Demonstration and Information Morning by the Welsh International Lakes Fly Fishing Team

On Saturday the 17th February the above team will be holding a demonstration morning on the way they set up and the choice of tackle when fishing at such a high level.

Come along to the Merthyr Model Engineering Railway Site CF47 8RE in:

Cyfarthfa Park Merthyr Tydfil February 17th
At 10 am until 2pm and meet the Team.
They will Answer Questions and take you Through the following and other Topics.

Tackle choice, and why/where they use different rods / lines etc.

Lake craft – Where we would expect to find fish, in which types of water given various river / weather / conditions, and time of year etc.

How we would approach fishing a lake. What methods we would adopt for different types of water, and why.

Fly selection. fly tying – We can also describe the methods we use and show set ups.

Of course we would also be happy to answer any questions anyone may have on any aspects of fly fishing.

This is your opportunity. Make the Most of It.
Note

Aberfan Canoe club will be holding their Annual Canoe Race on the Brecon Canal from Pencelly back to Brecon on Sunday 10th June. Please make a note in case you want to fish the canal on that day.

Merthyr Tydfil Angling Association were awarded two notable certificates by Keep Wales Tidy in 2018 as well as one on a flag ship project being carried out at Treharris on land we own.

We had the Green Flag award for Penywern Top pond and an Environment award also for Top Pond sponsored by Welsh Water for Habitat improvement on the Top Pond.

The award of the Green Flag for our land at Treharris was for the work and access being carried out there under the Gwyl Taf Project. This has made the land accessible and the work on improving the land has made it the place to have a walk around. The original funding for this project was from Greggs Bakers to who we are grateful and further funding was South East Wales Rivers Trust Money and Natural Resources Wales Partnership funding.

The Association is holding an open days for those who are interested in Lake fishing on Saturday the 17th February 2018 at the Railway building in Cyfarthfa Park. It will start at 9-30am and finish at 2pm. Come along and see the members of the Welsh Lake fishing team tying flies and giving advice and if the weather is fine you can try your hand at casting. See poster first page

On Saturday 10th February and every two weeks until the 7th April 2018 we will be running Discover Fishing days at the Railway Building in the Park. Come along and learn to set up tackle, tie your own rigs, and learn to cast.

Picture on the left of the first session of Discover Fishing Days at Cyfarthfa Park.

It was great to see the enthusiasm of those Juniors who turned out to learn the Basics. I was lucky as a junior to have some great mentors who taught me how to tie flies and fish the River. In those days it was Strictly Fur Feather and Tinsel and much of the materials were sourced locally of from Veniards.

What a difference today when we go into tackle shops the choice is bewildering and the science behind some of the products never ceases to amaze. However you do need a deep pocket to keep up with all that is on offer. One has to wonder is all this change designed to catch the Angler or the fish. When buying hooks my first purchase of one at and old penny was a barbed no eight. I now look at a packet of 10 with no more metal than that no 8 but costing £1.50p
Autumn sport in the Beacons – Words Ceri Thomas
Images Tim Hughes

Airflo’s Ceri Thomas and Tim Hughes sample back end fishing in a Brecon Beacons still water where the resident rainbows are simply the best looking in Wales.

Today we are fishing Cantref reservoir, the middle of the three on the A470 to Brecon and smallest one. Cantref can be classed as an upland still water, being at 1073 feet above sea level. Once a fishery run by Welsh Water, Cantref was a popular put and take venue until 2012. At that time Welsh Water stopped the fishing and gave up the lease, much to the disappointment of local anglers.

After a few years in limbo, the sporting rights on the reservoir were eventually taken up by the local Merthyr Tydfil Angling Club, and under their stewardship the fishery is back on its feet again after a couple of years off the map.

At 40 acres or so Cantref is a perfect size for bank fishing, with a mix of easy and difficult shoreline access making for interesting and engaging fishing. Being fed by two decent feeder streams including the embryonic river Taff, it has a decent head of naturally producing wild brownies. These native fish can run upwards of a pound, although half that is usually the norm. On a fine summer evening you can often find these fish rising at the neck end of the reservoir to prolific hatches of black buzzer, or to terrestrial insects being blown off the neighbouring hill sides.

Cantref is also trickle stocked with rainbow trout over the season, allowing the reservoir to remain open until 30th November, thus providing decent back end sport in an area of South Wales where many other large still waters have shut their doors.

Today on a blustery autumn morning we are in search of some of the resident rainbows that become slim, dark, fighting machines in the cold tannin stained water. These well mended fish take on a unique heavily spotted appearance that I have only ever found in this lake and the neighbouring reservoirs - they really have to be seen to be believed, so we are hoping to get a few shots for the camera of what we rate as the best looking rainbow trout in Wales.

Where to start

We are parked on the road side bank and decide to drop down to the water’s edge there. With the strong wind blowing from the left to right casting conditions along this bank are pretty comfortable. There are a few gaps along the steep bank where casting is possible between the bushes and trees. Surveying the water, no rises are immediately seen, but being early morning this may change later in the day. We both decide to fish subsurface to start.

Tackling up

Being an upland venue with fairly acidic water, the fish in Cantref are usually not that far from the surface and are more often than not looking up for food, so I opt for a clear intermediate Airflo Velocity line that sinks at 1.5 inches per second. This line should help the flies bed in and drop through the layers quite nicely without going underneath the fish.
This is one of my favourite fly lines – it’s essentially the same spec as the old Airflo ‘fast glass’, a truly iconic line. Crystal clear slime lines have gone out of fashion a bit over recent times, but I feel that they bring several advantages, with stealth of course being the main one. When I use a clear line I find it inspires confidence and I find this translates into my fishing; a very important thing. My choice of rod today is the new Airlite V2 from Airflo in the 10’ #6 weight configuration. A six weight is simply ideal for bank fishing on this size of water – a good compromise between finesse, coping with the wind and putting out a decent line; plus it’s a great fun rod for playing fish.

Flies: Like a lot of upland venues the water is dark and peaty in Cantref, even more so after recent heavy autumnal rains. I like to use dark flies with bright trigger points in them in these conditions, so on the dropper goes a blue zulu and on the point a black dancer lure with a fluro green bead. This lure gives the impression a wide variety of aquatic life, and here I like to think it imitates the horse leeches that can frequently be found in the lakes weedy margins. For the leader material I have used the ever reliable Airflo G3 flourocarbon in 7lb. Tim has set up with a floating Elite line, a long leader and single black dog nobbyler with a red head.

Into the action

Keeping the back cast high, I angle my casts out from the bank to about 20 yards, which is far as the tree growth behind lets me. I count down each cast in 5 second intervals - hoping to find the cruising depth of the fish. Within 5 minutes I get a pluck on the retrieve and the next cast everything locks up - it’s a nicely conditioned rainbow of just over a pound. They are not that deep, a count of 10 seconds before beginning a fast jerky figure of eight retrieve seems to be about right.

Just up the bank Tim has changed from the black dog nobbyler to a dry daddy, after seeing some splashy rises. He lands two nice wild brownies in quick succession right off the surface.

Move or not to move?

Nothing happens for half an hour or so, so we decide to move spot to another area of the lake. At the top end of the reservoir two distinct river channels allow access to deeper water, and importantly patrol routes of fish right off the drop offs. The blustery wind is blowing down the valley right into this spot, churning up food. So despite the uncomfortable conditions we decide it’s the place to head. We get into the water, taking care to cover the margins carefully before wading out slightly to access the deeper channels.

The move pays off....

Almost first cast over a drop off and the fly line jags away with a feisty Brecon beacons rainbow attached. These fish really go well, and whilst they are not giants by any standards, pound for pound they are true fighters.
I pick up a quick succession of fish, a mixture of stunning wild browns and truly beautiful rainbows. The majority take the point fly, although a few brownies take a liking to the blue zulu on the dropper.

Tim has been enjoying some great sport round the corner, with a good number of wild browns nailing his dry daddy, fished off some weedbeds and around an old river channel.

He comes over and while I continue to catch fish on the intermediate, Tim is struggling to get the rainbows to respond to the dries. It seems the rainbows are preferring the fly retrieved on a level plane a foot or two beneath the surface, so Tim makes a change to a Di3 sinker with a single black dancer and is quickly rewarded by several lovely rainbows after working the fly back quite quickly, to keep it in the taking zone.

As the day progresses into early afternoon the wind increases in it’s strength, becoming almost unfishable with strong gusts of over 20mph right into our faces. However until this point it has
As the day progresses into early afternoon the wind increases in its strength, becoming almost unfishable with strong gusts of over 20mph right into our faces. However until this point it has been well worth braving the conditions, as we have netted around 20 fish between us, so we call it a day. Great sport on an underrated, scenic fishery that can be enjoyed for just a tenner. And those rainbows - aren't they the prettiest you have ever seen?

Fishing on Cantref: Day tickets are £10. Season runs 1st March to 30th November. Catch and release is encouraged and all brown trout must be returned before the 20th March or after the 17th October in any year.

Permits are available from Fishtec in Brecon or from Tony Rees in Merthyr Tydfil. Also at the paper shop in Cefn Coed Visit www.mtaa.co.uk for further details.

Ceri wrote this article for one of the Fly fishing magazines and we are grateful to him for allowing us to re-produce it here. He graphically describes the conditions and the way to fish Cantref. The quality of the fish from the photographs make this reservoir a must for our members to visit. We have one downside but hope that by the start of the season this will have been sorted. It is that due to erosion a lot of really dirty water has found its way into the Reservoir. It is beyond anyone's control and Welsh Water are working to contain it.
These are quality Pike from Pontsticill. During 2017 several people had the best fishing there they had had in years. One day we are sure that a Welsh record will come form this lake.