

The Piscatorial Society

Journal No. 136

Spring 2016



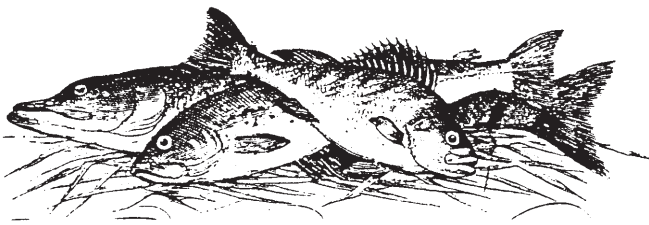
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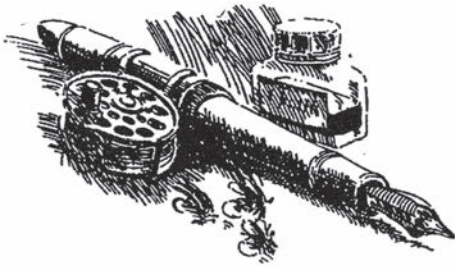
The Journal of the Piscatorial Society No. 136 Spring 2016

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Front Cover: Kingfisher photo taken in 2014 by Felix Rome who was then just 17 years old. Photo taken after 48 hours of waiting on the River Torridge.
Mr Fish drawings and some others by kind permission of Martin Mayhew.

Editorial



In time all good things come to an end, and so it is with membership of the Committee. Having served for nearly ten years it's time for me to move on, so this will be the final issue of our Journal under my editorship. A time for reflection perhaps and a brief wander down memory lane to recollect the changes and challenges your Society has faced over the past decade.

When I joined the Committee in 2006 our main focus was on the newly introduced National Trout and Grayling Strategy and the big debate then was whether we should immediately start stocking triploid trout or wait until 2015 when that aspect of the strategy became legally enforceable. Tim Olsen was our newly installed President during this early period and he energetically set about opening up the debate by explaining the Society's views on this contentious issue with a number of 'teach in' sessions, which Society members' were invited to attend. So there was a lot of heart searching at that time over this issue before it was finally decided to carry out early trial stockings of triploid trout.

At the same time Tim wisely immersed the committee into a reform process via a number of 'think in' sessions, where we looked at everything: the composition of the Committee, gaps in our portfolio of

waters, financial and compliance matters and how we should respond to the greater role that the Environment Agency was then taking in the management of our rivers. We also canvassed the views of our members' as to what sort of Society they wanted to see in the future. All in all a period of well overdue self-examination!

Out of that process and under the knowledgeable guidance of Richard Sankey and Graham Coley, we embraced the Government's new strategy. A contentious issue at the time but a very positive step forward, which ultimately proved to be very successful and helped to further cement our relationship with our regulators, leading to their support for our acquisition of waters such as The Grange and Abbotts Barton.

During those 'think in' sessions it was apparent that we were woefully lacking in terms of general compliance and Health and Safety. Graham Coley and Alastair Alexander then came to the fore, as we were swiftly made aware of our shortcomings and ultimately brought up to best practice standards.

On the financial side, Paddy, who has been an exemplary Hon Treasurer, produced more accurate monthly management accounts and annual forecasts and Pat Stacpoole admirably held the administrative side together before ultimately handing over the position of Hon Sec to Tim Earl in 2008.

Changes were also afoot in the way in which we supervised the management of our waters. Keith Johnson, who had some previous experience in this field, headed up our Fisheries Management Team and eventually Bob Wellard was brought in to relieve Richard and Graham from the ever demanding roles they played. And for general financial advice and sage counsel, Anthony Lowes was always there to guide the Committee along the right path.

After the strong guidance shown by Tim Olsen and his predecessor Brian Davis we

were very fortunate to be able to persuade Richard Farrant to take over the reigns as President. His formidable experience as a financial regulator, merchant bank director etc coupled with a rare ability to gently and impartially guide discussion to the right conclusion meant that he was never going to be able to get away with just serving one term so, after some deft arm twisting, Richard agreed to extend his tenure until last year, when he was succeeded by the equally talented and able Mike Baker.

It was a great team which was strengthened further some seven years ago with the addition of Tony Bird who had experience and connections with the S&TA and agreed to take on and bring our insurances up to date, and then David Watson, who set up and maintains our website.

In recent years others have joined the Committee and this year there will be a further influx of talented members' who, together with remnants of the old guard, will take the Society into the next decade. Our excellent new President Michael Baker, who is highly experienced in fishery and property matters, will be supported by a number of new Committee members who will replace several of the longer serving members such as myself who, having served their term will have retired this year. I wish them and my successor Graham Waterton well and hope that they will gain as much pleasure as I've done in serving our Society over the past decade.

In conclusion I feel that the Society now runs along far more professional lines than it did ten years ago. It is run like a business and now has most of the boardroom skills it needs to take us forward. We currently have an almost over abundance of excellent waters but as many are leasehold there is no room for complacency, and the excellent relationships that have developed between Bob Wellard, our keepers and our

waterlords are pivotal in providing a strong basis for the continuing renewal of those aquatic leases. In the past the Society's 'war chest' was built up to facilitate lease buyouts or new acquisitions but now the emphasis is more on improving the waters we have, in partnership with our regulators and waterlords. We are currently in a strong position and I have every confidence that our newly strengthened Committee will continue to maintain our place as one of the finest fishing societies in the country.

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Order from Chaos

by Tom Fort



In late winter, after the grayling fishing was over, I set about a task that I had been putting off for at least ten years. I cannot say that it was as much fun as my last December morning on the Test at Freefolk, but there was a satisfaction in it once it was done.

I have in my office at home around 700 books about fishing. For some reason that I cannot now recall – but which may have been related to idleness – I did not put them in alphabetical order when the shelves were installed. In fact there was no system of any kind in their arrangement.

This caused me much irritation and frustration in later years. I could never find books that I knew I had when I wanted them; it is amazing how easy it is not to see J.W. Martin's *My Fishing Days and Fishing Ways* or *Gone Fishing: Letters to a Brother Angler* – to take two wholly random examples – when they are right in front of your nose. Occasionally I did find what I was after and whooped with relief, but more often I gave up and felt resentful that the volume in question should be so damned unobtrusive.

One of the annoying consequences was

that I would forget I had a book altogether, then buy a copy, then discover that I had had it all along. Another, more serious one, was that I tended to stop reading fishing books at all.

(As an aside on the subject of reading fishing books, I would say something that I have long felt: which is that most of them are not worth reading in the first place. Of my collection I would say that a significant proportion – well over half – I have not read properly, or not finished. Of the rest, I'd say that the majority did not repay the effort. One example, again a random one: *Fishing and Thinking* by an Irish professor of philosophy, A.A. Luce, a bitter disappointment given its subject matter, which was fishing Irish waters.)

Then, one dark and dismal January day, the inspiration struck me. I cleared my office, arranged three tables, and began to order the books into piles. Some letters of the alphabet required two piles – it's surprising how many writers of fishing books have surnames beginning with G, H, M and S. Conversely those beginning with F (I'm one: Fort, *The Far From Compleat Angler*) Land T are thin on the ground.

It took me hours and I became extremely dusty and somewhat festooned with cobwebs. But once you begin something like that, you have to finish it; it's like getting your flies in order for the start of the season. And as with flies, it's a good idea to thin the stock out as you go. I did so chiefly by removing duplicates (which I have now passed on to another collector just starting out). I also took the opportunity to cull some books so bad that I could not bear to look at them again.

Now, as I write this for the *Journal*, I am surrounded by order where chaos reigned for so long. It is not COMPLETE order; I still have to arrange the books within their letter category, so that – for example – Sheringham comes before Skues, and not before and after as is still the case now

(I've just looked), and McCully before Mackie (those Mcs and Macs are the devil). But that's something for next winter, I feel. At the moment I am just happy to find Adams (Joseph, *Fifty Years Angling*, not a great read, I'm afraid) at the top left, and Young (Arthur, *The Story of the Stream*, a miniature masterpiece) at the bottom right.

And I have started reading again. My first outing was with H.T. Sheringham's *An Angler's Hours*, a book I was never able to find because the title is hardly decipherable on the spine. It is an utterly wonderful read, confirming my view of many decades that no one – I mean, no one – has written about the sport better than him. Here is one characteristic Sheringham sentence, as he contemplates what he calls “the fearful joy” of the mayfly season:

“There is something uncanny about finding the trout in a well-fished stream, commonly epicurean of taste and cautious of habit, converted in the twinkling of an eye into omnivorous maniacs; and it is small wonder that the insect whose advent causes this remarkable change has sometimes been the object of invective as well as of panegyric, for there are many men who prefer a season of moderate (perhaps slight) sport to the ‘crowded hour of glorious life’ which makes all after hours so dull and spiritless.” How could you resist him?

Delighted by the immortal H.T.S. I picked up another old favourite, *The Roving Angler* by Herbert Palmer, which my late mother bought for me in a lovely edition with Robert Gibbins woodcuts. Palmer – who was quite a well-known poet at one time, now utterly forgotten – is not a patch on Sheringham, but there is some very evocative stuff about fishing in Germany before the Great War, in France, in Ireland and on the Wharfe, and the book is well worth hunting down.

At the time of writing this, the coarse

fishing season has but a few days to go – I have plans for a chub and maybe a pike or two before the close – and there are six weeks before the start of the trout season. I have some more reading in mind: a dip into G.D. Luard, one of my absolute favourites and wonderful about fishing in Ireland; maybe some Chris Yates, the best of the moderns; a return visit to Thomas McGuane's *The Longest Silence*, which I raved about when I reviewed it a few years ago.

And I can find them! It's wonderful.

CDC: The Desert Island Feather (part one)

by James Morgan

My mother taught me French, leaving the instruction in the art of fly tying to my father. This was a handy education for a gourmand and budding fly tier but landed me in a rather embarrassing situation last year.

During the non-fishing season, I indulge myself on a wild Fenland bird shoot with a friendly drove of shots. A conversation with an obsessive wildfowler friend, Stephen, quickly moved onto the subject of fly fishing. With Fenland angling limited to the dying art of eel trapping and pike fishing, this required some detailed explanation. I lamented the limited availability of the magical feather used to tie my favourite fly; Marjan Fratnik's F-Fly, detailing that the feather could be found on most, if not all, waterfowl species. It was called the ‘cul de canard’, or CDC, a name devised in the 1950's by Henri Bresson.

Attempting to impress him with my French, I translated Henri's cul de canard

to 'duck's arse'. Directing him to the area of the fowl I believed these treasured feathers originated, my sniping companion willingly offered to become my source.

Less than a week passed before I received an irate phone call one crispy morning. Stephen had shot three Mallard and a brace of widgeon. As promised, armed with the samples that I had sent him, he had searched for the legendary CDC on the limp carcasses. He had foraged around for some time, poking and prodding a number of posteriors. Fed up, he used the hand that wasn't covered in scat to Google the prized feather discovering that they surround the preening gland on the back of the duck, not its derriere. I'm not looking forward to the ribbing I'll receive when the shooting season starts later this year.

A good basic dry fly

I have come to the un-radical conclusion that there are four basic considerations when producing any successful dry fly. In order of importance:

1. Make it float (either on the surface film, or in it)
2. Shape (impression on, or view from below the surface film)
3. Size (big or small, if in doubt, small)
4. Colour (light or dark, can you see it?)

A tyer must balance a structural engineering problem (#1 – getting it to float *correctly*) with the design skills required to address #2, #3 and #4. Nothing new. Lots of traditional and modern materials address these basics.

CDC – Additional benefits and presentation

There are additional subtleties that can be incorporated into dressing artificials to enhance the triggers that induce trout to 'take', including; movement, translucency, light refraction (particularly the trapping of air bubbles).

We all know that if you present a fly to a trout well, most of the hard work is done. Casting is important and the fly can also help you. Air resistance (suffer from leader twist?), water resistance (suffer from waterlogged flies?) and weight (scare fish with a splash?) all come to mind.

CDC not only ticks the boxes required to make a good dry fly, as other materials do, but also allows the incorporation of the subtleties and practicalities of delivery outlined above. It produces a natural movement for wings, legs, bodies & tails. It can be tied to create translucent effects that trap tiny air bubbles as the flies they attempt to imitate do. In addition, delicate wings and supports can be tied to collapse on casting to recoil to the original cocked position on landing – the perfect solution to the twists often encountered with traditional hackled flies. It's also incredibly lightweight, lending itself to falling like thistle down on the slackest of pools.

It is for these reasons and many more that I call it my desert island material and why I believe it to be the most important material available to dry fly tyers today. It also happens to be natural and biodegradable and available in many colours.

What is it and how does it work?

Fig 1: CDC for fly-tiers comes from the preening gland of wildfowl on the lower back, roughly where the wing tips lay at rest. This is where the saying 'like water off a duck's back' originates. Note, this is not its arse. Surrounding the preening gland, indicated within the square, is a circle of c. 5–10 layers of CDC feathers. Nearer to the preening gland are much smaller feathers called 'nipple plumes' or 'CDC puffs'. What lovely names. These are completely saturated in oil and can be harvested but are of little use except for tiny midge patterns.

Fig 2: A typical feather. There are a few variations in shape and size however this

shape is the most versatile. The thicker part of the stiff central shaft can be used to support the feather or the tip tied in if you wish the feather to collapse during flight.

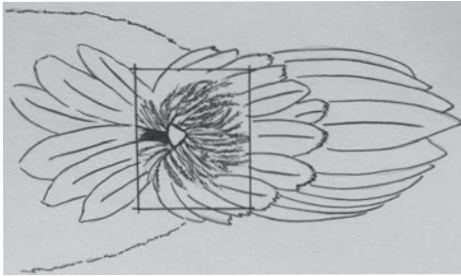


Fig 1

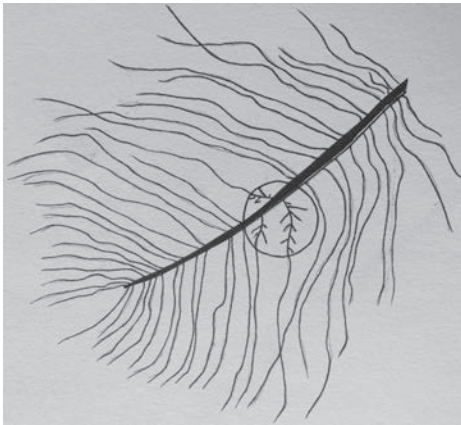


Fig 2

Fig 3: Close-up of the magnified vane circled in Fig 2. The individual vanes, along with the barbs and barbules can be seen.

Fig 4: Whilst the feathers are impregnated with natural oils to render them waterproof, it is not the oil but the individual barbs and barbules that trap tiny air bubbles in the feather that make them float so well.



Fig 3

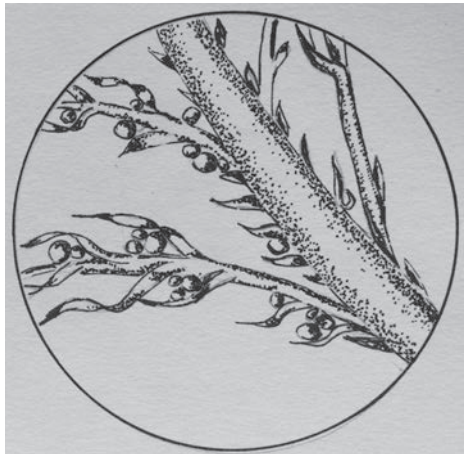


Fig 4

Fishing the flies

Flies made with CDC can be fished straight from the box. It is only when waterlogged should they be dressed.

Under no circumstances should any oil, not even CDC oil, be applied to dry or waterlogged feathers. Rather, a quick blow and blot followed by the application of a product called Frogs Fanny will disburse

trapped water in used water-logged feathers, puffing them up to create more bubbles for subsequent casts.

For the scientists among you, Frogs Fanny is hydrophobic fumed silica and is available at Farlows/SportFish. This product is a must for dry flies and works particularly well for 'Skues-style' nymphs.

Versatility for fly patterns

Feathers can be used whole for wings or for hackling to create movement as well as being tied in bunches or loops to aid buoyancy and create realistic surface film impressions. Spinning the barbs is also an effective material for bodies.

The fly that comes to the fore of most fishermen's minds is the F-Fly, devised in the 1980s. The F-Fly can take minutes to tie and requires a hook, tying thread and a CDC feather in its simplest form. This will appeal to most fly fishermen who generally tend to be obsessive minimalists. There are many other patterns that make use of CDC, which leads me neatly to my challenge.

Put your money where your mouth is – The CDC Challenge

I have set myself the challenge of fishing the entire 2016 season exclusively with flies made of CDC feathers. This will be accomplished with my new rod – a beautiful 7' 4wt split cane Garrison 201 taper made by Luke Bannister. I will report back on the patterns used and my success with them in the next edition of the journal. Tight lines.

Diagrams by Emma.



Wildlife Ramblings

by Tim and Heather Olsen



Much of our time as fishermen is spent pondering on the choice of fly to use. If you are like us, you spend a lot of time trying to identify what is on the water or fluttering above. Again you have, no doubt, amassed over time an assortment of publications to help you in both identification and choice. Probably the best of these vademecums is *Matching the Hatch* by Peter Lapsley and Cyril Bennett. A delightful, simple little book in our library, published pre-war, is Roger Woolley's *The Fly-Fisher's Flies*. No photographs, save one of the author fishing, and black and white line drawings, the only help for the reader to identify the flies. Gosh, eighty years on, we are truly spoiled by colour and photography!

However there is another riverside world, probably even more fascinating, that many of us do not get the chance to see. This is the underwater haunt of animal groups found in freshwater ponds and streams. Creatures that we know as invertebrates having no vertebral column or backbone. We first got into this some fifteen years ago by attending a workshop run by Cyril Bennett and Warren Gilchrist for the John Spedan Lewis Trust. It was not just about the identification of nymphs and other aquatic insects but looked at the methods of monitoring, recording and collecting samples. There was also practical time spent looking at insects

under a high intensity microscope. A trifle scary for those of a nervous disposition viewing the eyes, spurs and other parts of some of our larger caddis flies!

After this experience we were hooked, particularly Heather. We thought we would like to investigate the subsurface world, particularly as we had the Avon at the bottom of our garden. A request for the catalogue of Watkins and Doncaster followed post haste. These people are the Steinway of the world of suppliers of equipment to study the Natural Sciences. This led to a large order for various nets and other bits of kit the better to understand our Riverfly populations. There were triangular rustless metal nets for general water-life sampling and larger round sweep nets for collecting insects in grasses, bankside vegetation and bushes. Plus plastic specimen trays for inspecting the results of one's labours, not to mention pooters and pipettes!

Watkins and Doncaster was founded in 1874 by William Watkins, moving five years later to 36, The Strand. Arthur Doncaster joined the firm that year and became the driving force in building the business. Although he was completely deaf and speech impaired, he conversed with his customers by means of a slate around his neck. When customers asked for something or sought advice Doncaster wrote the answer on the slate, handing it to his astonished enquirer! Apart from developing a successful enterprise, Doncaster became a world authority on tropical butterflies. The widening of the Strand post-war caused the business to relocate. All you will now find at 36, sadly, is a Sainsbury's convenience store.

Of course not everyone wants to go to the lengths we did and get kitted up in this way. That said we were reminded just how fascinating the underwater world is earlier this summer. The Harnham Water Meadows Charitable Trust had an open day coming up and was keen to draw in

the public. A small, but shallow, stream inches its way across part of the land people would be visiting. Accordingly it was suggested that the Olsens might do a kick-sampling demonstration. The 'kick' element comes from the fact that when the net is put into the water the substrate above the net is disturbed by kicking. This releases invertebrates and other beasts which, hopefully, end up in your small triangular net. The mesh is of a particular size so the silt washes out, leaving your 'catch' and larger pebbles.

We thought that we had better have a dummy run at this. It would be embarrassing to catch nothing after all the hype in the Trust's advertising literature! So we set off one August evening wearing our wellies and carrying the nets. We brought some chest waders with us in case the water proved to be deeper than we thought or we sank into the mud! As we passed The Old Mill pub there were a couple of blokes sitting on a bench overlooking the mill pool having a pint. They stirred at our approach. We braced ourselves for what we expected to be a bit of mickey taking. You know the kind of thing . . . "Borrowed your grandson's shrimping net have we? . . . or "You won't find any butterflies round here mate!" . . . looking at our massive bug net. Far from it. The chaps knew exactly what the gear was for and were interested in the fact it was going to be deployed close to their local. From subsequent discussion one of them was a Salisbury and District Angling Club member and committed to the fascination and reward from going subsurface. We were greatly encouraged!

Whilst most of the visitors would not have given this apology for a stream a second glance on the day, it gave a remarkably good account of itself. Moreover it was not just children but many adults who were completely fascinated by what the stream produced. Fast swimming shrimps, looping/

undulating leeches, cased and caseless caddis, mayfly nymphs, water boatmen, water mites and bugs all put in an appearance. We also managed to find bullhead, minnows and some fry. Such pond and river dipping days are organised by an increasing number of Wildlife Trusts and provide a great family day out, whether or not you are a fisher.

Having been involved in a house sale, refurbishment, de-cluttering and downsizing over the past year and a half we have been very much out of the loop. Phew never again! There has been a lot of catching up to do, particularly with regard to Riverfly Conservation. All the equipment previously used at the John Lewis Leckford base has now been transferred to Salisbury & District's headquarters on the Avon. SADAC have been running Monitoring Courses for the Anglers' Riverfly Monitoring Initiative (ARMI) and plan, with the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (WWT), to do a Species Identification Course.

The ARMI initiative is being spearheaded by The Riverfly Partnership, a charity established a few years back comprising about a hundred organisations. These represent anglers, conservationists, scientists, various relevant authorities and others. The objects of the Partnership are to work to protect the water quality of our rivers, understand riverfly populations and conserve their habitats. Quite a mouthful to digest!

It plans to achieve its aims by establishing regular monitoring through fishing clubs and other organisations. This is not feasible for every association or society. Here in Wiltshire the WWT has embraced this work and is running monitoring training sessions for those interested in getting involved or who want a refresher! If you might like to get a better feel for what is involved have a look at The Riverfly Partnership website (www.riverflies.org).

The site has an excellent short film 'Taking Care of our Chalk Streams' showing the work of Cyril Bennett and The Riverfly Partnership in monitoring what lives in the River Meon. This river is fished by the Portsmouth Services Fly Fishing Association. The film shows kick-sampling and monitoring, which involves looking for eight different species, such as caddis, BWO, olives and gammarus shrimp. Of course there are opportunities to do this kind of activity on a more limited or occasional basis. For example, for some years now Heather has been collecting sedge flies for the caddis identification/recording work done by Stuart Crofts. Stuart, who has spoken at Society Fly days, is a highly skilled fisherman and a guide in his native Yorkshire, as well as being a keen naturalist particularly interested in river entomology. As we write this some two or three test tubes containing caddis are tucked in a corner of the kitchen to be sent on to him. Preserved in Isopropanol alcohol they provide an interesting diversion for supper guests!

Bob, Stuart and the team do, of course, input some of these issues into the courses they run throughout the year. However understandably members join the Society to go fishing rather than to prod around in the mud. Nevertheless there is nothing to stop you finding out more and, indeed, there is much here to enhance your fishing knowledge and experience. However perhaps you should talk with Bob Wellard before organising a mass kick-sampling in one of the Society's rivers! People like Harris, Croft, Craig Macadam and Bennett, Lapsley, Goddard and Clarke have all written knowledgeably about the subject. . . That said there are some good little guides available from the Field Studies Council (www.field-studies-council.org). These include Bugs on Bushes, an invertebrate name trail, and the Freshwater Name Trail, a key to the invertebrates of ponds and

streams. These go down especially well with children/grandchildren!

One of the most satisfying things of all is the look on a youngster's face, or that of his parent or, indeed, many adults as they peer intently into the specimen tray. All hypnotised by the sight of a Mayfly (*Ephemera danica*) as the nymphal shuck splits and a winged insect emerges. Have a go. People won't laugh; the chaps on the pub bench are probably fishermen!

How the Passion was Born

by John Dart

This piece is from a reading at a recent memorial service for Dan Topolski, an old rowing friend and crewmate, who died prematurely in 2015. It is based on an extract from 'Boat Race – The Oxford Revival' about his passion for rowing and sculling (a solitary sport) in particular. With some reworking it sums up well why I bother to fish for trout. I hope it might do the same for you.

It is hard to justify the wanton dissipation of countless hours spent fishing. I have fought against being tied to the sport, against identification with it, against the narrowing of horizons such a passion could bring. I have been apprehensive about discussing it for fear of being labeled as a bore, of being cruel to animals, or of indulging in an activity unfitting for modern man.

I was reluctant to admit to sophisticated friends that I spent several hours in some weeks doing it, learning more about it, or transforming fur and feathers to use with it. Was I worried about the opinions of those who cannot conceive how any intelligent person could spend time outwitting a fish? Or was I just a little

embarrassed by the amount of time that had to be spent on it?

By the time I left Oxford, to begin a life immersed in work, I had learned the basics. I had become known to my closer friends as a keen angler and, to the fisherman amongst them, as a competent one. Further subterfuge was hopeless, and I could hide my secret no longer. More disturbing though was that I could no longer pretend to myself that I did not find it hugely absorbing and satisfying, that in a life-style restrained by routine and domesticity it provided an alternative and strong thread through my life. Without it I could become nervy and melancholic. I might have directed more of my energies to sociable, and more acceptably cerebral alternatives. Some find inner calm and peace with poetry, music or painting: I find it through spending a few hours a week alone on the river. Mental concentration, some physical activity, time to contemplate, and moreover time to refresh body and mind.

Part of it is the deep delight in doing something at which one knows one is good and successful. Part of it is the sublimely satisfying feeling of being absorbed into the environment, reading the stream, identifying the hatch, choosing a fly, skill with rod and line, inducing a take, timing the strike, and encouraging a fish into the net. All are derived from a demanding sport, the calm of the river, immersion in one's surroundings and the joy of time spent far from the rush and bustle of town. The poetry of the stream, the beauty of the meadows, the harmony of the countryside, the rustle of the birds and voles hidden in the bankside; when these things are married to the precision timing required, the tactics of the art, the primal urge to catch a fish, and the concentration required to do it, the mind is emptied of all life's worries for a few restorative hours.

Then there is the added dimension of an

occasional fishing partner, the comradeship of the riverbank, and the intimacy of an environment where everything is perfect. There is, in short, nothing quite like it. Those who have not experienced it have missed a life-enhancing experience. That is why those old fishing types, in their funny clothes, continue to turn up at the Rod Room year after year. They simply want to soak up the sights, the sounds, and indulge a little more in the passion that has given them such intense pleasure, such joy, and at times some heartache.



Sea Trout in the Sea

by Keith Johnson

I suspect that most British anglers would think of sea trout as a similar species to salmon, to be fished for in rivers and lakes as they make their way back into freshwater on their journey to spawn. There are exceptions around the British Isles – the Voes of Shetland, the Moy estuary, the Kyles of Sutherland and Tongue for example – but fishing for sea trout actually feeding in saltwater is the exception rather than the rule.

Things are very different in the Danish archipelago, where for many years European anglers from Germany, Sweden, France, and as far away as Italy have enjoyed sport with sea trout around the coasts of the many islands. The centre of this activity has been the island of Fyn, situated between the western peninsula of Jutland and the eastern island of Zeeland, and now connected to both by bridge.

A decline in numbers of sea trout in the 1990's led the regional administration on the island, aware of the value of angling tourism, to invest money into hatcheries (using native brood stock), barrier removal on the spawning streams and habitat restoration. As a result, catches are now beginning to return to earlier numbers – as are the angling visitors.

Until recently the number of visiting British anglers has been low, possibly due to a combination of a lack of information and of the kind of desirable facilities found in alternative destinations – lodges, guides, etc. Last year, however, a new 'Denmark Fishing Lodge' opened on Fyn which caught the attention of fellow Piscatorial Julian Mahoney, and before long plans were made for a visit in September, together with our frequent fishing companion Bob Broadbent.

Our original plan of taking a car by ferry to Esbjerg was foiled when the service was permanently withdrawn, so it was courtesy of Ryanair that we landed in Jutland at Billund, centre of the Lego Empire, to pick up a hire car for the drive to Fyn. Two hours later we arrived at the Lodge to be met by Omar, owner and head guide, and his Italian partner Valentina. The lodge consists of a group of traditional farm buildings converted to provide comfortable bedrooms, a lounge with fly tying table, restaurant, small tackle shop/office and a very useful heated drying/rod room. All in all a comfortable base enhanced by very tasty meals produced by Valentina in the Italian style. Our 'all-in' package including breakfast, packed lunch, dinner and daily guiding, proved to be very good value.

Before long Omar was explaining to us over a beer the essentials of fishing for Baltic Sea trout. We had expected it to be similar to our own fishing for bass off the South coast of England – mainly intermediate lines with sand eel or fry patterns – and were surprised to hear that

floating lines were the preferred option under anything but very rough conditions, and that although sand eel patterns were used at times, in the autumn the fish were more likely to be feeding on small shrimps, prawns, and other similar prey. Fortunately, the shop was well stocked with suitable local imitative patterns, most to our surprise un-weighted in any way. Omar also warned us that the fishing was pretty demanding, most of our guests are younger!!

By the end of the first day we appreciated that he wasn't joking! Fyn is roughly square in shape, and about 30–40 miles across. A number of bays and inlets enable your guide to place you away from the worst of the wind and in a general area where the sea trout may be expected. However, there aren't really specific 'hotspots' and so the basic technique is to search for them by moving along the shoreline as you fish – cast, four or five sideways steps as you retrieve, cast again. Easy on a sandy beach, less so wading knee deep amongst stones and weed!

The water is very clear, and the best areas are where weed beds extend up to within a couple of feet of the surface – which explained the floating line. The sea trout lie on these beds as they provide camouflage from avian predators. Despite the water clarity, the fish are impossible to spot apart from the odd swirl on the surface.

Although the very occasional double figure fish is caught, a 60cm (5–6lbs) fish is regarded as a specimen, and the majority of fish that we caught were in the $\frac{3}{4}$ –1½lb range. We did manage one decent fish over 2lbs each, and of course all of the fish were silver and fought well. Most of the fish were on the small shrimp like patterns, and we gathered that the sand eel and baitfish flies were more highly regarded for spring fishing. Apart from sea trout, a few garfish were caught, and much to my surprise I caught two decent sized

flounders despite the fly fishing close to the surface.

Conditions were not particularly kind to us, with blustery winds most days and variable weather, but we caught enough to keep us interested, and it was certainly different to anything that we'd experienced before. Through the week we fished a number of different areas and saw quite a lot of the island, which was mainly pastoral farmland reminiscent of S.W. England, together with some market gardening near the main through routes. In the rural areas the only settlements apart from farms were small hamlets of a few houses and the occasional village.

All in all an enjoyable trip, but probably one that we should have taken when slightly less 'mature'! (See photos in central colour section.)

Absent Friends

We regret to announce the passing of Oliver Field, a long serving member of the Society and a former Honorary Auditor. Oliver will be greatly missed by all his friends and colleagues in the Society. Also departed this life since the previous issue was John Glasse a popular member since 1990.

Tinker Bell Creek

by Alastair Alexander



Gentle Giant is a hackneyed phrase but if it ever applied to one man, that would be my distant cousin Andrew. He must weigh 18 stone; his thighs are like tree trunks and his upper arms like York hams but he can wield a rod as well as any tennis player on the Centre Court. Watching him cast a fly on the water is like watching a ballet dancer and I called him the Nijinsky of Rocky River, for that is where he fishes. Sadly I haven't fished with him often as I should like as the Rocky River in question is a few miles from his home at Caribou Crossing in British Columbia but I have forgone a few other pleasantries to join him on occasion.

Despite his huge bulk he is a quiet soul, but it is not wise to arouse him as he does not know his strength, though thankfully I have had no need to test him. He seemed a man without enemies and I was commenting on this to him over a bottle of Canadian Rye for which I had acquired a taste.

"Well that's kind of you to say so although I'm not sure I agree, although I was lucky enough to have my greatest

revenge to be taken out of my hands. Let me tell you."

And this is what he told me.

I usually go to Rocky River with someone else but I had suddenly found a gap in my diary due to a cancellation, so I gathered my things together and set off with barely enough time to put together a lunch. I had fished for an hour or so when I felt a slight tug on the line. It was such a gentle touch I thought the fly may have just got snagged against a rock. Then suddenly there was a huge jerk and the line spun out of the reel uncontrollably. I battled with the fish for a good hour but without help and stupidly having left my net at home I could do no more than beach it. It was a whopper but it had not only swallowed the fly down its throat; it was completely exhausted. Even if I had been able to extract the hook, I am sure it would have died. Fortunately I had a hunting knife with me and I despatched it swiftly.

I don't know how much it weighed but it must have been around 30lbs. It was not just long but bulky with broad shoulders and I only just managed to carry it to the shade under that pine tree by the big rock. As you know, this is my favourite spot for lunch. You get a lovely view over the river and a small stream comes down from the forest and runs over the pebbles before joining the main river. In our early days of courting Ellen and I used to picnic here and she called the stream Tinker Bell Creek. The high pitched sound reminded her of the tinkling sound they had given Tinker Bell in Peter Pan when she had seen it in Vancouver as a child; the twinkling of the light on the water was like the dancing light they used to imitate the fairy. Ellen likes to give names to things; she always chose the names of our dogs and all the other pets around the house, and even her car. And she even gave me a few names over the years but I don't think I'll repeat any of them to you now!

As I sat down in the fork between the roots of the big pine tree overlooking Tinker Bell Creek I realised I was pretty hungry, so I had my lunch and lay back in the sun. Now if there is one thing I like to do after lunch, it is have a short nap but I think the combination of the beer and my hour-long struggle took its toll and I fell into a deep slumber.

The only thing better than going to sleep like that, is waking up. Perhaps the dead feel that way as they start to shovel the earth on your coffin and your spirit leaves your body and ascends to Heaven. I hope it will be like that. You come from a deep pit, half open your eyes, see the pine tree branches above you and smell the resin. Then the sound of the water greets you and perhaps a bird's song to confirm you are alive or in Paradise.

On this occasion it wasn't quite like that.

Even as I lay there with my eyes half closed I knew I was not alone. There was a shuffling sound and a dark shadow covered my closed eyes. Then I smelt a strong odour as something sniffed me. A foul smell of stale animal hair and regurgitated rotting fish. As the shadow moved slightly away I half opened an eye and my worst fear was confirmed. Standing over me was the largest grizzly bear I had ever seen, and he was busy inspecting me. He had started at my face but was now sniffing my shirt; the new one Ellen had bought me from The Hudson Bay catalogue. He didn't seem to like the smell as he snorted and moved further down my body. I am not sure whether it was my crutch or the waders that finally put him off. Another stare and then he wandered off to the fish. It didn't take much sniffing before he dug his teeth into it and in a matter of minutes, half of it was gone. You wouldn't have thought bears had such human traits but he belched loudly, lay down and went to sleep and was soon snoring! Terrified as I was, I have to say he looked quite sweet

lying there with his paws on top of one another folded in front of him, and his head resting on them.

There is always this dilemma when you meet a bear as to whether to stand stock still or run but I didn't have much choice. I was scared into complete immobility and for the hour he slept I was wracked with cramp.

Eventually, he awoke and looked at me again, and I thought he would return for another inspection but he simply picked up the remainder of the fish and wandered off downstream. That was enough for one day and I needed a drink badly. I packed up and headed for Kelly's Bar in Caribou Crossing as fast as my legs and pick-up truck would take me.

We can all be wise after the event and I must admit, regaling them in Kelly's was a bad tactical error. Perhaps the worst part of it was not making sure that Campbell was absent. I'm afraid he doesn't like me: never has. The reason I think goes back to some girl I nicked from him or perhaps a packet of cigarettes in High School. Both were equally important at the time. I've forgotten, but Campbell is not the forgetting or forgiving type. Ever since he has picked on me and been thoroughly offensive. He ridiculed me whenever he could and generally made himself obnoxious. But I think he was really jealous deep down; he was one of nature's failures. He couldn't last long in any job and finally ended up as a ranger for the local Nature Park, and only then because his uncle was on the Board of Trustees.

Unfortunately I didn't see him round the corner of the bar.

"Been fishing?" asked Pat from behind the bar.

"Yes."

"Successful?"

"Well more than successful," I said in my eagerness, and I embarked on my encounter, complete with details of the size of salmon, the smell of the bear's

breath, his view of my shirt and his dozing with his paws folded together.

“Oh, yes and then what? Did he then sprout wings and flyaway?” And I knew I was in trouble.

Campbell came striding round the corner and came face to face with me. “I’ve never heard so much bollocks in my life! You’re an effing liar” (and he didn’t use the euphemism). “There is no such thing as a 30lb salmon in the Creek and as for that rubbish about the bear, there ain’t no such bear around here. You’re just trying to draw attention to yourself.” He went on like this for some time and I eventually became quite riled.

“Well, have it your own way. I can’t prove about the salmon but I can tell you that the bear was not only real but a bit of a pansy. He had a streak of grey hair just above his left eye to prove it.” I regretted it even as I was saying it. The grey patch of hair above Campbell’s eye was too prominent for no one to realise the connection in my remark. I turned to the others in the bar to enjoy the sniggering at this remark so I never saw the right hook coming my way.

As I swam out of unconsciousness for the second time that day, I could smell Pat’s armpits and his cigarette and beer-soaked breath which was a fine match for my encounter with the bear, and enough to bring anyone back from the dead. But it was good of him to help me up as Campbell walked out of the bar.

“That was not very clever.” said Pat and I apologised. I got little sympathy from Ellen when I got home either for the cut lip or the stiff neck, and indeed she didn’t speak to me for a week. I know it was unnecessary to challenge Campbell’s proclivities and anyway who cares? But I have to say I did feel a certain justification when Kirsty left him some months later and returned to her parents and Billy Two Trees the rather camp maître d’ from Kelly’s left the reservation and moved in

with him. I was sorry about Kirsty as she was a mild girl and I was surprised she had the courage to leave him but clearly his devotions had changed.

I continued to fish Rocky River and nearly always went to Tinker Bell Creek as it was my favourite spot. But I never caught another fish above single figures nor saw the bear. I even began to think I must have dreamt it myself. In the meantime, whenever Campbell saw me he would make some snide remark or hum “If you go down to the woods today ...” I think even the others in Kelly’s bar got a bit fed up with it.

Then one day, as I came out of the forest by the waterfall upstream from Tinker Bell Creek, I saw the same bear with his paws folded one on top of the other and his head resting on them just as I remembered. I knew it was him as I recognised the grey patch of hair over the left eye. And not far away was Campbell sitting in the fork of the roots which was my favourite spot. His head was down on his chest as if he were fast asleep too. I crept up slowly and it wasn’t until I was quite near that I saw the gash in the side of his neck and throat, and the rifle between his knees.

The bear seemed unconcerned and at peace and I thought he had fallen asleep in the same way I had seen him all those years before. That is until I noticed the red flow down Tinker Bell Creek from the wound in his neck.

I can’t honestly say I shed a tear over Campbell, though I felt sorry for Billy Two Trees but I didn’t think the bear got what he deserved. It would have only taken a 30lb salmon to have saved the lives of both of them.



Reflections on Pleasurable Style in Writing; Mainly on Fishing

by Pinot Grigio and Adrian Maroya



In the early days of mechanised printing, there emerged a writer – William Tyndale: the finest translator into English of the ‘New Testament from Erasmus’ edition of the Testament in Greek. Tyndale was possibly born in 1492. His proposal to translate the Bible into English was declined by the Bishop of London, so he moved to Germany where the first printing of his translation began in 1525. He then moved to Antwerp and spent the rest of his life there, revising the translation, whose initial textual rudeness he had apologised for earlier.

A single phrase illustrates his desire for poetic, as well as informative language:

Consider the lilies of the field.

This was originally translated as: “Behold the lilies of the field”

In this passage, addressing the wonders of Creation, the translation goes on:

howe they growe. They labour not nor spynne. And yet for all that I saye unto you, that even Solomon in all his royalte was not arrayed lyke unto one of these.

(Matthew 6:28)

His translation might have influenced the English edition of the Geneva Bible (1560), much more widely diffused later. King James I ordered an independent translation, yet much came from Tyndale. Even in the 1881-85 revision of the King James Version, yet more of Tyndale’s words were restored.

It is also significant that “Consider the lilies” was the phrase borrowed from Tyndale in the Douay-Rheims translation (begun in 1582) of St Jerome’s Vulgate Bible – an exercise that was intended to uphold Catholic tradition in the face of the Reformation, which till then had overwhelmingly dominated Elizabethan ecclesiastical and academic debate. Linguistic elegance as proto-ecumenism!

Tyndale’s writing influenced Shakespeare and Milton. The *Times Literary Supplement* has described Tyndale as: “the man, whose choice of words has, for four hundred years, exercised supreme influence on English prose”.

A small book entitled *The Arte of Angling* appeared in 1577. The known copy has no page carrying the Author’s name. Its construction is in dialogue form, not previously known in English printed angling books. It is (among other ideas) urging the angler to observe virtues as: faith, hope, love, patience, humility, fortitude, knowledge, liberality, contentment with negative results, piety, (the use of prayer) and the ability to go uncomplainingly without food, charity, and memory.

From the piety angle, consider the following – which seems to come naturally to the author:

*Almightie God, that these did make,
As saith his holy book:
And gave me cunning them to take,
And brought them to my hooke.
To him be praise for evermore,
That daily does us feede:
And doth increase by spawn such store;
To serve us at our neede.*

The unknown writer was possibly from Lincolnshire. The only known copy is in the Yale Library.

Izaak Walton, *The Compleat Angler* (1653).

The first edition of the *Compleat Angler* lifted format and text from the *Arte of Angling*. The second and later editions changed the characters' names and the text evolved over several editions.

There is insight into experience *versus* the novice:

(Piscator – Of Trout): *Now for another. Trust me I have another bite: come Scholar, come lay down your Rod, and help me land this as you did the other. So, now we shall be sure to have a good dish of Fish for supper.*

Viator: *I am glad of that; but I have no fortune: sure, Master, yours is a better Rod, and better tackling.*

Piscator: *Nay, then take mine, and I will fish with yours. Look you Scholar, I have another; come, do as you did before. And now I have a bite at another: Oh me! He has broke all; there's half a line and a good hook lost.*

Venator: *I [Aye] and a good trout too.*

Piscator: *Nay, the trout is not lost, for pray take notice no man can lose what he never had.*

Note an emphasis on temperament, style – and not overly, the facts.

*The Fly-Fisher's Entomology
Trout and Grayling Fishing*

Alfred Ronalds
London (1836)

Of the Trout:

His great shyness renders it extremely difficult to obtain any accurate knowledge of his habits, by ocular observation. Even thick bush will seldom be found to be sufficiently opaque to conceal the observer.

With a view to obviate this difficulty I built a little fishing Hut, or Observatory, of heath, overhanging a part of the river Blythe, near Uttoxeter, in Staffordshire, which seemed favourable for the purpose. Its form was octagonal, and it had three windows which being situated only a four feet and a half above the surface of the water, allowed a very close view of it.

And consider this on 'Sight':

Of all the senses in fish, sight is perhaps the one of most importance to them. Their eyes are perfectly adapted to the element they inhabit; indeed their subsistence seems to depend almost entirely on the great sensibility of the optic nerve and the just adaptation of the crystalline and other humours to their proper office.

The book also introduced the concept of the Trout's view to the world as a circular window concept surrounded by a mirror when the conical angle becomes too acute. Smooth or ruffled, and determined by the depth of the fish in the water.

While Mr Ronalds employed more commas than we might today, his phrases are clear in intention and felicitous in arrangement.

If you then add the exquisite plates of natural insects and suggested imitations (the first time this was done) we have originality of the first order. His plates were frequently plagiarised thereafter.

Trained as an engraver, in married life Ronalds eventually became a tackle maker and dealer in Wales. In 1848 he moved to Melbourne and worked there as an engraver. Then in the Gold rush to Ballarat, where he is buried.



A Story of Catch and Release

by the late Oliver Field



On holiday at Auchtermory
You'll find the hero of this story
An English gent called Thomas Mason
Come North to get some education.
The locals said: "He's such a swell,
You'd think he wass the laird himsel.."
For o'er the heather Thomas roams
Wearing a hat like Sherlock Holmes
In plus-four suit of orange tweed
(The tailor who supplied his need
Assured him these were just the togs
For traipsing over Highland bogs).
A telescope he carried too
To add enhancement to the view.

One day he had some time to kill
And took a path that led uphill
And when he topped the final rise
The river lay before his eyes
And looking down he gave a cry
And put his spy-glass to his eye
An angler stood absorbed, intent
Good Heavens! How his rod was bent!
The line was streaking up the stream
The reel gave forth a mighty scream
Tom saw a monstrous silver flash
Accompanied by a thunderous splash.
And then the fish appeared again,
Shaking, as though enraged with pain
Then with a crash of mighty tail
It sounded like a harpooned whale
And bore down-stream, fear-crazed and
frantic,
Towards its haunts in mid-Atlantic.
The Angler followed, stumbling, grim

Seeking to thwart this latest whim
And saw the long flat glide appear
That ended in a foaming weir
And knowing it must now be stayed
Applied the strain, and loudly prayed
Tom gazed upon the scene below
And felt the cruel tension grow as
The rod-tip nearly touched the water

The line was taut, but Tom was tauter
And when it seemed something must crack
The salmon took a different tack
And tried some feats of aquabatics
That made Tom jump, despite rheumatics.
It wallowed, rolled, it flailed and lunged
It stood upon its tail and plunged
It whirled and swirled and circulated
It turned and churned and oscillated
But with the ever constant drag
It slowly now began to flag
It rolled and showed its silver flank
The angler steered it near the bank
His landing net was out of reach
He eased it up the sloping beach
And as it gave a final flounce
He dropped his rod, and made a pounce
And clasping it against his chest
Staggered towards a grassy crest
But Tom could hold himself no more
He jumped with glee, his cap he doffed
And waved his telescope aloft
With sparkling eyes, and face aglow
He shouted out Good show! Bravo!
And starting hastening down the hill
To praise the fellow for his skill.
The man looked up in consternation
And saw Tom's wild gesticulation
Immediately he turned around
And picked the salmon off the ground
And struggling to the water's brim
He pitched the silver monster in
And long before the ripples died
Had waded to the other side
And disappeared among the trees
As if pursued by angry bees.

So Tom returned, perplexed and sad
Convinced that Scots were raving mad!

International Fario Club visit, to the Piscatorial Society waters, 21–25th September 2015

by John Dart

We met our three visiting Fario's: Laurent Sainsot, Peter Staude and Phillipe Avril, on Sunday evening at the Plough Inn, Itchen Abbas for dinner. They had managed to fit in an afternoon fishing on Roger and Victoria Harrison's water at Ovington beforehand. Louise de Boulay, Roger and Victoria, joined Geoff Fleming, myself, and James Morgan for our opening dinner.

Monday

This saw heavy rain, with Laurent Sainsot and Rob Gibbs, who had risen at 5.30 am to join us, heading to the Test. I followed in an electronically challenging hire car, which caused some amusement at my expense for everyone during the week, after having gone to Alresford to obtain the shirts and picnic essentials that I had left behind in London. The Test fishing was as challenging as ever but Laurent, with Rob as ghillie, managed a good sized trout on the size 22 CDC's he favours, as well as some smaller fish and a grayling or two. He was kind enough to say that the Test at Freefolk had restored his belief in the Legend of the Test, which had been previously sullied by visits to the extended stew ponds of the lower reaches.

Phillipe and Peter were taken to Abbots Barton by James Morgan and Geoff Fleming where a long lunch, to ward off the rain, was followed by a very successful late afternoon at Abbots Worthy which

fished well for both days, everyone catching some nice trout.

We dined at the Chestnut Horse, at Easton after a visit to the Cricketers where Geoff shot in to secure our table (at the Chestnut Horse) and was told by the Landlord that the clue was in the sign!!

Tuesday

Dick Hawkes, who wielded his camera on both the Test and the Itchen to record the event, kindly took Rob's place on the hosting team. Dick started off with Laurent and myself at Abbots Worthy, where there were rising fish below the Island on the main yielding about 4 good trout and a grayling to Laurent using another minute dry CDC. Dick also gave us a guided tour of this stretch, which I have fished very little in the last 4 years, and which I had forgotten was so good with such a wide variety of water (Committee take note). Dick generously pointed out a host of fish holding spots benefiting both Laurent and myself later that day. We sat out the last heavy rain of the week in the Abbots Barton hut, over a prolonged and vinous lunch, and went up to the restored section of the Main and Ducks Nest Spinney, impressing Laurent with his Charles Ritz award for fishery restoration hat on. Laurent and I returned to net a few more fish at Abbots Worthy and Dick went to the Test to record events there. Phillipe and Peter, with their hosts James and Geoff, managed to catch one or two. Having fished in France they like a challenge!! We had dinner at the Woolpack, Totford, where the staff, food and accommodation are excellent. Michael Baker and Richard Farrant kindly drove over to join us for dinner, whilst Geoff and James sadly returned home.

Wednesday

Peter Staude, with his interest in fly fishing history, left us to fulfill an ambition to fish the Bourne. Laurent, Phillipe and myself

went to meet Allan Hardy at the Ginger Piggery on the Wylde for the Wiltshire section of the visit. This was after a visit to Stockbridge, which Phillipe had not visited, both to feed the trout with bread supplied by Laurent, and for them both to stock up on unweighted nymphs at Robjents instead of the 'Skues me' nymphs previously stocking their flyboxes.

Allan, who is also a long standing

member of the Fario Club, took Laurent off to the Broads whilst I charmed Phillipe with the Wylde at Glebe Farm where we saw at least 10 big grayling, caught several nice ones, and two pretty trout.

We stayed at the Dove at Corton where the accommodation is close to luxurious, the food also excellent and the staff charming. Laurent had caught a nice fish on the Broads, and persuaded the Chef to



Legend to Lunch at the Rod Room, from left to right: Brian Jakins; Laurent Sainsot; Angie Langley; Pat Stacpole; Phillipe Avril; Nigel Bird; Allan Hardy; Peter Baker

prepare this au bleu, with great success, as a starter. Peter Staude drove over from Winchester, where he was fishing the next day, to make up the party for dinner.

Thursday & Friday

Nigel Bird joined Allan and myself, for the last two days hosting. Nigel and Laurent both hunt almost anything that moves or flies, as well as fish, which got them off to a very good start. The Avon was in great shape, and we went off to fish at Chalk Pit before the Rod Room lunch. The latter was largely provided by Reeve's bakery, to their usual excellent standard, with the addition of hors d'oeuvres à la Jakins, and joined by Brian's partner Angie, Pat Stackpool and Peter Baker. Stuart McTeare, Joe Emmett and Craig Dawson put in welcome guest appearances, and are all to be congratulated on the great shape the rivers were in for this visit. Laurent presented the Society with a box of beautifully tied flies, of species that are endangered in the Chalk Stream environment of both countries, and which will be on show in the Rod Room once suitably cased.

After another successful afternoon, fishing for sighted fish, we had a farewell dinner at the Prince Leopold. Nigel and I took our guests to the Avon again on Friday morning before they left to catch a late afternoon train back to France.

The Farios' all experienced some very good September fishing here, really appreciating both the quality of our water and the teeming fish which are to be seen in all our rivers. They are all excellent fishermen, it was a privilege both to learn from them, using tiny dry flies with very accurate casting, and also to be able to show them just how good our fishing is. I think that the opportunity to fish to so many sighted fish was a pleasure and a surprise for them. The quality of the work done to keep our rivers healthy by our keepers, with the backing of the Society,

the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, and the EA is just not possible at present in France, and is something we must be very grateful for.

I am personally grateful to everyone who contributed to the visit, mentioned above, including John Curnow and Robert Beveridge, who had kindly offered their services to host if they had been needed.

In Vino Veritas

by Pinot Grigio



Dear Editor:

With interesting wines, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find a UK distributor. No doubt due to the double whammy of the financial crisis, but also the soaring value of the Oz dollar, reaching GBP = AUD 1.50 at one point. So, the Australian section in Waitrose shrank. Now more like 2.00.

I know there may be a farewell to you this year, and because you are under pressure to abandon Shiraz for Pinot Noir, I start with a top Australian brand of the latter:

– Bass Phillip, Gippsland, Victoria. Their top bottle won the best Pinot Noir in the



Bob Wellard into a fine fish on the River Wylie



'vi' Identification tagging of a brown trout – photo by Bob Wellard



John Shone with Brian Clarke and friends celebrating John's 80th birthday at The East India Club – photo by Editor



The Society's 2015 Grayling Competition Team



Bob Broadbent with lodge manager Omar and a Danish sea trout – photo by Keith Johnson



Fishing for sea trout with the Fyn Zeeland bridge in the background – photo by Keith Johnson



Creating a 'berm' on the River Avon – photo by Editor



Heavy plant used for infilling the new berms on the Avon – photo by Editor

country and is priced at half of Penfold's Grange at AUD 350.00. I sourced a parcel of the 2011 Crown Prince – a cadet label, about AUD 45.00 or so. It is a heavier wine than I now prefer, but an excellent transition between standard Shiraz and the delightful pale Mornington/Cote d'or style. As of now I do not know if you can find it in England.

With the following, I have a special request. Can you, or any Member, find an honest, hard working and pleasant importer/dealer. I have specifically asked each of these firms and they each say they are seeking a distributor in the UK:

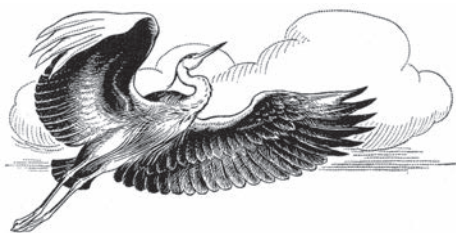
- Hoddles Creek Estate, Upper Yarra Valley, Victoria. Established in 1997, a family owned vineyard with chief winemaker Franco D'Anna. Noted for their own vineyard Pinot Noir and Chardonnay wines under the Hoddles Creek label, and selected bought in grapes under the Wickhams Road label. These are made in a way to avoid manipulation, allowing the grapes to do most of the talking. They are considered one of the most reasonably priced, high quality wines of their type.
- Angullong Wines, Four Mile Creek, near Orange, New South Wales. This is a largish vineyard of 550 hectares producing fifteen grape types on a variety of ancient soils. Among the interesting offerings are: Sauvignon Blanc, a Shiraz Viognier, Vermentino, Barbera and Temperanillo. These are priced here at around \$20.00. The Sauvignon is remarkable.
- Ben Haines Wines. While Ben is chief winemaker of Mount Langi, Ghiran, Victoria, he is building a portfolio of relationship with wine growers in Victoria, focussing on Shiraz, Chardonnay, Marsanne and Rousanne. Some of this is special stuff, still in small

amounts. Benn has experience in France and the US, and in addition is a musician.

Each of these outfits has a web site and Ben's in particular is worth a troll.

And now – the Weather Report . . .

by The Editor



It's one of those warm balmy afternoons outside. The air temperature is a comfortable 15c and a column of midges close to the water is slowly spiraling up towards an azure blue sky.

On the water the mallards are at it again. A male, head bobbing away pressurises a female into submission and the act is over in an instant. One has to feel a bit sorry for the female though, as she remained submerged throughout the whole process only to suddenly pop up again to energetically wag her tail once it was all over. In the nesting box that is perilously tethered into a crook in my sole remaining apple tree, a coal tit which had been inspecting this 'des res' over the past few days has now settled in and looks to be nest building. All in all an idyllic scene – but not just a week before Christmas!

Once again nature has been playing its tricks on us and the extreme weather patterns, primarily associated with climate change, are causing havoc once more.

Whilst disturbing for ourselves and future generations that have to live in this messed up planet, these aberrations have a direct effect on our wildlife. Bird eggs may hatch at the wrong time of the year when food sources are scarce and in a mild winter hedgehogs may go into hibernation too late and may not survive if they wake up too soon when food sources are scarce and a harsh winter spell follows. But it doesn't just stop there. All flora and fauna rely on reasonably predictable weather patterns for their long-term survival. They can't just adjust the thermostat on a central heating system as we can to adapt to new weather patterns. No doubt there will be winners and losers in such a changing world but I have no doubt that the losers will be in the ascendancy.

So what really has been causing these unusual weather patterns and how will it affect our rivers and the sport we derive from them? Unfortunately there is no easy answer to all of this but science is gradually coming to grips with the prime causes, which are complex and still open to debate.

We are all now aware that global warming is part of the problem. We burn too much fossil fuel. Western nations are largely responsible for what happened in the past, which makes it difficult to chide those fast growing economies in China and India for trying to raise their own living standards by using the same energy sources. Since the mid-19th century industrial revolution the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has grown from 280 parts per million to over 380 parts per million today and annual carbon dioxide emissions grew by about 80% in the three decades from 1974 to 2004. However we now have an international accord of sorts to try and stabilise the situation – so there is hope. Whilst changes in our own weather patterns have become more and more apparent (2015 was the U.K.'s hottest year

since records began), that's nothing compared to what has been going on in the Arctic. It's called Arctic Amplification and for reasons that are still largely unknown, the Arctic is warming up twice as fast as the rest of the world. This phenomenon creates a narrower difference in temperature between the poles and the equator and that effects air masses and solar currents such as the Jet Stream.

So, what are these air masses? Well these are huge masses of air, which take on the characteristics of the underlying surface when they sit over that location for a long period of time. There are a sizeable number of these but the four most prominent clusters of these enormous air masses that influence global weather are the Arctic, Polar, Tropical and Maritime air masses. Shifts in these air masses and global warming have influenced the behavior of the Jet Stream, causing it to meander off its historic course across the U.K. so that it is now far more southern than it used to be. Another factor influencing these meanders is that temperature difference between the poles and the equator. The more this temperature difference diminishes, the greater currents such as the Jet Stream will meander. Now we are getting into familiar territory as we're all familiar with that current of air which whizzes around the U.K. at 100 miles an hour plus and whose course meanders according to which air mass dominates at any particular time. So, for instance in the period 2008 to 2011 air masses from the north and east predominated bringing us Siberian type winters. The Jet Stream (which is caused by the rotation of the earth on its axis and radiant atmospheric heating) travels around 10 km above ground level but recent research has identified the influence of much higher winds in the stratosphere which, when they flow to the east strengthen the Jet Stream. These coupled with the temperature difference between

the poles and the equator can also affect the positioning of the Jet Stream.

So there are a lot of different factors influencing our weather and even if we manage to stabilise global warming, computer modeling indicates that we will continue to see more extreme weather patterns and probably more periods of intensive rain and flooding. As the air becomes warmer its ability to hold more moisture increases, which is one of the reasons why more sudden, heavier periods of rainfall are expected in the future.

Earlier I referred to the more visible impacts of global warming – birds nesting in the middle of winter for instance but how could these extreme weather events affect life in our rivers and our sport? Well a greater chance of flooding means more emphasis on remedial work to ensure greater connectivity to flood plains, which was one of the main objectives behind our recent works on the Avon leat. Sudden heavy rainfall also has other detrimental effects, especially when flood events wash away newly laid fish eggs. When rivers are in flood, permission is sometimes granted to Sewage Works to discharge untreated effluent directly into rivers in the belief that such pollution will quickly disperse and be dissipated by the sheer volume of water involved, but how much remains in the river and do these sudden discharges affect life in our rivers? In low water conditions the ground can find these sudden heavy periods of rain difficult to absorb and diffuse pollution such as run-off from roads and farmland can then quickly enter rivers causing major pollution episodes.

Warmer winters and stronger flows can of course encourage weed growth, which in turn can add to the time spent weed cutting the following season. Higher water temperatures will also, (rather like my nesting coal tit), impact on ephemeral hatching times and may eventually have an impact on the long term survival of our

fish species, although some may well adapt in true Darwinian fashion to the changes that are taking place around them. Science however forecasts a somewhat gloomier scenario and in 2010 a study by Cardiff University scientists found that salmon and trout populations in the River Wye and its tributaries fell significantly between 1985 and 2004, which suggested that warmer water and lower water levels were largely to blame.

Does this indicate poorer chances of recruitment for our native wild brown trout and grayling and will there be a greater dependency on stocking with less temperature sensitive species such as rainbow trout? Who knows?

But it's not all doom and gloom because; with the recent announcement that the French company Tattinger has just bought a southern U.K. vineyard, at least we can toast the decline in better quality champagne!

The Piscatorial Society Photographic Group

by Nick Gooderham

Forget the fish for a moment, how does a keen chalk-stream Piscator 'overwinter'?

You may seek grayling until 31 December, or rainbows for a further month on the Freefolk lakes. Some enjoy the opportunity to catch pike, barbel, chub and other coarse fish or travel abroad for various exotic species, and then early salmon fishing has its rewards. Whether turning to the fly-tying bench, reading fishy books or having a complete break, we all cope and look forward in great

anticipation to the new-season opening day. Those 18 or so of us in the Photographic Group have also enjoyed winter meetings, benefiting from social interaction to help with our photographic skills, improve our knowledge and kindle angling friendships.

Since our Wylde Valley visit in August, a small group met at Freefolk on Sunday, 11 October to capture the early autumn scenes whilst grayling fishing. Then, on 9 November, two of our members gave presentations, first John McCormack on close-up (macro) photography and using digital images in print form, followed by Bob Wellard who took us through the use of technology, Photoshop, to amend those digital images taken with the camera. Earlier this year, on 25 January two further 'in-house' presentations were given, this time by Dick Hawkes, 'Moving on from Auto' and Steve Chapman who showed how the use of the computer program Lightroom can enhance our images, with an example, well know to us all, 'Before and After' – see below.

These latter two events were well supported with 10 or more members in attendance and were held at The Flyfishers' Club with excellent dinner

provided to round off what proved to be most pleasant and successful occasions.

Our most recent event saw another small group meeting, again at Freefolk on Wednesday 10 February with the plan to photograph snowdrops in their natural environment. By the time the fishing season starts, this display is well and truly over but by the banks of the upper carrier in February the showings are quite spectacular. Snowdrops are notoriously difficult to photograph and offer a real challenge in understanding how to use a camera. Some of the outputs may be seen on The Society's intranet gallery.

10 members of the group currently subscribe to a secure facility on Flickr and share pictures, now over 250, taken and viewed for comment and enjoyment within the group. Of these, some 150 have been chosen for a slide show 'Medley' which could be available to be seen by all Society members at various events such as the AGM.

Our 2016 programme includes a tutorial by our guest, the eminent fisherman, journalist, photographer and entomologist Stuart Crofts, on The Photography of Insects, to be held at the Rod Room on Monday, 4 April. Further events are





planned for Abbots Barton for Thursday 16 June and another evening at The Flyfishers' Club on Monday 7 November, with the theme 'Photography and the iPhone'. These, and when agreed other events will be shown on The Society's intranet calendar.

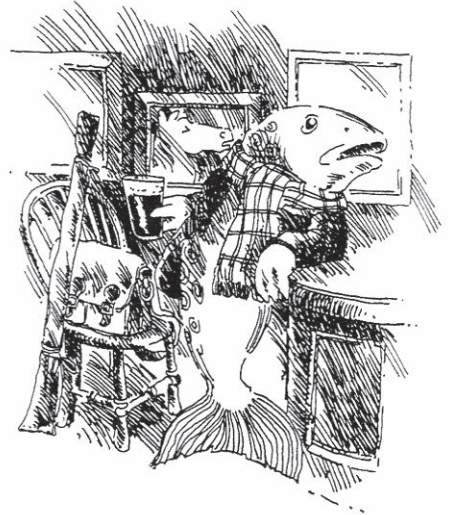
One other project under consideration is to work towards a 2016 Year Book. Although as I write this is still very much in the planning stage, it is hoped that such a record, whilst not conflicting with but complementary to the Journal will provide a useful item of interest for inclusion within the Society's records.

Should any of these matters be of interest to you, with the aim of furthering your enjoyment and that of others in The Gentle Art on our Piscatorial Society waters, please don't hesitate to contact me as the co-ordinator of the group, Nick Gooderham on 07774 685444 or through email at nick_gooderham@hotmail.com



Pub Review

by Gastro Enteritis



In this ever-changing world there are some things that have always remained quintessentially British – Wimbledon, The Grand National and The Eton Wall Game,

to name but a few. And on the gastronomic front there are our pubs but in general, whilst the beer they serve is colder than it used to be, the food is often variable and disappointing. The hand of the accountant is visible in this unseemly deterioration. Portion control means less wastage, and why employ your own chef when all you need is someone who knows how to turn on an oven or microwave to heat up dishes made on mass by 3663 or Brakes Brothers? Within this sea of mediocrity there are however some tiny islands of excellence and the best time to test their skills is on a Sunday, with a traditional English roast lunch.

Nothing waves the Union Jack better than a good roast meal with all of the trimmings and for those living in or visiting Wiltshire, they need go no further than The Angel at Heytesbury to enjoy a belt busting belter of our national dish. Having arranged to leave this cold and flu ridden country for as much of the Winter as we could afford, Angie and I felt we needed one final reminder of the excellent cuisine we were leaving behind and, as they always do, The Angel and its excellent roast beef lunch with sticky toffee pudding and lashings of custard provided a wonderful launching pad for our lengthy foray into the land of *shish kebab* (Abu Dhabi and Dubai) and then onwards to the Cotswolds of India – Kerala, to renew our acquaintance with their exquisite mild curry dishes.

There one's taste buds are assailed by the heady aromas of their local spices, which are blended in their natural form to provide a *Garam Masala* that is light years ahead of the ready-made alternatives available in our local supermarkets. As befits a country where the majority of the population are vegetarians, most of their best dishes are devoid of meat, although with Kerala boasting a large coastline and numerous freshwater lakes and canals, fish have become a sort of token vegetable

and are used in a lot of their national dishes.

In using lots of fresh vegetables and spices there is little fear of tummy upsets unless one adventures into street food or drinks the local tap water. The majority of the dishes we enjoyed in that wonderful Indian State were excellent but one in particular transported us to a sort of gastronomic Nirvana and, being a charming and helpful fellow (as nearly all of the population are) the chef Rahim at The Old Harbour Hotel in Cochin agreed to share the recipe of his aubergine curry with us. We gave assurances that his secret would be safe with us but I confess I lied and have detailed the comprehensive list of contents and method of cooking below. In matters relating to food I have no shame.

So, here it is:

Ingredients

Mustard seeds – 1 teaspoon
Fried aubergine – 150 gms
Coconut milk – 1 cup
Turmeric powder – 1 pinch
Chopped tomato – 2 table spoons
Coriander powder – 1 teaspoon
Cumin powder – 1 teaspoon
Salt – to taste
Coconut or vegetable oil – 2 table spoons
Thick yoghurt – 3 table spoons
Cashew paste (if unavailable just blitz cashews with water to form a thickish paste) – 3 tablespoons
Coriander leaves – 1 tablespoon, chopped
Curry leaf – 1 sprig
Chopped garlic – 1 teaspoon
Chopped ginger – 1 teaspoon
Onion – 1 tablespoon

Cooking method

Heat oil in a pan and add the well-cracked mustard seeds
Add in the onion, garlic and ginger – sautéed well
Add the spice powders, aubergine and half a cup of well boiled water

Then add in the cashew paste, yoghurt and coconut milk

Serve and smile with immense satisfaction . . .

So, there you have it. Even if you don't attempt the recipe, marvel at its comprehensive list of ingredients and then book the next available flight to Cochin Airport to taste the real deal . . .



Presidential Pontification

by Michael Baker

As I write this it's nearly the middle of March and, whilst still cold, the sun is out and it feels like the first day of Spring. As a bonus, I am being treated to a good rise of fish in the water outside my kitchen window in my cottage on the Avon. The fish are taking 'something' off the surface or just below it but I don't unfortunately have the entomological skills to identify this early hatch – dark olives perhaps?

However, having seen this activity and the spring bulbs beginning to emerge on the bank in my garden, it is for me the first day of excitement, hope and, in particular, anticipation for the coming season even though we are still 5 weeks away from it. It has been a long wet winter and though we seem to have escaped the flooding of the previous two years, without the breach on the Avon leat having been mended, it might have been a close run thing on a couple of occasions!

It is at this point every year that my thoughts begin to look ahead to the coming season and I embark on all those fishing related chores left over from the previous year. I go through my kit to see

what needs repairing or replacing and an inevitably expensive visit to Farlows or Sportfish ensues. I try to mend those leaking waders, finalise my guest list for days on the river and realise that my fishing book needs to be updated (I keep extensive records with photographs of my fishing trips in leather bound volumes and am currently on No 8 but am still over 2 years out of date!). It is about this time that I enthusiastically attack these various tasks, although I know full well that very few of these will be completed and that I will still have wet feet this coming season and my fishing book will continue to be two years out of date! Much of my enjoyment of fishing is in the anticipation and excitement of what is to come, and I am really looking forward to the coming season and the activities of the Society.

For those of you who were unable to come to the AGM on 20th March I would like to thank our outgoing Committee members who stepped down at that meeting. Alastair Alexander is one of our longest serving committee members and has guided us through the complexities of rapidly changing Health and Safety legislation with great skill; his wise counsel will be sadly missed. Louise du Boulay also steps down; Louise has been a great help on legal and company law matters where her advice has been invaluable. Brian Jakins has been editor of the journal and comes off as well, and a huge vote of thanks to him for undertaking this role so successfully over the last 9 years. We will of course continue to see him frequently as he lives within a few yards of the Rod Room. Lastly, but not least, Paddy Douglas-Pennant our Honorary Treasurer has come off the Committee after nearly 10 years, during which time he has dealt with the Society's finances with immense skill and prudence. The Society owes them all a huge vote of thanks for their involvement and hard work. Following their departure we are

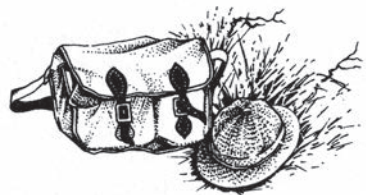
delighted to welcome four new members to the Committee and hope that they enjoy their involvement in the many and varied aspects of fishery related matters that it tackles. They are Richard Bond, Graham Waterton (who will take over as Editor of the Journal), Dick Hawkes and Stephen Coe who becomes the Honorary Treasurer.

For those of you who did not attend the AGM or may not have read the Committee report in detail that accompanied the Agenda, Bob Wellard outlined our improvement projects to Stockton, Glebe Farm and Parsonage Farm on the Wylfe (which I touched on in my article in the Autumn Journal), the leasing of the true left bank of parts of the Durnford Manor water on the Avon and the improvements to the leat as a result of the breach. With regard to the leat the Committee has decided to delay opening fishing there until the start of the mayfly hatch to give the vegetation on the banks a chance to stabilise and for the Environment Agency's contractors to carry out some remedial 'tweaking' to the works that were carried out there last year. These projects will I hope add to the enjoyment of our waters for all our members.

The improvements to the Wylfe stretches planned in partnership with our Waterlords and the Environment Agency have raised questions about the risk and liability that we as a Society might take on in the future when we are responsible for certain design aspects of projects such as these. The Society is currently an unincorporated organisation where its Committee is jointly and severally liable for its affairs and contracts entered into. Under our rules, Committee members are indemnified out of Society's funds for damage etc in its proper conduct of their obligations under these rules. We do have Directors and Officers insurance that will cover the cost of normal claims, however there is concern that our cover may be insufficient if we received some huge

claim for flood, environmental damage or pollution as a result of these activities and, under these circumstances the Committee could be held liable for any claims over and above our current cover. Indeed there is a possibility under our present structure of ordinary members themselves also being held liable for such damage.

To this end therefore we are actively considering changing the structure of the Society to a Company limited by Guarantee. Under this a Guarantee Company has no shareholders and its liability is limited to what is set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association which is typically £1-£10. Many clubs like ours have been changing to this structure partly in response to members being asked to go onto club committees and only being prepared to do so if their liabilities are limited. We are therefore investigating this further through our lawyers and accountants. We are told that this could be quite easy to implement although we have to resolve how we deal with Piscatorial Society Limited that holds all of our freeholds and leaseholds. This will be an important step for the Society and if the recommendation were to proceed we would intend to have a Special General Meeting, probably in the early Autumn to seek approval of members, with implementation scheduled for our year end on 31st October 2016 rather than leaving it to 31st October 2017. More information on this issue will follow in due course. In the meantime I hope you have an enjoyable season and look forward to seeing many of you on the riverbank.





Fisheries Manager's Report

by Robert Wellard

Catch and Release Review

At the Society's Hordern Meeting and at the AGM in 2016 questions were raised about the success of mandatory catch & release of *wild trout* on the Wylde and whether or not we should consider introducing a similar policy not only for *wild trout* but also for *stocked fish* on the Avon, at least until August; to avoid too many *stocked fish* being removed during the peak of the mayfly. An interesting concept 'mandatory C&R of *stocked fish*' and certainly I've not heard of it being proposed by members before. However, as it's now been almost 10yrs since the Society introduced mandatory catch and release of *wild trout* on the Wylde & Freefolk on the River Test, I thought I would take this opportunity to record some of the history of how the policy came about and at the same time present further evidence of how things have evolved over that period. First off, I think it's important to clarify that the basis of my report is to simply focus on the four key management questions highlighted below and not to debate the rather emotional or ethical issues of C&R, which we all know can be so divisive.

How did the idea of C&R first come to fruition?

In a joint paper to the wider committee in 2007, Richard Sankey & Keith Johnson, committee members forming part of the Fisheries Management Team (FMT), wrote:

It is a reasonable assumption that fly fishers are attracted to the Society by its reputation and more importantly by its stated objectives, which include amongst other things . . . "to maintain a fellowship of flyfishers and the tradition of flyfishing where possible for wild, or naturalised brown trout and grayling"

The discussion about to kill or not to kill is mostly driven by emotion rather than by science based evidence. Decisions on taking fish, or indeed on how many or what size to take, are frequently driven by personal assumptions without the benefit of having inside knowledge of the state of the fishery and fish populations in general. To understand the key issues we first need to define some of the terms that are frequently used; in particular, *wild fish*, *naturalised fish*, *stock fish* and *sustainable fisheries*.

Defining a truly *wild trout* within the southern chalk river context is quite different from the general understanding of wild endemic populations. All our rivers have been influenced by past stocking strategies that will have invariably affected the genetic integrity of the native stock. A diversity of scientific evidence has demonstrated that the progeny of *stock fish* are predominantly unsuccessful, as they are not adapted to best exploit a given localised resource. In general terms we should define *wild fish* in our rivers as those that are naturally recruited. Meaning, they naturally spawned and grew within that localised environment. This is certainly true of the *grayling* in all our fisheries. By contrast, *naturalised fish* are those that have been

stocked, primarily at a smaller size, and have grown on successfully. Importantly, they must have survived in the river for at least one winter, successfully competing for food and resources. It was the aspiration of most members, (and what was most likely defined in the Society's objectives), that these *naturalised fish* should look like and behaved like *wild fish*.

Within the context of the Society's stocking practice *stock fish* are fish stocked into the water with no objective to naturalise but to act simply as a supplementary resource for exploitation, mostly these fish are defined as "takeable" fish. These are currently trickle- stocked into our Avon and Abbots Worthy (Itchen) fisheries at regular intervals throughout the season, just prior to the demand periods, on a 'put and take' basis.

Defining *sustainable* will always be contentious; in the main it should refer to ecological sustainability and not simply to commercial sustainability. Within the context of the Society's fisheries it should mean either:

1. Fisheries that perform well and are reliant on naturally recruiting *wild fish*, where exploitation levels do not degrade the population or impact future fishery performance.
2. Fisheries that perform well without the need of stocking with takeable fish.

Taking this one step further, in order to improve the quality of the Society's fisheries, the FMT proposed that the Society should move further towards its stated objectives and find ways of reducing exploitation rates. In particular, a reliance on generating significant numbers of takeable fish through stocking appeared to be in conflict with where the Society was in 2007.

By using the Society's own electric-fishing data and catch returns, it was possible to make reasonably informed

assumptions. The Wylve, which in 2007 was the Society's only *wild trout* fishery, typically produced 400-700 trout to rods each season. Whilst the kill rate on the Wylve was small in number (35-75) it was probably targeted at the larger 3+ and 4+ year classes. Based on calculated assumptions of the trout population of the Wylve the FMT believed it to be 'unlikely that the number of fish killed in the higher exploitation years was sustainable'. Meaning that these higher kill years were most likely damaging the recruitment and subsequent fishery performance – as well as impacting individual angler expectation and their fish catches during the latter part of the season.

The Society endeavours to generate as few rules as possible. Whilst proscription is deemed as unpopular, it would appear to be almost impossible to achieve the Society's fishery aims and objectives without some form of framework that goes beyond the reliance on personal choice. Whilst it would be possible to calculate a potential sustainable harvest figure each year and then divide this between the members equally via some form of quota system, the FMT thought it would be extremely difficult to operate and regulate.

To achieve the Society's stated objectives of populating its fisheries with *wild fish* it would require a reduction in the number of fish killed, which included the implementation of mandatory C&R on already established *wild trout* waters where a no stocking policy was already in place (Wylve & Freefolk fisheries) and encouraging voluntary C&R of *wild trout* on stocked waters (Avon & Itchen at Abbots Worthy). To my knowledge there are no records suggesting either mandatory or voluntary C&R of *Grayling* on these waters in 2007.

Note: Research carried by the Society between 2009-2012 suggested over winter survival of *stocked yearlings*, without

supplementary in-river feeding (an illegal practice), was extremely poor and so with their naturalisation significantly diminished, the Society amended its stated objectives ... "to maintain a Fellowship of Flyfishers and the tradition of flyfishing where possible for wild brown trout and grayling"

How was it managed and what was the reaction?

A not uncommon response by some members was that they would be happy to return most fish but thought it right that they could kill just one or two fish each visit.

Balancing the aspirations of members with the longer-term objectives of our fisheries has never been an easy task, however, the committee recognised that in order to implement such changes they would need to manage the process very carefully and decided to tackle some of the more critical issues on several fronts, including articles being written in the Society's journal, workshop presentations being given at social and business events and information being sent to members as part of their subscription renewals.

Members were advised more thoroughly on best practice for C&R; to improve survival rates, and the use of barbless hooks also became mandatory.

The Wylde and Test were designated as no-kill fisheries for a trial period of 5 years and a maximum of 2 guests per member were allowed to fish the Avon in May.

Those few members who continued to kill a disproportionate number of fish (identified in annual catch returns) were invited to take a more precautionary approach.

Clearly there was a significant move to inform members of the negative impacts of over exploitation and for the majority the concept of mandatory C&R was embraced from the outset. Having gone through a

significant period of consultation with members and the gathering of information from questionnaires, the Society's committee, as part of the wider 'Presidents Policy Review', took the bold step to give a clear mandate to the FMT to move closer towards *wild brown trout* and *grayling* fisheries. I'm sure at this point there were a few members who decided to give up their membership.

In terms of recruiting new members, the Society operates a simple but transparent process whereby prospective members are either sponsored by existing members or meet and/or go fishing with someone on the Society's committee, thereby ensuring new candidates are properly briefed on the Society's stated aims and of C&R, which has helped ensure they value the nature and style of fishing that the Society provides before joining. Today the Society has 190 members and a fairly healthy waiting list.

It's maybe worth mentioning that the Society was also actively involved in the Environment Agency consultation process for the National Trout & Grayling Strategy – the EA proposing a move to only permitting stocking of sterile triploid brown trout with implementation by 2015, which I'm sure also played a role.

What were the consequences?

This is an interesting question and it's also quite difficult to precisely quantify exactly how C&R has directly influenced the improvements we've seen in all of our fisheries. What is interesting is how Society members', in fact lots of anglers, have not only taken to C&R of *wild trout* and *grayling* but also of *stocked fish*, which suggests a complete sea change to where we were 10 years ago. I've no doubt the general acceptance of declining *Atlantic salmon* populations and their mandatory C&R on lots of rivers across the UK has

been a major influence. Improved techniques used for C&R have also had a significant impact on the survival of all fish species and there's plenty of scientific evidence available that suggests C&R works, especially where populations are in serious decline.

In terms of fishing pressure and exploitation, the Society is fortunate in that it is able to offer a wide variety of fishing on almost 20 miles of river on the upper Test, Itchen, Avon & Wylye, with members movements shifting between areas where we have a good covering of weed, deep water and some pretty good fly hatches. Not surprisingly, the main period of activity falls during the peak of the mayfly in late May and June. After that it's quite possible to find large parts of our waters un-fished for days or even weeks at a time. I like to think we offer something for everyone as some stretches are relatively easy to fish whilst others are more challenging. Having two rivers where we have some stocking allows those members who maybe only fish a few days a year, or a guest who's relatively inexperienced, the opportunity to catch a fish even on the more difficult days. At the other end of the spectrum we have waters dominated by *wild fish* where even the most experienced of flyfishers' struggle to catch one fish per visit. Having said that, there's no such thing as an under-fished fishery, only one that is either over-fished, or perhaps more typically, over-exploited.

River Avon

Assuming all fish killed on the Avon are *stocked fish* (it's not always easy to tell the difference between a *wild trout* and a *stock fish*), in 2007 – 62% of *stocked fish* were killed, 2008 – 37%, 2009 – 32%, 2010 – 31%, 2011-15%, 2012 – 20%, 2013 – 28%, 2014 - 14%, 2015 -14%, which shows a 78% drop in 10yrs. Conversely, assuming all trout caught and released on the Avon are *wild trout* (ditto above), in 2007 a total of 2,989

wild trout were released, 2008 – 2636, 2009 - 1852, 2010 – 2417, 2011-1943, 2012 – 1867, 2013 – 2430, 2014 -1966, 2015 – 1674, which, despite a good deal of habitat and river improvements, suggests a steady decline in the number of *wild trout* caught and released over that period. The reason for their decline is not known but it could be argued that continuous stocking of farm trout both by the Society and our neighbours, is having a negative impact and may even be suppressing the *wild trout* population.

In 2015 the Society carried out a post monitoring electric fishing survey of a restored area of the Avon above Moor hatches. The site had not been stocked for 2 seasons. A total of 200 *wild brown Trout* and 62 *Grayling* were captured, measured for length and weight and then returned safely back to the river. 25% of all trout captured were over 10 inches. Only 3 stocked trout were caught.

In the same year we saw a total of 801 member (and guest) visits to the Avon. If every member elected to kill just two *stock fish* per visit we would need to introduce 1,602 *stocked trout*, or about 1.5 tonnes in weight of fish, which would clearly have a negative impact on *wild fish*.

On the positive side, the number of *wild trout* caught and released on the Avon significantly outnumbered *stocked fish*; the stretch above Moor hatches is proving to be extremely popular.

River Wylye

The Wylye has not been stocked since 2004. With the exception of 2013 and 2014, when the same number of *wild trout* were caught & released, the number has increased every year with a 65% increase over 10-yrs. These increases are despite a period of 2-yrs of drought and 2-yrs of flooding, which further suggests our *wild trout* on the Wylye at least appear to be able to meet the challenges of 'natural' stress events in an ever-changing climate.

In 2015 the Society's catch returns recorded a total of 365 rod visits to 6 miles of the River Wylye; a fairly low level of fishing activity, especially for a chalk stream, with catches of 3 fish/visit being quite common.

Freefolk

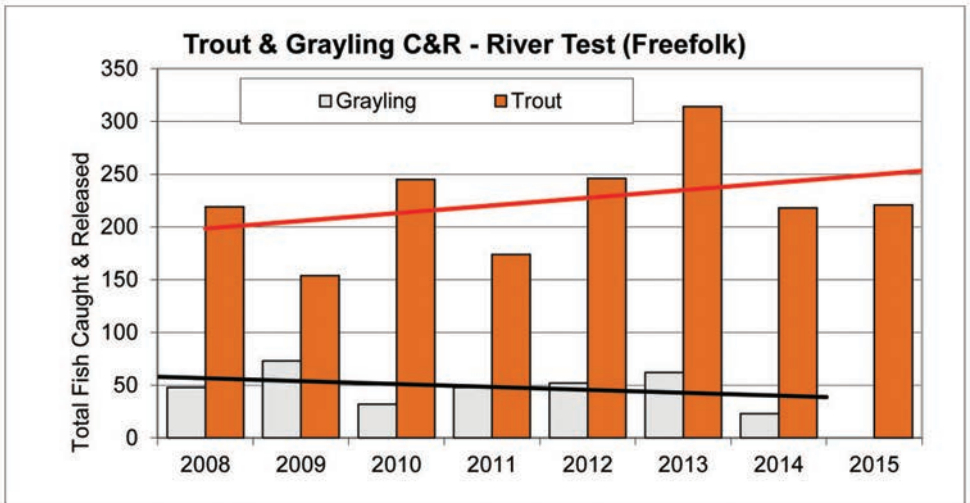
Similarly, Freefolk on the River Test, which provides some challenging fishing for *wild trout* and *grayling* in gin-clear water (most of the time!) continues to do well, especially in those recently restored reaches.

Having the adjacent lakes does relieve some of the fishing pressure and I'm sure provides a valuable resource for members who enjoy having a *rainbow* or two smoked for special occasions. The lakes also provide a great place to take beginners and whilst we still operate mandatory C&R on the river, members fishing the lake can C&R up to 6 *rainbows* and take a brace home. Any *wild trout* caught in the lakes should be returned.

The Itchen at Abbots Worthy has been

predominantly supported by stocking takeable fish for many years, although in more recent years we've seen increasing numbers of *wild trout* on the Fulling Mill and Penny Lake carriers and the top of the main river, which appears to tie-in with the excellent work the keepers have done to narrow an otherwise over-wide channel. At the same time this work has provided refuge areas and cover with Large Woody Debris (LWD) along the wild, non-fishing bank. More frequent stocking with fewer fish up 2lbs has enabled us to move the fishery away from being a completely stocked water, with far too many large fish impacting on juveniles, to a mixed *wild trout* and *stocked trout* fishery.

When limiting the number of fish killed to a two fish limit on the Avon and at Abbots Worthy on the Itchen, it became apparent that some members, returning to the rod room empty handed, were feeling pressured to kill their two fish allocation in fear of being labeled poor anglers. Interestingly having a 'No Limit' policy in recent years would appear to have had a



*Grayling data is taken from 2016 catch returns so 2015 is not available. Itchen (Abbots Worthy)

reverse affect, with less fish being killed and taken.

Both Abbotts Barton and Itchen Stoke fisheries are not stocked and operate with mandatory catch and release of all fish.

What are the implications for the chalk streams as a whole?

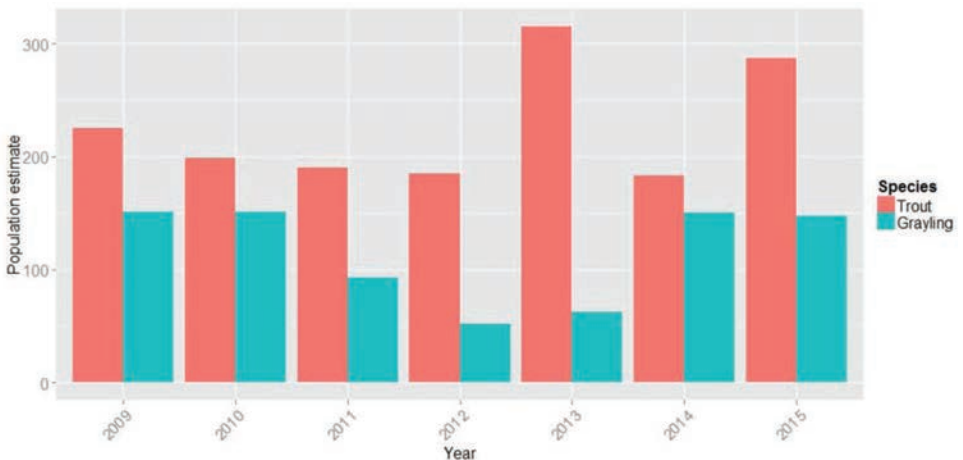
All rivers are different and so one really shouldn't try to compare, especially when there are so many other factors that come into play. Water quantity and water quality (or a lack of it), habitat, food supply etc can all have a huge impact from one year to the next and populations of *wild trout* and *grayling* are in a constant state of flux.

For the past 18 years, working alongside the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust and Natural Resources Wales (previously Environment Agency Wales), the Society has carried out annual electric fishing surveys at six sites on the River Wylfe. Our surveys continue to provide valuable information about *wild trout* and *grayling* populations and communities in relation to habitat, location, time and the available

space. More recent data certainly suggests an upward trend in both population density and biomass of *wild trout* and a downward trend in *grayling*. By studying the data it's also possible to estimate total populations at each site.

Looking at the data in terms of angler catches and 'recordable' wild trout (trout over 25cm/10inches) it's reasonable to suggest that for each site surveyed there's, on average, around 20 trout that are over 10 inches and at least one that's over 12 inches; we occasionally record *wild trout* over 16 inches, however these are rare. A quick calculation would suggest we have somewhere in the region of 100 *wild trout* over 10 inches for every km of river and perhaps 900–1000 *wild trout* over 10 inches for the whole of the Society's Wylfe fishery, figures which have remained fairly constant for the past 10yrs. If we were to lift mandatory C&R it's quite possible those members who want to take the odd fish would focus on taking fish over 12 inches, perhaps believing there's still plenty more for everyone else. In contrast, it would be reasonable to suggest exploitation of fish over 12 inches would

Population estimate 2009–2015 for all six Wylfe sites combined



have a serious impact not only on spawning and annual recruitment but also in terms of reducing the prospects of other members enjoying the opportunity to catch larger fish.

In 2015 there were 365 visits to the Wylye, if every member were to kill just one fish over 10 inches per visit it's possible the wild trout population would be reduced by as much as 30%, which again would be unsustainable. If we were to move from mandatory C&R to voluntary C&R and the majority of members were to return all of their fish it could be argued that this would alleviate exploitation rates to a reasonable level. Size slots for killing only 10–11 inch *wild trout* might offer another solution. But then how do we deal with the conflicting interests of members when one member, who fully supports mandatory C&R arrives on the water to find another member leaving the river with a brace of *wild trout*? Mandatory C&R has certainly reduced if not prevented conflict between members.

For a number of years the Society has carried out river improvements on all of its waters, however, more recently we've been able to access grant funding and, by working in collaboration with the Agencies and owners, we've delivered several projects in a shorter timeframe and already we're seeing significant improvements in the numbers of *wild trout*, particularly on the Avon. Whilst mandatory C&R appears to have been widely accepted and appears to be working well on the Rivers Wylye, Test, Abbotts Barton as well as Itchen Stoke on the Itchen, it could be that the voluntary C&R of *stocked fish* is having a negative impact on *wild trout* and *grayling*. Therefore it's my view that if we can continue to improve the habitats of wild trout and grayling at the rate we currently are, thereby increasing carrying capacity of wild fish, even our more popular waters should be less reliant on *stock fish* and we could seriously consider reducing stocking.

Quite recently the Society signed a



A wild trout of 12 inches . . . the 'normal' size for wild trout in southern chalk streams!

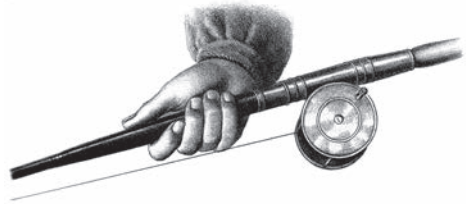
collaborative agreement with the EA to deliver a number of large-scale river restoration projects on the Wylde – one of the objectives **'to contribute to the overall desire to move the entire River Wylde into a Wild Fishery'**. As previously mentioned, electric fishing data for the Wylde suggests an upward trend in wild trout but a drop in grayling recruitment following two years of floods. If we were to switch this to two years of drought it's likely we would see a drop or even a collapse in the populations of all *wild fish*.

The question is, can we be absolutely sure our rivers can be solely reliant on naturally recruiting *wild fish*, where exploitation levels do not degrade the population or impact future fishery performance? Personally, I would argue there should always be a fall-back position to allow even a small amount of stocking of infertile, triploid trout, of an appropriate size, for maintaining the angling resource through difficult periods of drought or when wild trout numbers fall below a sustainable level.

Conversely, if improvements to habitats and recruitment of *wild trout* can be achieved and there's evidence to suggest the population is being suppressed by *stocked fish*, it would make sense to reduce the number of *stock fish*.

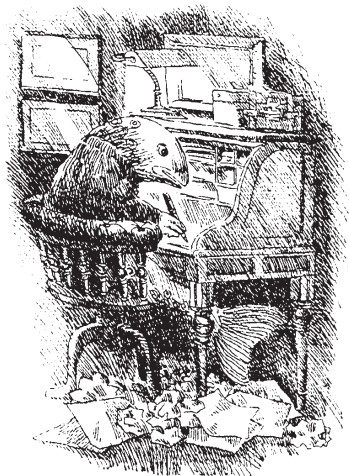
Impacts from predators, attracted by 'honey pots' of *stocked fish* and the pollution of our chalk rivers by fish farming are two 'cans of worms' I'll leave for closing on another day . . .

In summary, I can see plenty of reasons why the use of mandatory C&R of all *wild brown trout and grayling* would be a positive step on the chalk streams, however I can see no justification for supporting mandatory C&R of *stocked fish*.



A 13 inch grayling

Keepers' Kaleidoscope



Head Keeper's Review Fashion & Flooding

by Stuart McTeare

There is a theory out there that says if you hold on to something for long enough it will become fashionable again. Now before you even think about that long forgotten cravat there must be exceptions and who said all fashion was great anyway, maybe those smart people behind the new Cravat Club enterprise want to tell us otherwise but do you really want to look like the schmo from a BBC 70's Sitcom? I have long been a fan of any literature that references nature, so with the current veritable flood of nature writing & the veritable nature of flood writing you

would imagine it would have been a joyous time for me, drowning in a ream sea of words over the last few months. Nature writing, I read, is back en vogue.

For every sensible sentence written there is always the nonsensical in any sphere. Today we live with the spectre of the instant expert. Mr. Google has a lot to answer for. I think flooding is a little like football or even fisheries management where you have whole armies of arm chair maestros just waiting to be called up to be the next Mourinho. All with the vision of a myopic mole heading for the high ground to avoid, guess what, the stress of the flood. Can you imagine how horrific it must be for a mole in a flood? I'm sure there's many a mole that would know how to be wise after the event but hey they are dead.

This winter amongst other things I have read 'Landmarks', 'The Shepherd life', 'Life of a Chalkstream' and 'Rivers' plus fathoms of column flood inches in the newspapers. 'Landmarks' for me was a real landmark of a book 'The Shepherd's' book was really great until the shepherd started talking about dredging Cumbria Rivers and I know they are different styles but 'a Chalkstream' was a pale imitation next to the weighty 'Rivers'. I so wanted to rise to 'a Chalkstream' but I found it hard to swallow, the fact morphing into fiction was too difficult to digest. I know I could be missing the point, clever scribbling can always be something you just can't quite discern. Naively I always fall foul of the trap that says a published fellow fisher must somehow be enlightened enough to have seen the light. Alas it's not always the case, I am sure we may not all agree on what the light is though? Here we can neatly mention all the hyperbole in the newspapers about the floods and the need for dredging. The bigger picture is always so much more complicated.

Obviously I haven't slavishly read every article about the floods that appeared in

the papers this last winter or listened to every interview but by and large when I have, it's sent me reaching for my metaphorical Spike Milligan bowl of table tennis balls that I have strategically placed, like Spike, by my easy chair for throwing around the parlour primarily at the TV when something jars. Thanks for the inspiration Spike. My wife Fiona hails from Keswick in the Lake District, where her mother, my mother in law, still lives, so I am more than familiar with the chattering Cumbria becks and rivers. Indeed, Constance, my 14 year-old daughter; caught her first Wild Brown Trout in the shadow of Skiddaw from the river Caldew last summer, the same river that helped flood Carlisle in December. I know of all their charms and power. Really can anybody honestly tell me, shepherds included, that dredging would have saved the damage caused by a foot or more of rain falling in such a short time in an area of such steep gradient?

Now dredging is in fashion again, we have fashion victim farmers in the Wyllye valley, who would like us to dredge and even remove our LWD? I don't like to make too many rash statements within these Pisky pages but what I will say is if we have a Cumbrian rain event here on the Chalk streams we will also be in trouble whether we, as the more joined up thinkers are thinking, reconnection with the flood plain or not. A dozen or more inches of rain in as many hours is a serious amount of precipitation. I watched the news footage aghast and enthralled as I saw centuries old stone bridges I knew so well just barged out of the way by the rampaging rivers. It made me think what a trifle our breach issue was, with the little amount of extra water that we've had in the south this winter even that repair was not man enough to dodge some more damage. Parnassus made by moles. Amazing isn't it, we only think about the material devastation when we view flood

damage but what does it do to all creatures great and small? The odd drowned mole is the tip of the iceberg, what did Connie's trout do when the torrent hit? I'm sure being lovingly cradled by my daughter was far scarier for it?

All in all the northern winter floods and my bedtime reading over the last few months have reminded me of one of my all-time favourite hippy dippy authors Hermann Hesse and this quote from his book *Siddhartha*:

'Gentleness is stronger than severity, water is stronger than rock, love is stronger than force',

Now Herr Hesse I don't see any fashion statement there?

Freefolk and Abbots Worthy

by Craig Dawson

Mild, wet and windy might well sum up the Winter thus far. That said, as we reach the end of February, the wind has swung round to the east bringing cold air and drier conditions. Wet, well sufficiently so, to ensure that the Test and Itchen will carry a far better head of water into the new season than last – first part of the equation done! Fly – despite the rather gloomy fly survey results collected by Salmon and Trout Conservation UK and presented at the Fly Day by our guest speaker (Mr Nick Measham), they remain in reasonable numbers on the Piscatorial stretches of both rivers, so there is promise in that regard.

The trout have performed their part this winter by spawning in good numbers. As usual, there was an initial spurt of activity in the Christmas week and then a lull

before things really got underway late January, with the bulk of the redds being cut by the middle of February. Once again, as with last Winter, most of the redds appeared in the main river channel (Freefolk) and are spread the entire length of the river where there is gravel. In the past, spawning here at Freefolk was limited to very few areas. It would therefore be nice to think of this as a 'fishy' endorsement of all our labours to improve habitats for them.

On the subject of labours, here at Freefolk we have done a bit of maintenance work in the form of re-instating some of the woody 'D's' on the non-fishing banks at the top end. This is ongoing/rotational work with a few D's done most years. On the fishing bank, we have backfilled the top D below the footbridge with gravel, as the peat that was originally used had all but washed away. At the opposite end of the fishery, we have backfilled/re-enforced a short section where the rushes had pushed out into the channel. This will hopefully facilitate easier access and a better casting position when tackling the lower end, without disappearing up to one's waist in the mire.

For those members' that know and fish Abbots Worthy, a few changes might be noticed this season. Lord Tom has had contractors in to fell some of the large poplars that tended to dominate this fishery in places, the main beneficiary of all this attention being Penny Lake. The removal of the dense line of poplars from the TRB at the top end of Penny Lake has been akin to the opening of heavy curtains on a summer's morn'. The increased light, or should that be the introduction of light on this stretch, can only be a good thing with regards to weed growth, that had been all but absent throughout this rather gloomy tunnel. We keepers have installed a simple causeway/path through the boggy/reedy bit to provide better access

when fishing this beat. Hopefully, more members will venture up here now that it is not quite so spooky. The one drawback (there always is), to all this tree felling is that, given the lack of value in the timber and the costly complications in removing it, the decision has been made to leave it all to rot down in situ. This might well appear somewhat unsightly/shocking in the early season but once the vegetation gets up it should be hardly noticeable. Maybe, but the gains far outweigh the large pile of sticks.

With light in mind, we turned our attention to the trees along the TLB of Fulling Mill. These are long overdue for thinning/pruning having been put on the 'long-finger' given the vagaries of the Piscatorial's future at Abbots Worthy and more pressing jobs on our other waters. However, and with all that in mind, an opportunity presented itself, so we made a start (from the top). Historically, Fulling Mill had a good head of weed in it but as the trees have grown so the weed has been gradually shaded out, only really establishing itself later in the summer. The work has involved a lot of cutting and folding of the willows, creating the bonus of a 'living' woody mattress along the TL B that will provide much needed cover and a little nipping-in at the same time.

On the cormorant front, the two rivers have been chalk and cheese. Virtually no activity at Abbots Worthy but a steady and persistent invasion at Freefolk, without any of the customary intervals between events. Coordinating cormorant control with the various fisheries affected by their predation under a single licence is a bit like trying to herd a bunch of wilful/single minded beasts like cats – which all want to go in different directions. Ordinarily, I would put the intermittent arrival of cormorants down to blowy conditions at sea forcing the birds up from the coast and this may still be true.

Fortunately, I hear through the

grapevine, that some of the 'cats' have been herded and that there is something of a whole catchment licence for the control of cormorants on the Test now, like those that have been established on the Itchen and Avon river systems. Being the Test though, only some of the keepers are aware of all or part of the licence (I'm afraid to say we are not one of the 'cats' as the herdsman didn't get to us!). But, it might explain why we have had more regular cormorant visitation, in that they are now being moved on more regularly up and down the river. On the positive side (if there is one where cormorants are concerned), birds have not appeared in large numbers and tend to concentrate their efforts on the lakes, presumably feeding on the roach/rudd population, our rainbows being sufficiently large enough to make them less desirable a nibble.

At this juncture, I would normally be commenting on the arrival of Spring as a few warm days will have hinted to, however this winter has provided no shortage of warm days and no real cessation to hatches of fly or fish rising. It seems that one season will seamlessly roll into the next, the difference being that there is a bit more water about now than there was before. It's all set, we wait for what the Fishing Gods decide will come in April . . .

The Wylde

by Joe Emmett

As with the previous year, the last of 2015 was mild and fairly productive on the fishing front. Despite having a bit of a wet August, things settled down for the Autumn and although it was a little windy I think I'm right in saying that once again we had the warmest December and January on record. One difference this year

though was the distinct lack of water in the river towards the end of the season and several longstanding members commented that it was the lowest they had ever seen on the Wylde.

This situation wasn't helped by the absence of decent amounts of weed throughout most of the fishery. Despite some reaches such as Heytesbury Mill and the top of Middle Boyton having a very heavy weed growth and being declared as 'unfishable' by some, once cut, the weed failed to make much of a comeback and either washed out or was finished off by our resident swans.

This all led to an interesting grayling season and although I had seen very good numbers held up in the usual spots towards the end of the summer, once Autumn/Winter arrived they seemed to relocate. I unfortunately didn't get out to fish for them as much as previous years and never really managed to locate them. I have had mixed reports from members regarding the grayling fishing, with some not catching many, whereas others did very well indeed. There were a few fish caught over the magic 2lb mark again but it seems that this winter the fish weren't necessarily where people were expecting to find them!

Our annual grayling survey took place in October and although the results showed a slight decline in grayling this year over last year's figures, there were still good numbers and a good mix of age classes, showing that spawning is still successful. The trout numbers were in great shape again this year with very good recruitment evident throughout the whole fishery. We decided to tag a few of the larger wild trout, so we are able to monitor their mobility within the fishery. It was very reassuring to see that some of the areas where we have spent time improving the instream habitat were holding better numbers of both trout and grayling – more proof of the benefits of woody debris within the river habitat.

Due to the absence of any large scale projects this Autumn we got straight on with the job in hand and I'm very pleased with what was achieved in such a short space of time. We targeted the pollarding at lower Knook, adding much of the material to the river as brushwood mattresses, log deflectors and berms. This has had a positive impact to this already very lovely stretch of river and will no doubt benefit the fishing of those who venture down there this season. We also cleared up the willows above the heronry at Middle Boyton. Again these were put into the river and have created some nice features on this ever improving stretch. The area below Boyton road bridge has also seen its fair share of attention this winter with lots of the over shading willows addressed and used for bank protection and flow improvements. This has also helped to create some nice scour holes, fish lies and improved the sinuosity of the lower end. Hopefully this will again improve the habitat for the fish and the fishing for us anglers.

We didn't really get any substantial rain until after Christmas and it wasn't until January that the proper rain drove the river up onto the banks in places. This was great for recharging the river although a little unfortunate for the trout who had made a good start at spawning after Christmas. January also saw a few very windy days, bringing down one or two trees for us to deal with. All have been put to good use and for those of you who wade at Heytesbury Mill you may find a rather large scour hole left by a windblown willow that came down in January.

As we now come into early

March the river is looking in pretty good shape. There are better amounts of weed showing through the gravel than at this time last year and a good amount of water going through into the start of the season. The weather is showing signs of warming up and it is predicted to reach 13 C by the weekend (11/03/16). This all sounds promising and I have my fingers crossed that come the start of the season, as with last year, there may be one or two grannom around to provide us with some good early season sport.





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