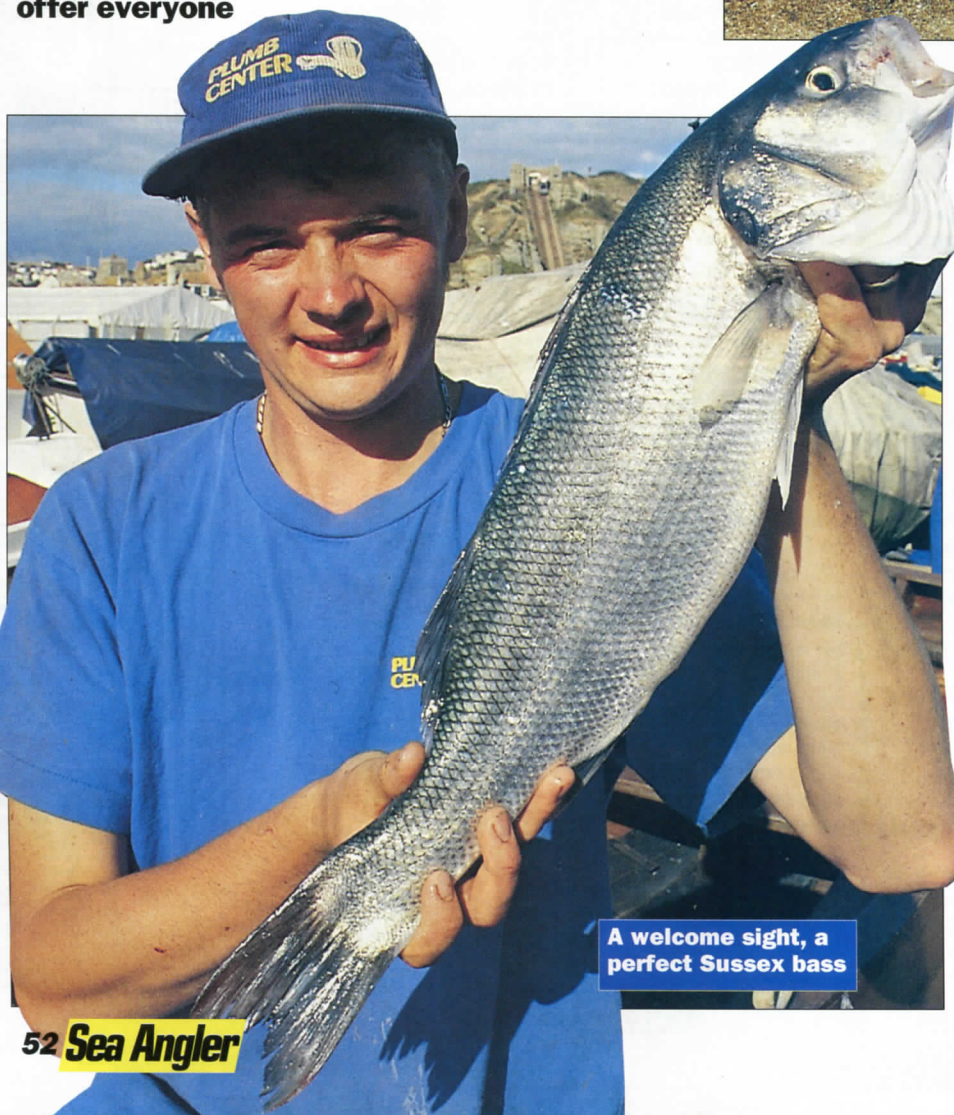


Do you want to join our gang?



With over 2,000 members, East Hastings SAA is one of the biggest and most successful angling clubs in the country. Whether you want

to try some serious fishing or just relax in one of the club bars, this outfit has something to offer everyone



A welcome sight, a perfect Sussex bass

A bulldozer helps with launches and retrieves



FROM HUMBLE beginnings, when members met in a wooden hut, the East Hastings SAA has grown into one of the wealthiest, best-equipped and great value for money sea angling clubs in Britain.

For just £20 a year, anglers can use one of 20 17ft 6in club boats, buy cheap bait, refit a boat in a well-equipped workshop or simply relax and swap fishing yarns with fellow fishermen in the comfort of a cut price bar.

It's an attractive bait and the club currently has 470 angling and nearly 2,000 social members, some from as far away as Holland, who enjoy a cocktail of friendship and excellent fishing.

It is a far cry from 1910 when the association was formed by just 56 anglers who met in a small wooden shack close to the beach. Members can now use one of the club's glassfibre or wood boats for free, although anglers must use their own outboards and cannot put to sea without a compass.

Each boat is 17ft 6in long, cost £3,300 and designed to be hauled up the beach. A full-time and four part-time boatmen are on hand to give advice on launching and retrieving, and there's a bulldozer on standby to drag boats over the notorious shifting shingle.

Four quid enables you to store an engine in the outboard storage room



STORY BY DAVE GWYER

while tackle lockers cost just £6 a year. A well-equipped workshop is capable of taking boats up to 28ft long and costs £10 a week to use.

John Thomson, the club's secretary, said: "We are open seven days a week from 5.30am when our tea bar opens for early-morning breakfast. It is aimed at anglers but trawlermen are welcome and we get a lot of them here."

In other parts of the country trawlermen and anglers are like oil and water, they don't mix, but at the East Hastings club trawlermen are welcome and provide plenty of cheap bait which is packed in plastic bags and frozen.

John said: "The boatmen dig lug and sell them cheap to members and the trawlermen give us Calamari for nothing. We have a couple of freezers on the beach and when our members go angling, they take what baits they need for the day."

But sometimes the system can lead to embarrassment. John revealed that one member was buying cheap meat from the butcher and secretly storing it in the club bait freezer.

Another angler took some bait to go fishing but when he emptied his bag on the deck, rather than juicy Calamari squid, out popped a frozen chicken and two pork chops!

Fishing off the Sussex coast is varied. John said: "We get most species through the seasons. Club boat anglers go for dab, plaice and whiting and they have been catching anything up to 60 plaice a trip. Offshore anglers go for cod, bass, pollack and conger.

"Notable catches last season included an 82lb conger and a superb 6lb 8oz plaice, caught by Harry Ebsworth, which broke a club record set in 1921. There's also 20lb cod to be had, plus good runs of bass, but nobody has come close to breaking the 143lb 8oz skate record set in 1925," he added.

The club holds at least five competitions a year and although keenly contested they are not cut-throat. Every member has a sporting chance of winning a prize or trophy - which are awarded for almost every achievement. The Alf Jacobs Memorial Trophy, for instance, is awarded to the angler who catches the heaviest black bream.

Want to know more?

It costs £20 to join as an angling member, £13 for OAPs and £5 for juniors. Interested? Contact: East Hastings SAA, The Stade, Hastings Old Town, Sussex, TN34 3DW, tel: 0424 426644.

Local tackle shops offer club members 10 per cent discount on gear.



There's some hard-fighting conger to be caught off Hastings