



**BELOW:** The ever-popular outdoor conference centre—good food, good booze and good company.

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF RENE GERRITZEN, DES HARRIS AND BERNIE WOOLLANDS

# SHOW FOR THE WORLD

The International South East Show

**Koi-keepers from Belgium, Germany and Holland visit the show on a regular basis, which has led to it being dubbed “The International Koi Show”**

**THE UK HAS SOMEWHERE** in the region of 60 Koi clubs scattered throughout the country. Approximately 30 are sections of the BKKS, two are ZNA chapters and the rest independent. Of these, only approximately 15 run Koi shows—with the majority under the BKKS banner—one by the ZNA and two independently. The South East is one of those two and despite its location it proves to be one of the most popular shows (in terms of attendance) in the UK’s calendar. Held in Kent, the most South Easterly county it is geographically closer to France than the majority of the rest of the UK. Koi keeping doesn’t appear to be very advanced in France but this continental closeness makes it easy for Koi-keepers in Belgium, Germany and Holland to visit the show on a regular basis, which has led to it being dubbed “The International Koi Show”.

**One man—one vat**

The club operates some unique practises one of which is its “one man – one vat” policy. People wishing to exhibit Koi at this show are limited to just one vat, a system introduced several years ago after complaints that the show was a closed shop. However, the club takes into account that

personal circumstances can alter between booking and showing and asks potential exhibitors to indicate on the booking form if they could fill an extra vat at short notice. This one man – one vat policy is widely acclaimed to be the reason for the high quality Koi at the show, in the words of Show Chairman, Alan Archer: “it allows more people to show, but limits their amount of space which prompts them to bring their best Koi.”

Comparisons are often made between the South East Show and others, but this is played down by them. “The focus is our own show—we look at previous shows and look on ways to improve things,” says Club Chairman David Brown. “It’s not about competition with others. We just want to get better.” Dave puts the SE’s success down to continuity. All previous Show Chairmen have handed over the reins to their successors and continued to assist for many years after.

**Future plans**

Part of a long standing improvement plan is the upgrading of the show tanks (called vats in the UK). In 2004 all vats were 2m/6½ft in diameter, but such was the increase in the size of Koi that they started introducing 2.5m/8ft vats to cope with it and last year they added six 3m/10ft vats too.



**LEFT:** The South East’s new trophies, made to their own design.**BELOW:** Friendship trophies from around the Koi World. **BELOW LEFT:** David Brown presents Lee Jeffery (Grand Champion owner) with his awards.



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Dealer competition will be featured in a future article in Koi Nations, so nothing more will be said here.

Value for money was ensured when they set out a recession-busting policy of holding down prices to 2008 levels. Dealer

Until this year their centre ring consisted of 40 show vats plus numerous reservoirs and auxiliary vats. This year, due to demand they increased it to 42. However, in early August they began to receive a few cancellations which quickly exhausted the waiting list and so second vats were issued to a few that had expressed an interest. In the run up to the show weekend there were 38 different exhibitors booked. But irritatingly two of those ended up as last minute no-shows and the final tally of Koi was 254 exhibited by 36 hobbyists in 40 show vats. Benching co-ordinator Bernie Woollands added, “We had several new exhibitors this year which is always a good sign and they brought with them some quality Koi to add to those we’d come to expect.” Quality was a word heard often at this years show from such notables as Peter Waddington and BKKS President Gary Pritchard.

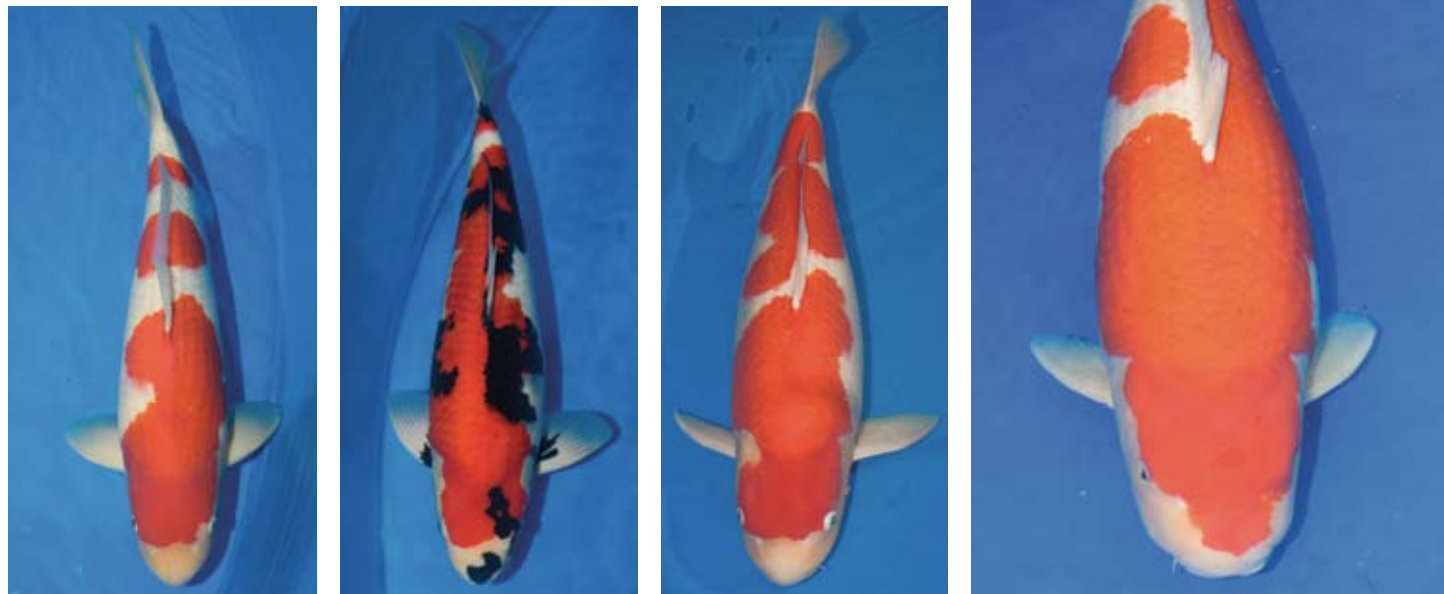
Quality, innovation and value for money are words and phrases that the SE set store by and this year several innovations were trialled and most worked first time. A new method of waste water disposal, an enhanced water testing regime that Hanna Scientific Instruments are supporting as well as a dealers’ competition were three of the latest. The

bookings began slowly but then picked up a pace and in the end they managed to field 32 different Koi and Koi related dealer stalls to provide their visitors with variety and choice. Supported by some arts, crafts, gardening and catering stands plus the display of Bonsai and Reptile, there was a total of 51 Stalls. For the children a bouncy assault-course was provided along with a coconut shy, and a clown called Balloonatic who entertained folks young and old with his own brand of balloon magic. Some of his creations were of an adult nature best kept for the evening barbecues when the workers and guests chilled out!

**The main attraction**

But for all of this periphery activity, the main event remains the exhibition of Koi in the centre ring where the earlier remarks about improved quality was backed up by the international panel of judges which contained a good mix of people with experience of the South East Show alongside some newcomers, which together added up to one of the most highly qualified and widely experienced team of judges ever to grace a UK Koi show.

**FROM LEFT:** Supreme Young, Size 4 Kohaku owned by Andy Baker; Supreme Adult, Size 5 Showa owned by Ron Rance; Supreme Mature, Size 7 Kohaku owned by John Hellens; Grand Champion, Size 7 Kohaku owned by Lee Jeffery



**The SE show includes a lecture theatre on a bi-annual basis and this year it was named the KOI Nations Lecture Theatre in honour of its main sponsor**

During benching Christine Woolger was heard to remark: "A lot of high quality Koi are going to go home without a prize"—the competition was so intense, especially in the Go-Sanke classes in Sizes 2, 4 and 5. Even size 7, a record (for the SE) with 16 entries didn't leave any easy options with eight Kohaku, five Sanke and three Kawarimono contesting the awards there.

This year's Baby Champion was a Size 1 Kohaku exhibited by Frank Chalke bred by Sakuma who had used Momotaro bloodline to produce this specimen. This Koi beat 32 other contenders in its size before taking on 46 from Size 2 proving that quality can overcome quantity. Sources from within the judging panel tell me that this decision was backed by a 'large' majority.

The Young Champion was a Size 4 Kohaku exhibited by Andy Baker, a member of the SE club and bred by the Tanaguchi Koi Farm. Andy bought this Koi as Tosai at 28cm/11in in 2008. Measuring up at 54cm/21in in 2009 this Koi was unanimously voted Young Champion out of a total of 89 Koi benched in Sizes 3 and 4.

The Adult Champion was an Oomo Showa exhibited by Ron Rance another club member. This Koi caused a split vote amongst our judges requiring the casting vote of the senior judge Mike Harvey to take the prize. It was one of the smaller entries in this size but as Chinese judge Hongman Leung said after: "This is one beautiful Koi." Hongman then put his money where his mouth was and awarded it the ZNA Guangdong Chapter Friendship Prize. Ron is one of the longer serving members of the club and a mentor to many an up and coming Koi keeper.

The Mature Champ, an approximately nine-year-old Kohaku from a breeder called Izeka, was exhibited by John Hellens from the North East Section. John's journey to and from the show adds up to 660miles/965km. The senior judge has stated that he thinks this was a unanimous decision too, if not it was by a very large majority.

**And the Grand Champ is...**

And finally the Grand Champion was a size 7 Kohaku exhibited by Lee Jeffery another of club's members. Lee exhibited this Koi in 2007 where it took the Jumbo Champion. Lee also won GC that year with a different Kohaku that had also returned this year but it failed to compete with its vat-mate that had bulked up considerably in the intervening years. This award was another unanimous decision by the judges.

One of the main features of this show is the eating area where a mass of tables and chairs are situated between the bar and the catering stalls. Dubbed "The international outdoor Nishikigoi conference centre" it was packed with visitors catching up with old friends from home and abroad and very international it was with hobbyists from all over the UK including Northern Ireland, plus those from Belgium, Germany and Holland plus the judging contingent representing Australia, Belgium, China, Germany, Holland, South Africa, the UK and the USA.

**The lecture theatre**

The SE show includes a lecture theatre on a bi-annual basis and this year it was named the *KOI Nations* Lecture Theatre in honour of its main sponsor. A well thought out agenda of topics, from Tategoi (Mike Snaden) to the Show Champions,



**LEFT:** South East membership stand—always a warm (and wet) welcome!

(Mike Harvey and judges) with Bernice Brewster (Koi Health) and Peter Waddington (Filtration techniques) kept the attendees entertained and all speakers actively welcomed questions and dispensed answers on demand. A post show survey with some of our long-term visitors which included the question "Best speaker?" produced a tie between all four of them and a consistent remark that all four were not only very knowledgeable in their chosen field but still very passionate about the hobby.

Show Chairman Alan Archer would like thank everyone who made this show possible: the dealers, the exhibitors, the judges, the sponsors, the visitors but last and no means least, his crew of show workers that got

the show on the road and took it down again ready for next year.

Several years back one of the South East Show's overseas visitors (Guus Roijen) summarised the show as, "The Koi Keepers' Show", illustrating the fact that the vast majority of visitors were drawn from the Koi Kichi (Koi crazy!) and that there was little passing trade. Those Koi Kichi and the title "Koi Keepers' Show" remain the SE's priority to this day and it was remarked upon again when Dennis Tillbrook, a long-term domestic visitor commented: "Whether they are eight or eighty, everybody here is mad about Koi", and that's just the way the SE like it. — by Christina Evatt/Bernie Woollands