

Bristol Water Fishery Report

September & October 2025



The exceptionally low water levels continued throughout September and October, reaching a point not seen since 1976. After Blagdon's boats were brought to a halt in August, when the jetty reached its lowest safe limit, Chew Valley Lake soon followed, with both jetties now grounded and the lower section of the boat hard giving way to thick, clinging silt. It became increasingly clear that conditions had reached a critical stage, and after reviewing the long-range weather forecast and extraction data, we determined that only a few days remained before boat recovery would have become impossible.

This extremely difficult decision unfortunately coincided with two major events, the Garafit Cup and the Celtic League Final. The latter was cancelled due to severe winds, meaning that the Garafit Cup became the final boat competition of the 2025 season. Following this, we were forced to begin the challenging process of cancelling all remaining bookings for the year, including the Champion of Champions, the Bristol Water End of Season Competition, and the October and November Pike Trials.

This was a massive administrative and financial undertaking, involving the processing of hundreds of refunds through every possible method, from our online booking portal to over-the-counter transactions and even cheques sent by post. The impact on revenue has been significant, but the cooperation and patience shown by our anglers during this process has been truly appreciated. On behalf of everyone at Bristol Water, we extend our sincere thanks for your understanding and continued support during what has been an exceptionally challenging time for both our fisheries and our team.

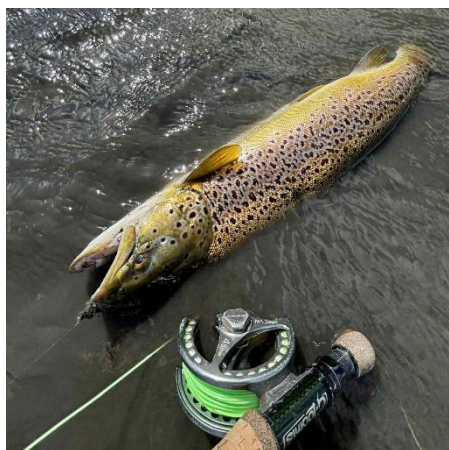
Stocking

The final stockings of the 2025 season took place in September, following the large introduction of 6,700 fish into Chew Valley Lake in late August. Chew received a further 5,600 fish, while Blagdon was stocked with an additional 1,000 fish across September and October. The Barrow Tanks also saw 800 fish added, bringing the season's stocking programme to a close and ensuring excellent angling opportunities heading into the autumn until the end of the season.

Blagdon Lake

Blagdon Lake remains closed for boat fishing; however, it continues to be open for bank angling for both season ticket holders and day-ticket visitors. While access is still available, we wish to manage expectations by reminding anglers that the water levels remain exceptionally low, and that reaching productive fishing spots can involve crossing areas of exposed sand, gravel, and mud, as well as wading in shallow margins. We strongly encourage everyone to exercise caution and good judgement when planning their sessions, allowing additional time for access and ensuring that safety always comes first. The use of a wading staff is highly recommended, and we advise anglers, wherever possible, to fish with a partner and waders.

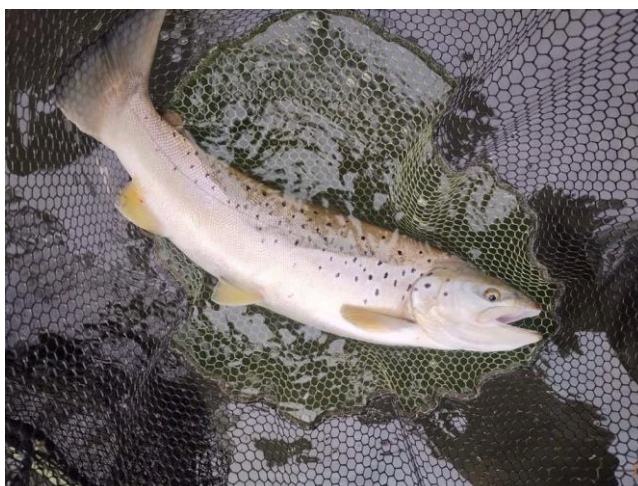
Despite these ongoing challenges with access, the fishing itself has remained consistently productive, with plenty of fish reported from key areas including in front of the Lodge, Green Lawn, and Cheddar Water. When a Northerly wind has made these exposed spots difficult to fish, anglers have still found good success in more sheltered locations.



In terms of methods, anglers have found flies presented high in the water to be most effective during settled conditions, with foam daddies and hoppers proving especially reliable choices. During windier or more unsettled spells, switching to small lures or nymphs retrieved just below the surface has brought consistent results. Overall, while access requires extra care and preparation, those who have persevered have been rewarded with some truly enjoyable and productive sport on Blagdon.

Gareth Jones's 4-5lb Brownie on the 13th of September from Blagdon!

Jeff Hurst landed a stunning 5lb+ Brown Trout. Caught on a floating line using a small black tinsel booby on Blagdon.



Chew Valley



The final weeks of boat fishing at Chew Valley Lake brought a real mix of conditions, with water clarity fluctuating dramatically, from 3–4ft visibility on the better days to as little as 18 inches during periods of heavy colouration. Despite these challenges, anglers who adapted their approach continued to enjoy productive sport. Success often came to those presenting flies high in the water, with washing line setups proving particularly effective. A combination of Boobies on the point and top dropper helped keep flies near the surface, while Cormorants, Hoppers, and small lures fished on the droppers created just enough disturbance to draw aggressive takes from cruising trout.

September and October also hosted several key competitions, including the Airflo Shield Final, the BRFFA Hidden Pairs and Hidden Teams, and the Fluff Chuckers Multi-Species Event, all of which delivered excellent fishing despite challenging conditions.

Alongside these events, the return of the Pike Trials saw high participation and some exceptional captures. Bank anglers also enjoyed success on trout, particularly from Woodford Bank, Nunnery, and Walley Bank, using fry patterns, lures, and washing line setups. The trout season continued robustly through this period, with anglers still reporting good sport right through to November.

Barrow tanks

Throughout September, the Barrow Tanks saw a vast improvement in catches following a challenging start to the month. Early September proved tricky, with anglers reporting plenty of fish activity but finding them hard to tempt. However, by mid-September, the fishing switched on in spectacular fashion. One angler even recorded a catch-and-release session of 17 fish on Tank 3 using dark fly patterns. Since then, all three tanks have been productive, with many anglers reaching their catch limits.

On Tank 3, the inflow area has continued to fish particularly well, while White Wall has also produced some excellent results. Fry patterns have been especially effective, often tempting the better-quality fish. Tanks 1 and 2 have both performed consistently along the natural banks, with lures and fry imitations proving to be the flies of choice. Tank 1 has produced some impressive specimens in recent weeks.

With water levels fluctuating frequently, our team has been closely monitoring the safety of the banks. As a result, on 9th November, we made the decision to close Tank 3 due to low water levels exposing slippery and unstable margins. This measure ensures both angler safety and the protection of the fishery while levels remain reduced. We ask all anglers to adhere to this until the levels at tank 3 increase and we lift the closure.

Pike Trails

October also saw the return of the pike angling at Chew Lake. The return of pike angling this autumn brought an incredible buzz of excitement back to Chew Valley Lake, with anglers from across the country eager to wet a line once again. Despite the challenging conditions and falling water levels, the start of the trials saw some truly exceptional catches and memorable days on the water. Among the standout fish were several 30lb+ specimens, including David Rossiter's stunning 37lb 7oz pike caught in early October, Andy Carpenter's 35lb 4oz giant from the bank, Gavin Fudge's 31lb 11oz lure-caught personal best, and Carl Garratt's 31lb 14oz pike taken on a dead bait off Nunnery. The quality of the fishing reminded everyone why Chew remains one of the UK's most celebrated predator venues. Both bank and boat anglers made the most of the available opportunities, with a real sense of camaraderie and excitement across the fishery. Even with the boating season cut short due to low water levels, it was a memorable autumn for many who managed to connect with one of Chew's legendary predators.

This season's Pike Trials saw an impressive turnout of angler's keen to make the most of the limited bank availability; however, the start of the pike fishing period was unfortunately marked by a number of rule breaches. Several anglers were found using banned baits and accessing the banks prior to their allocated fishing times. As outlined in our regulations, these actions compromise both fairness and safety, and as such, the individuals involved were excluded from the fishery under our zero-tolerance policy. While these situations are always disappointing to address, maintaining high standards of conduct is essential to protect the welfare of our fish and ensure an enjoyable and fair experience for all. We would like to remind all future pike anglers to carefully read and adhere to the rules and regulations before fishing, which are available on the Bristol Water website.

Despite this, we would like to celebrate some of the great catches anglers have achieved!

October and November Pike Catches:



David Rossiter – 37lb 7oz



John Sturt – 31lb



Chris Wells – 31lb 9oz



Gavin Fudge 31lb



Toni Fletcher new PB - 28lb



Andy Carpenter – 37lb 7oz

Cortland Team Championship

Although adverse weather forced the cancellation of Day One due to high winds, spirits remained high as competitors returned for Day Two. Despite the shortened format, the event delivered some exceptional angling and close competition, with Team Elinor emerging victorious, securing their third championship title.

Andy Stones of The BRFFA claimed Top Rod honours with an impressive catch of eight fish. His local knowledge and steady performance in challenging conditions earned him well-deserved recognition among a strong field of anglers.

2025 CHEW VALLEY GRAND FINAL			
Match Statistics:			
Anglers:	78		
Total fish caught:	152		
Rod average:	1.95		
Average fish weight:	2 lb	11 oz	
Largest fish:	5 lb	2 oz	
Best Total Bag with bonus:	16 lb	13 oz	
			Name: GC PETER MORUZZI
			Name: CA ANDY STONES
Team Results			
		Fish	Total Weight
1	ELINOR	20	41 lb 14 oz
2	NORTHERN DRIFTERS	16	35 lb 6 oz
3	BRFFA EMERGERS	16	34 lb 7 oz
4	CHEW VALLEY MELON TWISTERS	14	33 lb 14 oz
5	TEAM TIGHTLINES	15	30 lb 8 oz
6	TEAM SNOWBEE	13	28 lb 12 oz
7	STOCKS FALCONS	11	24 lb 14 oz
8	BLAGDON FLY FISHERS	11	24 lb 13 oz
9	REEL FIN SHADY	10	24 lb 7 oz
10	TURRALL YOUTH TEAM	8	18 lb 3 oz
11	BEWL BRIDGE FLY FISHERS	7	17 lb 12 oz
12	WELSH WIZARDS	8	16 lb 3 oz
13	TEAM OPTIMISTS	3	7 lb 6 oz

The biggest fish of the competition was landed by Peter Moruzzi, weighing in at 5lb 2oz.

A special mention goes to Jesse Gale, who was awarded Top Junior after landing three fish for a total of 6lb 9oz. An outstanding performance that highlights the promising young talent within our angling community. Close behind was Wilbur Leoviriyakit, also landing three fish for 6lb 5oz, showcasing the skill of our local juniors.

The success of the event was made possible thanks to the hard work and dedication of everyone involved. A sincere thank you goes to organiser John Horsey, whose continued commitment ensures this prestigious competition maintains its exceptional standard year after year.



Airflo Shield at Chew Valley Lake



The Airflo Shield Final took place at Chew Valley Lake on Saturday 13th September, bringing together 10 teams and 60 anglers for what proved to be a challenging yet rewarding day on the water.

Despite tough conditions, competitors showcased outstanding skill, determination, and teamwork throughout the event. The Northern Drifters emerged victorious, securing first place with a strong team performance and a total of 16 fish, earning themselves £1,000 in prize money and a Switch Reel each.

Top individual honours went to Marco Orsi of Team Hogs, who landed an impressive 8 fish, a particularly memorable achievement as it coincided with his birthday! In total, 117 fish were caught, giving a rod average of 1.95, a highly respectable result considering the recent testing conditions.

A big thank you goes out to Airflo, Kieron and Gareth and all participating anglers for making this year's final such a successful and enjoyable event at Chew.



2025 Airflo Open Shield Final Team Results 13-Sep-25

	No. of Fish	Total Weight	
1 Northern Drifters	16	36 lb	6 oz
2 RAF FISH HAWKS A	13	30 lb	14 oz
3 Welsh Wizards	13	30 lb	5 oz
4 Llanilar AA	13	29 lb	1 oz
5 Tunbridge Wells	13	28 lb	15 oz
6 Hogs	11	23 lb	10 oz
7 Team MFF	10	23 lb	2 oz
8 Stocks Falcons	9	21 lb	9 oz
9 Rutland Water Fly Fishers	10	21 lb	2 oz
10 Snowbee	9	19 lb	3 oz

No. of anglers	60
No. of Fish Caught	117
Rod Average	1.95

Best Bag		
Marco Orsi (Hogs)	17 lb	8 oz

BRFFA Hidden Pairs – 20/09/2025

The BRFFA Hidden Pairs competition took place at Chew Valley Lake on Saturday 20th September 2025, with 18 members taking to the boats for what began as a calm and promising morning. Conditions started favourably, with a gentle southerly breeze, comfortable temperatures around 18°C, and fish rising in front of the jetties and along Woodford Bank. As the boats set off just before 10am, most anglers headed towards the cages and sailing club area, while a few explored Moreton and Nunnery. Early action came from Dave Reynolds, who landed the first fish of the day at 10:04, followed shortly by Mark Thomas at 10:10. However, as the morning progressed, the fishing proved challenging, and by midday the wind had picked up significantly, with white horses forming across the lake.

	NAME	No Fish	Total	1st fish	4th Fish
1	Paul Golding C	3	4	11:12	
	Ron Howard	1		12:15	
2	Dave Reynolds	3	3	10:04	
	Anthony Coxhead	0			
3	Mark Kennedy	2	2	11:50	
	Joe Donlin	0			
4	Mark Thomas	1	1	10:10	
	Jesse Dominguez	0			
5	Paul Bond	1	1	12:22	
	Ron Thomas	0			
6	Alan Williams	0	0		
	Paul Brace	0			
6	Rik Anderson	0	0		
	Stephen Ellis	0			
6	Pete Bessell	0	0		
	A Maisey	0			
6	Sean Glover	0	0		
	Steven floyd	0			

With gusts forecast to exceed 30mph, the Bristol Water Fisheries team made the sensible decision to bring the boats in early for safety reasons, cutting the day short at 3pm. Despite the shortened session, there were still some impressive results, with both Dave Reynolds and Paul Golding managing to land three fish each, though Dave took the edge on time to claim top individual honours. In the results, Paul Golding and Ron Howard took first place, with Dave Reynolds and Tony Coxhead in second, and Mark Kennedy and Joe Donlin in third. Mark Thomas and Jesse Dominguez finished fourth, and Paul Bond and Ron Thomas rounded out the top five.

Following the event, anglers gathered at The Stoke Inn for well-deserved food and drinks, where prizes were presented with thanks to Airflo Fishing Products and Kieron Jenkins for their continued support. A big thank you also goes to all participants and the BRFFA organisers for ensuring another enjoyable and well-run competition — and, as Paul Golding aptly put it, “The winner today was fly fishing.”



Fluff Chuckers Multi-Species Event – 27/09/2025

The Fluff Chuckers Multi-Species Event returned to Chew Valley Lake on Saturday 27th September 2025, bringing together a fantastic group of anglers for one of the most enjoyable and light-hearted competitions on the calendar. Despite challenging conditions following a hot and dry summer, 32 anglers took to the boats in search of pike, perch, rainbow trout, and brown trout, with points awarded for each species caught and additional points for multiple captures. Spirits were high throughout the day, with camaraderie and good humour at the forefront.



The overall individual winner was none other than Chew Valley's and Bristol Water Fisheries' own Luke Cox, landing 2 pike, 2 perch, and 2 rainbow trout to claim first place and take home an Orvis Clearwater Rod and a YETI Half-Gallon Rambler. The top boat pair went to the ever-consistent Cornish duo, Keith Burnett and Steve Retallack, who both received Wychwood Game Ionica rods for their efforts. The biggest pike was caught by Paul Thomas, biggest perch by Jim Lockyer, and the biggest rainbow trout by Tony Milano, all earning prizes courtesy of Orvis UK and YETI Europe.

Following the prize-giving, anglers enjoyed a well-earned drink courtesy of Lakedown Brewing Co., sharing stories of missed runs, near catches, and fish landed in great spirit. A huge thank you goes to event organiser Rodney Wevill, as well as all the sponsors and anglers who made the event such a success. Difficult fishing or not, the smiles at the end of the day said it all, a brilliant event celebrating great company, sportsmanship, and the joy of being out on the water.

PFFA – 28/09/2025

The Pike Fly Fishing Association (PFFA) event, held on Sunday 28th September 2025, proved to be another memorable day at Chew Valley Lake, showcasing the skill and enthusiasm of some of the UK's top predator fly anglers. Action came thick and fast, with several competitors landing fish within just a few casts. A total of 150 pike were caught during the event, including the longest at 111cm and weighing 28lb 8oz, a true Chew specimen. Jack Welshman and Gary Jarvis took home the Best Boat award, with Jack also claiming honours for the most fish caught on the day. Supported by Savage Gear, whose generous sponsorship added to the event's success, the day was a fantastic celebration of fly fishing for pike, marked by great catches, good company, and plenty of smiles on the water.



BRFFA Hidden Teams Competition:

1st					6th				
	No Fish	Time 1st	Time 4th	Rod Average		No Fish	Time 1st	Time 4th	Rod Average
1 John Braithwaite	8	10:25:00 am	2:40:00 pm	7.0	1 John Gumbleton	0	12:00:00 am	12:00:00 am	3.0
2 Andrew Weeks	4	12:12:00 pm	2:36:00 pm		2 Anthony Torrington	5	11:05:00 am	1:31:00 pm	
3 WJ Wellman	9	10:40:00 am	12:07:00 pm		3 Stephen Ellis	4	11:52:00 am	2:30:00 pm	
TOTAL	21				TOTAL	9			
2nd					7th				
	No Fish	Time 1st	Time 4th	Rod Average		No Fish	Time 1st	Time 4th	Rod Average
1 Mark Miles	14	10:00:00 am	1:45:00 pm	7.0	1 Lee Williams	4	10:30:00 am	2:28:00 pm	2.7
2 Jim King	0	12:00:00 am	12:00:00 am		2 Andrew Maisey	2	1:25:00 pm	12:00:00 am	
3 Jesse Gale	7	10:41:00 am	1:37:00 pm		3 Tony Coxhead	2	2:52:00 pm	12:00:00 am	
TOTAL	21				TOTAL	8			
3rd					8th				
	No Fish	Time 1st	Time 4th	Rod Average		No Fish	Time 1st	Time 4th	Rod Average
1 Ron Howard	8	11:20:00 am	1:00:00 pm	6.3	1 John Humphry	3	12:00:00 pm	12:00:00 am	2.3
2 Bill Pugh	5	12:15:00 pm	2:45:00 pm		2 Paul Brace	2	12:00:00 pm	12:00:00 am	
3 Sean Torrington	6	9:56:00 am	1:02:00 pm		3 Pete Bessell	2	1:55:00 pm	12:00:00 am	
TOTAL	19				TOTAL	7			
4th					9th				
	No Fish	Time 1st	Time 4th	Rod Average		No Fish	Time 1st	Time 4th	Rod Average
1 Tim Wellman	7	10:06:00 am	3:33:00 pm	8.5	1 Graham Currie	4	11:01:00 am	1:19:00 pm	2
2 Andy Stones	10	12:15:00 pm	2:15:00 pm		2 Jody Gale	1	10:03:00 am	12:00:00 am	
					3 Joe Donlin	1	2:25:00 pm	12:00:00 am	
TOTAL	17				TOTAL	6			
5th									
	No Fish	Time 1st	Time 4th	Rod Average		No Fish	Time 1st	Time 4th	Rod Average
1 Luke Cox	4	10:39:00 am	1:30:00 pm	4					
2 Mark Kennedy	3	9:55:00 am	12:00:00 am						
3 Ron Thomas	5	11:05:00 am	1:54:00 pm						
TOTAL	12								

The BRFFA Hidden Teams Competition, held on Sunday 12th October 2025, brought another fantastic day of friendly rivalry to Chew Valley Lake, with anglers showing great spirit despite the ongoing challenge of low visibility. The event saw consistently good catches across multiple areas of the lake, producing an impressive rod average of 4.6 fish per angler, a testament to both the skill and persistence of those taking part.

The competition came down to the finest of margins, with the top two teams tied on 21 fish, and victory ultimately decided on time. The winning team of John Braithwaite, Andrew Weeks, and Will Wellman took first place, with Will securing the win by landing his team's fourth fish just 1 hour and 30 minutes ahead of his rival junior angler, Jesse Gale. In second place were Mark Miles, Jim King, and Jesse Gale, while third place went to Ron Howard, joined by Bill Pugh and Sean Torrington.

From everyone at Bristol Water Fisheries, we'd like to extend our thanks and appreciation to the BRFFA for their continued support and for organising such engaging and well-run competitions throughout the season. It's inspiring to see not only seasoned anglers performing at their best, but also the club's talented juniors, like Will Wellman and Jesse Gale, leading the way and showing that the future of fly fishing at Chew is in excellent hands. Despite challenging water conditions this autumn, events like the Hidden Teams continue to highlight the camaraderie, enthusiasm, and dedication that make the BRFFA community such a valued part of our fishery.

Garafit Cup 18/10/2025

The Garafit Cup 2025, held on Saturday 18th October, brought Chew Valley's boat fishing season to a spectacular close, with 80 anglers taking to the water for what proved to be a hugely successful and enjoyable day. Despite the falling water levels marking the end of the boating season, the competition went out with a bang. The lake fished superbly, producing an impressive 291 trout and a rod average of 3.63.

Top honours went to Matthew Griffiths, whose 13 fish for 26lb 12oz earned him the Top Rod title. In second place was Paul Roach with 10 fish for 22lb 14oz, followed closely by Mark Miles in third with 11 fish for 22lb 11oz. It was also fantastic to see four junior anglers taking part, all of whom went home with prizes, a promising sign for the future of the sport.

The prize table was overflowing thanks to the generous support of sponsors including Garafit Services, Airflo, Fulling Mill, Fly Fishing Bulldog, Franks Flies, The Woodford Restaurant, Greenlands B&B, Iain Barr WCC Flies, Celtic Blob Company, Snowbee, Pearce Hydraulics, Hickleys, You-Nisafro, Liftmaster, Brooks Finance, Vinyl Graphics, and Paul Sweatman.

A huge thank you goes to Mark Stevens for his outstanding help in organisation and to Mike Kayes plus everyone who helped make the day such a success. The Garafit Cup once again showcased the fantastic community spirit and top-class fishing that Chew Valley Lake is famous for.





Cancelled competitions and events

With the cancellation of all the boats on Chew, competitions planned for the latter half of October and November were cancelled. The Champion of Champions competition faced an unfortunate series of cancellations during the 2025 season, ultimately being called off for a third time following the closure of boat angling on Chew Valley Lake due to low water levels. Originally scheduled to take place on 20th July, the event was first postponed because of the extreme heat experienced during mid-summer. A rescheduled date of 31st August was then also cancelled, this time due to high winds, making conditions unsafe for anglers. The final planned date of 1st November was sadly abandoned following the rapid drop in water levels at Chew, which made boat launching and recovery impossible. We would like to thank all the anglers who showed great patience and understanding through these repeated postponements. We are now looking ahead to bringing the Champion of Champions back for the 2026 season. As always, this prestigious, invitation-only event will welcome those who have achieved top placings in previous competitions.

For the same reasons as the Champion of Champions, other boating competitions had to be cancelled on Chew including the Bristol Water end of season competition and the Bristol Water Pike Competition. This year was to be the return of the Bristol water pike competition which was last held in 2019. Despite this competition being cancelled, we will be looking to keep the draw for the pairs entered to compete the same for the 2026 pike competition with the continued sponsor from Fox Rage!

Looking forward

As we approach the final few weeks of the 2025 season, the lakes continue to face the challenges of low water levels, the lowest we've seen in decades. Despite these conditions, it's been another fantastic period across our fisheries, with memorable events such as the Garafit Cup, Airflo Shield Final, and Fluff Chuckers Multi-Species day showcasing the passion and resilience of our angling community. The pike trials have also returned with some impressive early catches, while Blagdon and the Barrow Tanks have continued to produce excellent sport for those fishing from the banks.

Barrow Tank 3 will remain closed to all users until levels are deemed safe by Bristol Water, but Chew, Blagdon, and Tanks 1 and 2 remain open for bank fishing, with additional Pike Bank Days scheduled through November.

We'd like to extend our sincere thanks to all of our Bristol Water Fisheries staff for their continued hard work and dedication, and to our loyal anglers and visitors for their support and understanding throughout what has been a challenging but rewarding season. Be sure to keep an eye on our Bristol Water Fisheries Facebook page for the latest updates, catch reports, and announcements as we head toward the close of the year.

Remembering Iain Thompson

This year, we were deeply saddened by the passing of Ian Thompson in August. A keen angler and long-standing Chairman of Knowle Angling, Ian was not only a highly skilled and passionate fisherman but also a warm and much-loved member of our angling community. His enthusiasm, good humour, and dedication to the sport touched everyone who had the pleasure of knowing him. Rest in peace Ian!

