

**NORTHERN GOLDFISH  
& PONDKEEPERS  
SOCIETY**  
A Nationwide Society  
**NEWSLETTER**



Online Version

February 2015



One of member Alan Ratcliffe's very blue Bristol Shubunkins

The Calico Shubunkin has so many pigments (yellow, orange, red, brown, black, purple, grey, white) on its faintly blue background that it is known as the Speckled Goldfish, Coronation Goldfish, Harlequin Goldfish, and more. But the rarest colour is that blue hue and it took our sister society in the Nationwide Group, Bristol Aquarist Society, to develop their own pedigree fish with at least 25% blue colour: the Bristol Shubunkin (that was over 70 years ago).

With his great knowledge of genetics, Alan has spent years selectively breeding really blue Bristols and won many awards in this class of Fancy Goldfish. At the February Meeting he talked about this work and declared that the essential four things for good, retained, colour were...

**Genes** – choose the parents wisely   **Bright Lighting** – especially sunlight where possible

**Temperature** – warmth is needed as the fry turn colour   **Algae** – contains colour-enhancers

He allows algae to grow on the side glass and when thick, slices it off with a razor as a sheet feed.

## Minutes of the February Meeting

Sherridan reported that two Goldfish Shows in 2015 will be repeats of 2013/4, in the same venues and same weekend dates. The Nationwide OS really needs a better venue for Shows to spend time during judging (to Nationwide Standards!) but all the alternatives in Northampton are already prebooked. It is hoped to move everyone to a local public house – more news later in the year.

The other is the North East Goldfish Society who will be at their 2013 venue of Redby Community Centre, Fulwell Rd, Sunderland SR6 9QP on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2015.

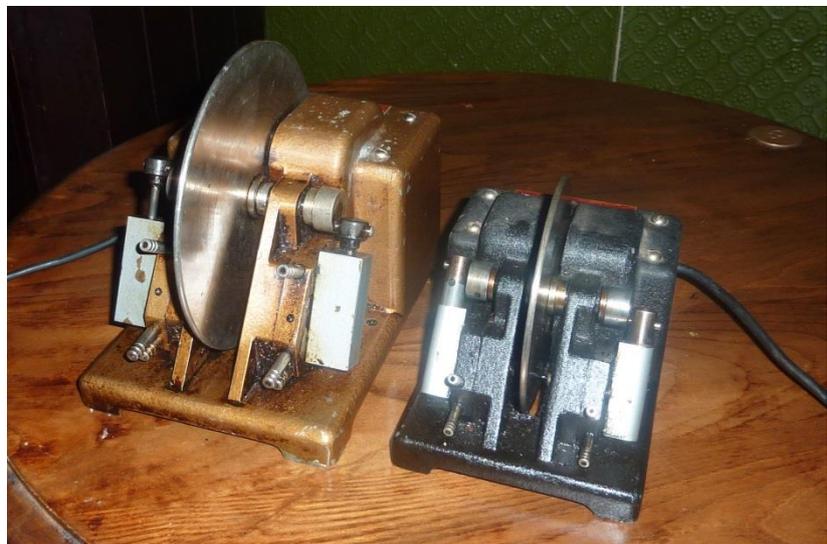
Sherridan then showed two Calico Orandas bought from Altrincham for £15 the pair. He hoped to cross-breed these Orandas with Veiltails because they have good Hoods – but 'swallow' tails...



As promised last month, President Bill Ramsden brought more large sweet jars (for Brine Shrimp Hatchery) and the polyester grass (for spawning mats). Here is an example...remaining samples are with Sherridan for anyone needing them (they are free) ring him on 01619697567 to arrange collection.



Bill also brought his vintage Hy-Flo Airpumps. Engineering marvels; but not available (free or sale!)



Sherridan showed a leaflet from the United Utilities Water company which offered a list of all the water chemistry and quality in your area (just add your postcode). Go to: <http://www.unitedutilities.com/> and click Help & Support (more data if you have an account of course). Without an Internet Connection, write to United Utilities Services, Haweswater House, Lingley Mere Business Park, Lingley Green Avenue, Warrington WA5 3LP for their advice leaflets.

The latest Newsletter from Bristol Aquarists' Society (February 2015) has a letter from their Peter Brokenshire writing that he had been amazed to find 'Black Goldfish' in the Hong Kong Goldfish Markets, with a photograph. He wondered if they were available in Europe...by coincidence VP David Ford brought a photograph of his latest acquisition – a Black Goldfish from Tong Garden Centre.



In fact, David found shoals of these Goldfish in aquatic shops throughout West Yorkshire. They are very popular the dealers reported. Members agreed they were indeed Goldfish: not Koi or Carp breeds (with barbules). They were probably line-bred from Comets with selection for the melanin colour. This is used to hide fish from predators, hence the black top and grey base (to camouflage under the bright sky ceiling).

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As reported last month, to start this year with a technical approach to Goldfish-keeping, here is an article on Auto-feeders.

Auto-feeding Goldfish by VP David Ford

If you are going on holiday it is best to use a Carer. This needs to be a knowledgeable aquarist because feeding is the main holiday-time problem...goldfish are underwater cows. Lots of excreta, so once the water quality is catered for, it is best not to feed at all! It is not the solids that are the problem – it is the Ammonia in the equivalent excreta to our urine.

A Goldfish can beg like a dog for a meal and an inexperienced Carer will succumb, over-feed and pollute the water. (They might then email you on holiday with the sad news). Tell them to feed only once a day and supply ready packaged portions. If the friend just visits your place, once a week is enough to give a feed and check all is well. If you have no friends or dislike your relatives, use a feeding block. The pet trade is awash with choices....



Available for 'the weekend', a week, even 14 days (but not more – after such a long time, ammonia problems will develop). Most use Plaster of Paris encasing food pellets. This chemical is partially hydrated Calcium sulphate ( $2\text{CaSO}_4 \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O}$ ) which becomes fully hydrated under water ( $\text{CaSO}_4 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$ ) which slakes (crumbles) and so slowly releases the food packets.

Social media has condemned this chemical as a potential pH changer (confusing it with Calcium carbonate  $\text{CaCO}_3$ ) but all it adds is Calcium ions,  $\text{Ca}^+$ , to the water – which are actually beneficial (the Calcium hardness) to Goldfish. But the customer is always right and many manufacturers now claim 'contains no Plaster of Paris'. These range from effervescents to gelling agents (being wet food mixes, the latter are preserved by pasteurisation in aluminium pouches – like the latest non-canned dog and cat foods).

All are effective, so it is your choice. Try the feeding block for a few days prior to holidaying so the Goldfish is not suddenly confronted with a strange new object, best avoided.

### The Fish House

The multi-tank aquaria of the fish-house has the advantage of a frame on which an auto-feeder can be fixed (adjustment of any lids/covers may be needed). If you are a technophile you will enjoy choosing and using the amazing range of auto-feeders on the market...



Digital technology means the portion size and frequency of dispensing can be predetermined. Most use AA or AAA batteries rather than mains power for safety reasons. Use good quality batteries, the Pound Shop type may not last the weekend, let alone a fortnight!

Play with them well before leaving home to make sure the device works correctly. Flake food is the easiest to dispense but a warm fish-house means moisture can be absorbed and the flakes may 'cake', stopping the dispensing action. Some units have anti-caking designs (but cost more). Granulated foods may be preferable.

Auto-feeders are particularly useful for baby fish that need those frequent small feeds. Not only during holiday time, of course. They can be used for daily feeds when you are at work, especially if you do shift work.



One good example for the single aquarium is the Juwel Autofeeder. The price should be under £25. It is powered by two AA batteries and contains a microchip operated by pressing three buttons. These are for ON/OFF and to select one feed or two feeds every 24 hours....

Although it is designed to slot onto the Juwel aquarium cover, it will fit any tank with a feeding hole. The amount dispensed is varied by a mechanical setting of the plastic dispensing blade...at

the chosen time setting, the top portion holding the flake or granular food turns round once. The blade scoops the food within this section and it falls through a small hole, then into the aquarium.

It was found that the large flake of the Aquarian® brand worked well and they did not clog over time. Granules were effective too but tended to give a large feeding dose – useful for the bigger aquarium with many fishes.



### The Pondkeeper



Outdoor ponds are awash with micro animals and algae, so Pondfish can be left many weeks without hand-feeding. Again, there may be baby fish that need some supplementation and pond-feeders are available that dispense pelleted Pondfish foods.

The next photo shows the experimental ponds (in the Aqualab during development of Aquarian® Pond Foods) where different recipes were auto-fed. They were left for months at a time without disturbing the fish (this was long-term autofeeding).....

The autofeeders operated continuously and, after many weeks, the fish were removed and their growth measured.



### The Display Aquarium

Once an aquarium, or pond, of any size, is 6 months or more old, the water will be mature and the filter system will be biologically active. It will be full of live micro-organisms that can feed the fish.

Tests in my Aqualab showed that the droppings of Goldfish will become coated in Rotifers, Algae, Archaea, Fungi and Bacteria within seconds of being excreted. The Goldfish can be seen to suck-in excreta and spit it out (apparently in disgust!). But these experiments showed the fish were actually stripping these microorganisms from the waste material – instant live food.

Just do a small water change and clean the filters a few days prior to leaving and the fish can be left alone. Even for a two week holiday, but beyond that, get a fish-sitter, or fit auto-feeders. Of course, they are expensive so banks of such devices over numerous aquaria are not practical – just use on the baby fish tank or those prize Show fish.

Turn the lights off if there are no live plants – fit a timer if a planted aquarium.

### A Cheaper Option

The Chinese make a cheap autofeeder under the name 'Butterfly' which is simple, but effective....



The 'included' battery is inserted and the red axle turns slowly through 360 degrees in 24 hours via a clock mechanism (it ticks). The plastic dish fits over this drive, and, when filled with flake or granules, scoops a portion into a chute that allows the feed to fall into the aquarium.

The adjustable clamp clips under the base and holds the unit securely on a glass or frame edge.

Hence, one good feed a day – to turn off the unit, remove the battery!

**Sherridan has this unit in stock at the NGPS special price of £10.**

By the way – if you also have Tropicals make sure the heaterstat in the tropical tank is working correctly – *and do not turn off the mains electricity as you leave!*

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Next meeting March 10<sup>th</sup> .....see you at The Church Inn.....

