

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



**MAY 2020**



One of your Chairman's favourite paintings  
"A contemporary Russian painting, obviously  
the Butterfly variety has become popular all

over the world. Needless to say no goldfish should be housed permanently in a bowl such as this!”

... and now his thoughts on the Common Goldfish.....

## **The Common Goldfish by Sherridan Moores**



To many people unaware of the hundreds of different shapes and colours of fancy goldfish the Common is simply 'a goldfish' they may

not even recognise the other fancier varieties as the same species. However they are all man-made varieties of the very same species, *Carassius auratus* (pronounced CAR-ASH-US OR-RATE-US), a species of carp originating from central and southern China. It is a standard fish shape, usually golden-red in colour and well known as a household pet in tank or pond.

Though strictly not a fancy goldfish, the Common is a first mutation from the drab olive/silver wild fish involving the development of red/yellow/white colouration. The Common exists only in the scaled or metallic form, the London Shubunkin being essentially the same fish but existing only as calico or scaleless fish.

The body and finnage, paired pectorals and ventrals and a single anal, caudal, and dorsal, is the same as the wild ancestral fish. It has a streamlined cigar shaped body which in most tank housed specimens keeps a

similar depth of less than half its length throughout its life but in specimens housed in large deep ponds tends to grow relatively much deeper in the body with age. They can grow to more than 12 inches (30cm) in length and there are reliable records of specimens living for 40+ years, there are stories of much longer life spans, sometimes measured in hundreds of years, but these are almost certainly fanciful.

The Common has always been a popular fish with both casual and dedicated goldfish keepers and probably does deserve the title of world's most popular pet fish. It has always featured as one of the recognized breeds with all the British goldfish societies and retains this position in our present-day Nationwide Standards which describe fully the required detail of a show specimen.

Breeding of the Common is quite straightforward and as the variety is not far removed from the ancestral fish it retains a

great deal of vigour and strength and a good spawning instinct – the fancier the variety and the greater the development away from the ancestral fish the less true this is and difficulties can arise in getting the fish to spawn. For the same reason identification of the sexes is usually fairly easy and males will tend to be well tubercled up and eager to drive the females which usually can be easily identified by their swollen, softer feeling, flanks. Often no special preparation for spawning is needed, it is enough to have both sexes in a tank in the spawning season and Commons will spontaneously spawn. Of course if you are aiming to spawn and raise the fry particular males and females should be chosen, well fed, provided with clean, well oxygenated water and, preferably, kept apart until in prime condition and then brought together. Commons will usually satisfactorily chase and produce eggs or they can readily be hand spawned ( this article is not meant

to describe the breeding process exhaustively but I will add my usual warning - do not attempt to hand spawn unless the females are on the point of shedding eggs or you will likely injure them ). It should be noted that male Commons can often be so vigorous and eager to spawn that they can injure or even kill the females if they are in a confined space such as a tank or small pond, for this reason care should be taken not to leave groups of mixed sex Commons ( or any of the single tail varieties for that matter ) in such conditions, especially if the males greatly outnumber the females, during the spawning season.

Once the eggs have hatched, given proper food, space and water conditions Common fry present no special difficulties to raise. It is sometimes thought that, because the Common lacks the multiple mutations of the fancier varieties, it is easier to breed good specimens but this is not necessarily true -

though the difficulties are certainly different - with the fancier varieties faults in the fry are very much more obvious at an early age enabling the numbers that need to be kept to be reduced, because the required features of a Common are so much more subtle they are not so obvious when immature and many more fry need to be grown on to be sorted at an older age. This is also true of the important colour requirements, as discussed below, as, like all metallic varieties, the red colour does not develop for some time so many uncoloured fish need to be kept and carefully looked after.

Another problem encountered raising good, potentially show class Commons, is that they are faster and more vigorous than most varieties and do tend to rush about the tank and bang themselves on items in the tank knocking scales off their bodies. This will not usually harm them seriously but, as the scales that grow back to replace the missing

ones usually do not match the rest in colour or even, sometimes, size and shape and will form an unattractive and long-lasting blemish. It is only too easy to knock scales off when catching or handling the fish, so the greatest care should be taken when doing so, be patient, use large soft nets and keep your fingernails short, it goes without saying also that the tank should be kept as clear as possible of hard or sharp cornered equipment. These precautions should be taken with all metallic varieties, but the vigour and speed of the Common do make it especially vulnerable. Calico varieties are just as capable of knocking off scales but in their case they will not be noticeable.

The speed and vigour of Commons also means that they are much more prone to jump than the other varieties, so cover the tanks. If any fish start jumping, more than previously, suspect something wrong with the water, the fish are trying to escape to

better conditions – evolution has not yet taught them that water high in nitrates is in fact preferable to the fish-house floor!

On the show bench the permissible colours for a Common are red, orange, yellow, blue, brown, black with the addition of white if variegated. Self-white is not an allowable colour as it was felt that to allow this would lead to many white fish, which are quite common, being bred and we should be encouraging colourful fish. Any white fish exhibited should not be disqualified but should not be awarded any points for colour.



*A self-white Common may look quite striking in a dark tank but would be given no points for colour or special characteristics at a show and would, therefore, really struggle against even modestly well coloured competition.*

White is allowed in variegated fish as it can be used to break up areas of the other colours to produce pleasing patterns or as part of one of the recognized red and white variegations; Sarassa being red and white spread over the body and Tancho being white body with a red patch on the head. Both of these colour patterns can be found on any variety. Tanchos are rare but Sarassas are often seen (a large percentage of commercial Comets are Sarassas) the colour on most Sarassas is almost always good, being a clear white and a deep scarlet red but good, really pleasing attractively patterned Sarassas are very few and far between. It is difficult to describe

what makes a good Sarassa pattern but balance and symmetry certainly come into it, small patches of red are rarely satisfactory – unless they occur only on the fins and head – and large areas of red on the upper or lower body with a horizontal 'mirror image' white area unbalance the fish. A well balanced 'continental' pattern (spread like continents on an imaginary planet) can be really appealing and a red area on the head always seems to give the fish a 'purposeful' finished look.





*Above is a very attractive Sarassa Common.  
Below is a nice Tancho Common.*

Whatever colour the fish is it should be of the deepest, richest possible hue. The standards allow 20 points for colour and another 20 points for intensity of colour as the variety's special characteristic, essentially totalling 40% of available points.

Therefore a really good coloured fish should pile on the points and come well in front of poorer coloured fish in the show even if the

poorer coloured fish are slightly better in some other aspect. Sadly, this is not always the case, frequently a much superior coloured fish will be placed behind a poorer coloured one because of some slight fault it has in the finnage or scaling etc. Certainly, the ideal is a good coloured fish with everything else also to a high standard but, where this is not present, colour is paramount. This is one of the most commonly seen judging faults and needs to be addressed in whatever system of judges training we opt for in the future.

Not so long ago it could be fairly said that it was quite easy to select Commons from imports to establish a new strain, the deeper coloured fish from a dealer's vat or tank could be chosen and the best shaped of these bred together. While this may still occasionally be possible, imports these days seem to be mostly a mix of common-tailed and comet-tailed fish that have been bred

together making a reliably well-shaped strain much harder to achieve from them. There are several well-established strains presently maintained by breeders and specimens should be fairly easy to obtain either direct or at one of the auctions.

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## **Top Tip of the Month**

Peas are full of vegetable protein that is ideal for a Goldfish's diet (actually, a Pea is not a vegetable, it is a Legume, like Beans and Peanuts). When you buy frozen peas (Petites Pois are best) take a few and boil them for a few minutes, drain and store in the 'fridge (will last many days). Take each pea and squash between first finger and thumb – this will remove the cellulosic skin, revealing the double cotyledon. This can also be crushed and dropped into the aquarium – all Goldfish love the taste.



After the squash – skins on the right,  
Goldfish food on the left.

## **Aquatic News**

During isolation you can pass an hour or two on your smart phone. For your President's video (Bill's Goldfish) use the Vimeo version – tap here:

<https://vimeo.com/350902874>

If you would like to read how Aquarian® was created and its 40+ year history go to:

<https://vimeo.com/349210515>

Although a video, it is a manuscript – the pages change every 10 seconds. If too fast for reading, tap the screen and the pause icon, then again to await the page change. Note: there are 297 pages – there is a downloadable version at the bottom of page 1 of [www.drdford.com](http://www.drdford.com).

After developing Aquarian® I did some marketing work, including TV appearances. These are collected in the hour-long video 'DMF on TV' see:

<https://vimeo.com/344132561>

These were last century, of course, so it is interesting to see just how much the hobby has changed in just a generation or two.

But the basic advice does not.

If you have a YouTube account, visit 'Goldfish Kingdom' (via search) for videos of some superb specimens. If no account, try this link: <https://youtu.be/fzFkBTAHRME>

## Spawnings

Member Craig Clinton reports that he has had a successful spawnings of Celestials, Ranchus and Moors.

Here is Craig photographing the fry – there are several hundred of each and are line-bred, pedigree varieties.



They should be available by July and prices will be by negotiation including some method of delivery/collection because of Coronavirus. Craig lives in Manchester; call him on mobile 07954178895.



Examples of the Craig's Calico Ranchu and the Moors, currently about 2 inches. Celestials available too.

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## Show News

With most – if not all – fish shows cancelled this year; Bristol AS have decided to hold a virtual competition online. This is instead of their annual Open Show on June 27<sup>th</sup>. We will watch plans and the event with interest. It could be a way for our annual show to happen!

Similarly an online meeting took place by BAS when 13 members used 'Zoom' to safely meet & greet each other.

This was Monday 11<sup>th</sup> from 8pm for more than an hour with discussions from spawnings to foxes and rats stealing breeder Goldfish.

BAS member Tony Barnard is seen here on my computer screen; whoever is talking fills that screen.



Must be the future of all club meetings.

Finally – instead of the May Minutes.....

## **Notes from your Chairman's fish house.**

As I sit here typing in the fish house I am looking at a 36" x 12" x 8" tank (or as I often call it a sawn-off three footer) containing five red Lionheads that I bought from Dickenson's, the wholesalers (strictly trade only) nestling under the old Warburton toll bridge on the banks of the mighty

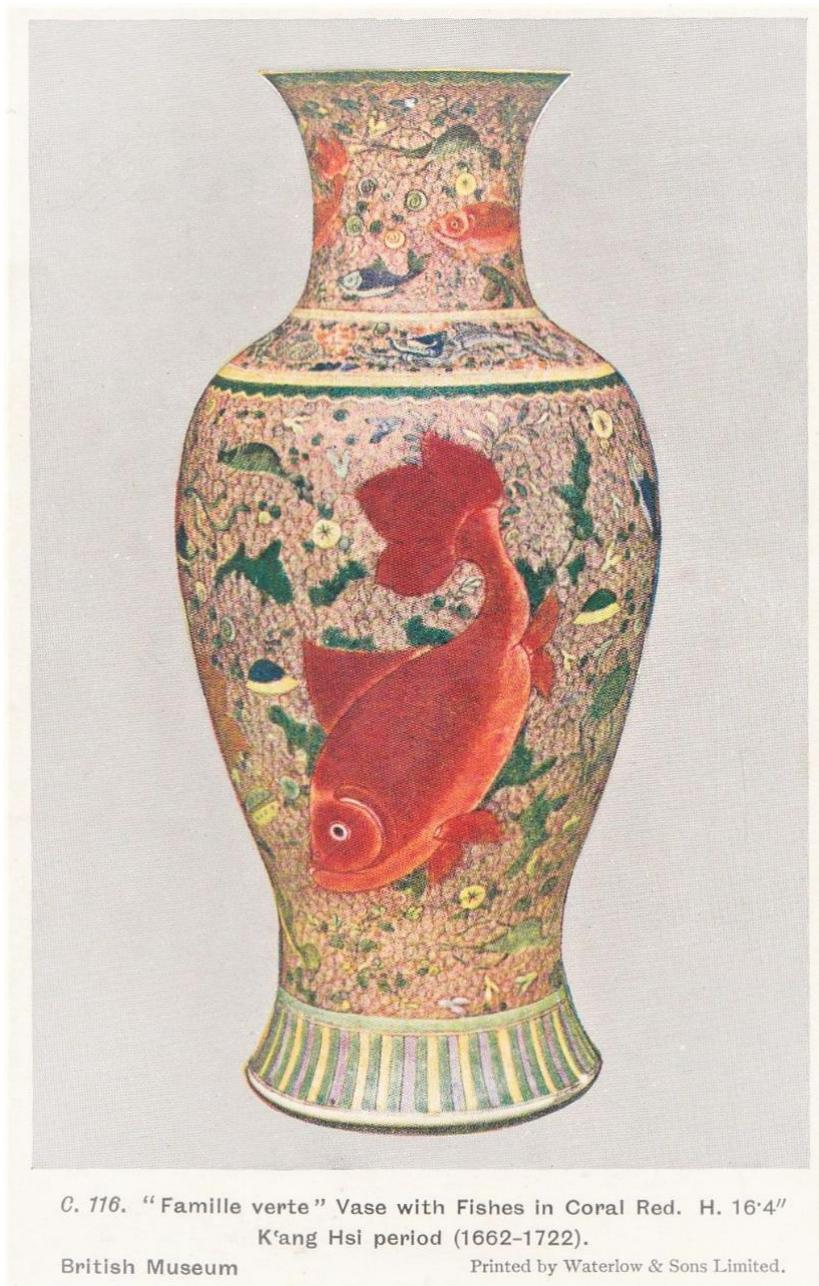
Manchester Ship Canal, early last year. I have been using Dickenson's for around four or five years and have bought thousands of tropicals from there and a handful of goldfish. There is nothing wrong with their goldfish, it is just they are very ordinary, mostly Ryukin and non-standard Orandas, the Lionheads were the only ones I have ever seen there and were proper Lionheads about 1 1/2 inches in the body. Of course they had many faults but I selected a dozen of the better ones and was really pleased with the potential new blood line.

The Lionheads in the sawn-off are two males and three females and spawned for the first time a fortnight ago. I did a hand spawning and got about 600 - 700 eggs but unfortunately only half a dozen hatched. First spawnings of the year or those from virgin pairs often do this but hopefully with good feeding they will spawn again quite soon - fingers crossed.

There are four saw-offs at the moment. The second is full of water only, ready for some fry, the third has three adult calico Veiltails and a large red Wakin in and the fourth has a single young red Wakin. All the other fish are in tanks and vats around the garden. The other tanks that belong in the fish house, mostly the 48" x 18" x 8" are stacked outside ready to come back in on the new metal square section tubing supports. Their return has been delayed as I noticed some rusting on the sawn ends of the tubing so have dismantled it all again to apply some grease.

Members who came on the Japan trips may find the new Tuesday night Channel 4 TV series featuring Paul Hollywood discovering Japanese food of interest. He tried a Mosburger, which Dean and I had one lunchtime, in the first episode. I wonder if he will discover the rice 'rugby ball' omelettes we had several times, I can recommend them.

I came across this postcard in a dealer's list recently, bought it for a fiver and it has just arrived. I would think that the fish portrayed on it is undoubtedly a Wakin, so we can safely date their origin to before 1722.



C. 116. "Famille verte" Vase with Fishes in Coral Red. H. 16'4"  
K'ang Hsi period (1662-1722).

British Museum

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Keep well and good luck with your spawnings.

Sherridan.

The next meeting would have been Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020 but instead of The Church Inn at Prestwich, the NGPS Newsletter will be sent to you (online) on that date.

