

Press Release

Water company discovers rare picture of record 53lb salmon

A RARE picture of a 53lb salmon caught 135 years ago at Mudeford has taken pride of place at a fishery museum.

The cock fish, which was 4ft 4in long with a 2ft 4in girth, was the largest ever salmon recorded from the Hampshire Avon and Dorset Stour estuary.

It was caught in the nets at the Run in Mudeford on the day of the 1880 General Election – April 2 – by Mr S Shambler.

The fish was mentioned in the Times of London on April 13 1880 and a cast was displayed for many years at the Natural History Museum in London.



Tony Timms, Curator of the Royalty Fishery Museum in Christchurch, had been searching for a picture of the salmon for eight years.

The image was eventually discovered in the archives of Bournemouth Water when staff were researching the company's history for a 150th anniversary commemorative book.

Tony said "I had already researched the history of this fabled fish, I only thought that I might get a photo of the cast of the fish, so to see a photo of the actual fish on the day of capture is remarkable. This was the missing link which has now been closed".

He added: "This is an incredibly exciting find and the picture will now take pride of place in the museum."

Bob Taylor, Bournemouth Water's Managing Director, presented a framed copy of the picture to Tony at the company's Head Office.

He said: "We've always had a great interest in and respect for our local history. It's therefore a great pleasure for us to be able to contribute to the Royalty Fishery Museum and play our part in preserving our local heritage."

The closest the Royalty Fishery got to the 53lb record established in 1880 was a 52lb cock fish which was caught in the nets at the Great Weir on May 8 1915.

By an amazing coincidence, again on May 8 some 19 years later in 1934, a 50.5lb cock fish was taken in the nets at the Run in Mudeford.



On February 27 1952 the record rod caught salmon for the Hampshire Avon was taken with a cock fish weighing 49lb.

It was caught at the Greenbanks Pool on the Royalty Fishery by Mr Granville Martin Howard and is one of the largest ever salmon caught on rod and line in England.

The British record for a rod caught salmon is 64lbs which was caught by Miss Georgina Ballantine in the River Tay in 1922.

The Royalty Fishery is believed to date back to 939AD with reference made to a Royal Fishery at Christchurch.

The title of Royalty Fishery was conferred by Royal Grant in the reign of Queen Mary and renewed by Elizabeth I.

It was acquired by the then West Hampshire Water Company in 1929. Ownership of the fishery also gave the company registered title of two thirds of Christchurch Harbour together with the tidal reaches of both the rivers Avon and Stour.

It is believed the Crown retained the bottom third of the harbour as an anti-smuggling measure. Fishing rights in this section of the harbour are currently open to everyone.

