

BIODIVERSITY OF RIVER THAMES CONTINUES TO IMPROVE

On Saturday 27th October Lis and I went to the 40th City of London Fishery Research Experiment at Denton, Gravesend. The event is organised by the City of London Corporation, the Thames Angling Preservation Society and the Environment Agency with additional funding provided by the Fishmongers' Company and the Port of London Authority.

The first Thames Fishery Research Experiment organised in 1966 by the Thames Angling Preservation Society with the Greater London Council and the PLA attracted over 500 participants who caught 578 fish. From 1973 it became an annual angling event which is now in its 40th year.

Before returning them to the river, the Thames Fishery Research Experiment stewards register fish caught and awards points using a scoring system that reflects variety as well as scarcity and significance in the context of a cleaner river. The results of the 40 Fishing Experiments have demonstrated that the River Thames has recovered since the 1950's & 1960's when a person was placed in quarantine if they fell into the water!

Over the years, Dick Hodges and Reg Butcher of the Thames Angling Preservation Society have been key figures in organising the annual competition and their hard work and enthusiasm continues to be greatly appreciated by all who take part. County, corporate and school teams were included among those taking part and, yet again it was very jolly event - not even spoiled by torrential rain !! As usual the lunch was also most enjoyable.

I became involved again in 2006 when I joined the board of the PLA and, by 2007 the Water Conservators had introduced the Biodiversity Prize, one of our miniature tankards, for the catch which best demonstrates the continuing improvement and conservation of the River - we thought that this captured the original spirit of the competition. This year I took great pleasure in presenting the prize to Phil Baxter of the PLA team as well as presenting the PLA Schools Trophy to Gravesend Grammar School.

Other awards included the Lady Howard Trophy won by the Thamesiders Angling Team with the highest number of points, and The Fishmongers' Cup for individual anglers for the largest and/or best fish caught during the competition - won by Rick Hodson of the PLA team with a whopping 9 lb cod! Best individual catch by an adult was won by Paul Longmuir of the Public Services Team, while Matthew Perry of Gravesend Grammar won best individual catch by a school team.

The event was rounded off with a vote of thanks from the Captain of the Essex County team.

Prof Peter Matthews
The Master, Worshipful Company of Water Conservators