsel, while I was on a black tadpole and a small white minkie. There were plenty buzzers hatching, and even an occasional rise, but conditions really said stay downstairs, stick with what you are doing, and find the fish. The other factor that swayed us on this was the frequency of the action. Nothing for 10 mins, then we would both get a take within a second of each other. Then nothing for another 10 mins, then 2 takes on consecutive casts -- a sure sign of moving groups of fish, and not too fussy when they passed your patch.

As it slowed in the bay, we looked about and we saw a bit of an armada assembling in the open water out from the butts -- just over to our right. Sure enough -- there

was a rod bent, and there another, and over there another. No invitation required! Aye, this'll be the fish that hug the reeds at this time of year... my arse! We did a drift that started at the butts on the west shore, and finished at Kate's Brae on the east shore -- about an hour later -- and there were fish being taken by the boats around us the whole way across. Two-ups were happening here, there and everywhere. I can remember a few years back finding the fish in April way out in the middle, though on that occasion it was overwintered brownies being drawn to the hatching buzzers. The fish being caught here were stockie rainbows. Go figure!

Adam and I finished with 22 fish landed and another 7 lost -- and we doffed our caps to 2 or 3 other boats around us who were clearly doing better than we were. So, with all that going on -- fish being caught on every line -- any fly -- every retrieve -- just needed to be in the area -- just a matter of being there... Er, so we thought. We honestly expected everyone else to have catches like ours, and yet others came in saying they were in the area, but could not get tuned in. Others who were not in the area also struggled (that is always going to happen).

Alan Duncan was best of the rest in our club, having had 6 (plus a bonus 9 lb pike) - - no details supplied. Tom Steven and Bob Allan had half a dozen fishing buzzers and Diawl Bachs slow, on intermediate and DI-3 in the butts area. Bob Whyte and John Gibson also had half a dozen, including a 4 lb 8 oz blue to John's rod. They mostly fished the heronry, with sink-tip, intermediate and DI-3, with damsel, coral lure, black fritz and orange blob on the score sheet. It's a funny old game...

The Club's 14 rods landed 51 fish (19 of which returned). Top rod was Mr Marr -- not bad for a man who fishes about once each year... with 20 year old tackle!

Sunday, 15th April

Lindores Loch, Day Session

A day of 2 halves, weather-wise. The morning was millpond-calm, with some of the mist that has been wandering around the east of Scotland over the past week or so. It burned off, and the sun came through. It was pleasantly warm for mid April -- no one was complaining about the sun -- a rarity for fishermen! However, when an odd whuffle came up from the north east it was quite bracing. Layers went on, came off, went on again... In the afternoon, a breeze got up -- quite stiff at times, and it clouded over. This time it was from the west though, and it was much softer. The water was a good clarity, and what was notable was the number of fish throwing themselves about this early in the season.

Andy told us the water was fishing very well, and double figure catches were the norm the day before. We found it a bit harder going than that (I remember a similar 'after the Lord Mayor's Show' scenario last year!), although if we had had a better conversion rate, our totals would have been much more respectable.

Andy also told us that pretty much any method was working, and we had fish by pretty much any method -- if you could get tuned in with your weapon of choice. As is often the case at Lindores though, the choice was principally between fishing nymphs and fishing lures. Most boats stayed close to home. Those that ventured a bit further afield didn't hit into any great concentrations of fish -- more a case of one here, one there, sort of thing.

Trevor and Alan found it slow-going early on, but picked up the pace when they moved over to the top end of the railway shore. They finished with 15, fishing nymphs slow on SSI (super slow intermediate) lines. Their top fly was a ye olde style pheasant tail nymph (would you believe, I don't have one photographed -- will do when I get a moment!).

Stewart Barnes and Ian Macdonald were only one fish less for their boat. They were a bit more adventurous, and had a go up at the big house. They fished 'Chew' style with floating lines and nymphs, notably Diawl Bach and damsel, but also taking fish to cormorants.

While we are still in nymph mode, top boat of the day was Dougie Skedd and Tommy Steven, who ventured all of 50 yards to Milanda Bay, whereupon much sport was to be had. They took 22, fishing floating line, with Dougie scoring on flashback Cove PTN, and Tommy on PTN, Diawl Bach and red holo Diawl.

So, who resorted to lures? Er, well, it was like this, M'Lud... I started with a hedged-bet rig of 2 nymphs and a black tad on the tail, slow figure-of-eighting on floater, then on ghost-tip. First fish was on the tad. So was No. 2, and No. 3. So were 4, 5 and 6. I kind of made the assumption then that that was the sort of thing that was working, and went with it. I was glad to see in the returns that I wasn't entirely alone. John Robertson reported a bag of 5 to black-and-silver lures.

The club's total for 14 rods was 71 fish.

Sunday, 22nd April

Linlithgow Loch, Day Session

Not a bad day for it at all. Breeze a bit stiff at times, but overcast and mildish for mid-April. The water was gin-clear and a good hatch of buzzers came off through the early and middle parts of the day. The buzzers were substantial too. A size 10 was a good pick to represent them. The specimen in the photo below was recovered from the stomach of a chapped fish. They were feeding well on these pupes. The apparent armour-plating is the air under his skin as he (or is it a she -- how do you sex a buzzer pupa?) was getting ready to hatch.

The fish were lumps as well. Most of them were 3 lb plus, with a good mix of stockies, near residents and long-termers all showing in the catches. All our boats

opted to set anchor and fish nymphs. I'm sure there would be a few variations in the set-ups: swinging them static, slow figure-of-eighting, hanging them under the 'tache, but that was effectively it for how we all went about it. Depth was probably not that critical -- we had fish to all 3 positions on the cast, and experiments coming up higher, and dropping down lower didn't really lead to any firm conclusions.

Flies used were a frugal few. Buzzer pupes featured heavily. Many folk simply wrote "buzzers" on their card, and there was no point in trying to elaborate. Ian Macdonald had by far our best bag of the day, and Ian's set up was a brown buzzer, a hare's ear and a Diawl Bach. Ian took his fish all from one anchorage off the north shore, just east of The Rickle. However, there were fish all over the water. Trevor Gibson and Bob Allan had 17 between them out in the middle of town Bay. They were off to a flier, netting half a dozen while we were still faffing about trying to get the boat set-up right.

Tommy Steven and Fraser Gault had 14 down at Ponsonby's (the south east corner). Dougie Goddard took his fish further into the shallows of the west end than most boats cared to venture. Alan Morrison and I, after said faffing about, eventually got tuned in and had a good spell off the north-west point. Among our successful patterns were epoxy buzzer, orange thorax Cove, Spanflex buzzer, and Jimmy's flash-back melanistic Cove.

As the day wore on, the buzzer hatch dropped off, and so did the fishing for those who stuck with the nymphing tactics -- eh, well, that was all of our club, anyway. Well, nearly. Stewart Barnes gave up and switched over to cormorants and pulled out a late one. It wasn't his best of the day, but one of his earlier fish was the best so far for any of us on a club outing: 6 lb 12 oz.

The Club's total for 11 rods was 71 fish.

Sunday, 29th April

Carron Valley Reservoir, Day Session

After last year's ideal conditions, it was hardly surprising that the forecast weather for Carron this year should be a return to the dreaded bright sun and cold east wind. We sort of got half away with it -- it was overcast for the whole morning. However, the cold east wind bit got us with both barrels.

This was our first outing to Carron since the controversial introduction of rainbow trout. We were not sure what to expect. Some folk were unsure whether to tackle up for brownies or for rainbows. What was clear was that most of the boats went out on the hunt for rainbows -- 90% of them started fishing within 100 yards of the jetty. I can only assume that was where the stock went in???

Stuff that for a game of soldiers. We were at Carron. One of the best places for wild brown trout. Always was. Why would it not be now?

John Gibson and I chose not to join the boats at the dam, and we headed up the far end, for Carron Bay -- my favourite area. When we got there, we almost had the top half of the water to ourselves. It looked like pulling was the order of the day, and John went with an intermediate and I with a DI-3. It occurred to me that my standard approach when pulling on Carron -- black and white lures with a muddler on the bob -- would be seen by many as a rainbow rig.

OK, well maybe, but it catches me more brownies than trads do. John's intermediate and trads hooked 3 rainbows, while my lures and DI-3 hooked just one rainbow. Of course, maybe the rainbows were higher in the water than the browns, but maybe folk should rethink their approach when rainbows are the quarry and pulling is the order of the day. Anyroad, the brownies liked the lures just fine. We caught the usual range -- from 8-9 inches up to about 1 lb 2 oz, plus probably the smallest fish I have ever landed on Carron - it must have been no more than 4 inches long -- and it had the black tadpole half way down its throat.

Dougie Skedd and Bob Whyte eventually arrived up the top end, and they had sport with both browns and rainbows, to pulling with DI-4 and clan chief and claret snatcher. They went back to the home end for the last spell and had some unexpected dry fly action when a frantic rise came on to black scrotty stuff in the lee of the dam.

Ian Macdonald and Trevor Gibson drifted the entire length of the water in the course of the day, and took 7 rainbows and 5 sizeable browns. Ian fished the kelly green intermediate and snatchers, while Trevor stripped a yellow dancer on a DI-3. John Miller and John Levy had just one rainbow to their boat, but had 10 sizeable browns. They also fished all over the place, going with intermediate and Wet-Cel 3, pulling with: soldier palmer, cormorant, silver invicta, teal, black & silver and kingfisher butcher.

Tommy Steven and Richard Goddard fished along the home shore, taking fish to medium sinkers, with palmers and olive goldheads. Richard had catch of the day: a powan. This protected species is thriving in Carron and more are being caught every year -- though it is an offence to fish for them intentionally, and they should always be returned safely if caught.

The club's 10 rods landed a total of 50 sizeable fish.

Saturday, 5th May

Lindores Loch, Evening Session

A wee window in the weather was afforded to us -- sandwiched between the cold easterly winds of the last 3 weeks, and the rain and gales that came in... er, later

tonight! Conditions were best early evening -- dull, warm, light breeze. Just about the time you were looking for it to calm away, the incoming front pushed quite a stiff breeze ahead of it, and that kind of took the edge off things.

It was a strange sort of evening. Dougie Skedd went with dries and stayed on them all evening. That was the right thing to do, but on the first drift out and across, he saw loads of fish rising and had quite a few fresh-air shots, but had no actual hook-ups. I had the advantage of a boat to myself, and I also started on dries. Given the chance to cover 360 degrees, I stayed close to the head of the wind at the railway shore looking for risers, and I also found it a bit slow-going at first. I picked up the other rod and had a go figure-of-eighting with neutral density suspenders, and that was worth a single fish.

Then I saw Dougie's rod bent, then again with another. I went back to dries and went out into open water. Sure enough, they had come on with a vengeance. A drift from the big willow on the railway shore, out and down towards the reedy island took me through hundreds of rising fish. It was a medium-sized dark buzzer that was getting them up. I was drawing nothing out-the-blue, but for about every half dozen rises covered, one would take. I was on 2 black flies and one claret -- all smallish 12s. The fish were picking out the black ones. Claret was doing nothing at all. I took off the claret and went 3 black (Klinkhammer, F-fly, hopper). Straight away the new member of the team started catching. I ran out of fish towards the island, and went back up, intending to repeat the drift. But, by now the wind was freshening, and changing direction, and my next drift took me along the railway shore, close in to the side.

Here were hundreds more rising fish! Same story -- nothing out-the-blue, but covers were meeting with a decent level of approval. Several were long-range shots. My eyesight is not what it used to be, and I could not see if the fish that rose where I had cast to actually had my fly, so I had to lift *slowly* to see if everything tightened up. On several occasions it didn't have it, but the movement of my flies drew a reflex reaction from, not necessarily just one fish, but sometimes 2 or 3. One would go for my fly. That would spook a second one close to it, which would spook a 3rd, which would spook the first fish that had been going to take my fly. Doh! Other times, the wee lift would have the effect of inducing 2 takes at once. They were V lively, and 6 lb Tectan was not up to coping with double-ups. I lost 8 flies and went through 4 casts in the course of the evening!

The sport tailed off quickly once the light was failing -- couldn't see my flies by this time anyway. Back at the harbour, comparing notes with Dougie -- he's fished nothing but 2 claret flies all night (claret Shipman and claret Klinkhammer). So much for my black vs claret theory! Dougie had found that figure-of-eighting his dries was getting him more action, which did fit in with my experiences of the fish going bananas when I lifted slowly.

I felt that it was most absolutely definitely a night for drifting, and that anyone who anchored was putting themselves at a disadvantage... except maybe if you were to anchor just out from the big willow -- right at the confluence of those two lines of fish -- which is exactly where Fraser Gault and Bob Temple set up

stall. They switched between nymphs and dries before finally settling on dries. They had fish to Diawl Bach and black buzzers, then to black and claret Shipmans.

Tommy Steven, John Levy and John Miller all fished a mixture of nymphs, wets and dries over the course of the evening, taking fish to buzzers, and again black and claret Shipmans. Len Newby had fish to good old trads: silver invicta and coachman.

The club's 9 rods caught 43 fish.

Saturday, 12th May

Coldingham Loch, Day Session

This was the archetypal 'game of 2 halves'. If ever a day was designed for having an afternoon and evening session, instead of the 9 to 5 schedule, this was it. The morning was cold, wet, windy -- from the north east as well: not what you want when you are perched on cliffs on Berwickshire's north east coast! We really could have gone out at lunch time and missed nothing of any consequence. My boat partner, Bob Allan had a fish on buzzers first cast -- before I'd got my flies in the water. We thought we were away, but it was a red herring of mammoth proportions, as that was 100% of our sport for the morning. Tommy Steven picked up a couple on buzzers, while his boat partner Bob Whyte also caught a brace, to a cat's whisker tad, fished on DI-3. Stewart Barnes had a couple on a damsel. Apart from that, it was nothings and ones all round for the first few hours.

However, around the middle of the day it cleared up and the wind dropped away to just a light ripple. If it hadn't still been baltic, it would have been ideal conditions. We even saw a couple of fish rise. I had swung nymphs all morning for ne'er a touch, and I needed a change. If there is one thing I have learned about Coldingham fish over the years it is that you can almost always get sport to dries. I thought I'd give them a go. We were still sitting at anchor, and I never like prospecting with static dries at anchor, so I put a big 10 sedgehog on the tail and figure-of-eighted it. Within 5 minutes, I had had a look from one and caught one. Progress! I passed the word on to John Robertson and Bob Norris in the boat sitting next to us. John changed over to dries and quickly took 2 to a parachute Adams (sorry, but I only have a photo of a very frotered one), fished static.

That was good enough for us, and we upped weights and went on a drift with dries. Initially we thought we had struck gold, as a drift along the east shore out of swing-gate bay saw us get at least a dozen assorted chances, without actually landing a fish. A repeat drift saw, ...er, ...nothing. Damn! Bob came off dries and put a wee orange tadpole to a DI-3. We went in search of risers. We were heading for the top of the west arm, but we never made it that far, as we ran across fish rising in the neck, just where it narrows.

They were a tough audience to please, I can tell you. Many covers simply ignored the flies. Many others had a go, but with a splashy, non-committal type rise that you kind of knew before you lifted that you were not going to tighten into. A couple of times I covered a fish, gave it a few seconds to see if it was going to take, then gave the flies a wee bit movement to see if that got its attention. Bang! That worked. That suggested they were keen enough, so maybe it was a presentation thing. We were seeing a few olive duns coming off, but didn't see any get taken. There were also a few black gnats, and I did see a couple of them get taken. I had on a hedged bet set of dries, I have to say -- fairly non-committed myself: a size 14 black Klinkhammer on the bob, a size 12 Adams hopper in the middle and a size 16 claret Bob's Bits on the tail. I had fish to all 3, so not much pattern there. Meanwhile, bob was catching well with his orange tadpole.

Stewart Barnes and Ian Copland came up past us and found more rising fish up at the top of the arm. Tommy Steven and Bob Whyte, seeing the action going on in the arm, came and joined in as well. They all found the same hard-to-convert thing going on, but they got on top of it with pure perseverance, Tommy taking fish to a size 14 Bob's Bits, Bob (too many Bobs!) on a black Shipman and Stewart on un-named dries. With only 20 minutes on the clock I pushed my luck too far with figure-of-eighting the flies at covered fish, as one such lunged at the fly and cracked-off the whole cast. I had been thinking that the lighter breeze and brighter sky might demand finer tactics, but had been reluctant to change off the 3 flies to 7 lb double-strength with which I had started the day. This was partly due to the time taken to change over when we were fighting the clock with fish rising all around us. It was also partly due to my reluctance to go any finer than 7 lb double when the fish were hitting moving flies, and also partly because I just couldn't be arsed.

However, as I now had nothing on the end of my line, I put up a 2 fly rig to 5 lb double: a size 16 sparkle gnat and a size 12 hare's ear F-fly. That met with instant success: a fish on each fly in the last 15 minutes to static covers. So, maybe finer presentation was a key to better takes.

The fish were going great guns as we were forced to call it a day at the 5 o'clock finish time. Pity!

The best of the boats that had concentrated on the main bowl was that of Trevor Gibson and Boyd Scott. They took 3 apiece. Boyd had 2 to orange tadpole and one on a dry hare's ear, while Trevor didn't fill in the back of his card -- *again*.

The club's 12 rods had a total of 38 fish... but if we had just had an extra couple of

Monday, 21st May

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

Cap'n Fishy balloted-out. Stewart Barnes reports...

What are the three conditions we don't want when fishing "TheLake"? Of course, bright sun, strong wind and cold temperatures are the answers, and once again we were unlucky enough to manage the hat trick. The flat calm on our arrival was short lived, and although initially things looked promising they soon deteriorated.

Dougie Skedd and myself tried drifting in towards the reeds in International Bay and our day started by being treated to one of the worst examples of boatmanship that I can remember seeing for some time. We were about 30 yards off the reeds when a boat suddenly cruised through in front of us. The "carefully chosen words of reprimand" had not the slightest effect and we ended up just having to laugh about it. An early but brief flurry of rises in International Bay didn't last long enough to make it worthwhile changing to dry tactics. The odd fish was being caught along the Road Shore and it was clear that Kate's Brae was getting a lot of attention.

Dougie's slow buzzer tactics brought one fish but the news from around the loch seemed to be that we weren't the only ones struggling. Lochend was dead, apart from a very feisty 5 lb pike which gave me a hard time. By this time we could see fish being caught by the armada at Kate's Brae and managed to sneak in a couple of times where my slime line damsel/cormorant set up accounted for another one. However it was too busy and also quite windy by this time and we decided to try the north shore from the Rookery via Sam's Point right down to Hotel Bay. This was a fruitless move and we didn't even have a touch on this drift.

Having seen fish being caught along the Road Shore, Dougie and I decided to brave the wind and try again just along from International Bay. By this time we were both on slime lines and seemed to be getting a few plucks which Dougie was sure were from fish, whereas I was rather pessimistically thinking it was weed. I am delighted to report that Dougie was correct and to prove it he was soon into a fish on a cormorant. I then started to catch too, likewise on the cormorant. The answer seemed to be short 80 yd drifts, with most fish being caught within the last 30 yds. Despite the hassle on such short drifts, using a drogue seemed to be worthwhile and we caught steadily up till finishing time. Dougie finished with 5 to cormorant and small white cat, although he dropped 3 more at the finish. I managed to hold on to mine, with damsel joining the cormorants as the required flies and eventually accounting for 9.

Elsewhere, the Road Shore was again the spot for John Miller, who took three to Diawl Bachs and for Ivor Young, who also took three, this time to a fritz damsel, both fishing slow on floating lines. Unfortunately ones and blanks completed the sorry story and a total of 24 fish for the 12 rods was an unusually poor return for the club at Menteith. Conditions seemed to be the winners on this occasion and we can only hope for better luck in the late season outings at this venue.

Sunday, 3rd June

Glencorse, Day Session

Nearly a perfect day, conditions-wise. We had a good ceiling for most of the day, with the odd spell of sun and the odd shower. It was warm as well: more than 10 C warmer than last Sunday! The wind was light, but swung around a bit, before doing a full 180 in the afternoon.

The water was clear and although there was no real hatch, there were assorted small terrestrials being blown-on over the course of the day, most notably black gnats. The water fished very well for us, with catches coming from every area -- even right out in the middle, over deep water -- in fact that was one of the best areas. Most of the top bags came to dry fly. The fish were coming decidedly easier in the morning, when there were very few fish actually showing. *Euan Cluness with a stock rainbow*

More fish showed in the afternoon, but they were trickier to catch -- maybe because they were tuned in to the naturals a bit better. In particular, we found good groups of feeding fish out in the middle of the water. They were lying along some cracking slicks that formed, coming off the south shore and running out and across. The slicks had a good amount of collected scrot (our name for all manner of dead fleas, shucks, leaves, seeds, feathers, etc), which was being picked at with relish (we call such fish scrot-pickers).

Some of the rainbows were punching well above their weight, and we had an occasional decent wild brownie in our catches (all browns were returned). Seven of our 10 boats hit double figures (and one of them had only one angler), so here's a run down in no particular order (well OK, in the order the names appear on the sheet) of those 7...

Tommy Steven and Greg Milne were more catholic with their tactics, and they chopped and changed between dries and nymphs on floater and lures (hot-head damsels) on fast glass. They stuck to the same drift all day, however -- along the road shore.

Bob Whyte and Ron McCarron also concentrated on the road shore, and the middle bay. They did well with Bob's favourite combo of DI-3 and cat's whisker.

Euan Cluness and I both fished the same 2 static dries all day. Euan was on a claret hopper and a Klinkhammer (can't remember the colour), while I was on a size 14 black Klinkhammer and a size 12 half-hog. We were all over the middle section of the water in the course of the day.

Trevor Gibson fished dries (no, your eyes do not deceive you!). He was figure-of-eighting an F-fly behind the island.

Dougie Skedd and Bill Scobie covered more water than any other boat, venturing up to the top end in the morning. Dougie mentioned finding the fish taking larger

static dries early on (black & red Shipman's and deer hair emerger), but having to go to a size 16 black gnat for the tricky afternoon fish.

Ian Macdonald and Boyd Scott fished static dries over much of the water. Black Klinkhammer and olive comparadun was all they needed.

Mike Phillips and Richard Goddard also covered pretty much the whole water in the course of the day. Mike was on dry fly, and his killer was this beat-up thing (If ever the expression, "It's not the fly, it's the fisher that matters" rung true..). I think it was a Bob's bits once upon a time. Either that or it had a detached body -- which has become detached! He even asked to get it back! Richard - you need to turn the card over and fill in the back.

The Club's total for 19 rods was 16 killed and 104 returned.

Sunday, 10th June

Frandy, Day Session

Stewart Barnes reports...

We were delighted on arriving at Frandy, to find conditions to die for - mild, overcast, with just a hint of a ripple. For a water that normally offers excellent top of the water sport, these were just the factors that have been few and far between on our previous visits to this high and rather exposed venue. The wind did get up a little later on, but overall the conditions remained excellent.

The word was that it was fishing well to the dries and indeed that was the method of choice for the most of the anglers. The areas fished were split into three. Some went right up to the shallow water at the top end, some tried the margins of the middle of the loch and some stuck to the tried and tested drifts between the jetty and the dam. All three areas provided trout, although the latter area was not as productive as usual, particularly in the morning.

As far as tactics were concerned, the main choices were dries, dries and dries. Allan Everington, fishing the shoreline and shallows, had four to Fiery Brown Sedge and Black Klinkhammer, using a slow figure of eight retrieve. Boyd Scott had four to static Olive Hoppers and Parachutes at the dam. This area also produced four for Bob Whyte on small Claret Shipmans and five for Tommy Steven on Claret and Pearly Bibio Hoppers. Tommy's fish came relatively late in the day as he had struggled in the morning. It was good to see guest and prospective member Gary Wright come in with a four fish basket from buzzers and dries.

Club Champion Dougie Skedd was in good form and ended up top rod with nine fish. He showed his versatility by alternating between dries and pulling tactics with an intermediate and "washing line". As far as patterns were concerned he certainly rung the changes and caught on seven different patterns, the main ones

being Coral Booby, Amber Tag and Black Gnat. Dougie fished the top end in the morning, moving to the dam area in mid- afternoon.

A rather modest total of 38 fish were netted with exactly half of them being returned.

Sunday, 17th June

Linlithgow Loch, Day Session

Tom Steven reports...

After days of horrendous weather, a lovely warm day with gentle ripple to flat calm conditions, and a few trout popping lazily here and there, greeted us at Linlithgow as we loaded the ubiquitous trolleys.

Unfortunately, the sun rapidly burst through the early haze and the temperature began to soar to over 20 degrees Celsius and the fishing, which started quite hopefully to slow fished buzzer pupae and dries, took a rapid nose dive. The rest of the day took on the appearance of many of our previous June trips to Linlithgow, namely scratching around and persevering doggedly for two or three fish at best, while the populace of Linlithgow frolicked on the slopes below the Palace, jogged the lochside path, fed swans and picnicked their way through the heat of the day!

Forbes Mackenzie stuck at it with determination to land three on lure, buzzer and dry fly, while Edward Hamilton found what was perhaps the most skilful solution -- catching three on CDC emergers.

The only consolation was the fact that several rods caught and released some cracking residents in the 5 - 6lb class which fought very hard all the way to the net. In my case, a beautiful fin-perfect 5½ lb fish taken on a dry size 12 pearly bibio took 10 minutes to land and jumped about once per minute!

Sunday, 24th June

Lindores Loch, Day Session

The weather wasn't near as bad as it looked like it might be, but it was bad enough for late June. Dreich about sums it up. The useful things it gave us were a steady light breeze, 100% ceiling and flat light. It was a bit cool though, and decidedly soggy.

Andy told us the fish were feeding in the early mornings and evenings, which didn't bode well for a day session. The water was recovering from a green algal bloom, and, while it was still decidedly minty looking, the clarity wasn't too bad. Andy told us that dries were working and, after last year's equivalent outing provided a dry-fly-fest, I tackled up accordingly, with a black Klinkhammer, an Adams hopper and a claret half-hog.

We started right in the middle, and I had an offer first cast. Then another, and another, and another... Some were swirling under the fly without taking. Others were taking the fly down, but rejecting it before I could tighten into them. However, one finally stuck. Then another. Then another. And this was all on the first drift. What was Andy talking about? This is superb! Er, well it was... for precisely that first drift. I didn't land another fish until the last hour! Early mornings and evenings Andy said... and he was dead right!

John Wastle, in the boat with me for his sins, started on a washing line set-up. That did nothing while I was having my mad spell, so he quickly set up the second rod with dries. Even as I was starting to find sport tailing off, John picked up 3 fish in quick fashion to claret Klinkhammer and claret half-hog.

The fish quickly shut up shop on John too, and it was hard, hard going for the next 4 or 5 hours, though John did pick up a 4th fish on dries up towards the big house. Speaking to those around us, it was the same story all over the water, with a burst of early action quickly followed by hee-haw. The only boat we saw pick up fish in this spell was Christopher Bell and Bill Scobie, who took 3 each. They split their time between anchor and drift -- all in the middle section of the loch, which seemed to come out tops for area. I don't have much detail, but Christopher was on dries (amber hopper).

Fraser Gault was another to get a bit of a dizzy as a result of the false start -- he had a fish first cast... then one more for the day. Fraser popped a booby on floating line. Dougie Skedd, in the boat with Fraser, mixed it up with washing line tactics on the slime line, which was worth a fish to the booby, and dries (a blue-winged olive Klinkhammer -- sorry no specimen for photo), which was worth another two.

Tommy Steven and Adrian Coats had a brace apiece to dries (claret and red hoppers), while Stewart Barnes also had a couple to dries (orange hopper and elkhair sedge). Unfortunately, aces and Brussels sprouts completed the score cards.

Having messed about with various tactics after the dries had, er... dried up, with an hour to go, I put up a floating line with a couple of snatchers and a gold-head damsel on a shortish cast of double strength. Figure-of-eighting this set-up, I started to get offers, and I managed to stick to a couple of late fish. I don't know if this was the first of them coming on for the evening, or if it might have worked if I had tried it earlier???

The fish were certainly there, and I think if you had gone out with dries at first light, you could have filled the boat.

The club's 14 rods landed 27 fish.

Friday, 29th June

Linlithgow Loch, Evening Session

We did well to get a totally dry evening, given as how it seems to have rained every day for weeks. However, the advantage of a heavy overcast sky is that it holds the temperature in as the evening develops. What you don't want is the ceiling opening up and allowing the temperature to drop rapidly, just as you are expecting the evening rise... which is what happened on this one!

That was a pity, because everything else was teed up nicely. The water was crystal clear. The fish were high in the water. We had a light westerly, and it was warm... well at least early doors it was warm.

No one ventured up the east end -- not sure if it is weeded up? Anyway, there were plenty of fish in the west half of the loch, and water of 9-10 feet and deeper was weed-clear. There was an early burst of action for several boats. I had an wee experiment with boobies in deep water, and had 2 and several missed chances in the first 15 minutes -- then nothing. Absolutely nothing. Not a touch. At all. The boats around us all seemed to pick up early fish, but likewise they quietened down after a while.

John Miller and John Levy were fishing nymphs on floaters. They enjoyed the early action, and then had to hunt around. Eventually they got into fish off the north-west point. John L had top bag of the outing, with 6 to jungle cock Diawl Bach. They finished up drifting down towards the Rickle. Douglas Maxwell and I had only one fish each for the middle spell (one to swinging buzzers and one to a damsel), and we tried going for a drift, expecting to get some action to dry fly as the evening developed. After a couple of encouraging early chances, nothing happened. No offers. No fish rising. Later than I should have done, I gave up, picked up the nymphing rod, and for want of something else to try, I replaced the point fly with a small black booby to make an instant washing line. That was a much better option, and it brought some late sport.

John Robertson fished on his own and he too found the washing line set-up on a floater was a good bet, picking up 4 in the town bay and Palace bank area. I'm guessing from Fraser Gault's card that he was also on the washing line, as the component parts are "cat booby, Diawl Bach, floater and figure-of-eight".

Stewart Barnes reported that he struggled to find fish until he dropped in at the end of the Palace Bank. Stewart had a lot of chances and 3 landed to a hot-head damsel and a Diawl Bach, slow figure-of-eighted on floating line.

Trevor Gibson and Gavin Macdonald toughed it out with nymphs in the middle of the west end for most of the evening, and gradually put a pair of bags together on

buzzers, Diawls and hare lugs. Amazingly, while we had gone looking for rising fish later on -- and found none -- Trevor and Gavin stayed anchored where they were, and the rising fish came to them. I watched Gavin cover one, hook it, lose it, then cover another, hook it and lose that as well. And all the time there was not a fish to be seen anywhere else on the loch! They both took fish to a comparadun, and finished with 5 fish each to give them top boat.

The Club finished with 33 fish for 11 rods -- good given the iffy conditions.

Friday, 13th July

Glencorse, Evening Session

Another unremittingly dreich outing! It looked great conditions all day as well. Just as we arrived, back of 4 p.m., the first spots of rain started to fall. And that was it. It rained the whole damned evening, apart from a 5 minute spell when it almost didn't. Apart from the rain, conditions were good for dries, and I had been out the previous Friday evening, and it had been all dries then, so Dougie Skedd and I went for that. When it's raining, you can never be arsed getting everything soaked changing methods, so you just set your stall up and hope for the best.

We worked our way up the water, getting scant interest until we got into the narrow channel leading up to the far bay. Here we gradually started to see the odd rise and to pull the odd fish up. The previous week, in windier conditions, I had found a big size 10 really bushy black hopper had been by far the best pattern and I went with a less dramatic version of the same thing. That worked again, this time with a black Shipman (12) sharing the spoils. Dougie was getting his fish to a deer hair emerger.

The sport increased going into the top bay, and for a while we were getting a steady run of offers, many of which were non-committal about taking the fly down. Eventually 3 boats were doing the same drift and the fish didn't take kindly to that. We backed off, down the channel again, and here, about mid-evening we found a bunch of fish on the pop. We could see straight away the characteristic rushing hither and thither type rises that say one thing: *Caenis* nymphs!

It wasn't a *Caenis* evening, and we didn't see many duns in the air, but the nymphs must have been up having a think about it, at least. The fish certainly were in a different mood now, and I was kindly invited to poke my big dries where the sun clearly never shines. Dougie was still getting success with his deer hair emerger, which he now had teamed with a grey Shipman. I switched to a 12 half-hog on the tail with 2 size 14 Shipmans, in hare's ear and ginger. That brought sport back online for a bit, although eventually it tailed off as the light went even more dim than it had been all evening... and the temperature dropped... and the risers stopped. The ba' was on the slates!

John Miller and John Levy had fished around about us all evening. John M fished dries, taking a brace of 3 lb plus rainbows to black and claret hoppers, while John Levy fished wets (doobry and snatchers) on floating line. John also had a pair of rainbows, plus loads of sport with the wee wild brownies. Ron McCarron and John Robertson fished further back, and had a bit of sport to yellow dancier and Diawl Bach (not fished together!). Our other 2 boats decided it wasn't a night for stopping out -- fair enough!

The six rods that did stick it out to the end had 18 fish.

Saturday, 28th July

Butterstone Loch, Day Session

What a strange mixed-up season this is turning out to be. Must be the weather! Back in April we had the outing to Menteith where the fish should have been in the reed beds, but were out in open water. By late July, the fish are often sulking out in the deep water, but here we were catching them all out the reed beds! The bailiff told us they were in at the edges, and he was absolutely correct. He also told us they were being caught on floating lines, and nymphs and dries. Lures were not figuring in catches. For all but one of our boats, this also turned out to be the case.

Conditions-wise, the day was not ideal. The ceiling was a mix of cloud and sun, but the main problem was the stiff, blustery, swirling westerly, which spoiled presentation for much of the day. The other problem was logistical. With the reed beds on the north and south sides, and a westerly breeze, it meant that whoever was sitting on the offshore seat basically didn't get a kick at the ball. Everyone realised this, and so much swapping of seats ensured that everyone had a chance. Nevertheless, there was a bit of a dichotomy in the catches -- the best 5 rods all landed 8 fish each, while the other 6 rods landed 9 between them.

John Levy got tuned into the reed-bed fish better than anyone, and he had great sport figure-of-eighting buzzers on the floater. Diawl Bachs figured for guest Ed Green, who figure-of-eighted them on an SSI (super-slow-intermediate -- if you don't have one, you can use an Airflo floater). I also had fish on Diawl Bachs (on the floater), but when I put a black Spanflex buzzer on the point, it got all the attention.

As mentioned above, there was one boat that bucked the trend for floaters and nymphs. Tommy Steven and Dougie Skedd fished the south west shore reed beds, with Tommy stripping orange and yellow boobies on DI 7, and Dougie fishing a variety of lines and retrieves with cat minkie booby, black minkie, yellow dancier, popping bug, and hare's ear snatcher all taking fish. Stewart Barnes took fish to cormorant, Diawl Bach and hot-head damsel, slow figure-of-eighted on intermediate and floater.

With all the fish in the reed beds and a stoory wind, anchoring was really the thing to do, so there was not much opportunity to give the dries a chance. A shame, because conditions were good in spells when the wind dropped, and there was always an odd rise here and there throughout the day. I had a go in the last hour - there was a steadier number popping away at the edge of the lily beds in the north-west corner, but I couldn't get a look from them. I let the boat drift out for the last 15 minutes to see if there were any pelagic roamers over the deep water. There was! I picked up the resident at the top of the page on an Adams Klinkhammer (I trust Messrs Adams and Klinkhammer have no objection to their forced marriage).

The club's 11 rods landed 49 fish. One of the benefits of having all this crappy weather is that for the first year in quite a few, the fishing is continuing right into summer. So far, we've not been getting the dog-day stuff of the past few years, when high temperatures and low stale water combined to send the fish either sulking into the depths, or, if there weren't any depths, all stressed-out and just not for playing.

Sunday, 12th August

Glencorse, Day Session

Middle of August.... The past few years, it has been a case of dog days -- fish stressed-out with warm water -- lying doggo, or throwing themselves out the water. All change this year -- Jet stream slipped or something... Here we were with 2 fleeces on and hood up! The forecast said the weather would be quite good for fishing, though maybe danger of a flat calm. Aye, right! It was calm until we arrived. As soon as it saw us, it mixed up a stiff westerly blow to last the whole day. The sky gave us a fair old mix - dreich, then sunny intervals, and finally some rain.

Still, the conditions were quite decent for fishing, and we came away feeling we should have done better. It all seemed a bit slow. There wasn't much meat on the water -- just a few heather flies. There was an odd fish showing, but seldom more than once. The bay right up the top end was the best bet, but the fish were very easy put off. One drift out and down, and you had to rest it for a good bit before going back up. Apart from that, fish could be caught anywhere on the water, with them putting in little cameos here and there throughout the day. With the exception of a decent brownie, all the fish we had to our boat were cracking quality resident rainbows.

Early on was a good time to get a fish -- Dougie Skedd had 4 in the morning to a hare's ear emerger, then hee-haw all p.m. Two of us went with the heather fly approach. Our presentations were different, but both worked. Tommy Steven fished a dry pearly bibio with a quick figure-of-eight, while I got mine to a pearly-winged heather fly, fished static. Trevor, in the boat with me, went the figure-of-

eight way, taking fish to heather fly and black hopper. Tommy's boat partner, Bob Allan went downstairs to take fish on DI3 and PTN and Diawl Bach.

I found that the fish in the morning, while not exactly forming a queue, did at least take my size 10 heather fly square between the chops when they did venture to have a go. As we went into the afternoon period the number of takes increased, but they were all edgy attempts that resulted in nothing but fresh-air shots. I was thinking, I bet if I change down to a 12, I'll stop getting the takes. However, as it was 100% fresh-airies at that point I thought I may as well try. So I changed, and sure enough the takes dried up! Great. However, an old beat-up emerger-style claret Klinkhammer came to my rescue and took a couple of late fish for me.

Stewart Barnes had an early fish to a damsel before changing to dries to take 3 more to elk hair emerger and daddy. Adam Marr, over from Hong Kong and fishing with Stewart took his fish to hoppers. Still on dries, John Wastle had 3 fish to black and claret hoppers, while John Robertson took fish to an elk hair sedge. Those mixing it up a bit included Chris Bell, who had 3 to claret hopper and hare's ear nymph, and Ivor Young, who had a brace to Wickhams and bibio hopper, fished slow on an intermediate. Bob Whyte took 4 to cat's whisker on an intermediate line, while Boyd Scott, took a brace to damsel on a sinker.

The Club's 18 rods landed 46 fish.

Sunday, 26th August

Coldingham Loch, Day Session

A game of 2 halves, well 3 halves really. Weather-wise, the first 2 thirds of the day were bright and breezy, though the sun added some much needed warmth. Although it clouded over nicely later on, with the wind dropping into the bargain, these improvements were offset by a drop in temperature when the sun went in. The conditions were reflected in the way the day went, fishing-wise. Early on, both dries and nymphs were working well. As the sun climbed, it got a lot quieter all round, but as the cloud came over the dries came into their own.

Douglas told us that Saturday had been good for dries, with a fall of small *Bibionids* coming down the top arm and getting the fish on the pop. That was music to my ears, as the weather on Saturday had not been anything to write home about. I went with a size 14 mkll black Klinkhammer on the dropper and a black pearly-wing bits on the point. The Klinkie worked really well, and while the Bits did a... er... bit, it wasn't holding its place in the team and was subbed, firstly by a daddy-long-legs (offers, but nothing sticking), then an emerger-style claret Klinkhammer (worth a fish), and finally a black hopper (worth a couple).

In the boat with me was guest Hugh Thomson. Hugh fished hare's ear nymphs and slim, nymphy-style wets, giving them a slow retrieve on the floater. This worked very well in spells. Hugh and I (who remembers 'Hugh and I?') spent all day drifting from the very top of the west arm, down the arm until we ran out of fish. That seemed to happen quite quickly, causing us to concentrate on short drifts. Bob Whyte and Greg Milne did likewise, with Bob tuning into the dry fly action on olive Klinkhammer and deer-hair emerger.

Bob Allan had got off to a flier, having boated 2 while I was still settling up with Douglas. He and guest Ed Green parked-up above the cages and had early sport to nymphs (Diawl Bach). As nymphing lost its way later in the day, they came up to join us at the top of the arm. Bob tried his hand at dry fly fishing, and had his first success with the method, taking 3 on an emerger pattern.

Tommy Steven and Dougie Goddard fished down towards Swing-gate Bay early on, but without much success. Later on, they came up the west arm (getting busy by now!) and got tuned-in, figure-of-eighting dries at anchor. They returned 11 between them, mostly taken to a dry Bibio.

Euan Cluness took a long time to get tuned in, but he had a really good late run on dry fly, tucked in to the quieter water behind the copse. Euan's fish came to an olive hopper and a Klinkhammer. Boat partner Eric Singer would have done better if he had realised he was fishing his daddy-long-legs on a broken hook!

That left Trevor Gibson and Adam Marr. They fished at anchor against the eastern high bank early on, where Trevor's 'taching technique worked well with Diawl Bachs. Later, when nymphing was struggling, they went on the drift with dries, and Adam then got into top gear with a hare's ear CDC.

The Club's 12 rods landed a total of 59 fish

Saturday, 1st September

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

Westerly gales were forecast, and while we didn't get gales, it got decidedly breezier as the day wore on. Too rough to fish the road shore area, and so it was a case of considering the alternatives. The best places turned out to be: tight in behind Sam's point (aka reedy point), the heronry (though this got rough later on as well), and the Butts. Gateside Bay was a favourite (probably as it was catching most shelter) and, while it was a recommended area, it didn't produce a whole lot.

Reports had been of biblical numbers of heather flies. I can tell you that in recent years I have become the anti-heather fly magnet. Wherever I am they are not. Wherever they are, I am not. And so it was. We saw one, which, when added to the one I saw at Glencorse a couple of weeks back makes 2 I have seen this year. Determined, I tackled up with dry fly, going with a pearly-winged

heather fly and MkII black Klinkhammer. I wasn't 100% confident, however, and I put up a second rod with slow glass, Texas Rose muddler, hare's ear palmer and hot head damsel on the point. Plan B was needed early doors, as the dries were a waste of effort, despite seeing plenty black gnats on the water, as we made our way up. After drifting down the Rookery, we got into a few fish off Sam's point. My boat partner, Len Newby was getting a lot of follows without converting. As we drew in to the calmer water behind the point, suddenly there were fish showing all over the place, and it was worth the effort having put up 2 rods to be able to make a quick change: first cast with the dries resulted in a fish.

Although the fish stopped showing after just 5 minutes, our confidence in dries was now high, and Len changed over, going with an olive Klinkhammer and a black hopper. We picked away at the fish in that area for the whole morning, being joined by John Wastle and Alan Duncan, who had a fairly similar story to tell to our own. They had started with pulling (orange mini-lure and minkie on slow glass), then switched to dries (claret hopper).

By lunch time, the fish behind Sam's point had seen all they wanted to of our stuff, and we decided to look for fresh horses. We went over to the Butts, where we ran into Dougie Skedd and John Miller. They had been working away at the fish in there with dries. John got his on claret and black hoppers, while Dougie got his on heather fly and Madam X (as you do). Dougie was getting lots of offers, with a very poor conversion rate, while John had the the less maddening scenario of fewer offers and a near 100% conversion rate. We picked up a single fish at the Butts before deciding it was a bit slow, and so we moved on.

We tried a stop at the back of the promontory, where the food lane builds up on a stiff westerly. Deadsville, so we moved on round to the heronry. We passed Alan Morrison and Fraser Gault coming out. They had been doing well in there with dries. However, they signalled it had gone off -- it was very rough by now after all -- so we made our way up to the top, to the Malling shore/Dog isle area. Nothing doing there, and decidedly stooory. The obvious thing to try was to tuck in round behind Stable point, into the calm water. So we did. It was like another world there.

There was a dose of boats, and we needed to work out whether they were there because they were catching fish, or were simply sheltering. Hmmm.... simply sheltering, it turned out. However, we managed to pick up a couple of fish on dries in there. We bumped into Stewart Barnes and Trevor in there. They had got off to a great start out from international Bay, taking fish to dries (daddy-long-legs, CDC sedge and bibio CDC hopper, before it turned too rough to stay there.

Len had to go off at 4.30, so after dropping him off, I tried a go round towards International Bay. Er, no way! Far too rough. I came back and finished off in hotel Bay and picked up a last cast fish on a CDC feather fly.

Back at the ranch, we caught up with Eric Gray and Colin Jaap, who had had sport to an orange lure on a sink tip line.

The club's 14 rods landed 44 fish.

Saturday, 8th September

Glencorse, Day Session

Weather-wise, what we had was a bright and breezy start, with the wind dropping to an ideal level, although it did tend to swing about as it often does at Glencorse, as it tries to find a line of best fit through the hills. The sun also gave way to cloud as the day went on, although for those of us that went with dries, the best of the surface action was strangely before the cloud came over.

Early on, most fold went with dries, but it was slow-going -- probably just too cold at that time, added to there being very little meat on the water. Boyd Scott and I fished all the way from the top end to the dam for not a fish. Trevor and Bob Whyte did the same drift, with Trevor picking up their single fish to a half-hog. It was much the same story for Dougie Skedd and Fraser Gault. We all arrived down at the dam around the same time, where John Gibson and Greg Milne were fishing. Things changed quickly. Firstly Greg Milne caught one on a yellow lure and intermediate. Then, Dougie Skedd, having given up on dries for a bit, caught the first of 3 in short order, figure-of-eighting a cat-minkie-booby on a Hi-D. I had also tried a change by now, and banged one on Hi-D and lures while Dougie was playing his first. Hmmm... stockies about... stay on, or get off was the question. It was getting busy anyway, and Boyd and I decided to get off, and we went back up to the top end to start over with dries.

Nearing the far end, we ran into Ron McCarron and Bill Scobie, also fishless, but even as we were speaking to them, Ron hooked into a fish on dry fly. That gave us renewed enthusiasm, and we set about it. The next period saw us get a lot of sport, mostly from brownies, with an odd rainbow in among them, though our conversion rate was very poor. The likelihood was that they were taking the very small scrots that were all we could see on the water. Our 12s and 14s were massive by comparison. I thought a change down to extra smalls would just get less chances, so I stayed with my team of: half-hog, pearly-winged heather fly and mkll black Klinkhammer. Boyd was switching between figure-of-eighting dries and doing same with nymphs, his best pattern being a nymph tied from Nutrigrain bar wrapper. Gradually we got our names on the score board.

It was still bright, but we could see clouds approaching, and we thought we were in for an improvement. Alas, as it clouded over, sport slowed-up! The whole day was probably temperature-driven. This idea was backed up by news from Dougie Skedd and Fraser Gault. They had also come away from the stockies and, as they worked their way up the water with dries, they ran into a group of keen-yins at the knuckle. Dougie had success with his Madam X again. However, those fish had also went-aff as it clouded over! Stewart Barnes also had a tale to tell of a frantic spell with dries in the middle of the day. He was at the back of the causeway wall when they came on. It was all go (bibio hopper), then all stop.

Anyway, time for pastures new... Boyd and I went down the arm and round the corner into the first bay on the road shore. We got some fresh sport here. I noticed a distinct change in the fishes' preference on my team. The ones up the top bay had all been coming at the Klinkie and heather fly, ignoring the half-hog in the middle. The fish we were among now were all coming at the half-hog (which was a particularly sparse specimen). A look around at what was on the surface revealed that fishy favourite: fiery brown flying ants. I changed the other 2 flies for stuff more like the ants, and sure enough, there was instant attention to both substitutes -- for exactly no fish landed!

Time ran out on us -- and everyone else. Back at the harbour, Trevor and Bob had taken the stockie option down at the dam, and our total for the day was highly indebted to their choice. They had fish to slow retrieve with intermediate and midge-tip lines, mostly to cat's whisker, damsel and orange blob.

The club's 11 rods landed 36 fish

Monday, 17th September

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

The weather forecast was for cold, with gales. It was cold, but we escaped the gales, thankfully. Just a bit of a swirly, changeable breeze that was trying to come anywhere from NE to NW, depending on where you were trying to fish. The sky was a right old mix -- everything from glaring, brassy sunshine, to showers. There was very little meat on the water and very few fish were seen to rise over the whole day. Easy to think these were hopeless conditions to fish dries, but dries are always worth a try at The Lake, and it proved to be a really useful back-up tactic on the day.

I was fishing with Paul Young (he's been a member of our club more years than he cares to remember). We started off at the shallows just round the corner from the boats -- usually a good place to start -- as did several other boats. Nothing doing at all. So, we took her up to just shy of Sam's point -- a regular hot-spot over the last season or so. Sure enough, there were fish here, and we took one each, Paul on slime line and a wee damsel, mine to a dry (pearl-wing heather fly). Dougie Skedd and Bob Temple came in at the back of us. Dougie reported having had a lot of bumps to washing line tactics, but had only stuck to one. I had set up 2 rods, and had been swapping back and forth between dries and pulling, but had not had an offer pulling, so I re-rigged that rod to a washing line. We had a few more chances at Sam's point, but as we found last time, the fish there quickly put the tin helmets on when you start repeating the drift -- it's shallow water, right enough.

We decided to make a move, and tried a couple of drifts in the heronry. Brussels sprout. We moved on up to Dog Isle. There were several boats working the area, and we soon saw a rod bent. Before much longer we were getting action of our

own. Still missing more than we were landing, but it was definite progress. We decided to keep working away at it. Paul was continuing to have success with his damsel, but also had a fish to a black hopper on the bob. I was now getting Dougie's problem with the figure-of-eighted washing line getting too many bumps and not enough hook-ups. One to a candy-stripe snatcher and one to a black booby was all it managed.

Mid-afternoon, and suddenly there was a wee flurry of rises. I decided to give the dries another go. Instant interest, so I stuck with them. Fewer offers than the washing line, but a much better conversion rate. It makes a huge difference at the end of the day! Just the heather fly, and a fiery brown hopper in 12s were involved.

Eric Singer and son Keith (first club outing in over 20 years!) had a good day, taking 9 to the boat (whereabouts unspecified). They were both fishing cat's whiskers on floating lines. Bob Whyte and Edward Hamilton matched the Singers for numbers, but using intermediates, and damsels (in addition to cat's whiskers). They caught their fish in Reedy Bay.

Trevor and John Levy caught their fish in Roman Bay (*Trevor -- where the Hell's Roman Bay???*) and Malling Shore, to slime line and slow retrieve, with yellow dancer, cormorants and Kate McLaren.

Tom Steven and guest Hugh Thomson got theirs in Gateside Bay, with Tommy on Hi-D and booby, and Hugh on floater and yellow dancer.

The club's 15 rods landed 40 fish.

Sunday, 23rd September

Loch Vennachar, Day Session

This outing replaced the one we had booked at Portmore, after that fishery decided to close its doors to the public. The only water we ever had catches that could be counted on the fingers of one hand (apart from Loch Leven) was Portmore, so maybe it was on the cards that we would replace like with like. One or two of us had a boat during the season, and we all found it hard going. Reports seemed to suggest there was an odd fish to be caught, but once again we (with a couple of exceptions) could not find the buggers.

Conditions weren't brilliant, but they weren't bad for brownie fishing. It was very mild, with about 50% cloud cover and a stiffish westerly that dropped away during the afternoon to give a really pleasant end to the session.

We were advised to fish the Portnellan shore, so headed off that way at the start. Dougie Skedd dinged one on the first drift, going into Milton Bay. After that, we zig-zagged our way all the way down towards the dam, covering fishy

looking water, but without so much as a touch, a swirl, a follow, or any sort of sign of life. Reports were saying slime lines or DI-3s and palmers, so Dougie went slime, while I went DI-3. We covered fly sizes from 14s to 10s, in assorted patterns.

It had been so fruitless in the eastern half, that we decided not to bother with the sailing club side at all, and instead to go with the bailiff's tip from the previous day, which was the western point of Lendrick Bay. Dougie was by now fishing flashy stuff: a sparkler and a Dunkeld dabbler. As we rounded the point of Lendrick Bay, Dougie birlled one fish, then landed another. We swung round for a second pass. Dougie banged another couple, then landed a second one. Great, we thought. I stuck on some sparkly stuff and we went back round for another pass. Unfortunately, we had been seen with the net out, and several boats went through the spot before we got another chance. With what seemed like the only fish in the place lying in a 50 yards stretch, that was too much pressure and they shut up shop. I missed one offer, and that was it for Lendrick Bay. We went over it another couple of times to make sure, but no joy.

We gave up and went back to Milton Bay for another try -- well it was the only other place we'd had an offer. Nothing doing. We crossed over and tried down the Grass Bank drift and all the way on down to the Sailing Club. Nothing doing. So, we came back up and tried Boat House Bay. Nothing doing.

Our second boat was clean, as was our 3rd... and our 4th. Our last boat had fish -- two of them! Again, it was a case of a brace to one rod, that being guest Hugh Easterbrook, who caught 2 fish for 2 lbs. The first was caught on the Sailing Club/East Dullater drift on a sink tip line - fast retrieve - yellow dancer. The second was caught on the Invertrossachs drift on a DI-3 line - fast retrieve - glitter damsel. Hugh had offers just before catching on both occasions, but repeating the drifts was fruitless.

Saturday, 6th October

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

As so often happens, the quietest weather of the year falls after the autumn equinox, and we had by far our most windless outing of this, or just about any other, season. I think we had a slight whuffle for about one minute, and the rest of the session was glass calm. The temperature was OK for October, we had 100% ceiling, and the light was also as flat as a pancake, so there was a chance to have a day on dry fly. It would certainly beat the pants off flogging away with sunk line on such a calm day!

Standing on the beach before the off, we could see a good dose of fish rising just off the reeds beyond the harbour where the Inchmahome launches go out from. It's a real hot spot, and one would think that everyone who fishes The Lake would know it's a hot spot, so there should be no excuse for boats ploughing

through the area at the off as they head round to International Bay. However, that is always what happens and as the water is only a couple of feet deep, it scatters the fish and it can take hours for them to get back and settled again. Sure as death, it happened again, so we set off to look for risers elsewhere.

We headed off clockwise, which turned out to be the long way round, as we didn't find fish until we were almost back at the start -- Sam's point, to be exact. We thought we were in for a cracker, as there were plenty of targets to shoot at, all along the reeds and down towards Hotel Bay. However they turned out to be in a real tricky mood. Most were only up once, so covers could not be directed with certainty, and oncers are less inclined to take anyway. In addition, when we did get a fish up more than once, they were always, but always heading away from the boat. That meant trying for long range covers: not easy in a glass calm, and there always seemed to be a wee air coming in your face no matter which way you were casting -- so leader turnover was pretty naff a lot of the time. However, there was still enough times when you could be fairly sure you had shown your fly to the fish, and the fish had ignored it. However, there were also some tell-tale 'crinkles-under' to show you the fish had indeed seen your fly and had invited you to poke it where the sun don't shine.

After a couple of hours with only 2 fish on for a few seconds each to show for our efforts, Ian Macdonald and I decided to try going finer and smaller. That worked -- well it maybe didn't so much work, as improve things a bit -- and we started to put a few fish in the boat. We were both on 14 or 16 CDCs: Ian's a hare's ear, mine a candy-stripe. We spooned the fish to see if there were any clues as to why they were so tricky. Not really -- just been picking away at whatever they came across -- some scrotty buzzer pupes, bits of grass (as usual) the odd hoglouse, and the most common item was the shuck of the decent-sized buzzer that had been hatching. It had quite a brownish tinge to it, so I put a size 14 fiery brown Shipman on the tail and that was worth two fish.

The 2 or 3 boats around us had been working hard as well, and they had been landing enough fish to draw attention from further afield. It very quickly got very busy in behind Sam's point. Before long there was more than a dozen boats, the fish stopped rising, and we took our cue to look elsewhere. We went across to see if the fish off the shoulder had settled down after being run over at 9:30. We spotted Dougie and Adrian coming away from there so reckoned there wasn't much doing. However, we were seeing fish just a bit further along and we went in for a look. Same story as before -- tricky hardly describes it! We worked away at them though, picking up another 2, before... they got even trickier! Ian went to a single fly (we should probably have been fishing a single all along), but stepped back up to a size 12, a hare's ear comparadun. That got instant interest, bringing several chances and our last fish of the day.

When we got in and compared notes it was clear the rest had struggled even worse than we had. Only 2 rods had anything much to report. Adrian Coats had 3 fish, including a 6 pounder, caught in Portend Bay to a floating line with a very slow-fished goldhead stickfly. Tommy Steven, meanwhile, went downstairs with

intermediate, then Hi-D, catching 1 each to a peach booby, a yellow booby, and an orange mini-lure.

The club's 16 rods caught 22 fish.

Saturday, 20th October

Linlithgow Loch, Day Session

The day got off to a lively start, with your correspondent taking a dip in the harbour on his way into the boat. All I can say is, watch out for boat 4 - it's got a vicious streak! My thanks go to Boyd Scott and the duty bailiff for pulling me out. Ivor and Len were on hand to give me 5.6 and 5.7 respectively, having docked a point for over-rotation on entry.

It could have been a lot worse -- the only bits of me that stayed dry were the 2 pockets holding my car keys & USB drive, and my mobile phone. Although my seat box shipped a fair bit, the camera escaped, and although my landing net sank, it left just enough of the frame visible to get a grappling anchor into it and retrieve it from the depths. Someone asked later, "Were you wearing your lifejacket?", to which I replied, "Thankfully, no!" -- I had thus saved myself the 20 quid it costs to recharge the damned thing.

I'll not do that again in a hurry, though.

As I forgot to bring a towel or a change of clothes, and as it was far from tropical enough to dry-off in the boat, my early morning swim meant a drive home to get sorted out. Having eschewed the 9 a.m. start that the others made, I returned, nice and dry, at 11-ish, and got out onto the water with guest Jim Walker (what must he have thought of this lot!). I hadn't even put up a rod, when I was called into action to get a photo of Boyd Scott, who was into a fish just behind us in Town Bay. Having got that dealt with, I got a rod put up, but again stopped short of actually fishing, while I took a shot of Trevor into a fish. Boyd took another one, his 4th of the morning before I got a fly in the water. Finally, I wet a line about 11.30 a.m. And that's exactly the time the fish switched off for the day. Doh!

Trevor did manage one fish late on, to a booby and sinker, their earlier fish having come to brown buzzers fished on the point, deep, just on the edge of the drop-off.

Ian and Gavin Macdonald had 5 between them in that first couple of hours spell, and missed quite a few more, before the fish shut up shop. They fished a bit further over towards the north-west point, both on hares ears and Diawl Bachs, but with Ian on floater and Gavin on slime line.

John Levy was the only person to get a couple of fish after the 11.30 cut-off, taking 2 of his bag of 3 in the late morning/early afternoon period. Again, it was a case of fishing nymphs, slow on a floater and long fluoro leader, and taking the

fish deep on the tail fly. John was on buzzers with a gold-head pearly thorax fly on the tail position.

The Club's 10 rods landed 15 fish.

2008

Sunday, 18th March

Lindores Loch, Day Session

A new season upon us. Time to dig out all the kit from where it was thrown last October. Recharge the batteries -- both biological and lead-acid. Go over it all and try not to forget anything -- but there is always something. Waistcoat or wellies are my usual favourites. If I forgot something this year, I didn't need it!

The weather for our first trip of 2008 was a great deal better than any of us had expected. Andy reckons northeast is a good wind direction for Lindores due to the amount of shelter it affords, and so it proved. The strength was ideal all day, and it stayed fair, with sunny spells giving a wee bit of warmth to proceedings. Nevertheless, the electric welly warmers were a boon on the day.

We were told that Saturday's boats had had a superb catch, mostly to lures in mid-water, and fairly close to home. As often seems to happen to us on a Sunday, there is an initial flurry of action, after which it becomes hard going. Probably a result of going after Saturday's left-overs. Or maybe we can fish nane. Whatever, we had the same thing again. John Miller had a fish first cast, and then went the rest of the day without a touch! We did much the same early on - three chances produced a single fish in the first half hour, then nothing.

We hung around the bottom end longer than we should have, then decided to try pastures new. That proved a good idea, as we got into a spread of fish across the top bay, in front of Lindores House. John Gibson had fish to a cruncher on DI-7 and a sweetcorn booby on an intermediate. My best fly was that traditional wet fly, an orange blob, fished on a Hi-D. However, all it took was a couple of other boats to start making the same drift, and the fish put their tin helmets on.

Back at the home end, it picked up in the afternoon, as it often does. Best boat was the 10 fish taken by John Levy and Hugh Easterbrook, with John catching on a slow-retrieved WetCel 3 with a damsel and orange lures, while Hugh fished a cat's whisker fast on a Di-5. It was a successful day for Hugh, on his first outing as a Club Member, as it was for his pal Jim Walker, who took 4 on a medium sink line and various fritz lures.

More new boys... Hugh Thomson and Ed Green fished intermediate lines slowly, close to the margins, to take fish on both nymphs (Diawl Bach) and lures. Fraser

Gault also had a bag close to the road shore on fast glass and hot-head damsel. Tom Steven had fish at both ends of the loch to Di-7 and big lures. Elsewhere among the catches, orange was the stand-out colour for lures, with an odd fish taken to buzzers.

The killer fly on Saturday, we were told, was a yellow dancer. John Robertson had 3 tied up and gave one to his pal, Bob Norris. Fishing their identical dancers along the railway shore, the score was John 0, Bob 5! Bob, you might need to supply your own in future.

The catch for 18 rods was 43 fish.

Saturday, 5th April

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

Thursday and Friday were 15 degrees, with a SW breeze. Just the ticket. Saturday was 5 degrees with quite the most annoying wind any of us could remember having at the Lake. It came this way, then that, spinning the boat round and round. In fact, conditions in general were never the same for more than 2 minutes. At times it was almost calm, but later we had a wild squall that had us running for sheltered water (my arse bone is still sore from being bounced up and down on the thwart!). At times we were peeling off the layers in the warmth of the sun. Later we were blowing on our fingers to get the feeling back into them. What a day! Most folk packed-in with a wee bit left on the clock; we assumed out of frustration that it just was not any pleasure trying to fish in such conditions.

Apart from the odd shower of, variously, rain, hail and snow, most of the rest of the day the sky gave us bright, brassy sunshine. So, all in all, not great fishing conditions. Easy to make up excuses, if we needed them. However, the fishing was OK. There was a cracking good hatch of fly. Buzzers small and large, stone flies and sedges (yes, sedges in April!) were all hatching. And, when conditions allowed, there were fish up and feeding on them. We found a good number on top in the shelter of the reeds between Sam's point and the Rookery. Unfortunately, as the conditions were changing every few minutes, it didn't last, and there was no chance to have a go at them with dries.

Dougie Skedd and I went with different tactics. Dougie set up with DI-2, and a washing line rig of wee green-and-white booby on the tail with hare's-ear and claret snatchers on the droppers. I'm afraid I was nowhere near so sophisticated. I went DI-3, with black tadpole, cat's whisker and orange blob. Well, the conditions weren't very inspirational! As it turned out, we caught exactly the same number of fish, so I felt justified in my choice. In fact, we had fish on all 6 flies. We caught the usual well-conditioned rainbows and superb blues, but also had quite a few brownies. These were obviously stocked fish. In fact the colouration of some was quite unusual -- it seemed like the hatchery had put a bit too much astaxanthin in

the diet, as they had orange pelvic and anal fins! When I saw the first one flash under the water, I thought I had a perch, or a roach on!

After morning spells in home bay, the Rookery and the Butts, where we caught fish in all 3 locations, we repeated the tour in the afternoon, but couldn't repeat our success in any of them. We tinkered with our tactics, and tried a few alternative spots, but all to no effect. So, we ended up coming to the conclusion that the fish had been put off in the afternoon by the continuously changing weather. Wrong! It turned out that quite a few of the other boats hadn't started to catch until the afternoon.

The road shore was a good spot (one place we didn't try). Two of our best boats fished there. John Miller and John Levy were both on DI-3s with lures (black and green tadpole, orange blob). Len Newby and Tam Forrest fished a mixture, higher in the water (ghost tip and intermediate). They had fish to fritz lures and tadpoles, but also to buzzers and cormorants. Tommy Steven and John Robertson also had fish early in the Hotel Bay / Home Bay area, and when they went off there they had some success at Lochend. Both fished DI-3s. Their successful flies were damsel, viva and black tadpole. Alan Duncan and Dougie Goddard had 5 to their boat, but no details supplied.

Bob Whyte was yet another to have success on a DI-3 line. Bob had a bag to cat's whisker and black fritz in Gateside Bay. Catch of the day was made by Bob's boat partner, Bob Temple, who equalled Tommy Steven's feat of a few years ago by catching a 20 pound pike on a yellow fly in Gateside Bay. Tommy's was on a yellow booby. Bob's was on a yellow dancer. Pike do like yellow!

The club's total for 14 rods was a very respectable (given the conditions) 47 fish.

Sunday, 13th April

Lindores Loch, Day Session

Another of those days where you know that when the sun comes out it isn't helping the fishing, but you are really glad to see it every time it appears. Lucky with the weather in general -- still cool, but a light north-west breeze with sunny intervals throughout the day. Andy told us it had been fishing well during the week, but had gone off the day before we arrived. Just our luck.

For 13 of our 14 rods it was a hard, hard slog. We tried quite a few tactics, and several boats explored the water, and although we only had one blank, catches were poor. We had the odd fish swinging buzzers, the odd fish figure-of-eighting nymphs such as Diawl Bach and bloodworm, the odd fish on lures such as black tadpole and yellow dancer. Most were taken on either floating line fished slow at anchor, or on midge tip or intermediate lines. There was one to a good old cat's whisker on a DI-5. In all, 13 of us landed 18 fish. Then there was Trevor.

Trevor actually started the day struggling along with the rest of us. Then, mid morning he got himself tucked into Milanda Bay, in front of the reed bed, and started to catch. Trevor was using his favourite technique of hanging 3 size 12 buzzers: 1, 2, (3 was the same as 2) under a bung. I know some people consider this is simply not cricket, and indeed the use of floats to buoy-up the line is banned at some fisheries. However, that is not for me to say. There is certainly a lot of skill involved, as Trevor has put in countless hours perfecting his technique, and I know that others can't expect just to have a go and catch the way he does. What I find intriguing is that, while at times it is no better than normal fly fishing, and at other times it is not worth a sook at all, there are other times when it completely blows away every other method of fishing.

As the fly is not moving at all, the fish has the chance to examine it at close quarters before taking it. I remember watching wee sea fish in the Med that we were catching on small hooks baited with tiny pieces of rag worm -- just dangling them directly below us from the rocks. They would take the bits of rag no bother, and I thought I would try them with a gold-ribbed hare's ear. It looked much the same to me. They gave it a close inspection and decided it was not for them. Who knows, maybe it needed to smell? Anyway, not one would take it. So, why do rainbow trout take a skinny buzzer hanging in front of their nose? I have heard some folk say it works on stockies but not on wild fish. However, perch are wild fish, and Trevor was pulling out nearly as many perch as trout, and no one else was catching perch in any numbers...

Back to Trevor... So, there he was sitting with his boat partner to his right, and another boat a few yards to his left, and while the other 3 rods landed 4 fish between them, Trevor landed 14 rainbows, lost 6 others and, as mentioned, caught a dose of perch as well. It's certainly one to think about!

Sunday, 20th April

Linlithgow Loch, Day Session

We might have created a new minor tactic today: white-water buzzer fishing! It was bad enough that we were still cursed with cold easterlies in late April. Oh well, at least easterlies don't get up to much strength. Enter us. Bugger! Given the sort of conditions illustrated above, the wise move would probably have been to stick to something on sunk line -- boobies on a DI-3, a damsel on a slime line... that kind of thing. However, most of us went out for a day's buzzer fishing -- as you do! And we were damned if a little thing like a 20 mph easterly was going to deny us. There were a few of the big Linlithgow buzzers coming off, and spoonings showed that at least a few of the fish were feeding on them.

In fairness, it wasn't too bad at the start. And Trevor and Fraser were straight into action in the west bay. Trevor was on his usual 'tached-up buzzers, while Fraser took his fish to Diawl Bachs. Dougie Goddard and I were just a bit further into the shallows and we started to pick up fish after we added a bit weight to the tail fly

(in my case a Blakeston's buzzer). Except Dougie dropped his first one well into play, then the next, and then the next. Then the wind really got up, and we lost our anchorage (both anchors!). Then Dougie's hat blew off, and we thought we had lost it. Then... and this is spooky... it came back towards the boat! It really did. Never seen anything like it. We netted it out. Dougie was so relieved. By now, any attempt to cast out to the side for a swing was instantly turned into a straight down the wind job. The fishing tailed-off anyway, and we knew we should be trying something different, but also knew that any attempt to change would be fankle suicide.

Meanwhile, Ian and Gavin Macdonald had gone up the east end for a bit of shelter, but had had a wasted 2 hours up there. When they came back down, Gavin got one of those spells that buzzer fishing can produce when you get tuned in. He took 5 fish in 5 casts! Gav was on black buzzers and a wee damsel. Boyd Scott took 3 more to buzzers, while boat partner Hugh Thomson went with what was probably a more sensible approach to the day, taking 4 on a cormorant and sink-tip line.

John Levy and Eric Singer gave up on town bay and tried tucking-up close in to the north shore. They also switched from buzzers and that did the trick, as they proceeded to take a bag to green fritz lures. By mid-afternoon most of the boats had tucked up under the Palace bank/town bay area to get as much shelter as was going. But the whole area was dead. Things were not looking good for Dougie, and he was ruing those lost fish earlier in the day. We gave up on buzzers ourselves, and tried some different stuff -- washing lines, boobies, goldheads... nothing. Then, with the last few minutes on the clock, success! A fish on a yellow goldhead fritz lure broke Dougie's duck with his last cast of the day!

Tommy Steven and John Miller had fished until early afternoon in the west end, then made the brave decision to fight their way upwind to the east end. A bold move, but it paid off in spades. Having had only a couple of fish before their move (and given that the afternoon was a total write-off for the west end), they got into fish in the north east bay. Time ran out on them when they were still catching, but they finished top boat with a dozen, taken to buzzers and bloodworm patterns.

The club's 14 rods had a highly creditable 52 fish (and, thanks to Dougie's yellow fritz, no blanks!)

Sunday, 27th April

Carron Valley Reservoir, Day Session

The great British weather, eh? Seven days ago, we were sitting on Linlithgow, all hopped-up against the biting easterly. Now, here we were on the warmest day since some time last year, at times not a breath of wind, and the rest of the time "light and variable". Not ideal conditions for fishing for brownies. I guess that is one thing to be said in favour of there being rainbows in Carron these days --

conditions that are bad for brownies can be good for rainbows. The lack of wind itself wasn't a problem for the brownie fishing, as there was a good hatch of buzzer that continued throughout the day, and whenever there was a decent ceiling the brownies were up and rising in good numbers at both ends of the water. However, that perennial enemy of surface sport, the sun, spent too much of the day poking through the scattered clouds, making dry fly fishing a stop-start, stop-start affair.

Of our 6 boats, 1 featured predominantly rainbows in their catch return, 2 had a roughly 50:50 split and 3 caught mostly browns. Jimmy Millar and I started just out from the harbour - we had been watching a good rise get going from the car park, and Jimmy had an early fish, but the rise did not last, and we made our way up to our favourite spot - Carron Bay. There was a light breeze coming out the south up there, so we started our drift right up where the burn comes in - always a good spot for a large brownie. We both put the dries down and picked up the other rod, loaded with trads. Jimmy was on the Kelly green, and I was on an Anglian Water slime line that must be at least 15 years old! Right on cue, the fellah above whacked my butcher variant. It was one of the best wildies I have had on Carron over the years and would have made the 2 lb mark.

Jimmy and I continued to switch between dries (black Klinkhammer and black Shipman in 14s and 16s) and pulling throughout the day, and while it was never red hot, we had decent sport (OK, maybe need to bolster that with the missed chances to make decent) from the brownies, with just a solitary rainbow to our boat.

Our top rainbow catchers were Ian Macdonald and Trevor Gibson, who got into them along the shore between Carron Bay and the far dam. They fished intermediate and floater, with black tadpole, snatchers and dries all taking fish. Bob Whyte had a 50:50 bag of browns and rainbows up at the top dam, taking 2 to a Kate McLaren and all the rest (even the browns) to a cat's whisker, all fished on an intermediate. Bob also caught a powan - and even that was on the cat's whiskers! Dougie Skedd caught a powan as well, this one on a buzzer. Dougie fished with Gavin Macdonald, again concentrating on the far end of the water, and their mixed bag of brownies and rainbows were caught on buzzers, dries (Klinkhammer, Shipmans, CDC F-fly) and pulling a slime line with claret snatcher.

Tommy Steven and Richard Goddard fished all over the place, picking up browns and rainbows, including a big stockie rainbow of 8 lb 3 oz for Tommy. Gonnae no put fish that size in Carron? They switched between fast sink and floater, and between lurish stuff - black tadpole, Viva, Mrs Ross, trads such as soldier palmer, nymphs such as snatcher and Diawl bach, and dries such as Bob's bits and black hopper.

John Miller and John Levy fished much as Jimmy and I had done, mixing it up between trads (on midge tip) and dries (claret hopper), and likewise they caught mostly brownies, with a single rainbow to their boat. They mostly fished in Burnhouse Bay and the roadside around Gull Island.

The Club's 12 rods landed 62 fish of takeable size - a good total in tricky conditions.

Saturday, 3rd May

Lindores Loch, Evening Session

(Cap'n F away - JSB Reports...)

This has been quite a productive outing overall, nevertheless the number of rods has been dropping over the last two or three seasons and we were down to seven for this particular evening. Of course, it is likely that members may well have other, more family orientated ploys on a Saturday evening and this is understandable. Likewise, the fact that it is still fairly early on in the season, with attendant issues for both light and temperature, may well be a relevant factor in relation to its seeming lack of popularity.

On Saturday evening it was not encouraging to be told that fishing was likely to finish at 9.00 pm. 4 hours at £40 per boat did not seem the best value on the fixture list. Although we did negotiate a later finish, it was so cold by 9.00 pm that everybody was glad to pack in shortly afterwards.

On arrival the ambient temperature was 17 degrees with a lightish S.E. wind and, although the sun was still bright, the outlook seemed promising. Most boats decided to start at the head of the wind, with some stretching down the railway shore. I was fishing on my own and having had no joy initially fishing dries, I decided to try up in Bird Hide bay and at the White House. Later on, looking back, I could see that most boats had retreated onto "Milanda Bay". By 7.30 p.m., as the temperature had dropped considerably, I was heading back to join them. Parking next to Trevor Gibson and Tommy Steven, I was heartened to hear that Trevor had four and that Tommy had lost two on a double hook up. Little did I know that, so far, these were the only fish touched.

I was fishing nymphs and buzzers slowly on an intermediate line and was pleased to net very quickly a nice rainbow to a cheeked Diawl Bach on the top dropper. Shortly after, Trevor, who was fishing his usual buzzer and "tache" rig, was in to another one. Unfortunately this was to be his last and although I caught another on a small black lure that was the end of the evening's sport. The last hour was pretty miserable and as we all trooped back to the jetty it was disappointing to find that Trevor's five and my two were to comprise the club's total for the evening!

My suggestion is that, next year, we might consider a Friday or Sunday evening later in the season for this outing.

Saturday, 10th May

Coldingham Loch, Day Session

The outings seem to be in a run of winter, summer, winter, summer just now. So, time for a summer one. We found out when we got back home it had been dreich and raining in Edinburgh. Coldingham is famous for its microclimates, and we had a day of warm, calm, sunny weather. Another odd number outing, and this time it was my turn to be Billy-no-mates. However, not a problem to have a boat to yourself when given the chance to chase after odd rising fish in a flat calm with dry fly, which is what I spent the day doing. Great fun. Very tricky at times, and I had to drop to a single fly on a 4lb double strength point. Even then, I was getting crinkles under, false takes, fresh-air shots, and inevitably (on such a light point and hooking lumps in the weedy shallows) a couple of snap-offs.

There was a decent number of big buzzers about early on, and that was when the fish were easiest, and I had success with a size 12 Adams hopper. That didn't last unfortunately, and as the fish turned tricky, I could see a lot of tiny wee white moths skittering about and a lot of the rises were those surging ones that push a bow wave ahead of them -- like when they are chasing *Caenis* nymphs just below the surface.

The surging activity dwindled, but the fish didn't get any easier until the last hour or so. By this time, I had switched to a pair of size 14 sparkle gnats, and these worked a treat late on. Maybe it just needed the sun to drop a bit in the sky - it did get a bit overcast later on, which no doubt also helped.

Of the remaining boats, some spent the day fishing buzzers on floating line, some mixed it up between buzzers early and dries later on, and one went with damselfly. The latter were fished by Bob Norris and John Robertson, on intermediates and sink-tip lines, in home bay. The buzzer boys were Hugh Thomson and Ed Green, who fished up the shallow arm, Tommy Steven and Gary Wright (best boat), who fished in home bay, and Eric Singer and Bob Allan, also in home bay.

Trevor also 'tached' up a bag to buzzers, sitting off the south west point, though his boat partner, Bob Whyte did better with dries later in the day, catching to black Klinkhammer (12) and olive comparadun (14). Ian Macdonald and Euan Cluness were two more who did better after changing to dries - hare's ear, black comparadun and hoppers.

Stewart Barnes and Ross McLeod were another pair who fished buzzers early, dries later, and then back to buzzers, mixing it up all over the water and ending with Stewart taking a lump of about 5 lb, on a buzzer, in home bay, with his last cast of the day.

The club's 15 rods landed 62 fish.

Monday, 19th May

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

Still stuck in the run of cool easterlies that used to occur once per decade, but now seem to occur every other year. I just checked the 5-day forecast. Tuesday - it's to be out the east, Wednesday - east, Thursday - east, Friday - east, and Saturday - east! However, the remainder of the conditions for our May trip to Menteith were not at all bad. Wind light and variable, and apart from some sunny spells mid morning, a good, overcast ceiling.

And though it might have been a bit on the cool side yet, one could not fault the effort put in by the fly life -- buzzers - big ones and small ones, olives, mayflies, and loads of tiny scrot were in evidence. One also could not fault the effort put in by the fish to feed up top. The main item apparent in the surface film was big buzzer shucks, although the only fish we chapped had but a few small buzzer pupae in it. Bob Allan and I set out our stall to fish dries, after finding a good number of early risers up the side of Dog Island. However, it quickly became clear that it was not going to be case of 'Help-yourselves, lads'. We found it tough. Not impossible - we did catch fish, but it seemed like you needed to cover 200 to get one to take your fly down and hang on till you lifted.

From our perspective, it seemed that the main stumbling block to us filling our boots was that almost every fish that rose was only up the once. Didn't matter if you covered it or not. Watch one rise and wait for it to come up again to get a bead on it... no show. No second show, again and again and again. And nothing coming to you out the blue, either. Eventually, a fish would take the fly down, but when you lifted - fresh air! Start again... The best of what we had was to black Shipman and black Klinkhammer. Great challenge though, and it's what fishing is all about. I would not have swapped it for a day pulling them out on a cat's whiskers and sinking line.

It became clear, when we analysed it all after the event that the fish in different areas had behaved differently. Our boats, by happenstance, divided into those concentrating on fishing dry fly and those concentrating on fishing nymphs. Best boat was that of Boyd Scott and Trevor Gibson, who went with buzzers on a washing line set-up (booby on the tail to keep them high in the water). They concentrated on the Tod Hole to Butts area. Dougie Goddard was another to catch on the washing line. John Levy and Hugh Thomson did nearly as well as the washing liners, just fishing buzzers and Diawl Bachs, slowly, on floating lines in the Road Shore/International Bay area.

Stewart Barnes and Eric Singer got off to a great start at Road Shore/International Bay, though they dropped more than they landed. They mixed it up more than the others, wish a fish or two to floater and intermediate... lure, buzzer, damsel, cormorant. They lost their way a bit as the day wore on (I can sympathise!).

That left a couple of boats who, like us, had concentrated on dry fly. Dougie Skedd and Ed Green fished at the Heronry, Stable Point and Lochend, and did

about as well and Bob and I did over the day. Best of the action to dry fly went to Tommy Steven and Bob Whyte. They had second best boat, fishing at Sam's Point. Flies on their list (size 14): black Shipman, CDC hare's ear, sparkle gnat, sparkle dun and olive comparadun.

Sunday, 25th May

Carron Valley Reservoir, Day Session

Will this run of easterlies ever end? Not by Sunday, 25th May, alas. And to make matters worse, it blew up to a hooly in the afternoon. To make it worse yet, we had bright sunshine most of the day. Could anything make it worse? Well, the conditions were pretty decent for the first hour... but we went out with a duff outboard and wasted the best of it, limping back to harbour and changing boats. (Stewart Barnes and Dougie Skedd lost 2 hours in the afternoon when they suffered similar mechanical problems while up at the far dam!)

Tommy Steven and I had intended to head up to Carron bay, but after our outboard problems we thought we had better not waste any more of the good conditions, so went to plan B and worked our way up the bays on the south shore. We were pulling trads on WetCel II and DI3 respectively, but by the time we arrived up at Carron Bay, we had had little to show for our efforts, apart from a succession of undersized brownies (mostly to a claret bumble muddler), and just one that made the measure.

The area on the south shore beyond Carron Bay had been holding rainbows (in addition to plenty browns) when we were here at the end of April. It turned out that there were still rainbows in the area, as the 3 or 4 boats fishing up that far all picked up a few. But there was no sign of any decent browns. To get a rainbow or two, Tommy and I both had to go a bit deeper. Tommy went onto a Hi-D, while I lazily stuck a goldhead black tadpole on the tail. The taddy picked up just as many wee brownies as the trads had been doing! Tommy's fish also came to a black tadpole, and a mini-Viva.

As the wind picked up, we went in search of quieter water, and had a go both sides of gull island. There were fish in the area, and we both had chances, and a further rainbow each. With only 4 club boats out, it won't take long to go round the others... Dougie Skedd and Stewart Barnes spent most of the day up the far end. They had 4 rainbows and 2, yes 2, takeable browns., mostly by going deep with DI-7. Successful flies included clan chief, shug, viva and black booby.

Bob Whyte and Innes Zenati fished the eastern end of the south shore. They caught rainbows on cat's whiskers - and didn't need to go any deeper than an intermediate, either. That left the Gibson brothers, John and Trevor. They spent the day at the head of the wind, tucked-up at the dam wall, and did OK, taking half a dozen rainbows, mostly on DI-7 and boobies. The club's 8 rods landed 24 fish.

Sunday, 1st June

Glencorse Reservoir, Day Session

The day started promisingly, if a tad bright, and a tad calm. However, it quickly clouded over and a breeze got up from the east (is there any other direction it can come from, we ask ourselves?) Not to worry, the first couple of hours gave us good fishing conditions. Len Newby made the most of this period - doing way better than anyone else at this time. Len fished a black tadpole and a cormorant on an intermediate in the big bay area, and took 10 fish, followed by 3 more in the afternoon.

Meanwhile, others were fishing with dries and nymphs and other stuff that was being treated with disdain by the fish. An odd one was taken here and there, but no bags were being built up. Christopher Bell and I worked our way up to the top end before we found fish willing to take our offerings which, after some fiddling about, became damsels on intermediates. The fish seemed to be high in the water - often taking within seconds of touch-down, or first pull.

Then the rains came. And it rained and rained. And the fish stopped taking (well, our flies at least). What do you do? Persevere? Move? Change tactics and get all your gear soaked in the process? Christopher had had one on a claret hopper early, so I had a bash with the dries rod (as it was made up anyway) but figure-of-eighting the dries to make them stand out in the rain. Instant success, with a fish to a claret hopper. The next one wellied it when I was off guard, broke me, and I never had another offer after re-rigging. We didn't realise we had been steered in the wrong direction by the high in the water thing. We should have gone deeper.

Bob Whyte and Richard Goddard were fishing the same area and had a similar tale to tell - fish early on, taken on intermediate and medium sink, pulling with cat's whiskers, snatcher, damsel and tadpole. Then struggling as the rain came in. That last pattern, the tadpole, was starting to recur in proceedings. Moving on... Bob Norris and John Robertson had fish to floater, intermediate and sinking line, but the only pattern on their cards was: tadpole. Bob Allan: 3 out of 5 fish on a black hot-head. Dougie Skedd had most of his fish to a black booby on DI-7.

The 'pattern' was certainly emerging. Averaging it out, black tadpoles on a sinking line seemed a good bet. It should have dawned on me - the water around the boats was teeming with tadpoles! I'm not sure I'm convinced that a 3 inch streamer passes as an imitation of a black wriggly thing half an inch long, but Dougie Skedd will tell you it is all about "controlled exaggeration".

All of which brings us to Tommy Steven, who landed no less than 18 fish over the course of the day. The vast majority were taken on DI 3 and mini-lures: bloody butcher, Viva and... black tadpole. Just to throw a spanner in the works of all this clever deduction, Tommy's boat partner, Dougie Goddard had his fish on fast glass and snatchers!

With all the mention of black tadpoles and no idea of the exact patterns being referred to, the best I can do is give the links to all the usual suspects: black tadpole, black tadpole, black tadpole, black tadpole, black tadpole and black tadpole.

When we came in, admittedly a bit on the soggy side, we found that no fewer than 8 of the 20 rods had bugged-off early in a wet and bedraggled sort of state. I am still waiting to hear from 2 of them. Others I caught up with, their cards turned to papier-mâché, and not much to tell.

To date, 18 rods landed 73 fish.

Sunday, 8th June

Frandy, Day Session

Cap'n F otherwise engaged - the secretary reports:

As we drove over the Forth Bridge en route to Frandy, the day seemed very promising. The temperature was at last rising, there was some cloud cover and, very importantly for Frandy, there did not seem to be more than a light breeze. As we breasted the brow of the approach road, the latter part of that illusion was promptly shattered. All we could see were white horses scudding across the loch towards the dam - damn!

The word from Ken McCutcheon at the lodge was not encouraging - stronger winds were forecast later in the day. However, the fishing had been reasonably good and at least the midges, which had been terrorising anglers recently, should not be a problem.

Strangely, as we set off from the jetty, the wind had eased a bit, which was welcome, but that didn't last. As usual boats spread themselves out over the loch. Some went to the narrows at the top of the loch, others chose a mid-way station and others started in the main bay opposite the Lodge.

Bob Whyte and I joined the latter group. Starting right at the jetty we quickly found ourselves drifting diagonally towards the North end of the dam. I hooked one near the tower and Bob lost one near the end of the drift. We also saw Trevor Gibson into a fish near the dam. We decided to repeat the drift, but, using a drogue, we tried to keep as close to the South shore as possible. I soon had another couple of fish and Bob lost a second one. Trevor clearly was having some success and he and Dougie Skedd also repeated the drift. By lunchtime the sun had broken through, the wind had picked up, albeit with some softer spells, but the air temperature was reasonable.

Unusually, we did not see much surface action, however Bob and I pegged away in the same area with a mixture of floating and intermediate lines, along with various

lures, wets and nymphs which were doing the business. I actually had my first five fish on five different flies, ranging from a Yellow Dancer to a Clan Chief. A Holo Cormorant was the best as it totalled three plus a breakage. Bobs had three on a Kate McLaren plus one each on a Cats Whisker and a "Shuggy". We ended up with a healthy total of 12 fish for the boat. However this was eclipsed by the best boat of Trevor and Dougie in which Trevor had 13 fish to his own rod, all on a small orange booby fished washing line style on a floater. Dougie reluctantly gave up on the dries and took three on Hi-D and booby. If bank anglers had not picked up on the fact that the bottom end of the South Shore was the place to be, a number of us would have done even better as a lot of the fish were close in at that point.

Of those who spent at least some time further up the loch, Tommy Steven and Allan Everington stuck with dries and managed 6 on such flies as Bibio, Half Hog and Deer Hair Emerger. Hugh Easterbrook and Jim Walker fished Cats and Dancers for 5 fish.

We have come to know Frandy as very much top of the water country and it was disappointing that, for once, dries did not do as well. However the conditions did not help, with the strong wind and bright sun keeping the fish from rising. We hope that the July outing will provide more appropriate weather for the floating line.

The Club finished with 47 fish for 16 rods.

Sunday, 15th June

Linlithgow Loch, Day Session

Cap'n F and JSB both away. Report by Dougie Goddard.

It was a select group of only six members that gathered for the June outing to Linlithgow loch.

After a dry and sunny start to the summer, the loch was beginning to show signs of getting a bit 'rich', particularly close to the shore in Town Bay. The wind varied between light and flat calm and changed direction frequently over the course of the day, whilst overhead conditions varied between bright sunshine with periods of good cloud cover and the occasional brief shower.

As is the norm at Linlithgow, most anglers opted to fish buzzers for most of the day. There was the occasional rise, which tempted members to try the dry fly for short periods, but the fish tended to show once only rather than exhibit the classic feeding habit.

Top boat was John Miller (4) and Bob Norris (2) with John taking one on a claret hopper, two on a gold-head pheasant tail nymph and another on a Diawl bach

whilst Bob had both his fish on dries. They opted to stay over the deep water in Town Bay.

Tom Steven and I had two fish each with mine taking buzzers in the morning, also in Town Bay. Tom was unlucky to lose two fish in the morning, but held on to two caught in the shallower water down at the East end of the loch, with one taking a bloodworm representation and the other falling to an olive buzzer pupa.

John Robertson and Trevor Gibson had a difficult day with only one fish each, John catching his early in proceedings and Trevor late in the day. They stayed at the Town Bay end of the loch and had their only successes fishing buzzers.

After a long and difficult day, everyone was happy to come off the water at 6pm rather than opt to go out again after weigh-in to see if there was an evening rise.

Sunday, 22nd June

Lindores Loch, Day Session

Outing cancelled due to combination of shitty water and shitty weather.

Friday, 27th June

Linlithgow Loch, Evening Session

An interesting evening... 100% ceiling and warm and muggy at times, then cooler as the wind turned to the east. The breeze was never more than light and was glassy calm at times. We paid the penalty for the good cloud cover as it turned very dreich. Thankfully, the rain was seldom heavier than that threshold level that stops fish from rising or seeing a dry fly. Rising they were at the start too - in big numbers - in the shallows at the west end. John Miller and Walter Mowat had a go at them with a variety of stuff, but couldn't get a look. I had a boat to myself again, and I sidled in on them with dries set up. Not a look! I couldn't see what they were feeding on - there were no flies in evidence. I gave them a go with Leadbetter suspenders - not a look to them either.

I went back to dries out of a lack of alternatives as much as anything else and, after covering about 100 fish, I got a blue to take a 14 claret Shipman's. What had he been on? A quick spooning revealed the answer - stuffed to the gills with very small pond snails. They must have been migrating at the surface - too small to be noticed, looking in the water (it was clear enough, but the light was about 2 candle-power). It was years since I was presented with this challenge, and I was trying to remember what the answer was (if there was one) when it went calm and that seemed to put the snail feeders off.

With the snail feeders going off, I had a trundle about the loch, looking for risers. After a few false starts, I settled on a drift along the north shore, about opposite the palace. Ivor and Tam Forrest were doing the same drift, and I soon found why - there were plenty of risers to throw at. These fish were a completely different proposition from the snail feeders in the west end. They were much more inclined to take a dry. The earlier fish picked out the Adams Klinkhammer on the tail, while later in the evening, as the light started to go, they switched their preference to the dropper, a claret half-hog. I had one break from dries when the rain was at its heaviest and had a fish take the Leadbetter suspender first cast - but it proved to be a one-off.

It seemed like there was no great number of sedges on the go - about normal numbers for late June. I am of the opinion that trout, generally, are no great lovers of pupal and adult sedges. Of course there are certain waters and certain hatches that are the exception, but *generally* they prefer most everything else (if it is available) to sedges (apart from the cased caddis). And yes, I know that sedgy type fly patterns catch vast numbers of fish - I was fishing a half-hog after all... Anyroad, surprising then, when I was cleaning the fish I took home and had a look at what was in the stomachs of the fish from the north shore. As well as some larger pond snails, ram's horn snails, water mites (still alive the next morning, of course!) small sticklebacks, immature *Corixae*, caddis cases, large buzzer shucks, small green adults, assorted terrestrials, the mandatory filter tip, *etc*, the most common adult insect present was sedges.

And, well, er, that is about all there is to report - the rest of the score cards were mush by the end of the evening... Ivor had 3. Tam Forrest and John Levy both had 2. Something about a hat... Lads - gonnae carry a wee grip seal bag in your waistcoats and keep your score card in it when it is raining? It will make putting a report together so much easier.

Friday, 11th July

Glencorse Reservoir, Evening Session

Not bad conditions for a summer evening's fishing. Winds that light and variable way. Temperature a little on the cool side, perhaps, and dropping. Sky, a bit bright early, an odd shower later, but over the piece a decent ceiling. The water was close to top level. George suggested the top bay and down the roadside with dries, and who were we to go against the management's recommendations.

Ed Green and I went right to the far end to start, whereupon I stuck my chosen pairing of Adams Klinkhammer and claret half-hog out onto the water, to be met by a slurp and a good rainbow, first cast! That signalled the start of an early spell of action that saw several resident rainbows and several more brownies of up to the one pound mark come to the boat. We also caught a little wild-bred rainbow. Dougie Skedd also caught one in the course of the evening.

After the initial good spell, it got a lot trickier. The boats that had started up the top end started to filter down the water. The fish, which had been rising quite well stopped showing. There was the odd *Caenis* in the air, and we wondered if the quite spell was (as often is the way) the herald of a *Caenis* hatch to come. With nothing showing, I put up a second rod with pulling stuff and managed about 6 cast with it before fish started to rise again. About another 6 casts to the risers with not a single note of interest was good enough for me, and I went back to dries, where I stayed for the rest of the evening.

As the night wore on, there were no *Caenis*, and gradually the fish started to show again. Dougie Skedd and Hugh Thomson found them on a line from the big bay, going out into the middle. They had their fish to claret Shipman and deer hair emerger. We took up Dougie's offer to join them on their drift, but the fish spotted us coming and kept low. About then, we spotted fish rising in an inviting black water slick running along the deep, southern shore. We went for a look and found a good supply of risers that didn't seem preoccupied with anything much. More importantly, they were up and going steady. What a nice change from shooting at oncers! OK, it was maybe a case of taking 2, 3, 4, or even more attempts at getting them to see your fly, but providing you could get it in their path, they would have it, no bother.

The fish kept going in the black slick till about 10.20, at which point they put the shutters up for the night. And, erm, that's about the story, folks. Our members are getting increasingly lazy at filling in the backs of their cards. There were other fish caught, though bags were on average, disappointing.

Sunday, 20th July

Frandy, Day Session

A right rubbish day, conditions-wise. Middle of July, and we were layered-up like it was April. It was cold, bright and windy. Not what you want on a water where we have basically learnt how to catch them on dries and stuck with it. Not much in the way of back-up plans. The word was that dries were fishing well, although with it having rained the day before, the terrestrials were damped down and (there being no sort of hatch) there was no meat on the water, save a very occasional sedge. We actually had a reasonable number of cloudy spells, which egged us towards making it one of those days where you cannot be arsed putting in the effort to keep changing and changing and trying to find a way, but just put up a team of dries, go out and give it your best shot, and hope for the best.

Dougie Skedd and I started at the creek on the north shore, and took a long drift down towards the dam. We had an odd chance and saw a couple of rises early-on, after which we had nothing till we approached the dam. Suddenly we were in amongst fish, and we picked up a total of 3 (claret hopper, Adams hopper and sedgehog) with Dougie losing a couple more in play. Stewart Barnes and Trevor Gibson were also concentrating on the area, as were Tommy Steven and Innes

Zenati, plus Dougie Goddard and Hugh Easterbrook. With that amount of pressure, it didn't take too long for the fish along the dam to put their tin helmets on and put up the shutters. Before they did, Stewart nicked out a couple on a damsel, Hugh and Dougie took one each on dries and Tommy took a couple to claret hopper and half hog.

With the fish at the dam rejecting our advances, we retreated back to our start point at the creek. That was now equally useless. With nowhere else to go, we headed up to the top end for a look. Several boats were milling around up there. It was a lot more clement, though the wind was caught in 2, or even 3 minds, as to what it wanted to do. Swirling this way and that, it made for tricky fishing, but there were a few fish on the go (well, sort of!). We were tuning in on claret being the colour. Dougie had dropped another fish on a size 10 claret hopper and I had put one on in tail position. A nice wild brownie of a pound or so obliged, and Dougie stuck to a couple on his version.

We worked our way down the narrows and found an even more swirly wind area. The swirly wind thing may have been a draw for the fish - knocking insects down onto the water. There was a decent number of fish spread out and across the water, just where it was flattened by the wind's indecisiveness. We picked up our last fish there - claret hopper again. Stewart Barnes took one in the same area to a Bob's bits.

Meanwhile, Tommy Steven had persevered back down at the dam and had eked out another couple to claret hopper and pearly bibio. However, winner on the day was the conditions.

The club's 12 rods landed a total of 18 fish.

Saturday, 26th July

Butterstone Loch, Day Session

Cap'n F plumbing in domestic appliances (!) ... JSB reports...

Butterstone has been a pretty reliable venue for us over the past few seasons and the long journey north has been well worthwhile. Unfortunately, that was not to be the case in 2008. We arrived to find very good conditions overhead with a lovely mild temperature and, even though the surface was pretty much flat calm, things looked promising. Adrian, the manager, was honest enough to say that it was not fishing well for some reason, but as we could see a fair number of risers from the harbour, everyone headed out with a fair degree of confidence.

It was clear from the early stages however, that this was not going to be an easy day. The fish were certainly rising, more or less all over the loch, but in small numbers. They were also very skittish and whenever you moved the boat near

them, even with the electric, they were quick to go down. Likewise, whenever a slight breeze blew up the rise went off.

I was fishing with John Wastle, and we were heartened to see a boat into a fish. John had been fishing dries, but, reckoning that the successful angler had been pulling, he put on nymphs and tadpoles on a slow glass intermediate. This produced an offer and shortly afterwards the first rainbow to a small black tadpole. Based on the rising fish, we had opted for the centre of the loch while others had gone for the fringes. Looking around however there were few rods bending anywhere. John netted another fish before lunch to the same tactic, however that was to be his lot for the day. I ended up in an even worse position as I didn't manage an offer all day, while trying everything bar the proverbial kitchen sink.

I was not alone and sadly there were as many blanks as there were successes. Indeed, the club managed only 16 fish from 12 anglers, with half of the total fish caught by just two of our number. Tom Steven got his fish in the morning, taking three to sink tip and snatchers, with nothing else to show for the rest of the day. He found close in to the bank to be the best area. Credit must go, not for the first time, to Dougie Skedd who doggedly persevered with dries, picking up one here and one there, throughout the day, ending up with a very respectable basket of five fish. Successful patterns were varied and included Claret Hopper, Claret Shipman, Red Klinkhammer and Madam X. The West Bay proved the best spot for him.

All in all we came away feeling that we should have done better, but I'm afraid it was one of these days when the fish were simply not in the mood.

Sunday, 10th August

Glencorse Reservoir, Day Session

An excellent example of 4 seasons in one day. We had everything. Warm at times, decidedly fresh at others. Bright sunshine for a good part of the day was interspersed with showers, only for us to be pissed on well and truly as we tried to get off the water. Wind was breezy, then OK, then breezy, then OK. However, the weather took a back seat to the water, which was like oxtail soup over most of the reservoir at the start - an obvious result of the seemingly never-ending rain we've been getting. The discolouration was obviously coming off the hills, as the clearest water was up the top end, where the burn was coming in nice and clean. Unfortunately, the fishing up the top end, while normally reliable, was poor on the day.

With very discoloured water over the rest of the fishery, the going was tough, and catches were poor. Top spot was the corner of the road shore and the best 3 boats managed 5 fish each. Flies that stood out in the murky conditions were to the

fore. Tommy Steven and Boyd Scott caught theirs on DI-3s and black tadpoles, Vivas and orange lures.

Hew Thomson was another to use a DI-3, and he took a brace to an orange blob and yellow dancer with a slow retrieve. Dougie Skedd and Trevor Gibson went slightly higher in the water, with DI-2 and intermediate, catching on minkie booby, Dunkeld and orange blob. However, not everyone caught on bright stuff. Ivor Young and Len Newby fished with floater and intermediate, and they had one of the 5 fish boats, catching on gold-ribbed hare's ear and a blue damsel (!), fished slow. Ed Green took 3 fish to Kelly green line and a lime green cruncher.

Ian Macdonald and I started on lurish stuff and sinking lines, but had nothing to show for it after an hour. We had seen an odd rise during that time, and we both decided to set up a rod with dries to give it a try. We had instant success with wee wild brownies and a wild rainbow. So, we stuck with it - for the rest of the day. That might have been a mistake, as we only landed one fish over 10 inches, but we had really quite a decent amount of sport, both from the wee brownies, and from fresh-air shots from the better fish. We caught fish to claret hopper, Adams Klinkhammer and claret half hog.

The Club's 17 Rods landed 23 fish.

Sunday, 24th August

Coldingham Loch, Day Session

The first thing that struck us about the water was its colour. After the oxtail soup on Glencorse, last outing, we had pea soup on this outing. Obviously an algal bloom - a rarity on a water that is usually gin-clear. To make matters worse, after seemingly endless overcast and wet days, we would have to get a day of rarely broken sunshine, wouldn't we? Worse still, the wind was swirly and blustery. A real pity for those of us looking to get a day on dry fly (such a reliable method on Coldingham), because, although it will often put up with sun if the wind is OK, and put up with wind if it is overcast, it would not accept sun and wind together on the day. And that was a shame, because there was the best fall of terrestrials we had seen all year. Mainly black gnats, but all manner of assorted scrots was mixed in with them. Any time a wee cloud caught the sun for half a minute, the fish were up and popping away. However, before you even had a chance to pick up the other rod, the sun would be back out and the fish just vanished. Maybe the bloom was restricting visibility such that they had to be right high in the water to see the insects, and that was too high when the sun was out? Who knows?

Nevertheless, there was a brief chance with dries right at the start of the day, and John Wastle and I both went with them at the off. I had barely got the leader degreased when John pointed out a fish had risen right behind me. A quick dropped backcast, and it took my Adams Klinkhammer like a wee sweetie. A good start, and after that we both had several offers from covered rises, but neither of

us made contact. After a while the sun and wind came to dominate proceedings, and so it was a case of finding other means to dig out a fish or two.

We pottered about with various nymphing rigs at anchor... floating line vs glass line, weight on tail vs no weight on tail vs tail bouyed up with a suspender, swinging vs straight down the wind and figure-of-eighted back, and so on. A steady trickle of fish came in on these tactics, with most success coming to floating line with a black snatcher on the dropper and a hare's ear suspender on the tail, swung & slow F-of-8ed.

Mid-afternoon came and the takes dried up. Down in front of us, we could see John Miller and John Levy, anchored out from the summer house. They were picking up from a slow start and got themselves into a fantastic rhythm. Fish after fish came were now coming to their boat. The word was passed out - floating line and a black and green tadpole. Well, we pissed about with that sort of thing and it did us no good at all.

What else could we try? How about a washing line? Why not? I put up the slow glass, with a pair of mini boobies in black & sweetcorn and damsel, ostensibly to fish the black snatcher in between them. Chucked that out and very slow F-of-8ed it back... and it worked a treat. All right, so every fish that took, took one of the boobies. Any port in a storm, after all!

The 2 John's ended up best boat by a good margin. In addition to their black and green tadpoles, they had fish to Diawl Bach, green-ribbed Diawl Bach, and black buzzer

Of the remaining anglers, no less than 8 recorded a score of either 3, 4 or 5 fish - very good consistency in really quite adverse conditions. Ed Green and Euan Cluness recorded 7 between them. Ed deserves praise for being the the one person to stick with dries all day, taking his fish to a size 12 black Klinkhammer. Euan mixed it up between a silver sedge and a cat's whiskers. Trevor Gibson and Callum Macdonald split a 6 fish bag to Diawl Bachs, F-of-8ed on the floater. Tommy Steven was another to score with nymphs, F-of-8ed on the floater. Stewart Barnes' fish came to damsel and Diawl Bachs, again on the floater, with a slow or very slow retrieve. Last, but by no means least, Bob Whyte had a bag to damsel, cruncher and pheasant tail - yet again on floating line and F-of-8 retrieve.

The Club's 13 rods landed a very respectable 56 fish.

Sunday, 31st August

Glencorse Reservoir, Day Session

This was the second tough outing on Glencorse in the space of a couple of weeks. Last time it was easy to blame the turbid water after all the rain. This

time it was difficult to apportion blame, although the weather certainly didn't help. It started OK, calm and overcast, but showers quickly developed, and then they turned into constant rain. George told us the fish had been rising all over on Saturday, but we saw very few, and what we saw were rarely up more than once. It was do-able to sit with dries out and bring up an occasional fish. Stewart Barnes was by far the most successful with this tactic, and he top-scored with a bag of 5, taken to nothing fancier than a size 14 black Bob's bits. Just reward for applied patience. (Sorry Stewart - no photographic record of your success - rain and cameras = bad combination.)

I went with the same tactic and had one of those days where, what few fish you draw don't quite go away with the fly and shut their mouth on it. You are left trying to work out why. Fly pattern? Changed that. Presentation? Same as always - and I've been in decent form with dries this year. Leader material? Well, I have been on my trusty Tectan, but I'm not claiming it is infallible. Stewart was on fluoro - a nemesis of mine when it comes to dries. But I was willing to give it another experiment. I changed to fluoro, but far too late in the day. It did get me a late brownie and I'll save that idea for next time...

The one other thing that seemed strange... at one stage I put on a size 12 claret hopper, and quickly had one, two, three fish have a go without a connection, then a fourth, which did connect. It bust the rib on the fly, so I changed it for another size 12 claret hopper. And it never had an offer! What's all that about?

I should probably have tried a complete change of tactics, but when you are sitting there in the rain, and know that if you make the switch, everything is going to get soaked, you tend to put the idea on the back-burner. Besides, word coming from the others was that nothing much else was working either. So, I sat there most of the afternoon with my thumb up my arse.

Speaking of the others, dries was the best bet anyway. John Wastle had 3 to a black hopper. John Levy had 3 takeable browns and a rainbow to a dry daddy-long-legs, fished along the road shore. Trevor had a brace to dry heather fly, also along the road shore. The rest were ones and zeros. *John Levy: success on a daddy*

No particular area stood out - in fact the fish were spread about as evenly as it is possible to spread fish over a water - particularly one with such variable depth as Glencorse.

The Club's 12 rods landed 20 fish.

Saturday, 6th September

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

Dodgy weather forecast, and blowing a hooly in Edinburgh, but with it being off the north east, there was hope that there might be a bit of shelter through at The

Lake. And so it proved. Not that it was exactly flat calm, but it was perfectly fishable. It was mild enough as well and, when the sun came out as it did for extended spells, it was frazzling. The water clarity was a bit poor in places, no doubt as a result of all the wind and rain, but it was clearer in other areas. Some anglers reported seeing plenty of insect life -- shield bugs, heather flies -- and some of our guys had been fishing the Lake recently and the reports were all of dry fly action. So I started with that, and Hugh Easterbrook (who went with a team of wets on floating line) and I worked our way down the road shore and on to Kate's Brae, and beyond to Lochend.

After an hour, the dries had failed to get an offer, and I picked up the other rod, which was set up with a subsurface washing line - slow glass, 2 snatchers and a small damsel booby on the tail. I had put a big fiery brown snatcher on the bob because of all the shield bugs that were about. Almost instantly, a fish moved to the fiery brown, and then another took it. We were in front of Jimmy Nairn's at this point, and so we worked our way right along the reed beds and beyond to Tod Hole, taking short drifts onto the shore. We both moved and took fish at intervals all the way along, mine coming to the fiery brown snatcher on the bob, figure-of-eighting, and Hugh's to an orange dancer, fished pulling on a DI-3.

Meanwhile, Dougie Skedd and Trevor had headed in completely the opposite direction to get an onshore drift, by going up to the Malling shore. They were straight into fish there, with Trevor figure-of-eighting on a midge-tip (no flies given on score card) and Dougie on a washing line set up of fast glass with woodcock and hare-lug spider on the dropper and coral & white and cat boobies. They worked their way down the water via the Rookery, where they picked up a couple, before arriving down beside us at Lochend. However, instead of fishing the downwind shore where we were, they tucked in at the back of the promontory at the gravel pit. Dougie had a go roly-polying and hooked 4 fish rapid. This caught on among the many other boats that had by now gravitated to the area, and soon every second boat was roly-polying.

Another area that was producing fish was Sam's Point. Bob Whyte and John Miller fished there, and round into Portend/The Rookery. Bob had a bag of 8 fish to floating line and predominantly a size 12 Kate McLaren, fished slow. John had fish to cormorant and orange blob on a midge-tip.

Back with Hugh and I... We had had a lean spell in the middle of the day, but we got the feeling that the fish were still there to be had, if we just adjusted our approach a bit, so we resisted the temptation to look elsewhere. I stayed with figure-of-eighting the washing line, but changed the damsel booby for a small plain black one, and it took 3 fish -- 2 of them while it was sitting on the surface! Maybe dries would have worked at this stage??? Hugh, seeing Dougie and the other anglers roly-polying gave it a try himself, and he had 3 hook-ups in quick succession to it.

By this time I was having yet another another lean spell, and wondered if maybe I needed to be a bit deeper - what with it going a lot brighter and Hugh getting into them on the DI- 3. I took the booby off the tail, and inspired by Hugh's success

with orange, I put on a wee orange tadpole with a tiny tungsten bead. That was worth 2 late fish.

Other bags included Len Newby -- 4 to invicta on floating line, Bob Norris -- 3 to a gold-head blob on sinking line, and Fraser Gault and John Levy -- 3 apiece on floaters in the Lochend area. Fraser was another to catch on F-of-8-ed fiery brown snatcher, while John washing lined it with booby, Diawl Bach and snatcher.

Given the far from ideal conditions, the Club's 18 rods landed a highly creditable 78 fish.

Monday, 15th September

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

Yet another unremittingly dreich day -- perfect fishing conditions, in fact. However, whereas we had a good haul (>4 fish per rod average) on our last trip in much less favourable conditions, this time out we struggled. Douglas alluded to the likely cause before we set out -- "It's been hammered for the last week", he said. The National final had been on the Saturday, and the competitors had been out practicing for many days before that. So, just our luck that we turned up after the Lord Mayor's Show, to find the survivors with their tin helmets firmly strapped on. A pity, as the day was looking good, with light easterly breeze, mild and about 1 candle power of light. No matter, a challenge is a challenge and it was a case of adjusting horizons and buckling down to the task in hand.

John levy and I started at Sam's point, where John had a grip of an early fish on floating line and nymphs, only for it to come unstuck. There was an odd fish rising once, and I had a go with dries, but not a sniff. We tried a move to Lochend, from where the bulk of the fish on our last outing had come. We tried the same sort of water - a natural with that easterly breeze, and an odd fish was seen being caught, including one to Dougie Goddard - one of 3 he landed in the area to floating line and, variously: snatcher, mini orange lure and a dry claret Klinkhammer. But, John and I failed to interest the scorer.

We gave up on the area and headed for pastures new. We passed Tommy and Stewart coming from the exact opposite direction. They were headed for Lochend, having only had 2 fish from a long drift all the way down the north side. Well, that was 2 better than us, so we willingly swapped places with them. We dropped in on the east side of Sam's point and quickly picked up 3 fish on our first drift, losing a couple more. Olive seemed to be the answer, fished slow on floating line - John an olive flash-tail, me a semi-imitative damsel.

Our success was short-lived, and it was back to scratching around for an odd offer. We went for the grand tour. First, we were up by Dog Isle - a few boats were concentrating on the area, but we saw only a single fish taken while

there. We stopped by the heronry to look for rising residents in the calm at the back of sandy bay. All very quiet (well it was while we were there). We went on down to Shear point, again to look for residents on the feed. This time we did see a few. I was just getting set up with dries again when first the rain turned it up a notch, and then a boat drove right through the middle of the fish, and that was that chance gone.

We ended up going back to Sam's point, where eventually I did hook one on dries, only for it to come adrift. Game over. Most of the rest of the guys did much the same as us... or slightly better! Dougie Skedd and Paul Young had a couple at the butts and sandy bay, one to booby on slow glass and one to dry fly (Wyatt emerger). Stewart Barnes and Tommy Steven ended with 4, taken in International Bay, Sam's Point and Hotel Bay, 3 of them to floating line and a black Diawl Bach, and one to a dry bibio. John Miller and Hugh Thomson had 5 at Lochend, John catching on black hopper and buzzer on floating line, and Hugh to snatcher and lure on a midge tip. Bob Allan and Dougie Goddard also ended with 4, Bob taking a fish at the Rookery to floating line and damsel.

Bob Whyte and Ed Green also landed 4 fish, all to floating line, mostly at Sam's Point. Flies were black tadpole, damsel and black hopper. Eric Singer and son Keith had 2nd best boat with 6, all taken on midge-tip and a black lure at Sam's Point. Best boat by 3 was Gavin Macdonald and Trevor Gibson. They sat and waited in sandy bay for the occasional risers that appeared in between the showers. They managed to pick off 9 between them on dry fly: Gavin on an olive comparadun and Trevor on an olive CDC shuttlecock.

The club's 16 rods landed 37 fish.

Sunday, 28th September

Linlithgow Loch, Day Session

A decent day for it, if a tad bright at times. Nice, light westerly though, and about average temp out on the water for late September. The water was a bit coloured with algae, however, and I don't know if that was putting the fish off, but the fishing was very hard. Some of the guys had been out over the previous few days and had struggled, and it was no different for us.

Early on, there was an odd fish rising, and we wondered if a go with dries might be do-able, though the sun kept that idea pretty much on the back burner. Interestingly, in addition to the odd good trout showing, there were quite a few rises from what were obviously much smaller fish. We couldn't quite get a handle on whether they were roach or wild brownies. Probably roach?

I was fishing with John Miller, and we both started with nymphing tactics, John slow figure-of-eighting his team, and me having a swing. John's method was vastly the most productive, in that he was first broken by a violent take, and then landed

a good fish to a size 10 skinny black buzzer, on the point, on fluoro. And, er, that was it for our boat for the period 9.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m. I tried a good variety of changes, which there is no point in me listing, as they all proved equally fruitless - just accept I didn't sit there doing the same thing the whole time with it not working.

We did see a couple of fish caught. Eric Singer took one on a Diawl Bach/floater. Trevor took one on a daddy-long-legs of all things. How do you fish that with the bung, then? Ian Macdonald, in with Trevor, took one pulling with a snatcher/floater. John Levy, in with Eric, took one on a cruncher/floater.

All this was in the west end/town bay region. We started wondering what the boats that had ventured up the east end had been doing, and whether it was worth a look up there. Firstly, Tommy Steven and Chris Bell arrived back from having spent a good chunk of the day in the east, followed by Stewart Barnes and Boyd Scott, and the story from both boats was that it was no better - one fish between four rods!

Tommy and Chris settled in among the town bay boats and managed to pick up a fish apiece, Tommy to a green buzzer/floater, and Chris to a dry claret hopper, slow f-of-8ed. Around this time, Eric picked up a second fish, to an orange blob (still on the floater). Taking my cue from this I tried an orange booby on the end of my slow glass rig. I tried counting it down in 12 feet or so of town bay. I got to a count of 20 and... Hallelujah! Two fish in ten minutes. However, again, that was it. John tried something similar and had a grip of a late fish, only for it to come adrift.

The club's 12 rods landed 12 fish.

Saturday, 11th October

Lake of Menteith, Day Session

Not the best of days, conditions-wise. It was calm at the start, but that lasted until we stepped into the boats. Thereafter, a westerly breeze developed, which gathered strength until it was fairly stiff. The temperature was fine for mid October, and the sky was a mix of cloud and sun, with the latter predominating as the day wore on. The water clarity was much better than the last couple of outings, and really we should have expected a half-decent total. However, we did not get it.

There was some early action. John Miller had a fish after 5 minutes at Sam's Point to a black and green tadpole on an intermediate. However, one more at the butts later in the day to a dry claret hopper was John's only other fish. More early success came to Stewart Barnes and John Levy. They took 2 or 3 fish in Hotel Bay, John on blobs on a midge tip, and Stewart on yellow dancer, Diawl Bach and cormorant on an intermediate.

However, after the initial flurry, it got tough... very tough, and successes were few and far between. Len Newby took a couple to cormorant and green fritz, slow-fished on an intermediate. I managed but a brace as well: to a fritz-headed Dunkeld and a hare's ear palmer, on slow glass at Lochend.

Second best boat with 6, were Dougie Skedd and Trevor Gibson. Dougie fished a cat-minkie booby on a fast glass with constant retrieve (f-of-8 & roly-poly), picking up most of his fish in the heronry. Trevor took his to midge tip and booby and blob!

We passed by Stable Point, early afternoon, and there was a substantial assembly of boats fishing Gateside Bay. We saw one pick up a fish, so guessed there was a bit of action going on in the thick of it all. Late in the day, Stewart and John picked up fish in International bay, to finish top boat with 7 - not bad for a pair of OAPs!

The Club's 19 rods landed 23 fish

Sunday, 19th October

Coldingham Loch, Day Session

In a season blighted by rubbish weather, and at a venue where we are still looking for a day of good conditions, it was fitting that this season should save the worst for last! The photographs won't show it - they were taken earlier in the day when conditions were not too bad in the shelter of home bay - but we were blown off the water, mid-afternoon. Feckin' typical, because it was mild for October, and we had a good ceiling as well.

The decent conditions early were not reflected in our ability to put fish in the net. It was slow going. Ian Macdonald and Bob Whyte had the best of what sport there was to be had, taking 5 between them. Bob had fish to cormorant and damsel on floating line, while Ian had fish to Diawl Bach/floater and black & green tadpole/slime line.

Bob Allan toughed it out with floating line, taking a brace to damsel and Diawl Bach. John Levy did similar, also taking a brace to floating line: Diawl Bach and cruncher were the successful patterns. Thanks to a no-show, your correspondent was Billy-no-mates... again. I sat in home bay all morning, giving it everything I could think of trying, all for one fish that ran off with my fly while I was photographing Ian and Bob, above. Around lunch time I was considering a sleep in the bottom of the boat, when I steeled my resolve and upped sticks and headed up to the top of the west arm.

The wind up there was already causing havoc with getting a cast out. However, I caught one first cast, which made me realise I was onto something. Another quickly followed, then nothing. I hesitated to try moving anchorage, as it was

touch and go whether it would take hold. Being on my own afforded me the luxury of dropping it straight off the bow, so presenting the least air resistance possible. It held, and my move even further into the lilies produced another 2 fish in quick order. I was on floating line, only because it is shallow and weedy up there, and anything else would just get snagged in the salad. The fish were coming to a damsel and a mini-fry lure.

By now it was getting unfishable, and I thought if it got any worse, I would be struggling to get the boat back round. I decided to get back just in case and, as I rounded into home bay, I was greeted by the sight of everyone else heading in. I didn't need any encouragement to join them, and called it a day.

The Club's 7 rods landed 14 fish.