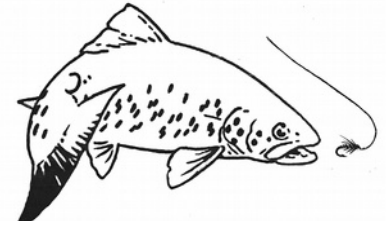


# Cinder Hill Fly Fishing



## Chairman's Report AGM 2024

### Summary of 2023 Season (Taken from a diary of events)

The wettest March in 42 years, banks, access and parking very muddy. Fishing was generally very good though. Poor conditions continued into April, albeit with 2 good days over the Easter Holidays in the 2nd week of April. Fishing at Cinder Hill was very good despite some poor water conditions. The Sparctics were also very obliging and provided some superb sport. The 4.5lb brown fell to me at Piplye middle pond and was returned. May saw some variable weather but catches were generally good.

The Ardingly show in June was a success with 70 adults and juniors having a go at fly casting. A number of new members were recruited filling up our membership. Early June and Charity day saw some good fish caught and many of the larger fish coming out in the few weeks after, although the large 6lb browns didn't show.

June was the hottest on record. Despite this some members caught very well with imitative flies, buzzers and dries such as Daddys and hoppers.

July turned out to be the wettest on record. Despite this, members still ventured out when they could with the catches at Piplye fairing better than Cinder Hill. This is probably due to the water at Cinder Hill colouring up more after heavy rain. Summer fishing is all about being at the right place at the right time when the trout switch on to feed. It can be in the morning, lunchtime or afternoon and last anywhere from 10 minutes to 2 hours. Then it is a case of finding the right fly. Generally if the water is clear then the fish will feed on buzzers and emergers. Some members had great success with dry flies during these periods. We were able to stock again at the end of July albeit with smaller fish around 1.25 lb that would better survive the elevated water temperatures.

August was cooler and wetter than expected and once the water temperatures had dropped sufficiently stocking was resumed in the latter part of the month with fish in the 2lb range. The trout were taking buzzers (red in particular) fry imitations and some dries. The fight was very exciting with fish taking line at every opportunity.

The first 10 days of September saw a heat wave with temperatures up to 32°C. The water temperatures heated up to 25°C and many fish could be seen in distress particularly in the middle lake at Cinder Hill which always suffers in hot weather.

Mid September saw the trout start to switch to fry. I witnessed one of the 6lb browns stocked in June at Cinder Hill cruising a foot out from the dam on the middle lake checking out the fry. Only a matter of seconds later there was a very large bow wave crashing into the shoal of fry. September turned out to be the driest on record. Just when you think you can get some rain the gods think differently. However, catches were generally good at both sites.

The Autumn show at Ardingly was well attended with more potential members added to the waiting list. Unfortunately, I had to miss the show due to Covid. I would like to thank all those members that helped out at both shows putting up and dismantling the marquee and assisting on the show days.

Early October saw really high temperatures up to the mid 20's. The lakes started to suffer from lack of oxygen. Piplye fished quite well but Cinder Hill was more of a challenge. Dissolved oxygen levels were falling causing the trout to be more lethargic. Piplye still fared quite well though. The end of season at Cinder Hill saw torrents of rain and brown waters. However, a few braved the conditions and fished on the last day. I was one of them and I caught 3, others also caught. Piplye top pond didn't colour up too much and fish were seen feeding all over, especially in the margins. The middle pond was too coloured and the bottom not a lot better. With the carp removed from the top pond at Piplye, the water clarity was exceptional all season, but it also meant that the weed grew thicker.

Continued

## Chairman's Report 2024 continued

Numerous work parties couldn't keep on top of the weed in either the top or middle ponds and you may have noticed that the weed is growing in all areas of the bottom pond as well now.

Overall, despite 2023 being the hottest on record and some record breaking rainfall at the end of the season the overall catch rates were very good.

We had a full membership of 120 last season and a healthy waiting list of over 20 for the 2024 season.

John Lutkin and Phil Stephens joined the committee during 2023. John took on the responsibility of Catch Returns and Phil has been working on migrating the website to a more modern platform.

Throughout the season Mark Orchin did some analysis of the catch returns collated by John Lutkin to determine any trends and build up a picture of how well each venue fished. Catch rates versus stocking at both sites were better than last season, being 80% (vs 61%) at Piplye and 71% (vs 66%) at Cinder Hill.

### **Stocking**

The stocking last season was planned on providing a reasonable head of fish in each lake and replenishing them as they were caught (similar to the last 3 seasons) which I believe was generally successful. Details and analysis of last season will be discussed further under a separate agenda item.

To provide some more variety to our members, we stocked more Brown Trout, Blues, larger Rainbows and Sparctics. After discussion with our stockist we decided not to stock Tigers as they are expensive and the experience at Duncton Mill is that they are rarely caught.

The cost of stock has increased again quite significantly and is set to rise further due to global events causing trout feed to rise. This was one of the reasons we had to increase membership fees again this year.

### **Membership and Recruitment**

Last season saw us reach our membership limit of 120 members in the Autumn. Successful Taster Days and promotion at the Ardingly shows contributed to our numbers swelling and it was necessary to start a waiting list which stood at 20 at the start of the 2024 season. However only a few of those on the waiting list took up the offer. This season has seen a strong return of members, but some have not renewed for various reasons and their places have been given to those on the waiting list. As of 31st March we had 120 members.

### **Rent**

This year is the first of a new five year rent agreement with our landlord for all six lakes.

We were able to negotiate an acceptable rent plan starting at £13,000 for this year and increasing by £200 per annum up to 2028. We have asked that certain improvements are made to the tracks and parking as part of our negotiations. However, these items have been on the agenda for a number of years at our annual meetings with the Landlord so it would be difficult to pin the Landlord down to a timeframe. Whilst the rent has increased by £500 for this year, we decided not to increase the membership fee further than the £5 to cover increase in stock costs.

### **Fishery Maintenance**

A total of eight work parties were held last season and I would like to thank all those members that helped out.

Most of the work parties were at Piplye, digging drainage ditches, clearing bankside vegetation and raking weed from the lakes. However, neither cutting or raking will prevent the spread of the broad leaf pond weed as it spreads through rhizomes in the mud. Despite efforts at the work parties, it was not possible to remove a lot of the weed. The Curly Waterweed was very prolific in both the top and middle lakes at Piplye and didn't die off even at the end of the season. The only way of removing the weed is to dredge the lake and this is to be discussed under another agenda item.

Continued

## Chairman's Report 2024 continued

### **Fish Losses**

In early February this year the water levels in the top and middle lakes at Piplye were lowered such that the water in the bottom lake could be pumped out to facilitate netting.

A total of 14 carp were caught and moved to another lake on the estate, but only 2 trout were caught. Theoretically, there should have been over 60 trout left in the bottom lake.

The conclusions are that some of the trout may have escaped over the spillway during extremely high water conditions, some may have died naturally and poaching may have occurred, however the most likely cause is predation by cormorants and mink. This has been highlighted to our Landlord. Whilst he can deal with the mink, he only gets a licence to kill 3 cormorants each year from Natural England despite the impact to wild and stocked fish. It is estimated that between 15 and 20 percent of stocked fish are eaten by cormorants which equates to £2000 - £3000 in our case.

### **Macmillan Day**

In June we held our annual charity day for Macmillan Cancer Support at Cinder Hill lakes.

Each member attending paid £20 for the day which included a barbeque lunch. There were over 20 members and guests at the event plus volunteers from Macmillan.

I would like to thank Laurie Storer for sponsoring the event, Jim Awcock for providing the meat for the BBQ and the many members that donated prizes for the raffle and also bought tickets.

With some generous donations from members a total of £1500 was raised for Macmillan.

Also, some of the larger fish showed with several caught in the 4 to 5lb weight range.

### **Courses and Tuition**

We now have two Level 2 Coaches as Phil Stephens has gained his licence and therefore we are able to offer courses and tuition to all age groups. If you know of anyone that wishes to learn or wants some mentoring, please get in touch with me via the Cinder Hill email such that we can plan suitable courses.

### **2024 Season so far**

As of 31st March, Piplye saw 139 visits with 274 trout taken, plus 43 Catch & Release fish, some of which were Sparctics and Browns.

***Kevin Reeves, Chairman, 31/03/2024***