

The Piscatorial Society

Journal No. 143

Autumn 2019



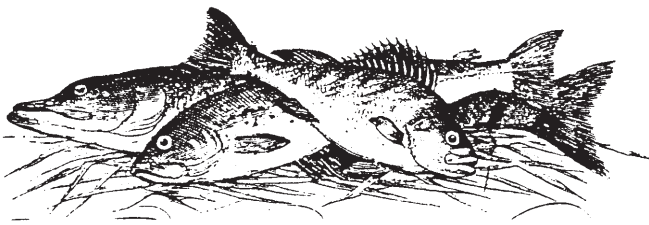
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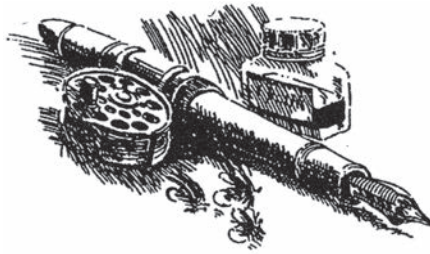
The Journal of the Piscatorial Society No. 143 Autumn 2019

CONTENTS

Editorial – <i>The Editor</i>	2
'I Don't Know What You See In It' – <i>Keith Johnson</i>	3
A Day on the Avon – <i>Pat Stacpoole</i>	5
Hatch & Release – A Silver Bullet Solution? – <i>Richard Sankey</i>	6
An Icelandic Saga – <i>Ian Piell</i>	9
Janus – Its Birth – <i>Hal Thirlaway</i>	12
Sir Robert Saundby – <i>Graham Waterton</i>	14
Reflections of Life in my Seventh Decade – <i>JSD</i>	18
Falling In – <i>Mac Stephens</i>	21
The Path to Enlightenment – <i>Bob Gibbs</i>	25
The Piscatorial Society Photographic Group – <i>Nick Gooderham</i>	25
Director of Fisheries' Report – <i>Robert Wellard</i>	29
Keepers' Kaleidoscope, Head Keeper's Review – <i>Stuart McTeare</i>	37
Freefolk, The Grange, Abbots Worthy and Abbots Barton – <i>Craig Dawson</i>	39
The Wylde – <i>Joe Emmett</i>	40
Notice Board	43
Directory	44

Front Cover: Autumn on the Top Lake at Freefolk. Photograph by Dick Hawkes
Mr Fish drawings and some others by kind permission of Martin Mayhew

Editorial



There has recently been a bit of a brouhaha on social media about stocking numbers. Apparently someone made a freedom of information request to the Environment Agency requesting the details of all stocking licences they had issued for the River Test last year. The information was incomplete and needed some interpretation as locations were given as grid references but the results raised some eyebrows as they were circulated on line. I spend a great deal of my time on many Test beats and I'm very well aware that extensive stocking takes place but the raw numbers are quite shocking. On the Test alone licences were issued for the stocking of just under 50,000 fish weighing a total of about 117,000 pounds. A few more experienced observers even suggested that these numbers were an **under** estimate. What does this tell us? That the demand for chalk-stream fly fishing is high and increasing? That Test fishermen having paid a lot expect to catch a lot of big fish? That fishery owners have an asset that they are perfectly entitled to exploit? Possibly all those things but there is one thing which we know. A chalk stream habitat even in the finest condition cannot naturally sustain such a population. What happens to these fish? Those that are killed and taken . . . are they eaten or just binned after months in a deep freeze? The vast majority of those that are caught and released will not survive over winter. Just as the game shooting world will come under increased scrutiny about the numbers of released birds and what happens to them, stocked fisheries will be next. Just as shooting must, chalk-stream fly fishing also needs to get its house in order.

These statistics are the more shocking when one considers the direction of travel of most less commercial and well managed fisheries. Chalkstream fishing has become very polarised and the Society chose many years ago to move with that flow and in the opposite direction to the more commercial and heavily stocked beats. A change which has not suited just the minority of our members. Deeper into this journal is an article about Robert Saundby who was the Society's President and edited the book which celebrated our centenary in 1936. In his Preface he writes:

*'Manners and modes have altered much since the Piscatorial Society was established a hundred years ago, and it is not to be expected that the Society would remain unchanged. A glance at the original card of membership is enough to indicate to anyone who knows the Society today how great are those changes. Nor is this thing to be deplored, for it is a sign of vigorous and healthy life. **The power to change, to grow, to adapt itself to altered circumstances – is not this the true index of vitality, the essential difference between what is living and what is dead?***

It seems to me that the Society since that time has remained able and willing to affect change when it benefits our members and our fisheries.

We have an eclectic selection of articles in this edition of the journal. In the spring edition this year Ian Gordon put forward his argument to solve the serious issue of the decline in numbers of Atlantic salmon in our rivers. In this issue Richard Sankey puts forward an alternative view. One of our regular contributors Pat Stacpoole wrote an article in 2009 in which he looked forward 10 years to how the Society may handle the new health and safety regulations. He thought, and I agreed, that now was a good time to scrutinise those predictions. Following the H&S thread one of our members, JSD, as well as an article, sent me a very helpful article first published in his fishing club's journal. The author was happy for me to reprint and its good advice for those who have a tendency to opt for full immersion rather than wading.

When I first joined the Society there were a number of 'hot' fly patterns used and sometimes created by members. The two general olive patterns which then seemed to be in everyone's boxes were The Beacon Beige (a variant of Captain Wills 'The Beige') and the Janus. The former invented by one of the great tiers of his era, Peter Deane, and the latter by our then Water Warden, Hal Thirlaway. His story of this rather quirky but very effective creation is retold having first appeared in the Journal in 1983. I seem to remember it's not an easy fly to tie but if you get it right and it lands correctly, the trout love it.

Delighted to hear from Dick Hawkes that he has negotiated with Farlows a 10% discount for Society members with their London shop and their on line shop (<http://www.farlows.co.uk/>). Use the code: TPS10 at the online checkout to apply the discount.

Once again, thank you to all my contributors particularly the regulars and as ever, grateful thanks to Bob Wellard, Stuart McTeare and his team for all they do on our fisheries.

Graham Waterton
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'I Don't Know What You See In It'

by Keith Johnson

We all know that the people we come into contact with, at home, at work, or socially, divide neatly into two groups, anglers and non-anglers. Anglers, of course, know how all-consuming our common interest can become, but it can be difficult and frustrating to discuss our passion with the rest of the human race. Often this is due to their initial reaction putting us immediately on the defensive.

For example, 'don't you get bored sitting there all day long?', or 'whatever do you find to think about all day?' How can one communicate to such a person the constant mental processes involved in a day's fishing? Where should I go? Which type of fly to begin with? Should I change tactics? What are those naturals beginning to hatch? . . . and so on. One of the main reasons for our enjoyment is surely that there is little room left for the everyday thoughts and worries that occupy our minds at other times.

Then there are those who clearly believe that ours is an entirely sedentary pastime, indeed almost an excuse for sloth. 'You should try something more active – you look as if

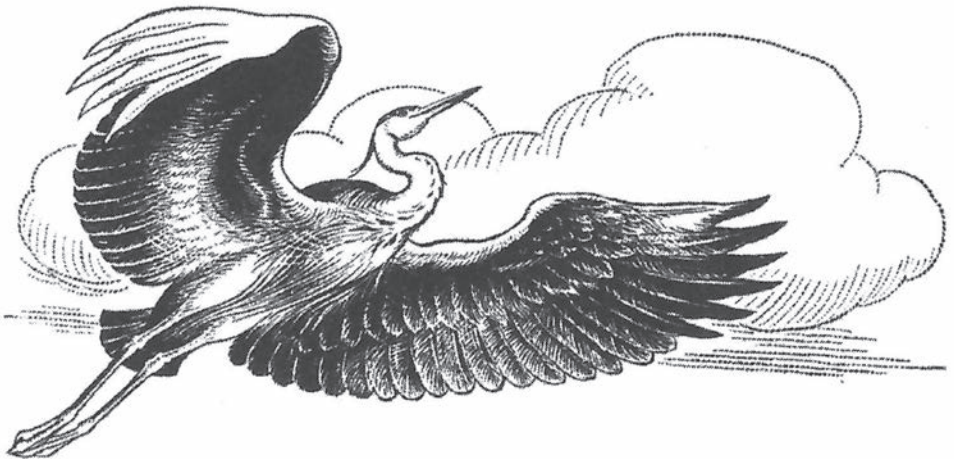
you need the exercise!’ I understand that even some ‘better halves’ have been known to think along these lines. They find it difficult to accept the amount of physical effort involved in, for example, casting from a drifting boat all day, or searching a stream for a rising trout, or wading and casting down a big salmon pool. Certainly, in my own case, any expression of tiredness after a hard week’s fishing trip is immediately attributed by nearest and dearest to the ‘après-fish’ rather than the fishing itself.

Even on the bank, we are not safe. One of the benefits of fishing Society waters is that one rarely encounters others than members, guests or keepers. However, when fishing more public locations, most passers-by will greet the angler in the same way: ‘any luck?’ This is a no-win situation: a negative answer brings puzzlement that you should be wasting your time on this pointless exercise, whilst the opposite seems to imply your acceptance that any success has indeed been due to good fortune. You, of course, are aware that it was in fact a faultless combination of practical skill, tactical awareness and animal cunning!

Perhaps the individual who most clearly demonstrates a lack of awareness of the whole point of angling is the one who believes that the only aim is to catch the maximum number of fish with the minimum effort. This manifests itself in comments such as ‘I don’t know why you don’t use dynamite – it would be much more effective’. At least in this case, a satisfying response is sometimes available. In the case of a keen golfer, for example, a suggestion that increasing the diameter of the cup fiftyfold could similarly increase his own enjoyment can do the trick.

One also meets those who profess that they have tried their hand at fishing in the past – usually a holiday trip off Devon or Cornwall feathering for mackerel – ‘pulled them out three at a time, much too easy to take up seriously’.

Many non-anglers will sum up their feelings with a simple ‘I don’t know what you see in it’. Perhaps one should take the time to explain to them the unique combination of attractions: the peace and quiet, the camaraderie with fellow anglers, the beautiful places visited, the observation of nature, at times the pure excitement. Just don’t let it detract from time when you could be fishing!



A Day on the Avon

by Pat Stacpoole

(First published 10 Years ago in Journal 122, Spring 2009)

“Do you remember what a fuss there was over introducing compulsory catch and release way back in 2009? What a lot has changed.” We were sitting on a bench on the banks of the Avon. John and I had fished together for years, and, as we waited for the hatch, we discussed the impact of Health & Safety regulations and political correctness over the past ten years.

In some ways conditions had improved. The bench was comfortable padded and it was reassuring to have a safety belt to prevent one falling into the water. We were sheltered from the light breeze by the safety glass shelter which gave a clear but protected view of the river, except where obstructed by the advertisement hoardings. They had been part of the price we had to pay for the sponsorship we had needed to conform to with all the new Health & Safety requirements. We had been lucky to get the financial support of a major supermarket chain through their eco-friendly subsidiary, Waitress. A legal firm had also helped by paying for “no win – no pay” advertisements. I was impressed by the four figure sums that they had won for a claimant distressed by losing a fish in the ranunculus and for another fisherman who had caught a chill by going over the top of his waders.

Admittedly, with concrete paths along the banks, the going was easier and gumboots no longer necessary but the handrails on the riverside and the ‘Beware Water!’ signs made casting difficult. The new car parks were convenient – our bicycles were secure in Row D of Carpark 96 – and the metal detector portals at the turnstile leading to the river had already proved their worth by detecting a fisherman carrying a metal priest. I made a mental note to send him a card at the end of this season and next as he would still be in prison.

No sign of a rise yet so John and I looked through our fly boxes; the flies were of the approved hookless variety which was perhaps as well as we knew that the CCTV camera in the shelter would pick up on any old fashioned hooked, or even – horror – barbed flies! I shuddered as I glanced at a copy of the Fishing Regulations on the wall of the shelter which gave the mandatory punishments for such offences.

Still no fly about so we decided to have lunch. There was no need to use the sandwich dispenser installed beside the bench as we had brought our own (vegetarian) picnic. No wine of course; it would be asking for trouble to handle a rod when under the influence of alcohol. I must admit that, as a fairly proficient fisherman, I had misgivings over the helmet with eye protection that we were now required to wear. The ‘Beware of the Backcasts’ printed on the back of the Day-glo fishing smock reduced my self-esteem but everyone wore them now so perhaps it was tolerable. However it was re-assuring to find that others shared my objections to the rotating yellow flashing lights that we would be required to wear on our hats next season. It would make stalking a fish difficult.

Action at last! Fly on the water and a few fish rising. I moved up the bank, marked a rise and was about to cast when – disaster! Roaring up the river came one of the Trout Rescue Agency’s rigid inflatable boats, klaxon hooting, lights flashing, bow wave pounding into the banks, a fish must be in trouble; it might just be a triploid suffering

from the effects of old age. Or, surely not? Had a fisherman hooked a trout and injured it? I wouldn't want to be in his shoes!

I could only hope that the paramedics would get there in time to revive the fish, otherwise the river would be un-fishable for days, choked with plastic-wrapped bunches of flowers and teddy bears thrown into the river by well-wishers mourning the death of a trout.



Hatch & Release – A Silver Bullet Solution?

by Richard Sankey

“Hatch and Release – The Only Real Option for Salmon?” by Ian Gordon in the Spring 2019 *Journal* opens up a complex and contentious topic for discussion, especially for fishery managers. Our editor asked if I would write a very brief case, from a scientific perspective, for why hatchery smolt ranching may not be the simple fix that it first appears. On the surface stocking with hatchery produced smolts is an intuitive solution to the lack of salmon in our rivers. Surely it's just like stocking pheasants, or is it more like trying to stock swallows?

I completely empathise with Ian who as a Spey Ghillie has painfully watched salmon rod catches on his river decline over many years. I also understand his frustration at what on the surface looks as though little has been done to reverse the decline, or indeed the

economic impact brought about by poorly performing fisheries. However, blaming the scientist is a bit like ‘killing the messenger just because you don’t like the message’.

Fishery management, including intervention, must be led by the evidence rather than by opinions or theories. By evidence I mean good science that has been peer reviewed and published in credible scientific journals. Yes, it is pretty dull and tiresome stuff but properly researching the published literature is always the first port of call. In the case of hatchery intervention, especially enhancement stocking, there is now an extensive, if not an exhaustive body of scientific evidence to show that not only is it unsuccessful but it also presents a series of significant risks to wild salmon populations. These include loss of population fitness through domestication, a reduced ability to adapt to environmental change and competition with wild fish for resources.¹² Whilst many UK rivers have historically been stocked over the last 100 years or so there is no strong evidence to support that it was beneficial, in reality it was most likely damaging to the wild fish stocks.³ This has led to the regulators in Scotland, England and Wales either ceasing the consenting of salmon stocking or at the very least a presumption against it.

Ian offers an instinctive and impassioned case for large-scale smolt stocking or ranching in the UK on the basis that it “works”, however the scientific evidence demonstrates that it doesn’t work in Scotland.⁴ For example between 1987 & 2000 on the Lochy, Tay, Dionard and Conon rivers the marine survival of wild smolts was shown to be typically 10 times greater than hatchery-reared smolts. Returning adult salmon from hatchery smolts ranged from 0–0.23% compared to 1–3.4% for wild smolts. Several other smaller and less formal smolt and pre-smolt release projects in Scotland have reflected the same sort of results. Similar studies have been carried out internationally and these all show clearly that hatchery produced smolts perform poorly compared to wild smolts.

Much is often quoted about the success of the West Ranga fishery in Iceland where smolt ranching has taken place since the 1990’s. The West Ranga is a relatively small river not able to support a wild salmon population due to environmental factors, however the operators have created a ‘put & take’ fishery through stocking about 500,000 smolts each year. Typical annual rod catches have been 3,000–6,000 fish. However it is important to understand there are significant differences in marine survival between Iceland and the UK. Whilst the return rate for wild salmon in Iceland varies from river to river, and year to year, the smolt to adult return rate is significantly higher in Iceland than the UK. Icelandic data shows that 10% wild smolts and 1.83% for hatchery-produced smolts returned as adults.⁵ Scottish returns are currently typically 2–4% for wild smolts and 0–0.3% for hatchery produced smolts (*Marine Scotland Science data*). This means that in the case of both farmed and wild smolts Icelandic survival at sea is at least 5–10 times greater than for the UK generally and in many UK rivers the variance is much higher.

Because of reduced marine survival the economic cost of generating ‘put & take’ salmon fisheries in the UK would be significantly higher per rod caught fish than in Iceland as many more smolts would need to be reared and released. The evidence would indicate up to 10 times higher. The West Ranga’s own data shows the cost per rod caught fish of stocking is about £350–£500. Butler *et al* (2009) calculated the cost of producing each rod caught fish for a river like the Spey was about £3750.⁶ Other studies in Scotland have shown the cost to be far higher⁷ with one on the River Ness in excess of £5,000 per rod fish.⁸ Fishing the West Ranga is extremely expensive, typically more than £1,000 per rod day, and of course it needs to be expensive to support the cost of the stocking activity. Would anglers in the UK be prepared to pay greater sums to fund the millions of smolts that would need to be released to create even a modest artificial UK fishery?

The impact of depleting wild adult fish from a river to stock hatcheries must also be fully understood and considered. Best practice for hatchery intervention requires the use of natal river broodstock. To create scale level smolt ranching in our UK rivers it would require removing a significant proportion of wild adult fish from our rivers, fish that would otherwise spawn and naturally stock the river.

Another frequently quoted example of 'successful' hatchery stocking is the Tyne where a once near dead river returned to a productive fishery. Despite much that has been reported in the angling press the science has subsequently shown the primary reason for the restored fishery is the natural recolonisation of the Tyne's own wild population rather than through hatchery fish. This was shown using DNA analysis from rod caught fish that was compared with DNA from both the historic Tyne wild fish population and fish from the Kielder hatchery programme.⁹ It is well documented that throughout the decades of when the Tyne was badly polluted there remained a tiny residual wild population of salmon.

The Thames was stocked for many years with smolts. DNA tissue analysis has shown that the few returning adults that appeared in the fishery were straying fish from other rivers rather than from hatchery stocking.¹⁰

Wild salmon populations are subject to significant natural variations in abundance. The evidence shows that salmon throughout their range have been in general decline for perhaps 30 years or longer. Marine survival is currently poor and declining, and the percentage of returning adults from smolts leaving our rivers is at an all-time low. In the not so distant past many UK rivers expected to see in excess of 10% of their smolts return as adult salmon, and yet today this number has typically declined to 2–4% and in some rivers it is much less. Understanding the various pressures that are causing this decline in marine survival is key to finding ways to restoring marine survival. Not all Scotland's rivers are experiencing such declines as generally the rivers of the far North and North East of Scotland are maintaining long-term rod catch averages. Trying to understand why these northern rivers are faring so much better is an important question that needs to be examined using good science and the evidence gathered then used to help reverse the declines elsewhere.

In summary, the stocking of hatchery reared or ranched smolts is not a successful or economic solution to declining salmon stocks and fisheries in the UK. It is only by better understanding the impacts on salmon through good science that improved outcomes will be found.

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What is Food for the Goose is Food for the Gander et al – An Icelandic Saga

by Ian Piell

We were in central Iceland on the vast elevated plateau of volcanic lava fields virtually entirely devoid of vegetation.

En route to the north east tip of Iceland just within the Arctic Circle to fish for trout and char in addition to tracking down the elusive Gyr Falcon, an ivory coloured larger cousin of our indigenous Peregrine Falcon. The plan was to stay with a farming family to whom we had been introduced.

I had heard that this area was the breeding grounds of the pink footed goose population that winters in the UK. The landscape so closely resembled the surface of the moon that it was chosen for the training of the crew of the Apollo moon landing craft. Covered in black volcanic lava and rock debris it was devoid of human habitation and access was extremely difficult.



The landscape so closely resembled the surface of the moon

Our hosts owned a substantial area of this wilderness and when asked where his boundaries lay he merely smiled and gazed at the far horizon where low white clouds of condensing thermal steam from geothermal volcanic activity were evident. We were keen to explore the breeding grounds of the geese and our young host kindly offered to show us the area in his large American pick-up truck that ran on huge balloon tyres. We found the breeding geese after crossing a wide river of snow melt.

It was mid-summer and the geese were in their moult rendering them flightless until their pinion feathers had regrown enabling them to undertake the arduous migration to the UK for the winter. The geese we encountered together with their well grown goslings appeared to be in excellent condition but it was a mystery as to their food source in this desert devoid of vegetation.

We noticed their tracks leading back to the river we had recently crossed and following these we saw evidence of the presence of geese on the shoreline. On the windward side of the river what we had taken as foam proved to be the discarded shucks of millions and millions of small black flies.

Suddenly we realised that the answer lay at our feet in that the larval and emerging stages of these little black flies formed the high protein diet for both the adult geese and their offspring explaining their fine condition.

I think it occurred to us simultaneously that what was good food for sustaining the

geese might even support a fish population! A hand placed in the water showed it to be surprisingly warm from the sunlight on the black volcanic sand on the bottom. Green filamentous weed grew profusely from the rocks and stones that littered the bottom of the river. It became apparent that the weed was host to the larval stage of these black flies. Consent was readily given by our host for us to try for a fish. He added quietly that no-one had ever fished this river before and that we would be the first to try!

Returning with fly rods in hand as pioneers in the literal sense of the word we started to fish within shouting distance of each other in a large inky deep looking pool under a vertical cliff of rock. Before long a savage pull and a swirl in the water jerked me into action as the fish ran the length of the pool before beginning to tire. A flash of orange denoted a sizeable Arctic Char quickly brought to hand. Paul was soon into a fish and so it continued well into the night for in this land of the midnight sun it was tiredness, not bad light, that eventually stopped play.



A large inky deep looking pool under a vertical cliff

Our host was simply amazed at our success and he was insistent that celebration was appropriate. In traditional Icelandic style this consisted of chunks of long buried fermented shark meat washed down with the local aquavit known as the Black Death!

Knowing that this shark meat was by way of an Icelandic initiation ceremony we asked for more which cemented our relationship!

Pioneer fly fishers we certainly were but this wonderful fishing would never have been discovered by us had it not been for those footprints of the Pink Footed geese in that black volcanic sand.

Janus – Its Birth

by Hal Thirlaway

First published in Journal 64 in June 1983 as part of an article 'Fly Box Secrets'

From Hal Thirlaway, the present water Warden, Librarian and Curator of the Museum, a fisherman during those rare moments when he had time to spare, writes about the one and only fly he uses.

* * * * *

Bob Lawson has described the dressing (*printed below, Ed.*) But why add to the surplus population of trout flies? This is how it came about in 1969 – the year of the Janus.

In that season, I concluded I would never be sufficiently skilful to match the fly on the water. Up to then the only true selectively feeding fish I ever landed was a 2lb lake perch stuffed with chironomid larva which I deceived with a 2in. plug while hunting for pike.

Second, my trout never produce a rise form identical to that of the naturals which they are taking at the time so the artificial does not imitate the natural.

Third, I have yet to find a natural complete with the arrangements essential to **hook** the fish.

Fourth, members of the Society leaned more to presentation than to imitation; Horace Brown (*President of the Society 1904–1922, Ed*) invented the Fore and Aft, J.C. Mottram was an articulate advocate for the pre-eminence of presentation (of the latter's *Flyfishing, Some New Arts and Mysteries*, Arnold Gitagrigh of America wrote "I had come to think of him as the completely unsung genius of English angling literature . . . that Mottram was angling's Invisible Man').

Last of all, I discovered David Jacques' *Fisherman's Fly* and particularly his chapters on Mayfly (pp 58–62) and on presentation (pp 93–97). Why not deign all duns on the same principle – to float high and upright in the physical attitude of a sub-imago drying its wings? Janus follows David's Mayfly style in all but one detail – the use of whisks. David dresses them conventionally as two or three tails. As Bob Lawson's description shows, Janus style flies employ five or six **long** whisks tied to represent transparent wings between the two hackles **after** completing the hackles. These 'wings' also serve to parachute Janus to an upright landing. The quality control test is to throw them up over a dinner plate of water; discard all that do not land upright. (The purist discards even those which fail to support the barb clear of the surface).

The Name

One warm July evening in 1969, Ken Fox and Shrimp Hordern fish a classic hatch of BWO near the fishing hut at the Red Lion Axford. Ken was hooking fish, Shrimp was not. "What pattern have you tied on, Ken?" On so classic an occasion it was impossible to refer to the ancestry by which it was then identified – the mating Black Gnat With Tails (Peter Deane's fly, less silver ribbing, is the embryonic form.) I shall not embarrass Ken by repeating his reply; suffice it to say it was so two faced that when he urged me to 'find a respectable name for that beast', Janus came instantly to mind, **ad unquem**.

Janus may be used almost exclusively throughout the season by tying in sizes from 20 up to mayfly. It fails when trout are taking hatching nymph. If you wish to improve presentation and explore the effects of 'hidden drag', try it for a season. To renew hope change size rather than pattern. You will hook so many fish you may be converted to the catch and release style. Who knows somewhere there may be a rare Ephemericid which Janus imitates exactly.

The Janus Dressing

Shoulder hackle	Badger Cock – very short hackles
Rear hackle	Red Cock
Body	Black silk – tied slim
Wings	5 or 6 long Cree hackle fibres

The lightness of dressing is essential.

The unusual feature is the use of Cree fibres for wings, so that a strict tying sequence is vital. After tying in the rear hackle, secure the Cree fibres in front, i.e. between the hackles, and cock them up to 90 degrees at the tips. The correct attitude helps to parachute the fly and to simulate transparent wings. More often than not, the fly lands upright and is therefore like Horace Brown's Fore and Aft.

Though a variety of colour may be introduced, provided that the basic shape and attitude on the water is preserved, the fly will still be a Janus.



Sir Robert Saundby

President of The Piscatorial Society

1932–1950

by Graham Waterton



In the middle of 1942 Air Marshall Sir Arthur Harris was told by the Air Ministry to adopt their strategy of area bombing and back in Bomber Command Headquarters at High Wycombe he asked his Deputy to produce a list of 94 city targets. A few months later, concerned that German radio intercepts were identifying these targets early, his deputy gave all those targets codenames. The codenames were fish and he was Air Vice Marshall Robert 'Sandy' Saundby who was not only the Deputy Commander of Bomber Command but also President of The Piscatorial Society, a post he held for 18 years. His favourite quarry *trout* described Cologne, the target for the first 1,000 bomber raid; Berlin, or 'The Big City' as aircrews knew it, was *whitebait* and Bremen being *salmon*. He was clearly challenged by over 90 fish names as *kipper*, *bloater* and *goldfish* all found their way onto the list.

'Sandy' Saundby was born in 1896 in Birmingham and attended King Edward VI School leaving in 1913 to join the London and North Western Railway. The rumblings in Europe

and the inevitability of war prompted him to join the Army and on June 15th 1914 was commissioned into the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, a month or so before Britain's active involvement in the First World War. He was soon struck down with meningitis but when declared fit applied to the Royal Flying Corps and joined them in January 1916. Saundby was very critical of the training he received but by July was a qualified pilot and serving with his first squadron on the Western Front. Within 6 months he had shot down 9 aircraft and was posted back to the UK on Home Defence duties. Tragically his brother William, also in the RFC, was killed in action while they were both in France.

In April 1917 he was piloting one of three aircraft which shot down the Zeppelin L48 which was lost whilst on a bombing raid to London. This action not only made him an 'ace' but won him the Military Cross.

Between the wars he served in Egypt, Aden and Iraq as well as many UK postings such as High Wycombe, Worthy Down and Andover . . . all, as it happens, close to chalk-streams. His last posting in 1940 was to High Wycombe as a senior Staff Officer at Bomber Command Headquarters where he stayed until 1946. Harris arrived in February 1942.

Harris was a forceful character and obsessive in his belief that area bombing was the right policy. Although he rarely saw the men he commanded when he was at High Wycombe the affection and respect they had for him grew from his time as a group commander when he visited them regularly and fought hard for them to have the best training and equipment as possible.

He had a fast temper, was unsubtle and direct in writing and in person and terrified many who worked for him which is why Saundby was a great foil for his superior and few who worked with them did not attest to their very effective partnership.

Saundby could not have been more different. A big man, cultured and sensitive, extremely sociable being happy to drink and chat with his juniors and a rare intellectual in RAF high command. He was considered by some to be a mild eccentric; as well as fly fishing he was a keen entomologist and could be seen in the grounds late in the evening catching moths. He also had a large model train set in a room above the Officers' Mess at the Headquarters. He drove a large old Rolls Royce but never took it shopping as he suspected such a vehicle invited overcharging. His parsimony was notorious and often seemed to be absent when it was his round in the Mess bar. He fished the lakes at High Wycombe often accompanied by anyone who could be persuaded to act as his boatman. On one occasion he produced some trout and was appalled when Harris, who disliked trout, had them made into fishcakes.

Their paths had crossed on a number of occasions having served together in Iraq and again when Harris asked Saundby to be one of his Flight Commanders at 58 Squadron at Worthy Down, just outside Winchester . . . Saundby accepted but only as the fishing season was close to ending. They had their differences and their arguments but Harris had huge respect for Saundby's organisational skills and calm efficiency and was delighted that his old flight commander and friend was at Bomber Command when he arrived. As Harris's deputy Saundby effectively ran the day to day operations of Bomber Command until the end of the war and Harris trusted him to do so. Different characters but their working relationship was entirely complementary; they both had seen the growth of Bomber Command and were dedicated to it.

Saundby, having turned down a command posting was told by Harris that it may affect his career, Saundby replied *"I am not concerned with my career but with winning the war and protecting our crews"*.

Unlike Harris who was a workaholic and whose health suffered as a consequence, Saundby took time away from High Wycombe (his home was in Berkshire but he lived with Harris and his family in their official residence at High Wycombe) and as a man who enjoyed solitude, fly fishing and his other great interest, collecting lepidoptera were ideal distractions.

Saundby had fished since childhood but his interest in the chalk streams deepened after the First War while stationed at Netheravon where he fished the waters of the Officers Fishing Association, later to become the Services Dry Fly Fishing Association. Having read *The Way of a Trout With a Fly* by GEM Skues he became interested in nymph fishing while on leave from Iraq in 1924, initially for grayling, using his own tying of nymphs weighted with fuse wire. By 1927 he fished the nymph regularly for trout and grayling. Within 10 years he was catching as many trout on a nymph as a dry fly. Frank Sawyer arrived on the Officers water in 1928 and will have known Saundby and may well have had a significant influence on him as he had on many subsequent generations. Saundby was an OFA committee member for many years.

Soon after he joined the Piscatorial Society, where, as well as becoming our President in 1932, he chaired our Fisheries Sub-Committee for 20 years. At that time the Society had fishing on the rivers Kennet, Lambourn, Test, Anton and its tributaries the Anna (AKA the Pillhill Brook) and Wallop Brook and the Upper Gade in Hertfordshire as well as some still waters.

Between 1927 and 1940 his two postings to the RAF Staff College near Andover, first as a student, then as an instructor gave him plenty of opportunity to fish our beat of the Anton, of which he became very fond.

When based at Bomber Command Headquarters in High Wycombe he fished many of the Chiltern chalk-streams such as the Wye, (at West Wycombe where he caught his largest wild brown trout of 6lb 5oz) the Mimram, the Gade, the Ver and the Chess. It is interesting that he noted they were inclined to dry up at times of low rainfall as there was already abstraction to supply new towns, cress farms and market gardens. Rather prophetically in his book published in 1961 he writes *"It is clear that no further demands for water can be made in this area without ruining the rivers altogether."*

He was clearly a thoughtful and analytical fisherman and his book *A Fly-Rod on Many Waters* shows him to be a strong advocate of sitting and watching and waiting rather than walking to find fish.

Although predominately a chalk stream man he took the occasional trip salmon fishing but most of his salmon were caught while sea trout fishing on the lower Test and the Towy. He fished the freestone rivers and Scottish lochs and particularly liked southern still waters, gravel pits and reservoirs having a real affection for Chew and Blagdon where he caught and became a great admirer of stocked rainbows.

He was though, strongly against the stocking of large hatchery fish into chalkstreams which he described as *"costly, ineffective and even dangerous"*. During the time of his presidency the society experimented with various stocking regimes, including the transplanting of 2 year old trout from the Anna and Wallop Brooks into the Test and from the Lambourn into the Kennet and had a hatchery to restock waters with fry from their own brood fish. It is clear however that many of the waters had only wild stock and were so under fished they produced some spectacular wild fish.

The debate about whether the Society was started in 1836 or 1837 rumbles on but the committee in 1934 held no truck with that issue and decided that its centenary would be celebrated in 1936 with the publication of a book. The Society had for many years lined

up one of our members, the great angling author, Hugh (HT) Sheringham to write the book but on his death in 1930 that job fell to PM Hammond but the editing and indeed the driving force of the book was to be the President, Robert Saundby.

He was knighted in 1944 and in 1946, injuries sustained in a crash 30 years earlier, led him to be invalided out of the RAF when he enjoyed a busy retirement not least as our President for a further 4 years. As well as his fishing, he was made a Fellow of the Royal Entomological Society and his extensive collection of butterflies and moths was later presented to the Natural History Museum. He died aged 75 in a Berkshire nursing home and his ashes were scattered on the Officers' water at Netheravon. He ends his book . . .

“By stream and lake the fly-fisherman, even today, can catch a fleeting glimpse of Arcady”



Reflections of Life in my Seventh Decade

by JSD

The 2018 fishing season marked my 71st Year.

It was a strange season with some of the warmest weather on record after one of the coldest winters "The Beast from the East" as the papers called it.

The season up North started for me on 25th March with reservoir fishing at my club water Bowshaw Whams reservoir 100 feet up in the Pennines. Just one trouble – actually getting there due to the depth of snow! When it was finally possible to fish, things did improve but the later hot weather, weed growth, lack of flies and low water, a drop of some 12 or more feet, all contributed to a very poor season.

My usual river fishing on the Wharfe also fell flat due to the weather contributing to low water and poor hatches. I only made six visits the whole season.

The chalk streams however, thanks to the wet winter were full and members were warned not to go to certain areas, they were unsafe due to soft banks. I came down on 19th May for the mayfly for a few days and fishing was again mixed. Hatches were very localised and I remember one afternoon when I went on Beat 2 of the Grange and my friend, another member, went to Abbots Barton. He had no hatch and no fish but I had a good evening with a huge hatch on mayfly and feeding fish. Overall however, I found the May fishing very mixed and not as good as the year before.

The end of June was our safari holiday to Botswana and it started with three days on The Chobe river on a houseboat. This not only gave us some excellent wildlife viewing but a chance to flyfish for tigerfish. I booked one day only with a guide as it was after all, a family holiday.

The river at this time was very high due to melting snow in Ethiopia where the river starts and the small fish seek shelter in the dense reed beds alongside the river. As the water drops they have to come out and the tigerfish are ready for them.

The river is huge and finding the fish is not easy and impossible without a guide. There was a guide, and two of us fishing, a chap from Australia, who was spin fishing, and myself.

The method was to cast a sinking line with a Clouser Minnow on the end in deep water close to the bank and strip it back not unlike reservoir fishing at home.

I did eventually succeed in catching some small tigerfish and was broken by a very large one. It was a unique and exciting day, fishing in the warm sun, with elephants in the river on the opposite bank.

The end of the month saw me back on the chalk streams for four days. The hot weather affected fishing but I did learn a lesson. I had fished all day until 8.30 pm until tiredness and hunger drove me and my guest off the river with a blank day.

On speaking to the keeper the next day we discovered the rise started at 8.45 pm and had been very good. The next day we resolved to fish late and can report we had success on spinner patterns. However I could not help but think that fishing in the dark on your own gets harder and you are more vulnerable to "untoward happenings" such as a friend of mine who broke his leg when he stepped on a rabbit hole in the dark. He was very fortunate that he managed to drag himself back to the car, with great difficulty, climb in and get help. Had he not done so he might not have been with us today.



With elephants on the river on the opposite bank

The weather got warmer and the rivers got lower so where do you fish?

I have enjoyed course fishing since childhood and it offers a pleasant change in the summer months. A friend of mine suggested we go carp fishing to Sugar Mill Ponds near Heck in Yorkshire.

The ponds were originally owned by Croda Ltd who used them as a disposal pond for chemicals.

When they got a new site they cleaned out the ponds and built two fisheries at a cost of over £250,000. One pond is mainly for carp and the other silverfish but does contain crucian carp which can be quite a challenge to catch.

The ponds were given to the local people as a nature reserve and amenity. The fishing is controlled by Sugar Mill Ponds Angling Club. It is a small Club and costs £15 a year. I had never been there before but it saved my fishing for 2018 and I had some most enjoyable day and evening fishing. Believe me a decent carp will certainly give you a run for your money and can be a real challenge to catch and land successfully.

Sadly in September I did not feel too well and did not fish at all in the back end. However after consultation with doctors and different pills my health considerably improved. The 6th January 2019 found me trotting the Myddleton Angling Club water on the Wharfe with members of the Grayling Society who had been invited to fish that day.

I should say that in trout season the Myddleton water is fly only but as a tribute to tradition in Yorkshire, upstream worming is allowed in July and August on either the lower or upper half of the river as directed in the members book for that year.

After September members are allowed to use coarse fishing methods and in winter we get some very good chub and grayling fishing. Members are told "if you are getting trout, note their size and condition and positions of swims". The system works well and it enables the club to monitor the size and condition of any trout caught.

This brings me to raise a matter which may give Piscatorial members some food for thought.

We have wonderful trout fishing on the rivers and two good still water venues but should we not also have some waters for coarse fishing? After all the pike's head emblem of the Society reminds us all it started as a coarse fishing society.

As you get older, river fishing gets harder. Sitting with a float or ledger on a nice summer's day is a different type of fishing to fly fishing but in its way just as enjoyable. I hope to still be fishing when I am a very old man; even if I cannot walk and fish on the rivers.

Conversely coarse fishing is a great introduction to game fishing, and teaches youngsters how to fish from an early age. For those of you who are grandparents it is a great chance to teach your grandchildren and other members of your family to fish. It can be a godsend for those with disabilities which make fly fishing impossible.

For those who want it, carp fishing on fly is just as challenging as the most wary trout and often works well when trout fishing is 'off' in the warm summer months. Trotting in winter for grayling on our waters would be most enjoyable and the season could be further extended to March. There is no need to wade when trotting which is the current reason for grayling fishing finishing at the end of December. It would also give the Society a chance to monitor other fish in the water untouched by electro-fishing.

Some may say if you want to coarse fish there are plenty of other clubs nearby. I would suggest the Society which calls itself "The Piscatorial Society" ought to have some coarse fishing, and remember the more lightly fished a water is, the better the fishing.



Falling In, or as it's known professionally – Accidental Immersion!

by Mac Stephens

Let's just start by saying that as anglers, we are not drowning in droves. In fact very few anglers actually drown, although many of us are subjected to the occasional 'dipping' now and then.

On average, between 300 and 400 people a year drown in our U.K. lakes and rivers.

The majority of these drownings are accidental so for those of you who've had your own close calls, the following should increase your chances of survival when future embarrassment turns to panic.

It's a sad fact that logic doesn't always kick in when we need it most. For instance, trying to swim whilst clutching that prized rod is always going to be tough but the reluctance to let go is understandable. We can become our own worst enemies if and when we get into difficulty in water.

Whether you can swim or not, understanding some of the basic physiological and psychological aspects of an 'accidental immersion' will greatly increase your chances of discussing your 'dunking' in the bar later.

Let's examine what happens to you when you go in:

Any trip or fall triggers your body to respond by releasing chemicals into your blood stream. These chemicals combine to raise your heartbeat, increase your blood pressure and restrict the flow of blood to your extremities.

If you are unable to regain your balance, you will instinctively put your arms out to steady yourself. In shallow water, this can mean damage to the hands, arms and head. If you're in deeper water, you've now adopted a pretty efficient diving stance which doesn't help things at all!

You then hit the water and suffer 'Cold Water Shock' which will involve taking an involuntary breath. If at this point your head is submerged, this could be the start of a drowning event.

If you survive all of this and make it back up to the surface, the next natural instinct is to swim, putting even more stress on your already stressed body. This is further compounded by the fact that for some bizarre reason, we try to swim back to the point where we fell in. This is usually back upstream and against the flow of the water.

All of this takes place in the first few seconds and can cause you serious harm with, sometimes, fatal consequences.

Now that I've scared you all half to death, you're probably asking "What can we do to avoid all of this?"

Try to remember and follow these tips and they will definitely help keep you safe.

- If you're near water it's a good idea to acclimatise your body to your surroundings – rub some cold water across the back of your neck and cheeks below your eyes. Whilst this doesn't stop cold water shock it prepares you mentally for the shock. This is something we do on swift water rescues all the time.

-
- Try not to dive! Entering the water in a near foetal position can help avoid injuries to the head and arms.
 - Try to take a breath before going under! Cover your mouth and pinch your nose, this helps prevent that first breath underwater.
 - When you surface, try not to swim! Instead just ask yourself “What happened there?” Often, that pause is long enough to stop you trying to swim and allow you to think.
 - Take stock of where you are, it’s time to plan folks! Ask yourself “Where can I get out?” Unless the flow is very, very slow, DON’T try to swim against it. Try to avoid the impulse to swim back to where you fell in. You could become exhausted trying to beat the current and waste vital energy that you might need later to haul yourself back onto the bank.
 - Don’t try to aggressively swim out of the water unless you are a very competent swimmer. You’re better off rolling onto your back with your feet facing downstream and in front of you to help fend off any oncoming obstacles. This is called ‘The Defensive Swimming Position’. Use your arms to swim backwards using big windmill strokes to give yourself direction and angle your head and body towards the bank your aiming for – professionally this position is known as the ‘Ferryglide’.

If you can get out in the shallows, do so.

If you’re now floating down the river, you’re not out of the woods yet! There are a few more things to look out for.



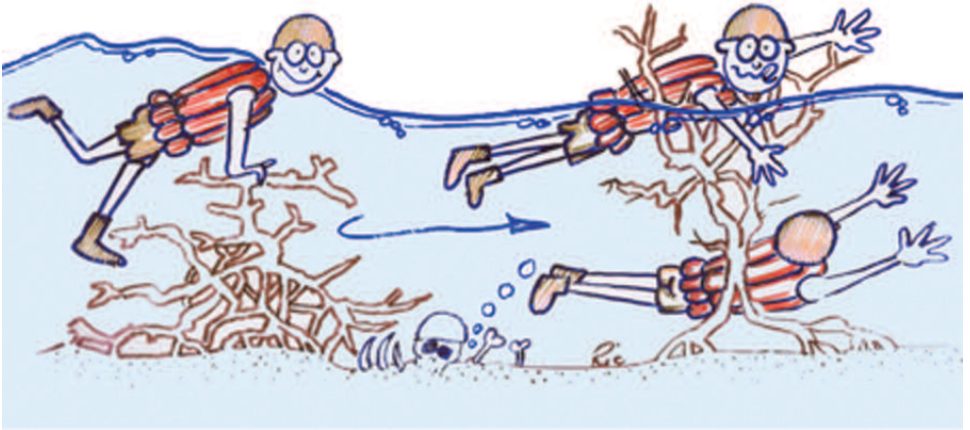
Foot entrapment.

In my experience, one of the biggest hazards is unseen. Foot entrapment, it is a killer! Putting your foot down in moving water is really not a good idea.

If you're being washed away ensure that you can feel the ground around you and you're in suitably shallow water (e.g. your bottom touches the river bed) BEFORE you attempt to stand up.

Strainers

After foot entrapments the biggest killers are strainers. A strainer is anything that water can pass through and you can't. Examples are partly submerged trees, fences, boulders and (if you're fishing urban waters), shopping trolleys and Mark 1 Ford Cortinas!



So what action should you take? Avoid contact with strainers at all costs! To enable you to do this you need to see them coming, i.e. be looking downstream in the Defensive Swimming Position – feet first, using your arms to steer you.

Only if you cannot avoid it should you turn and face the strainer. Swim aggressively towards it and aim to climb high onto or over it. This is a high-risk strategy that should be avoided but if you have no option give it your best! DO NOT under any circumstance, try to swim under the strainer!

Hydraulics and recirculation

This type of hazard is mainly found in front of weirs, waterfalls and boulder outcrops. The problem here is that this water 'recirculates' by continually rolling over itself. This area contains water in the deadly mixture of around 60% water and 40% air. Given that we can't fly, swim or breathe in this medium, a recirculation is not a good place to be! If you become trapped in one, it can be very difficult to escape from it.

Your only hope is to swim down to the river bed, point yourself downstream and pull yourself along the bottom beyond the boil line which is roughly the position of the middle swimmer in the illustration.



Of course, the best way to avoid this dilemma is by escaping the hazard before you get washed or drawn into it.

Better still, stay on the bank or in your boat. If you're wading with a weir below you and you cannot wade upstream against the flow, **GET OUT!**

Rescue Formula

If you are the would-be rescuer it might help to follow this shortened formula.

Shout – encourage the person to swim, use big theatrical gestures and point where they should swim. **CAUTION**, if you reach for them, be careful you don't get pulled in too! Let them grab your arm not your hand so you can pull free if required.

Reach – reach using something firm or solid e.g. wading staff. Ensure you are safe.

Throw – Throw something that floats.

If you or your buddy fall in and follow the advice above you'll probably increase your chances of regaling the tale (with the requisite embellishment) to your chums post event. If you lose your rod you can buy another one but there's only one of you – look after you! Stay safe and be a fishing legend not a memory!

Tight lines

Mac

N.B. if you do inhale/swallow amounts of water please seek medical help. There is a condition called secondary drowning that can prove to be fatal many hours after a near drowning event.

Mac Stephens

Mac, a member of CADAC, has had 32 years in The Fire and Rescue Services. Now designing, developing and delivering Technical Rescue Training Programmes for the Emergency Services and Industry in the UK and overseas. When not working, Mac can be found on the end of a fly fishing rod and is well aware of safety on the river.

The Path to Enlightenment

by Bob Gibbs

The path to enlightenment
led me to search for higher consciousness
down the cul-de-sac of sanctimonious veganism,
the U-turn of sexual abstemiousness,
past the quicksand of teetotalism,
avoiding the five-way junction of religion,
the motorway pile-up of communism
and finally, karmic meditation.

However, nothing compares to the focus, serenity, complete absorption,
at-oneness-with-the-world combined with the element of magic and mystery
as does the anticipation of a trout rising to my fly



The Piscatorial Society Photographic Group (PSPG)

by Nick Gooderham

I write this with only days left before the end of the current trout fishing season which I hope has been enjoyable and successful for members, maybe presenting challenges which have been met or otherwise. Dare I say that one of the great traditions of our sport is the proximity of failure and success and so it can be with photography, often with a share of

luck thrown in. Taking images of interest, properly composed without chopping off features, correctly exposed and in focus may seem simple but then sometimes we are blessed with good light, the unexpected feature or the effective use of techniques and all is worthwhile again. These parallels with flyfishing are shared with our PSPG members and others who carry a camera or these days their mobile Phone!



Stuart tying his Killer McSpinner

The PSPG collective activities during the fishing season are limited so as not to conflict with fellow anglers. However, since the last edition we have enjoyed two events. First, on 7 April eight members and guests met at Ashmere at the kind and generous invitation of Jean Howman. We combined our fishing with some photography before a demonstration by Stuart Teare tying his Killer McSpinners as described by him in the Autumn 2018 Journal. In calling Stuart's bluff at the challenge to Willian Lunn we were also joined by his great grandson, Ben Doughton, who gave a fascinating insight to his family's fishing experiences and, to our great relief, endorsed Stuart's tyings.

We then shared a day at Abbotts Barton in June with members of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust in the company of Jack Perks the well known underwater photographer who recently achieved a full house with completion of filming all 53 varieties of UK freshwater fishes! Jack presented a fascinating introduction in the nearby and recently reopened Cart and Horses before visiting the water, 'planting' his Go Pros and then reviewing the footage which even on this water in a short space of time revealed five species of fish. For those interested, Jack's work can be seen on his website www.jackperksphotography.com and for those of us present it certainly put a very different perspective on matters we all sometimes take for granted.



Jack collects a Go Pro

In balancing the practical with the technical, and maintaining the 'fun side' of our PSPG programme, we next meet at The Flyfishers' Club on 18 November for a presentation by Charles Rangeley-Wilson, followed by dinner. I'm delighted that already we are near capacity with 18 members and guests applying to attend.

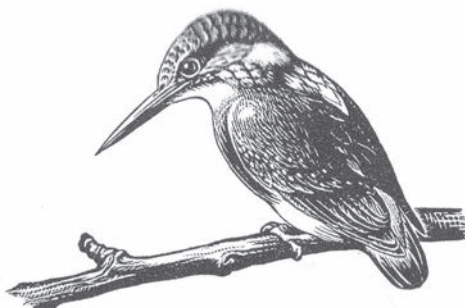
The programme for 2020 is still under discussion but we hope to continue with the

blend of meetings and workshops to share and learn more about photography in the good company of fellow members. In particular, we want to encourage PSPG members and indeed all Society members to take and share their fishy images and further enjoy their flyfishing and the environment in which we are so privileged to share.

If you are interested in our PSPG activities, details for joining are available through the Society's website.



The Abbots Barton visit team photo





Director of Fisheries' Report

by Robert Wellard

Stocking

There's been a great deal of interest and discussion about stocking farmed trout in chalk streams of late. Recent Freedom of Information requests to the EA suggest upwards of 60,000kg of farmed trout are being stocked in the River Test every year, which is rather mind blowing. My own request for information on the Avon gives permitted stocking levels (not all fisheries will be stocking to their limit – some may be stocking more) at close to 20,000kg. Whilst the total biomass of stocked fish on the Avon is considerably lower than that of the Test, it's still rather alarming to see where some of the heaviest stocking is taking place. Stocking in areas where salmon are known to spawn and their offspring emerge is also a common practice – something has to change!

As already mentioned by Graham *'we need to put our house in order'* if we are to stand up to the level of scrutiny already being applied by the likes of Wild Justice who, along with pheasant shooting, *have a long list of projects they plan to take forward*. Having recently raised this with the WFA committee, it was agreed that I would draft a Stocking Policy for further discussion; I've included my first draft below and look forward to receiving your comments . . .

Trout fisheries, whether for wild or stocked fish, depend on the physical, chemical and biological quality of the habitat, including good water quality, flows, cover and invertebrate life. Whilst members of the WFA have been stocking trout in their rivers for many years to provide a quarry for anglers and to meet the needs of anglers who want to take a fish home to eat, in recent years there has been an increasing interest in promoting wild fisheries and improving river habitats. Catch and Release is now widely practiced, even on put-and-take fisheries, with the vast majority of trout being returned, whether stocked or wild. This has led to the inevitable discussion as to whether stocking large numbers of farmed trout impacts juvenile salmon, wild trout and grayling populations, not only at the point of introduction, but also in areas much further downstream. There are, of course, people who still wish to stock farmed fish and so it is important we have an agreed policy that enables stocking to take place in the safest way possible that best serves the interests of all fishery owners whilst protecting wild fish stocks and river habitats throughout the Hampshire Avon (SAC/SSSI) and its tributaries upstream of its junction with the River Ebble.

The WFA's position: We follow 'best practice' advice from the Wild Trout Trust and Salmon & Trout Conservation on trout stocking as follows:

Given that some fisheries still operate at high exploitation levels, with a catch and kill policy, or where some fisheries perceive there's a need to stock, perhaps where the river cannot produce viable numbers of wild fish and/or where rods want to take fish home, only sterile female (triploid) trout should be stocked. However, the number and size of fish stocked should be consistent with the density and size-range of the natural trout population one might find in a more productive 'wild' fishery (between one and three adult trout >25cm/10 inches per 100m²). Of course, the option with the greatest benefit to river ecosystems and wild fish stocks is to operate at minimal exploitation levels, as a catch-and release fishery, in the absence of stocking whilst also promoting natural recruitment, healthy habitat, water quality and quantity. This option avoids any undue risks to wild fish stocks and also it reduces the potential for an increase in algal blooms, which can be significant if stocking in large numbers (elevated ammonia levels/nitrogen from fish excrement) and from over-winter feeding in the river, which is an illegal practice.

Some Simple "Dos" and "Don'ts"

- *DO consider whether you need to stock your fishery (or whether it could operate on a wild catch and release basis)*
- *If you stock, DO try to assess the density of adult trout that your fishery can realistically support and match your stocking densities appropriately. This will minimise any negative competitive impacts (as well as reducing wastage of stock fish and money)*
- *DO add fish in small batches on frequent occasions throughout the season (rather than as one or two bulk stocking events). This will help to avoid damaging peaks of competition with wild fish and creating 'honey pots' for predators and should maximise your catch returns on your costly stock fish*
- *DO try to get the majority of stock fish caught (and removed) before the end of the trout fishing season. They are unlikely to over-winter successfully, may well compete with wild fish whilst they struggle to survive the lean winter months and could also attract otters, cormorants and saw-bill ducks, especially during the main period of spawning and when salmon and trout fry emerge in the spring.*
- *DO use only infertile stock fish.*
- *DO ensure that the habitat, water quality and quantity in your fishery are all as good as they can be; wild fish require a balanced combination of all these factors in order to survive throughout each life stage.*
- *DON'T kill wild fish for the table – for every wild adult fish that exists; many hundreds will have perished as eggs and particularly during juvenile stages. Wild populations are consequently very sensitive to even low levels of exploitation.*
- *DO consider marking your stock fish so that anglers can quickly identify them from wild fish, identify where they were originally stocked, the year they were introduced, and assess how far they've moved within the fishery/whole river over time.*
- *Do use only barbless hooks.*
- *DO record angler catches of stocked vs wild fish. Angler catch records will enable you to have a more informed position when it comes to making decisions about stocking (or not stocking) in future years.*
- *DON'T feed stocked trout in the river. This is an illegal practice and can be extremely damaging to wild fish and the wider river ecology.*

River Itchen – Abbots Worthy

A letter from Dr Kerry Simms (EA Fisheries Technical Specialist) dated 5th August 2019, requested that I 'provide details of stocking on the Upper Itchen at Abbots Worthy for the past 5yrs', which I've included below for interest (Fig 1). The numbers pretty well match the

Fig 1. Piscatorial Society – Stocking River Itchen – Abbots Worthy

2015	Supplier	Qty	Av kg	Total kg
8th April	Itchen Valley Trout Farm	75	1.0	75
13th May	Itchen Valley Trout Farm	75	1.0	75
29th May	Houghton	100	0.6	60
22nd July	Itchen Valley Trout Farm	75	1.0	75
19th August	Itchen Valley Trout Farm	75	1.0	75
		400	0.92	360
2016	Supplier	Qty	Av kg	Total kg
6th April	Itchen Valley Trout Farm	75	1.0	75
3rd May	Houghton	100	0.6	60
24th May	Itchen Valley Trout Farm	75	1.0	75
1st July	Itchen Valley Trout Farm	75	1.0	75
20th July	Itchen Valley Trout Farm	75	1.0	75
		400	0.92	360
2017	Supplier	Qty	Av kg	Total kg
6th April	Allenbrook	75	1.0	75
3rd May	Allenbrook	75	1.0	75
22nd May	Houghton	100	0.6	60
14th June	Allenbrook	75	0.9	63.8
19th July	Allenbrook	75	0.8	57.2
		400	0.84	331
2018	Supplier	Qty	Av wt kg	Total wt kg
5th April	Allenbrook	75	0.9	67.8
2nd May	Allenbrook	75	0.9	68.8
22nd May	Houghton	100	0.6	60
18th June	Allenbrook	75	0.9	70.2
10th July	Allenbrook	75	1.0	73.6
		400	0.87	340.4
2019	Supplier	Qty	Av kg	Total kg
4th April	Allenbrook	75	1.1	80.0
2nd May	Allenbrook	75	0.9	69.0
22nd May	Houghton	100	0.6	57.0
13th June	Allenbrook	75	0.9	69.0
30th July	Allenbrook	75	0.9	67.8
		400	0.87	342.8

total number of fish and biomass identified in our Sect 30 Permit (Live Fish Movement Site Permit) issued by the EA in April 2015 (Fig 2).

Kerry’s letter continued . . . ‘The direction of travel on the Upper Itchen upstream of Winchester is to the fisheries becoming a Wild Fish Protection Zone (WFPZ) with no stocking. This would extend the existing WFPZ’s on the Candover and Cheriton Streams (already designated WFPZ’s). The Agency and others have been working very hard in recent years to restore the Upper Itchen so that it can support a wild fishery, so that the fisheries can continue to thrive but in a different way to how they may have been managed historically. **In light of the above, will you please voluntarily give up your site permit?’** Signed . . . Letter ends.

Fig 2. Other than in fish farms, stocking requires the Agency’s (Section 30) consent

5. Fish Introductions			
The permit holder is only authorised to introduce the fish species listed below to the site and into the waters listed below:			
Species / type	Allowed in waters	Conditions	Compliance Date
Trout, Brown	All permitted waters	Triploid Females Only	
		This species may only be stocked from a named source (see section 6a below) where the fish have been quarantined in a continuous flow of water isolated from any potential source of crayfish plague for a minimum period of 14 days before introduction. The fish should be transported to the site in water free of crayfish and plague.	
6. Stocking Limits			
The permit holder is authorised to introduce only the number or weight of fish and on dates described below:			
Number and/or weight of fish		Time Scale	
Total Number Allowed: 400 fish		Between 01 April and 30 September of each year	
Total Weight Allowed (kg): 400		the permit is active	

An interesting question, however, before I outline our response it maybe worth taking a few minutes to reflect on what’s changed and why there’s a ‘new’ move to stop stocking on the Upper Itchen . . . maybe it’s really not all that new!

The National Trout & Grayling Strategy (‘the Strategy’) perhaps puts things into context and provides members with a gentle reminder of where things were heading, particularly on our SSSI/SAC rivers, as far back as 2003, when the strategy was first launched. The aim of the strategy – **‘to conserve and improve wild stocks of trout, sea trout, char and grayling, while enhancing the environment for all types of fisheries for these species in England and Wales. It also aims to enhance the social and economic benefits derived from these fisheries.’**

Of a number of EA policies identified in the Strategy those listed below are of particular relevance to stocking:

Policy 15 – In considering whether or not to consent a stocking, the EA will adopt the guiding principles that fish introductions should not be allowed to jeopardise the well-being of naturally established ecosystems; and there should be no overall detriment to

the fisheries (stock, habitat, performance) of the donor water or the receiving water, or to the viability of the fish involved in transfer and introduction.

Policy 22 – The EA will work with others to monitor, protect and improve the physical, chemical and biological quality of trout, char and grayling habitat, including work with Government to ensure that impacts on fisheries are fully considered in the development of new policies and grant schemes relating to land use.

Policy 24 – The EA will work with others to improve natural recruitment to trout fisheries by removing, or making passable, obstructions to migration, taking into account the costs and benefits. Such obstructions might be man-made or, if natural, not wholly restricting passage. Where natural obstructions are considered impassable, we will take a precautionary approach to the protection of stocks which maybe genetically distinct and not remove the obstructions or ease fish passage past them. For any new structures, where the Agency’s consent is required, these must be designed to enable fish migration.

Policy 25 – On appropriate fisheries, we will work with fisheries interests to identify key insect and plant species associated with fishing throughout the season, and where practical, adapt existing monitoring programmes to assess their abundance

In 2014 the EA introduced further changes to stocking brown trout in England and Wales; having reviewed the evidence on the impact of stocking domesticated fertile brown trout on wild trout stocks and on the potential alternative use of sterile fish, as outlined in the strategy, and following extensive consultation, the EA decided to stop giving consent to stock rivers and most lakes with fertile (diploid) farm strain brown trout in England and Wales. From 2015 only infertile (female triploid) brown trout or the progeny of local brood-stock reared under a suitable regime were allowed to be stocked; because interbreeding between farmed and wild brown trout is likely to lower the ability of the offspring to survive in the wild, which could have serious implications for the long term future of wild brown trout (and sea trout). **The EA also set targets to encourage a progressive switch to using infertile triploid trout to a level of full compliance by 2015.**

More specifically the Strategy also identified a requirement to give some wild stocks greater protection through **Wild Fish Protection Zones (WFPZ’s)**. Whilst WFPZ’s do not elevate the level of protection above the level already provided by Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) in England and Wales, they do offer wild fish some protection against the impacts of stocked farmed fish. Whilst it could be argued that stocking with farmed trout is crucial to the success of many of our more commercially run chalk stream trout fisheries, I don’t think it’s unreasonable to suggest this needs to be re-examined if we are to prevent even a small risk of damage to wild stocks as wild fisheries continue to evolve. Ignoring the potential for predation of juvenile salmon by stock fish, stimulating an influx of predators and the creation of so called honey pots, and the potential for the introduction of disease just doesn’t make sense. Hence, **the EA will not give consent to stocking where local fisheries interests want to avoid wild fisheries being contaminated with stock fish**, which is probably where we are now on the Upper Itchen.

Whilst the Upper Itchen provides a good deal more wild fishing than many other chalk

ivers; in fairness the Society stocks only those parts of Abbots Worthy fishery, the Main, Penney Lake & Half Water, which I believe are currently unable to provide suitable habitats for wild trout (why else would we be stocking it?), but moving the whole of the Upper Itchen to WFPZ status still needs to be considered very carefully. Moreover, we need to understand fully what it really means to **voluntarily give up our permit** and how this might present challenges in the future, especially if the River Itchen continues to suffer from the associated impacts of agricultural run-off with its nutrient and chemically loaded fine sediment, over abstraction, nutrient enrichment from cress farms, inappropriate grazing of riverbanks by cattle, grazing of weeds such as *Ranunculus* (SAC species) by large numbers of juvenile swans, higher frequencies of floods and droughts caused by climate change, cormorant predation and obstructions to migration etc., which as we know has a negative impact and can seriously limit wild fish recruitment.

Unlike the Avon, where we've seen significant financial investment in river restoration through the STREAM project and the River Avon Restoration Project (RARP) over the last ten or so years, we haven't seen this level of support on the Itchen. It could therefore be argued that certain parts of Abbots Worthy are actually in a worse state than our waters on the Avon. If we are going to voluntarily give up stocking on the Itchen, firstly we need to make sure the river is able to support a viable wild trout (and grayling) population that can provide a sufficient resource for angling; **we need to 'fix' the river first**. We also need to make sure the regulators apply their best efforts and, if necessary, enforcement to protect the Upper Itchen from some of the impacts I've already mentioned.

While environmental quality will directly affect the fish, whether wild or stocked, it may also affect the quality of trout and grayling angling less directly. For example, dry fly fishing on the southern chalk streams is considered by many anglers to be a truly classic form of river fishing. Yet the quality of dry fly fishing depends not only on the abundance of trout, but also on abundant hatches of a wide range of insect species throughout the angling season. Lose the insects and the quality of fishing declines. A healthy growth of *Ranunculus* is also needed to provide habitat for the aquatic stages of such insect species and provides valuable cover for the fish.

If we are to consider voluntarily giving up our stocking permit at Abbots Worthy we need to ensure there is:

- a plentiful supply of clean water to support wild fish populations
- a plentiful supply of suitable habitats to support wild trout, grayling and salmon throughout their life stages
- free movement and good access for all fish to migrate throughout the upper catchment
- an appropriate level of regulatory protection, including enforcement, where necessary
- an annual program of monitoring of wild trout, grayling and salmon populations to help inform stakeholders where to carry out habitat improvements
- an agreed timeframe for review and, if necessary, to include the fallback option to allow a return to stocking in the event that the population of adult wild trout falls below an agreed threshold

Note – We have already entered into discussions with the EA & HIWWT and landowners to carry out a feasibility study for a major project across three areas of the Itchen at Abbots Worthy, Fulling Mill and Abbots Barton.

Our response . . .

Dear Kerry,

The Piscatorial Society is keen to support the idea of a Wild Fish Protection Zone on the Upper Itchen, however, the 'Main' and to some extent, the 'Penney Lake', (the only bits we stock) at Abbots Worthy are both heavily modified, impounded, degraded reaches, desperately in need of restoration, which remains a high priority for us, as you know. We need to 'fix' the river first!

The Candover is also a concern as, despite several site visits with the owners, NE and the EA, intensive grazing often leaves the river channel in a pretty poor state, which I've no doubt has a serious impact on wild fish populations and will continue to reduce its potential to provide a sustainable angler resource over time.

If we are to have Wild Fish Protection Zones, we also need reassurances that you will do all you can to protect these vulnerable wild fish habitats from inappropriate land management, agriculture and impacts from cress farming. We may also need help with funding to restore those parts of the river where we've inherited the legacy of an industrial past.

I look forward to discussing this matter with you further in due course.



The image on the previous page shows a stocked trout caught on the the River Avon in early October (Length 48cm weight c3lbs/1.36kg). If an adult stocked trout costs c£10/kg and we stock 20,000kg (£200,000's worth) a year in the Avon and we reduce the level of stocking by 50% on the Avon to 10,000 fish a year, with landowners donating the balance towards improving the river – imagine what could be done with the money.

Just imagine what £100,000 a year could do for all who come and fish the Hampshire Avon – we could:

- remove or bypass an impounding river structure, improving fish migration year on year
- take practical steps to tackle sediment inputs and pollution from runoff improving water quality
- create and support projects that deliver natural solutions for improving wild fish habitats
- promote the very best of what our wonderful chalk rivers have to offer to support local businesses
- provide opportunities to get more young people involved in angling
- continue to build future resilience to help reduce the impacts of climate change
- improve the potential of wild fish protection zones and to gradually phase out stocking over time

Just imagine!

Bob Wellard MIFM
Director of Fisheries
18.09.19

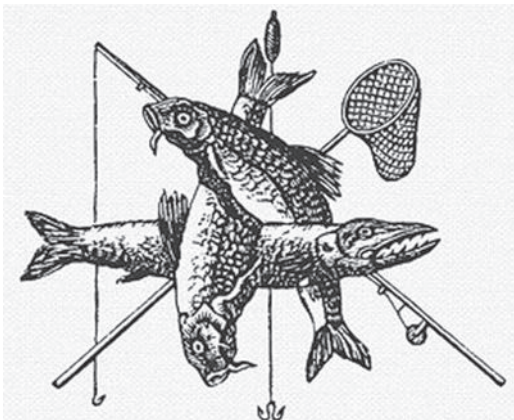
Useful links:

https://www.wildtrout.org/assets/files/library/Stocking_position_2012_final.pdf

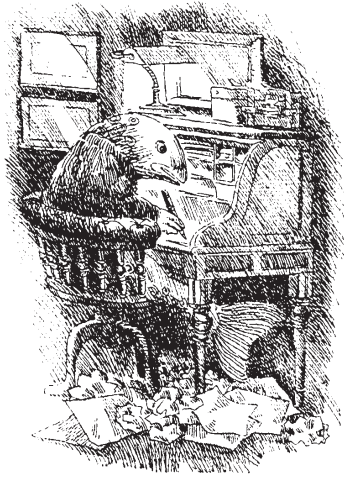
<https://www.salmon-trout.org/smart-rivers/>

<https://wildjustice.org.uk/about/>

<https://www.patagonia.com/artifishal.html>



Keepers' Kaleidoscope



Head Keeper's Review Sir Dave and the Shaman

by Stuart McTeare

'Years later, when Rahel returned to the river, it greeted her with a ghastly skull's smile, with holes where teeth had been, and a limp hand raised from a hospital bed.

Both things had happened.

It had shrunk. And she had grown.

Downriver, a saltwater barrage had been built, in exchange for votes from the influential paddy-farmer lobby. The barrage regulated the inflow of saltwater from the backwaters that open into the Arabian sea. So now they had two harvests a year instead of one. More rice, for the price of a river'.

So wroteth Arundhati Roy.

As I attempted to scrawl something across this blank sheet, the much needed rain was starting to fall, dappling the parched paving slabs outside with damp blotches that quickly merge from isolation, joining hands. Not a significant event but when you haven't seen it for a while its poetry. How I wish I could fill my empty sheet so readily. Tense, my Bic Biro pressed harder, indenting several pages below the surface, unknown Bironic riddles developing complex patterns that could be used against me, if I were a poison pen pusher. Searching for inspiration, I stare out, the blotches build, twinkling increasing reflected light, starting to cover the skeletal river's bare bones.

We were not quite at Arundhati's apocalyptic fictional vision here on the Avon but in

the late summer all the downsides of this year's low flows were staring right back at us from the skull's eyeless sockets; with extensive water crowfoot swan grazing in areas plus filamentous algae growth, it could have been easy to say the end is nigh but defeatism you know isn't my schtick.

As ever, the 2019 season had its highs and lows. I know it's an old ghillie/keeper cliché but one of the happy by products of working by water is the fascinating magnetic force it has to draw a rich, interesting, varied cast of characters. This season was no exception and a couple of visitors proved to be exceptional career highlights. In high summer, I not only welcomed a spear fishing Amazonian shaman but also the BBC's national treasure, Sir David Attenborough, to my neck of the woods. I spent two very different but inspirational afternoons with them both.

The bare footed mystic Manari, Amazonian shaman, who was in the UK to highlight the plight of indigenous people was crazy to snag a chalkstream trout which eventually he did but it wasn't without a little gentle guidance. How chalkstream anglers make life difficult for ourselves? Upstream? Dry fly? Lightly dressed nymphs? What on earth, Catch & Release? Come on we just want one of those fish that can be seen happily lolling against the current, impaled on an improvised spear? Easy. Well actually slow down. Beyond the language barrier there were a whole load of other complex ethical & socioeconomic stuff to boot going on but hey to watch Manari hunt emitting a strange whistle was pure shamanic magic. And do you know, he was able to feed his young son and wife with an Avon trout that evening. The chalkstream trout were charmed by his vocal skills as well.

Sir David was another story, wow. I hadn't realised what a huge deal the man is with the millennial yoots and I have to say I found him awe inspiring, totally charming. A fine example that age is no barrier, he is an incredible nonagenarian.

The BBC are making a sequel to the Blue Planet series called the Green Planet, focusing on plants and trees, the team came to film some flowering water crowfoot which of course has a life above and below the water's surface. Sir Dave spent the afternoon in our red punt at the Chalk Pit filming various takes involving water crowfoot. The script was given to Sir Dave at 2pm and he finished filming at 6pm in the blistering heat, at no point did they need to retake a shot because he'd forgotten his spiel, impressive for anybody but a person in his 9th decade, well what can I say? Sir David and I touched on angling briefly, his delightful angle on fishing; 'putting cold steel into fish's mouths' would I'm sure be lost on the shaman, cold steel into a fish's side is maybe a little different when we are talking about survival but then I too kinda make a living from fish, fishing and conservation. We all, I hope, are pulling in the same direction, united by a common cause, with young Greta sparring with old Donald, ecological issues have never had a higher profile. We live in exciting times?

Sir David may well have been inspired by his trip to the River Avon and his afternoon spent in our little red punt. I have just seen the launch of RRS Sir David Attenborough, the polar research ship and couldn't help but notice, being rather larger in comparison to the punt, it's the same shade of blushing rouge. Sir David Attenborough talking at the launch of his namesake big red boat about glaciers melting etc. said 'the speed with which we now realise things are happening is terrifying, we are only going to deal with it if we know what the facts are'. How true this is of all ecological change and destruction, with initiatives like Salmon & Trout Conservation's SmartRivers, that we are involved with, we are now at last getting a greater grasp of the facts effecting our fresh-waterways. Hopefully we will never see the *'limp hand raised from a hospital bed'*.

Freefolk, The Grange, Abbots Worthy and Abbots Barton

by Craig Dawson

Another summer of sun, the only difference being that this season began with less water than last. A fine dry spring was followed by a scorching summer which made for a testing season, both keeper and rod wise. In a year like this, judicious and careful weed management being the order of the day to preserve and maintain the river levels. It is also a year when all that in-stream woody material and folded willow comes into its own providing pinch points, deeper pools, cover and shade for the fish, especially where the river is rendered ribbon thin in late summer.

So, the season opened on both rivers with a reasonable showing of weed and the promise that it would be there for the season albeit without the vigour of 2018. Hawthorn were out, particularly at Abbots Barton and a few olives to get things underway. When the mayfly arrived there were good steady hatches, with a few very heavy hatches reported at Abbots Worthy. The Grange, as ever, produced huge numbers of mayfly but very picky fish, often the case when presented with such an enormous buffet. Fine tuning patterns for this water will be a life's work, I'm sure. The summer progressed with steady, if rapidly hatching olives during the day and good but brief spinner falls at last knockings. Sedge in the evenings were a little more reliable.

The lakes at Freefolk, in my opinion, have performed very well given the bright sunny conditions for much of the year. Algal blooms (colour) have been so brief and light as to be almost nonexistent and the surface algae far less of a problem than in previous years. Whilst hot and sunny, there was for the most part, just enough breeze to keep the surface algae 'penned up' at one end of the lakes. The Top Lake does however develop islands of algae in the middle that are anchored to weed growing up from the bottom. The fish have thrived on the enormous resources that exist within those waters and remain fighting fit. I heard of a 4.5lb brown being caught in the Top Lake towards the end of the summer by some fortunate angler, now that would be a fine specimen indeed, deep bellied and fin perfect.

It can only be the end of September, signalled as it is by the first weather warnings, but a welcome change with a week of decent rain. Long may it last. Having said that, the riverbanks both here and over on the Itchen have been surprisingly busy with members making the most of the mild conditions. Flies are still hatching in good numbers and there are some magnificent grayling to be had.



The Wylye

by Joe Emmett

Following what I would call a reasonable winter and spring the season kicked off with both a good head of water and promising weed growth. This is usually a good indication of how the season will play out, however, despite these two vital ingredients things were a little slow to start. The weather seemed to drag its heels and because of this the early hatches of fly did the same. There were still some good Grannom and LDO's, however, you really needed to pick your days wisely so as to take full advantage of them. Again, there was a small window of Hawthorn fishing in late April early May which if you were here on the right day you would have had some fantastic early season sport. Another species I saw a fair bit of this May was the Iron Blue, a very interesting species as unlike many of the others you never really know whether you will see any from one year to the next. Generally, they seem to favour those wet and windy late spring days when most sensible people are inside but as is always the case with fishing you've got to be in it to win it.

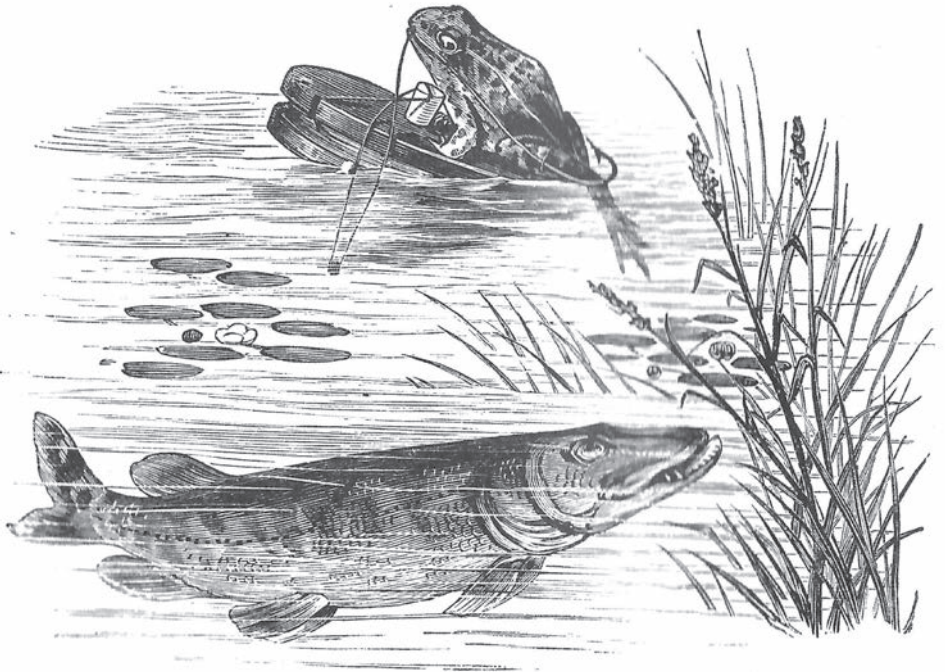
By the middle of May despite the weather starting to warm up it felt like we were a week or two behind and the proper Mayfly hatches didn't really kick off until June. We were rewarded with another good year though, with the Wylye's steady trickle of duns and good evening spinner fishing going well into late June. As seems to always be the case in June we had the usual unpredictable weather from wet and windy to hot and bright with no two days seeming to be the same. Despite the weed growth making an early start it seemed to slow down as we entered spring. We still cut our fair share in May and although the June cut was a little heavier our ongoing improvements in weed cutting and extraction seem to make the process run more smoothly each year.

July and August were what seems to be becoming the normal hot and dry months of the year with very little rainfall. Fishing during the middle part of the day can become very challenging during these conditions however those members who came later or stayed on were rewarded with another good season of BWO fishing. If you have still yet to experience this part of our season I would urge you to give it a go, it really is a sight to see. It may last 30 minutes or maybe only 10 but you will see more action during that period than you will have seen all day. It usually occurs just before dark and in the past, I have found myself fishing in the moonlight to the continuous rising trout.

Much like last year the season seemed to end before its time with good hatches of pale wateries still on the water into October. The water levels have held up remarkably well and where many rivers across the country have suffered from very low flows a combination of good spring flows and weed growth has meant we have maintained a fairly good water level throughout the summer and into the autumn. We are just in the middle of undertaking our annual trout and grayling survey on the Wylye. It's always an interesting exercise to see how our stocks of both species are doing. The survey gives us an insight into how successful spawning has been, how our river improvements are benefiting both species, what may be impacting their numbers and what areas of the fishery may need improving. So far this year's results are up on last year and with a good range of year classes in both species particularly trout it seems that spawning is obviously successful. The grayling population seems to be a little more unpredictable and

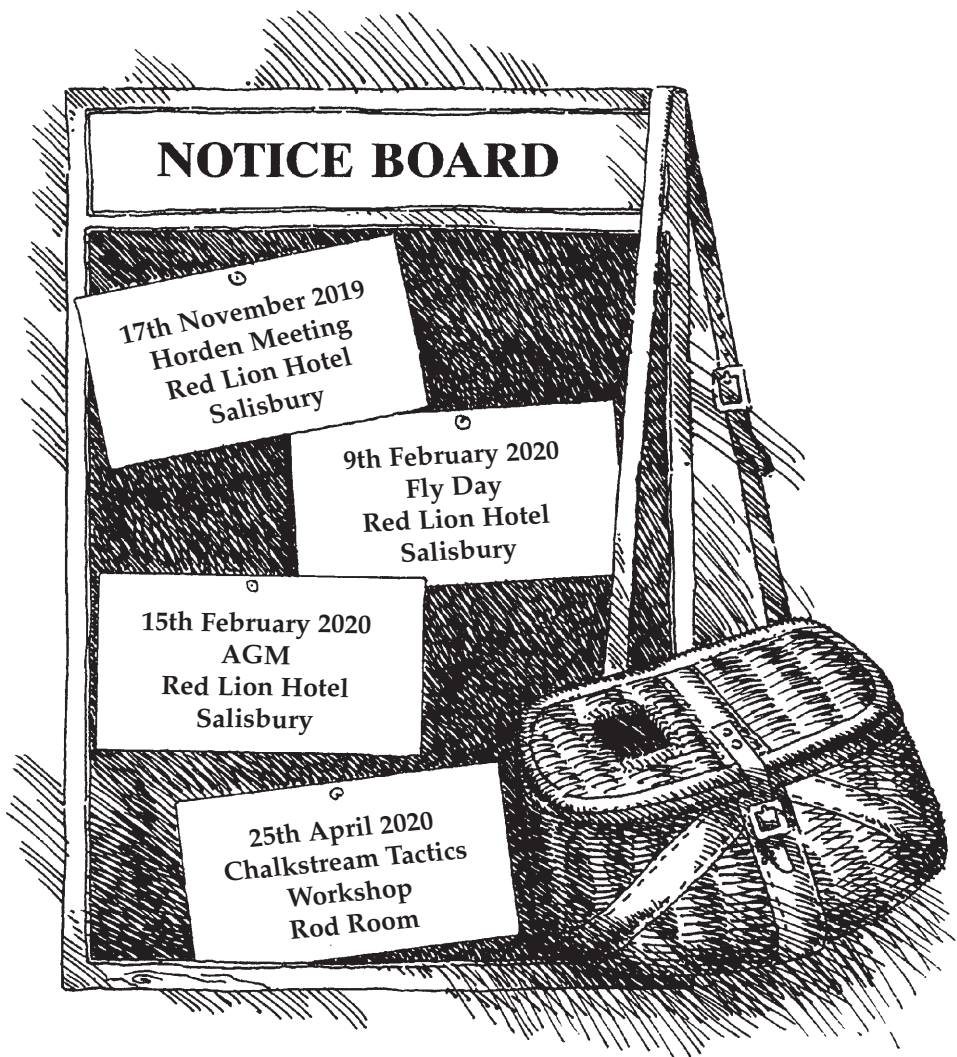
although the numbers have dropped off a little in the past few years there is still a good range of year classes. They are certainly fussier than the trout as to where they take up residence and we find in years of heavy weed growth the numbers collected in our surveys are usually lower. This year is no different and the best sites for collecting grayling were the sites with the least weed growth.

Winter seems to be fast approaching now and my thoughts are turning towards my winter work plans. Mother nature has already been kind this season and given me a few nice new structures in the way of fallen trees and no doubt there will be a few more before the start of next season. As ever there is the endless pruning to continue with and I hope to be making a start on this in the next few weeks. The first proper autumn rains started this week which can mean only one thing . . . barbel.



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OE G/drake Spent Spinner (9747)



SR Red Tag Retriever (9661)

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