

A photograph of a person fishing in a river. The person is wearing a white cap and a light-colored shirt, and is holding a fishing rod. The river is surrounded by dense green trees and foliage, with a large tree branch overhanging the water. The water is dark green and reflects the surrounding greenery.

The Piscatorial Society

Journal No. 147

Autumn 2021

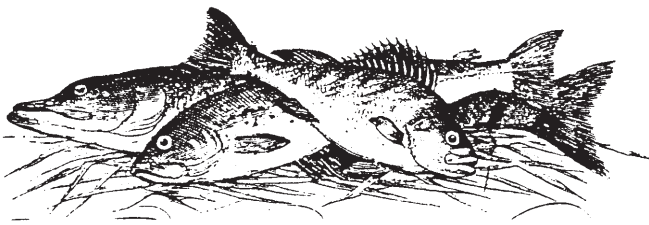
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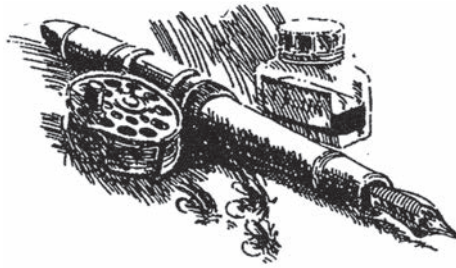
The Journal of the Piscatorial Society No. 147 Autumn 2021

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Front Cover: Late Summer Chalkstream Jungle. Photograph by Harry Waterton
Mr Fish drawings and some others by kind permission of Martin Mayhew

Editorial



You may not have heard of *hymenoscyphus fraxineus* but you will certainly, albeit unknowingly, have been close to it and seen its effects on all the Society's waters over the last few seasons. It is better known as ash die back and if you are unsure what it looks like, turn back to our cover photograph where the skeleton of one of its victims looms over the river. Ash die back is a fungal disease originating in Asia where its native ash species are immune. Steadily it spread west eventually crossing the Channel probably in imported ash saplings until a banning drawbridge was raised in 2012. Too late, as the European Ash has no defence and it's thought that at least 80% of our ash trees will perish. I suspect only the obvious unsafe victims will be felled, the emaciated relics our only reminder of a wonderful tree which according to the old folklore phrase "Oak before the ash, then we're in for a splash, ash before oak, then we're in for a soak" predicted our early season weather. Oh dear . . . yet more a slave to my weather app.

My only experience of Tenkara (or in Japanese "fishing from the skies") was trying to handle a rather too energetic 4lb Test brown trout which resulted in much running, high sticking and unintended wading. Not what my borrowed Tenkara outfit was designed for and although the audience enjoyed the pantomime, a simple albeit farcical demonstration of its impracticalities for many fishing situations. Hardly fair, you may argue, as a 15ft 10wt wouldn't do too well on a trout stream and a 2wt would struggle on the flats. In his article, Graham Coley will try and put the record straight about Tenkara's true niche although originally a technique that was not used to catch trout. I've spent a bit of time with Japanese fishermen none who used Tenkara, even on their home waters, and as language was generally a problem, have not learnt much about Japanese trout fishing. My assumption, born from international fishing magazines, was of small mountain streams and rather beautiful, colourful indigenous trout. However the discovery of an article in an old journal revealed that there was no indigenous trout in Japan and their introduction was, surprise, surprise, engineered by a British diplomat, Sir Harold Parlett. W. H. Henderson's article has a nice connection with Graham's.

Our new Librarian and Curator, John McGill, has come up with a novel article listing his six most precious fishing objects. Like John, when I pondered which of all my fishing bric-a-brac I would save from a burning building there was only one item which could be described as fishing tackle. The rest were odds and ends, of little value and really all memory joggers. It was a fun exercise. I do hope that a few more members will volunteer to carry on this articles theme in the future.

By the time you receive the next edition of the Journal the season will be opening and you will have a chance to visit the new Anton fishery and see for yourself what all the fuss has been about. The winter will see Bob and the keeper team not only complete a restoration of a small part of the fishery but also prepare the fishery for the new season with the creation of new return paths, new bridges, gates and signage to name but a few of the preparatory tasks. A word of warning however: we have not had access to the fishery so far this year and the restoration is a 5 year project so don't expect too much too soon. We hope to be able to give you more information about the fishery at The Fly Day in February next year.

Thank you, as ever, to all my new and regular contributors and to Bob Wellard, Stuart McTeare and his team for providing us with the wonderful fisheries to which we can escape.

Graham Waterton
watertongraham@gmail.com

Abbotts Worthy Memories . . .

From Keith Johnson

When I first joined the Society, Abbotts Worthy was considered by many to be the jewel in the crown of our fisheries, particularly for summer's prolific evening rises on Fulling Mill. Sadly, despite the Society's best efforts, the fishery is not what it was, but on occasion can still provide a lasting memory . . .

Two seasons ago I ventured down on 1st June to find a mayfly hatch of exactly the right proportions to interest but not bore the fish. I had already caught a couple of nice stock fish from Penny Lake and decided to end the evening on Fulling Mill. A nice wild fish of about a pound came from the 'Posts', and as I neared the top of the beat I spotted a quiet rise under the near bank between the trees opposite the path back to the hut. On went a spent pattern and having crept into position a side cast under the branches landed nicely (for a change!) and up she came.

After several minutes of attempts to get into the roots of the willow alternated with dashes both up and downstream, into the net went an immaculate wild brown trout of at least two pounds, one of the prettiest trout I'd ever caught, and a reminder of the good days.

From Robin Mulholland

It seemed that when we took on Abbotts Worthy the Committee of the day were determined that it would be well used and had stocked it generously. On the opening morning the late Ken Bramer and David Millet arrived at 9.30 and left at 10.30 having caught their limits! We were at that time still plagued with limits. I lived close by and often fished in the evening. The evening rise was dependable and in 15 visits I always caught my limit, often on a Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear which was always a good pellet fly. Amongst all the stockies I did however manage to find a wild fish of some size. It was lying at the top of Penny Lake in a spot which was impossible to reach but it was in a different position on one occasion, having dropped down a couple of yards. I could now

reach it and caught it on a Red Quill. It jumped and jumped and ran and it made me clearly aware of the difference between a stockie and a wild fish. More recently, 2019, I went with David Tibbetts in late September really to look for grayling. Penny Lake contained a number of large pale trout who contrasted markedly with the residents which were much darker. I assumed that they were trout from Abbots Barton which had run up to spawn. I hooked one of them, possibly 3 pounds, it jumped and ran and almost disappeared around the corner and then came off. The hook had straightened. I was disappointed not to land this fish because I suspect that it would have been a really superb specimen. I have become aware over the years that the wild Itchen fish are, in terms of condition, the best trout of all of our fisheries. I went again in September 2020 but the flow in Penny Lake was different and the trout were not there.

On one occasion I was fishing up Fulling Mill, it was late afternoon and the Iron Blue spinners were returning. Using a Houghton Ruby I had caught two trout and was feeling quite pleased with myself, I had got it right. Little did I know that just around the corner a cloud of Caenis were dancing. As the Caenis collapsed every trout in the river started to rise but not to my Houghton Ruby! I did not have a Caenis spinner pattern with me at that time but later I dressed some and caught trout on them at Abbots Worthy. It was on this fishery that I saw the heaviest hatch of olives that I have ever seen. I was on the Main just downstream of the footbridge when quite suddenly the whole surface of the river in front of me was covered in olives. A spectacle I shall always remember. The hatch did not last long and was probably local but while it was going on the trout rose hard and took my Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear readily. It was here also that I learnt that when there are Soldier Beetles about the trout will travel quite a distance to take an orange bodied Klinkhammer.

Members always enjoyed the butterflies on this fishery but what I remember most was a moth, the Scarlet Tiger. This moth is easy to identify and it flies during the day. Sometimes they were so numerous that I wondered if the trout would take an imitation but never had the courage to dress one much less fish with it.

In our early years there were always some Grasshopper Warblers breeding on the fishery. Alas there has been a nationwide decline in Grasshopper Warbler populations and their reeling song has not been heard for a long time. Our colony at Lower Boyton has also gone.

Time passes and membership changes. I wonder how many members are aware that Penny Lake is named after Lord (Bill) Penny. He was the first director of AWRE, Aldermaston and led the team that split the atom. Unfortunately he had died before I joined the Society but he is without much doubt our most famous member.

From John Dart

There is a spot on Penny Lake near the Keeper's hut and what is now, sadly, Tom Strafford's memorial garden. Here, a large tree overhung a deep hole under the roots which I am sure is well known to most members. I say overhung as, like Tom, the tree has recently departed with only a stump remaining to remind me of better days. There are always a shoal of trout there and usually a big fish. It's a tricky spot as not only is access difficult, risking a fall into the river but the currents are made awkward by a side channel coming in opposite the tree. The big fish will sometimes be out of its hole and feeding where side stream and the main flow come together. A good slack line cast occasionally gives a drag free drift through this area with the potential for some excitement, although failure to make a connection is the usual terminal experience. One

year, in the spring, I managed to get all this right. There was a very large fish in this spot – I guessed about 3lbs – and feeding. After some acrobatics and a fluky cast we finally shook hands with each other at opposite ends of my line. Instead of the expected battle a long, dark thin trout came into the net which would have made 3lbs in good condition but nowhere near in its present state. This must have been its last year and it might have been kinder to kill it. However, I could not bring myself to do that and slipped it back; it happens to be the only place on our waters where I have seen a mink and I expect the mink did the job for me.

A year or two later I was taking a guest, a very accomplished fisherman, to Abbots Worthy toward the end of the trout season. This was in the not so long-ago days when our rules were dry fly or Skues nymph only. I walked him over some of the fishery, mentioning our rules and giving him a map. I showed him this same spot where, once again and earlier in the year, I had failed to introduce myself to the new occupant of the Penny Lake hole.



The 'Skuse me nymph trout

We had a good day for fishing. I lost sight of my guest in the Abbots Worthy jungle but we met at the allotted time for tea.

"How did you get on?"

"I had a large trout."

"Where was it?"

"At the spot you told me about under the tree."

"Well, well, that was a good bit of fishing – it's always difficult there. What did you get him on?"

"Oh, on a 'Skuse me nymph!'"

From Stuart McTeare

Saying so long to somebody or something you love for the very last time can be heart breaking, maybe nigh on impossible for reasons of absence or distance. Saying goodbye to something or somebody you have mixed emotions about, a feeling of ambivalence can be a whole different ball game, whether we need to say cheerio at all. The Abbots Worthy fishery for me is that something that I am a tad conflicted about.

The Itchen at Kings Worthy and I go back a long way, some 40 plus years, Tom Strafford and I go back just half of that time. When Tom and I first met all those years ago there was a certain spark, maybe the spark that comes from a knife grinders wheel. As we got to know each other more the wheel wore down and for the last years of our relationship I had nothing but admiration for him, the spark had a different intensity less sharp, a warmer illuminating glow, the levels of exasperation had somehow morphed into huge respect.

My relationship with the fishery on the other hand almost worked in a counter revolution. I was blind to its warts back in the day, back then there was no M3 carving a hideous gash through the landscape. Funnily enough and weirdly Tom fully approved of the motorway, we often sparred about its advent and to this day I can't understand his defence of the road. He may possibly have been the only resident in Easton to favour the progress of this automageddon but hey that was so Tom, for him the silver lining was the hundreds of tons of chalk that made up the car parking area at his fishery.

The noise pollution now on certain days particularly in leafless winter times can be very invasive on the M3 adjacent sparkling Fulling Mill carrier, for me the jewel that twinkles amidst the rest of the sluggish silt laden trapezoidal channels that are otherwise Abbots Worthy. But even Fulling Mill would find it hard to look at itself in the mirror without wincing at those two hideous blemishes that are the weirs staring right back off its face. The keeper team did try and convince Tom that the removal of the weirs would be a huge improvement but alas he was a little reluctant to do anything more than a timid half job. On Tom's passing we didn't take the immediate disrespectful decision to do the full removal in respect to his Lordship, I hope he approved but who knows what will happen now the fishery is sold?

Fulling Mill sucks through the fishery like a steam train in full flight, magnificent in all its splendour. Vivid green ranunculus wafting, gravels buffed to the last and beautiful, razor sharp finned wild trout, alert and ready to dash once spooked by a lazy careless cast or heavy footed stalk, quite the anthesis of the sluggish canal-like Main; laden with stocked fish, silt and macrophytes associated with a chalkstream environment that is clearly under stress and suffering from degradation. Bizarrely the Main struggles as a direct consequence of Fulling Mill shining, with the flow split further upstream an ongoing issue having never been fully addressed after an historic hatch collapsed decades ago.

By coincidence just recently I happened to have the old Abbots Worthy catch records wafted under my nose, ah the smell of damp paper, and what an interesting read it is, for anyone else interested it now resides in the Rod Room. The records go back to the early 1990s, a time when there were no mayfly on the upper Itchen and Abbots Worthy didn't boast the mayfly bonanza that it does now. Indeed the numbers of fish caught back then were a pale reflection of what went on in the last years of our tenure, a brace was a mighty achievement, so naysayers pick the pike bones out of that one. But hey as we all know catch returns aren't to be trusted of course, there are anglers out there who

like to keep their success hidden under a bushel, for reasons of modesty, to lead fellow anglers away from the scent of a potential slaughter or just plain fishy mendacity?

The fishery team had all hoped that we could have secured a major funded restoration project for the entire fishery which would have been really amazing but it wasn't to be and now it is with mixed emotions that I say adios. Tom and Abbotts Worthy you will be forever remembered but now it's time to say toodle-pip and move on to an exciting new era and phase of life within the Piscatorial Society. Pip-pip, like the sound alert of that fleeting glimpse of the kingfisher in your life on the river, it was a brilliant flash while it lasted and will be forever remembered but now it has gone and time to move on.



Desert Island Flies – 2

by Richard Tomiak

So our next article sees member, Don Hutton, on the beautiful but isolated Piscatoria, stranded by malevolent winds. Fortunately for him (if not Stuart), a previous storm had stranded Stuart before him on Piscatoria and the island's chalkstream, the River Kimolia, is now in pristine condition! As Don's yacht goes down, he dashes to rescue his 8 favourite flies with which to explore this river: what has he chosen we wonder?

Entertaining fantasies of being "balanced", Don decided to save 4 dry flies and 4 wet ones. He ties his own flies and has a curious nature that wants to explore patterns and ideas. As a result, many of the examples below are classical patterns with a twist (see Purple Elk Hair Caddis) but all the more interesting for that. He is not alone in this regard – this condition affects many of us who tie our own flies. Indeed the great Skues noted, talking about Tup's Indispensable: "I myself, suffering from a constitutional incapacity to leave well alone, developed a number of variations of the pattern . . ."

During our conversation we explored several themes. One of them was on the subject of barbless hooks. Having lost a fair number of fish recently on barbless hooks I came to the conclusion that wider gapes are required for better retention of fish. I have written to a number of companies but could not find what I wanted. Don commented that many barbless hooks are simply the same as barbed hooks without the barb! This is too simplistic and clearly does not work as well as required, the loss of a barb needs to be compensated to improve the catch rate. We agreed that the ideal barbless hook has the following characteristics: a long, chemically sharpened point, a wide gap, much greater than with a barbed hook and a curved tip. All of these additional features will help to compensate for the lack of a barb. The nearest I have found to meet these requirements are hooks produced by the Czech company, Hanák, who have very progressive designs (link <https://www.hanak.eu/en/brand-hanak-competition/barbless-hooks>) and the Tiemco 2499 but Don has located a company in the US called Firehole, link <https://fireholeoutdoors.com/> who produce an interesting array of barbless hooks that address these design issues. At the moment they are not sold in the UK but hopefully this will change.

We also talked about the importance of shucks as a source of food for trout. I had always thought of them as chitinous waste but Don observes that they have a significant calorific value and don't "go anywhere" once a fish has spotted them. He has observed fish just munching away on shucks and why not? They require minimal energy to capture and are plentiful in a hatch. So don't skimp on the shuck!

And once he has tied his dries, how does he view them *in vivo*? I put them in a glass of water and look up from the bottom, a precarious activity. Don tells me that the ever ingenious C&F design have come up with a canny solution called the Fish Eye. It is essentially a cube that one fills with water and has a mirror at 45 degrees to aid visualisation. Clever – and safer than the glass of water trick!

So, on with the flies.

1: Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear Nymph

Hook: 14 and 16

Thread: Black or red

Tail: Hare's mask fibres

Body: hare's mask – lighter for the rear and darker for the thorax with more guard hares

Thorax case: turkey feather (more durable) or 6 strands of peacock herl. He sometimes coats the wing case with thin UV resin for durability.

Comments: This is unweighted at the start of the season of course but later in the season it is weighted with a black nickel tungsten bead. He considers this an essential unweighted pattern for early season and his "go to" for an imitative nymph.



2: French Partridge Mayfly

Hook: Size 12

Thread: Cream or red

Tail: Pheasant tail

Body: Cream raffia or kapok dubbing

Rib: Gold or red wire or flat tinsel reversed through the palmered hackle to protect it

Hackle: Olive green palmered the length of the body

Wing: Natural French partridge

Comments: This is tied in the Irish style. It works best for him when the fly just rests on the partridge hackle and this is achieved by using a fully palmered body hackle. He tells me that he does not always tie a throat hackle and if he does it's typically brown. Also, it is at its best when fished as a damp (but not wet) rather than dry fly so it sits lower in the water. A nice pattern to fish with as it doesn't wind up the leader as some larger flies can do. During the Mayfly season he will fish this one pattern day in and out.



3: Tactical Wonderbug (you really need to look at the picture!)

Hook: Czech nymph hook – size 16

Thread: Red or black

Tail: Gold Z-Lon (trailing shuck)

Body: Orange/tan/pink – he uses mixed snowshoe rabbit fur

Under the hair wing is a loop of the same Z-Lon and a little CDC puff. He ties the Z-Lon onto the hook – shuck first and then tie the loop under the wing followed by the CDC puff. He then goes back and dubs the body, trimming the excess Z-Lon behind the loop to the length of the wing once that is tied in.

Wing: Fine deer hair – X Caddis or comparadun deer hair works best.

Comments: This works really well after the Mayfly hatch and can also work as a sedge for the rest of the season.

They are not available in the UK commercially at the moment but are available from US websites.



4: Elk Hair Caddis

Hook: 14–18

Thread: Black

Body: tan kapok

Ginger palmered hackle under the wing and he doesn't tend to trim the hackle under the wing.

Gold or silver ribbing reversed through the palmered hackle.

Wing: Bleached elk hair or deer hair

Comments: The rules of the article only allow one colour but ideally will vary according to the hatch. Try purple with bleached elk hair as an attractor pattern. He fishes this pattern in different colour forms all season. In the early season he will use deer hair and a grey-blue dubbing for the body whilst later in the season it morphs to elk hair and a brown body.



5: Wylie Coyote

Hook: Jig hook 14–16 with pink tungsten bead

Thread: Black or red

Tail: Hare's mask

Body: Hare's mask dubbing

Collar: Couple of strands of peacock herl

Comments: This is a late season nymph and works especially well for trout.



6: Large Dark Olive

Hook: 14

Thread: Olive

Tail: CDL

Body: Turkey biot in olive

Thorax: Hare's mask

Wing: 3 or 4 CDC tips

Comments: This is a great early season dry fly. Remember to wet the biot to aid in tying.



7: Chubby Chernobyl

Hook: 12

Thread: Tan

Tail: Pearl Krystal Flash

Underbody: Gold/tan sparkling dubbing (ice dub or equivalent)

Body: Tan 2mm foam

Legs: Fine Sillilegs or equivalent

Wing: White Antron or similar

Comments: When I saw the photo of this I thought it looked a dog's dinner! However Don tells me that it has elements of a lot of different insects and consequently can be very successful under a wide range of conditions. It works well in all seasons and even subs as a mayfly dun! It **may** raise eyebrows with more traditional members . . .



8: Don's Caddis Pupa

Hook: Jig hook 14–18 with a black nickel tungsten bead

Thread: Orange

Body: Orange ice dubbing

Hackle: Partridge or Brahma hen soft hackle (one or two turns)

Collar: use the tying thread to make a small orange collar just behind the bead

Comments: Don believes that late in season, fish get tuned into colour and orange is a good colour to explore. It was a close run thing in having to choose between orange and yellow, another great attractor pattern according to Don.



As ever, we have a selection of nearly made-its and these are below:

Nearly made-it 1: Adams (upwing version)

Hook: 16–24, favourite size is 18

Tail: Coq De Leon

Body: Muskrat belly or equivalent blue grey superfine dubbing

Wing: Grizzly hackle tips

Hackle: Don usually uses a single dark barred ginger hackle instead, even better is Cree though he finds procuring good Cree hackle is in itself a real conundrum!

Comment: He carries the Adams in both the upwing and parachute version (which is an emerger). It was a close run thing between the Adams and the Large Dark Olive . . . He likes it as do most people, as it is a fairly generic upwing pattern and works extremely well on our chalkstreams as an olive imitation. It can be used to cover BWOs, iron blues, pale wateries, etc.

Nearly made-it 2: FR Nymph

Hook: 14 jig hook with a black tungsten bead

Thread: Black

Body: Yellow or orange dubbing – from ice dub to superfine

Comments: A very simple colour attractor nymph.

Nearly made-it 3: Griffiths Gnat

Hook: 18–26

Thread: Black

Tail: None

Body: Peacock herl

Hackle: Grizzly hackle palmered forward the whole length of the shank

Comment: Always worth a shout on fish which seem particularly fussy. Probably the simplest “micro” dryfly to tie.

Nearly made-it 4: Don’s version of Sherry Spinner

Hook: 14

Thread: Red

Tail: CDL

Body: Kapok in rusty brown

Wing: Badger hackle 4–5 turns, bottom cut trim so it sits flat on water with semi-circle of hackle on the top. Basically, the cut hackle “prints” like the wings of a spinner.

Comments: Fishing the spinner at night is always a challenge to see the fly, so the badger wing brings better visibility whilst keeping the spent appearance to a fish viewed from below.

So there we have it – an interesting selection of patterns that for me anyway, explored avenues which I have not been down and will make for busy winter’s evenings at the fly tying bench. And indeed fascinating to explore next season on the water with such novelties as the purple Elk Hair Caddis and the Chubby Chernobyl! On reflection, what came through in our conversation and then seeing the pictures, is Don’s great belief in attractor patterns, triggers and colours. Noticeably absent is black as a dominant colour in any of the chosen eight.

So, the one question that remains is, which is the *primus inter pares*, the one above all that must be saved? For Don it was an easy choice – a Gold Ribbed Hare’s Ear nymph.

Bon chance!

Lessons from God

by JSD

In the year 2000 I went on the fishing holiday of my life, parts of which I covered in an earlier article (Journal 141 at page 16). To continue:

After a week's bone fishing in The Bahamas we flew to Miami, and then on to Buenos Aires. We had an overnight stay in Buenos Aires. That first afternoon I went to The Argentinean branch of "The Urban Angler" and collected a Sage rod which I had ordered. It was a Sage XP5904 which I still have to this day. It has caught me many fish over the years.

That evening our party had the chance to dine at a famous steakhouse which had a fire pit in the window roasting meat. The service and the steaks were excellent, with G saying it was some of the best steak he had ever had.

Next morning we then flew with *Aerolineas Argentinas* to Chubut, Patagonia. This is a three hour flight, and avoids a 24 hour drive on the potholed roads.

We were collected from the airport by the guides and stayed at El Encuentro Lodge, an excellent lodge located on the river Futaleufu. The lodge was the first outfit to provide fly fishing trips in Central Patagonia. It was, and still is, run by the Beale family who have welcomed anglers from all over the world and now the next generation have taken over the lodge. In fact I was planning a trip to visit the lodge in 2020 when Covid stopped me in my tracks. A trip is still on but we will have to see what the future holds. The guides were excellent and friendly and the family looked after the party very well.

A normal day's fishing was to go out after breakfast, fish 'til lunchtime or later, and then return between 2pm and 4pm for a "siesta". We fished again until dark at about 8pm then back for a meal at 9pm.

We had hoped to be there at "grasshopper time" which was early that year but we had caught the last few days of the season. That week in 2000 we had some good fishing on the river, both from bank and boat. I recall I caught my first Argentine trout on a grasshopper pattern (fished on my new Sage rod) on the river which flows past the lodge. Ant patterns were also popular as were green Woolly Buggers fished out in the deep water. At the time I had a shooting head and a fast sink line which enabled me to cover fish normally not coverable by standard tackle. I had some nice fish, wild rainbows of up to 3lbs and some browns from the hitherto unfished water far out in the middle of the river.

The lodge had access to fishing on other rivers. One river, the Arroyo Pescado, is like a large chalkstream which flows out of the limestone ground in the middle of some of the grassland. It is gin clear and you can see very large trout, wild rainbow trout up to 8lbs – catching them is a different matter! I did however manage to catch some of their smaller brethren, wild fish of 2 to 3lbs on dry fly – superb fishing.

I recall a few days later some of our party returned to fish the Arroyo Pescado in a high wind which was blowing all the land based flies onto the water, the rise was prolific and they came back to say they had 100 fish between them!

I recall I thought it was no good fishing the water near the lodge due to the high wind and went riding in the area. To my delight I saw some Pacific salmon spawning. I was



View from El Encuentro Lodge

also gratified to learn I had been right not to go fishing locally because the others who fished locally caught nothing!

During that time we also went into The Los Alerces National Park. This is in Chubut Province, some 30 miles from Esquel. It is a park of 2,630 square kilometers along the border with Chile, best known for the alerce trees from which the park takes its name. We went to fish the Rio Rivadavia, a large river which flows at the foot of The Andes.

We walked down to the river accompanied by condors circling overhead and came on a gin clear creek flowing out of the ground. You could clearly see large trout swimming around at a depth of between 4 to 6 feet.

I thought a weighted nymph induced take; chalkstream style – cannot be too difficult.

It was difficult! No matter how carefully I placed my fly on the fish's nose I got no response although they were clearly seen to be feeding on nymphs.

G appeared some yards away on the corner and I saw him cast to a fish. After a couple of casts he was bent into a good trout which he duly released. He caught about another six fish before moving on.

I caught nothing that day and neither did anyone else but in an illustration of luck in fishing, two members of our party made a right turn at the junction with the main river and got two large trout under a log in the main river. The rest of us turned left and got no fish, which again illustrates how you need to be lucky and in the right place when fishing.

After dinner in the bar I asked G how it was he caught and I got none.

With some reluctance and more drinks he told me.

"Well I was using one of the new tungsten leaded flies. They have just come out.



Lunchtime

Tungsten is heavier than your brass headed flies and sinks quicker. I notice the bottom was covered in weed so I let the fly sink into the weed. When a trout came past I lifted the fly so it came out of the weed.

Then instead of lifting the fly again; and bear in mind those trout have seen everything; I let the fly drop down towards the weed just as a nymph would seek shelter. The lift and then the downwards motion they had not seen before. The trout obviously thought the fly was good to eat and so it was not difficult to get them."

Words of wisdom from a master angler God – what a lesson and a time in my life I shall not forget.

I had two more lessons in life on that holiday. On our way home we stopped for petrol and someone commented petrol was leaking from our tank due probably to a stone penetrating the tank. One member of our party got out of the vehicle, got all the party out and insisted he was going no further until the tank was fixed. It turned out he was in the petroleum industry and the "Petroleum Times" had reported the death of two people when a car exploded as a result of such a leak.

The lodge had to hire another car to get us home.

"A wise man takes his wife flowers". My wife is a very, very keen flower arranger and comes up with some amazing arrangements. That year she was competing in the Nationals and I took home some strange material which I had spotted on the beach in The Bahamas. Being dried, no problems with Customs, and that year she won first prize in her class. What an end to the year.

An Irish Story

by Barry Hannigan

First printed in Journal 75, June 1986

Those of you with brown knees will remember the MO's hygiene inspection. This was, and still is, an essential component of the Military Ritual, always conducted with much gravitas. Thus the MO is seen gloomily peering into DTLs and attempting to define, with prods from a short stick, the mysteries of the grease trap. I nominated myself to perform this function in What Nepal, which meant a pleasant flight and rest overnight in Katmandu, with a little roulette at the Annapurna Hotel, followed the next day by a short hop to Pukhara in the West.

The enthusiasm was mainly kindled by a sahib who had born back in triumph from the Phewa Tal what looked like a lake olive, and suggested it might be worth putting some flies around the lake. Thus far the plan had worked.

There was a little difficulty persuading the British gorkha officers of the reasonableness of things. It is a hard life for these strapping young men, even in Pokhara, for long on the hippy trail, and then inhabited by an errant population who believed in pot and, it was fondly thought, in free love. There were some more stable members of society, including an American evangelist sect, containing some fine examples of strong limbed American womanhood, with one of whom a young officer was much struck, but could only sate himself by attending evensong so regularly it was considered he was in danger of conversion.

However, one afternoon I got down to the lake and from a somewhat shifty native hire a small rowing boat and with anticipation set off onto this beautiful lake. The western Himalayas including the Fish Tail and Dhaulagiri stood stark white on the horizon. I took some potentially stunning photographs which failed to come out. Years before, I had hooked a masher on a fly on the Arun Kola high up in the East, and there was the chance again. But what fly? Certainly not a lure, perhaps a Tups Indispensable? I decided on a Teal, Blue and Silver and fished up and down. The boat was leaky, the wind inconsistent, no fish were evident, and hippies frolicked on the bank, not availing of this rare opportunity for ablutions.

Beaten, I pulled in. To the boatman, with wounded dignity, I said: "Maccha chaina", which means simply; there are no fish.

With dignity also he said: "No sahib, there are no fish. They do not come till the monsoon, when they can get up the river."

"You did not tell me."

"You did not ask me."

Akin to beating a cover in June, or December on a sea trout loch, but at least there was evensong.

Simply Fishing

by Graham Coley

A few years ago in late June, just above the railway bridge at Parsonage Farm on the River Wylfe, a trout was rising regularly in a run a few inches from the far bank, confidently taking mayfly duns. Without exception, every artificial presented over it was completely ignored, but the naturals continued to be taken. Then a gust of wind caught my French Partridge mayfly, which hooked the vegetation about three feet in front of the rising fish. A gentle tug, and the leader parted company with the fly, which tumbled into the river to be engulfed almost immediately by the fish.

Generally speaking, wild brown trout and grayling expect natural up-winged emergers, duns and spinners to be carried along the flow contours in the river, and these contours vary in their flow rates according to the distance from both the bank and any obstacles, and the depth in the water column. Our artificial flies are attached to a leader, which in turn is attached to a fly line and often these will lie on, or in, the river across the velocity gradients with the inevitable consequence that at some point in its drift the artificial will be dragged across the flow contours. This unnatural behaviour may either spook a wild fish, or fail to persuade it that the fly might be edible.

Fine tippets, long leaders (15–20), thin fly lines, and a casting technique which lays down the leader with a wiggle which takes time to be straightened by the flow, infinite patience and technical casting skill, together with pin-point accuracy can all be deployed to achieve some drag free drift. But COVID contemplations in the enforced lockdowns of 2020 led me to research whether there were better and simpler ways for mere mortals to tackle the challenge of drag, which would work effectively on our chalkstreams.

I was immediately struck by the realisation that generations of fly fishers in both Europe and Japan, driven by the need either to catch fish or starve, had developed very similar approaches, both of which had the potential to present artificial flies more naturally.

In Japan, there is the long and well-documented tradition of Tenkara, which continues up to the present day. This involves the use of a long rod with the casting line attached to its end. The primary purpose of this approach is to allow the fly to be presented to the fish with no line on the water. Drag free drifts are achieved by holding the rod across the stream flow lines and by keeping the line off the water. Subtle manipulation of flies fished just below the surface can further enhance the illusion of life. Additionally because no line has to be lifted from the water between casts further disturbance to the fish is avoided.

Similarly for most of the documented history of fly fishing in Europe and Colonial America, the fisherman used a long rod, with a casting line of a braided material such as horsehair, which was attached to the end of the rod. There is a well-documented history of how tackle of this type was used to fish classical North Country flies. Rods of 12–14 typically had three spliced sections with Ash or Willow for the butt section; hickory or hazel for the mid-section; and lancewood or whalebone for the tip. The idea was to have a powerful butt section and a pliable tip for casting. Lines were fixed and constructed from horsehair, and the focus was on presenting the flies upstream with the line kept off the water using short drag free drifts.

Modern Tenkara rods are made from carbon-fibre with a telescopic construction and are usually from 11 to about 14 in length. They are designed to cast a level fluorocarbon line of about 0.3mm diameter and a level tippet. The line is chosen to be the same length as the rod, and a tippet of about 3 is used. The fly is cast with a short vertical casting stroke such that on the back cast the line extends at about 45 degrees, and on the forward cast the rod is stopped high so that only the fly touches the water on delivery, followed by the appropriate length of tippet for a sub-surface presentation. The rod is held high throughout the drift and forms an isosceles triangle with the line. Short drag free drifts of about 3 seconds are employed.

I made a resolution to fish solely with Tenkara on the chalkstreams in 2021.

And this is my progress report.

All of my fishing this year both on the Society's waters, and the SDCFA's waters on the Avon has been exclusively with Tenkara.

I used two different rods: TenkaraUSA's Rhodo rod for fishing on the Wylye, which can be configured into 3 different lengths (8 10 , 9 9 , 10 6) to take account of vegetation, and Discover Tenkara's 12 Karasu for fishing on the Avon. I found it beneficial to use the longest rod, which the conditions would permit. After a bit of practice, the technique has proven to be extremely effective and thoroughly enjoyable, enabling accurate presentation with drag free drifts, and both trout and grayling have consistently taken my artificial flies, extremely confidently.



The Akiyamago fly

I have used either a classical French Partridge for the mayfly, or an ancient Japanese pattern from the Akiyamago region for olive duns and grannom.

The Japanese pattern predates eyed hooks, so I tied my version on ultra-sharp Gamakatsu GP110 lightweight spade ended hooks and formed the eye from the thinnest grade of primrose braided beading silk strengthened with a very thin coat of UV cured resin. The free ends are whipped down to the bend and trimmed to form a short tag. A well figured furnace hackle is palmered the full length of the shank, and then clipped to form the abdomen. The finished fly is about a size 16.

Another classic Japanese pattern: a Jun Kebari, fished as a Skues nymph, just sub-surface has been a revelation. This has proven to be a deadly and visually exciting form of fishing with the fish rolling just sub-surface to take the fly. Being relatively close to the fish has not appeared to present any problems.

My version is tied in sizes 14 and 16. It features a dubbed body (rear half black, front half red) and a hackle formed from a hen pheasant's wing covert feather. The hackle is tied with just two turns and the soft flexible fibres slope slightly backwards, and if fully folded back would extend no more than a couple of mms behind the body. The size selected depends on the water: if it is deep or broken then a size 14; if shallow or smooth a size 16.

Where or when rules permit, the technique has also been very effective when fishing a size 20 PTN with a 1.5mm tungsten bead. To achieve a dead drift I have found that it



That Wylie trout

helped with visibility to put a few inches of bright red monofilament between the casting line and the leader, and then to just hold it off the water.

Before the season opened I wondered how on earth I would be able to deal with any large fish with a fixed line and without a reel, if I should have the good fortune to encounter one. And I could find nothing helpful in the literature about this.

I now have the answer.

Once again, it was in June at Parsonage Farm on the Wylfe. I was fishing with my guest Peter and we were having lunch and contemplating the river where it narrowed at the head of a pool, when the surface was broken by a huge shoulder, which took a mayfly dun with a porpoise roll. We looked in amazement since this fish seemed to be far too big for the river. Peter manoeuvred into position and cast to the neck of the pool and yet again the Wylfe wind deposited the fly into the sedges on the far bank and it would not come back. Retrieval would have ruined the opportunity, so it became my turn. My French Partridge dropped gently in the gap and it instantly disappeared into a small whirlpool. Fortunately for me the fish immediately tried to run upstream, at which point I discovered that a Tenkara rod was capable of bending double without breaking. I managed to keep the fish above me and then as it came back in the current Peter captured it in the net. This is my biggest wild brown trout outside Iceland, and it measured 19 . It was carefully returned having never been removed from the water.

As I have grown in confidence, Tenkara has become my method of choice for fishing rivers when wading is permitted. It is effective, enjoyable and liberating, and just Simply Fishing.

References:

www.discovertenkara.com

www.tenkarausa.com

The Colonial Anglers Manual of Flyfishing by Ken Reinard 1995

The North Country Fly by Robert L Smith 2015



How the Brook Trout Came to Japan

by *W H Henderson*

Originally written in June 1986 and reprinted from Journal No. 77

In the mountains behind Nikko, about 100 miles north of Tokyo, lie the lakes Yunoko and Chuzenji. They are connected by a small river, the Yukawa, part of which used to be an Imperial fishing preserve.

A trout hatchery stands on the banks of this river not far from where it enters Lake Chuzenji. The hatchery is now operated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry but the name of Sir Harold Parlett CMG, who spent nearly 40 years in Japan, is closely connected with it and is still remembered in the locality.

Harold George Parlett was born in the Parish of St. Saviour in Jersey, CI on 2nd November 1869. He entered the Japan Consular Service in 1890 in which he served until his retirement for health reasons in 1927, at which time he was Oriental Secretary at the British Embassy in Tokyo.

Parlett was a keen shot and a fairly good one; but his happiest moments were those spent by a trout stream and trout were to become a living memorial to him.

There were no indigenous trout in Japan and the first to appear there were some rainbow, the spawn of which were imported from California in 1877 and hatched in the Tama River near Tokyo. Subsequently the Imperial fishing preserves at Lake Chuzenji were stocked with some of this variety. However these could not be fished without Imperial sanction. Fishing near Lake Chuzenji Sir Harold toiled all day and had caught nothing. Towards evening he reached a fair-sized pool; and with little hope he cast his fly. Then the miracle happened. First one trout rose, and then another, till soon he had a gleaming catch. Then from the far end of the pool emerged four Imperial keepers armed with staves and in strange uniforms bearing down on him. From a distance they shouted to him to stop. He knew then he had been poaching the Imperial preserves, and were it not that he was a diplomat and an ignorant foreigner, only the Heavenly Clemency itself could have saved him from execution.

Sir Harold then decided to import some trout of his own to enjoy better sport without risking his neck. In 1902 he imported 20,000 spawn of brook trout from Oregon, through Dodwell and Co., in Tokyo, and assisted by a Mr Glover and a Mr Oshima, he hatched these eggs on the banks of the River Yukawa. Thus began what is now the Government hatchery operated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

Thomas Blake Glover was a native of Aberdeen and died in Tokyo in 1911, at the age of 73. Mr. Oshima was still living in Chuzenji in 1962, an old and respected member of the community.

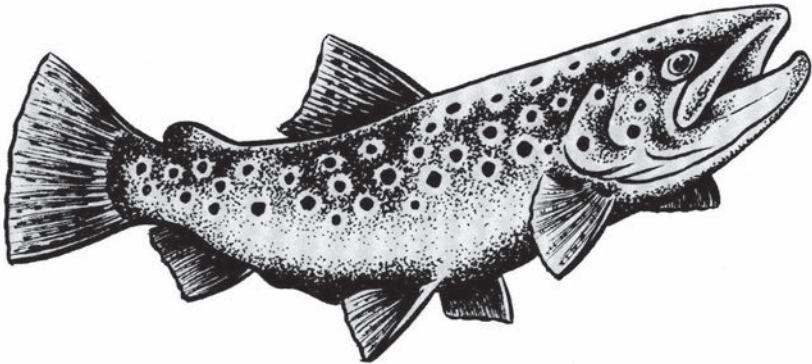
The hatchery is now mainly devoted to rainbow, which is hatched in many parts of Japan and has become an exporter, mainly to the USA. Locally, however, and adapting the name Parlett to Japanese pronunciation, the brook trout are still known as 'Pareto' and despite World War II and the passage of so many years, Sir Harold's photograph still hangs on the wall of the office of the manager of the hatchery. All the old letters, labels and other records of the first brook trout are faithfully and carefully preserved.

Yu in Japanese stands for hot water; thus the natural hot springs at Yumoto on the

North bank of Yunoko, lake of hot water, Yunotaki, waterfall of hot water and the river Yukawa, where Sir Harold hatched his trout, hot water river.

There is a beautiful waterfall (Yunotaki) where the water overflows Lake Yunoko and cascades down to form the Yukawa. At the foot of the falls there stands a stone monument to Sir Harold, raised there by local subscription, and at the entrance to the hatchery office stands another stone monument in the Japanese style erected by Sir Harold's family. When Sir Harold left Japan in 1927 the Emperor bestowed on him the Order of the Rising Sun. He died in Lymington, Hants, in June 1945.

The foregoing is based on information received from Mr Lyall Parlett, his son and the Bulletin of the Jersey Society in London.



How a Changing Environment Affects Grayling Survival at Different Life Stages

From John Dart with photos from Dick Hawkes and edits from Bob Wellard, adapted for the Piscatorial Society Journal, from publications by Dr Jessica Marsh of the Salmon and Trout Research Centre, Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, The River Laboratory, Wareham, UK.

This article is a synopsis of a study, part-funded by the Piscatorial Society, utilising 17 years of the Society's data on Brown trout and Grayling populations in the Wylye. A synopsis article is adapted from a summary of the study produced by the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, which can be found here: <https://www.gwct.org.uk/fishing/research/grayling/how-a-changing-environment-affects-grayling-at-different-life-stages/> The original article referenced below and available on the link as well as in the PS website Library.

Summary

- Grayling numbers fell by over 75% in all age-classes during the study period 2003–2019.
- Low river flow in summer was linked to reduced adult survival, and lower flow in winter was linked to reduced juvenile survival.
- More days of higher summer temperatures, and more cover with river plants were both associated with reduced survival of some age-classes.
- These conditions are becoming more common on the Wylye river, and the impacts they have on grayling may be a warning for the future of other species.
- How might these impacts be reduced by changes in our River Management Policies? Findings from this study, and those expected from the current study in progress (also part-funded by the PS) which is designed to identify those factors influencing **both** growth and survival, will impact our river management policy to be sympathetic to both grayling and trout. Such policies are particularly relevant to the development of our new fishery on the Anton, which is known for its head of large grayling, and may include:
 - Continuing pressure to limit abstraction of water for public supply during low flow periods should ensure that flow is not reduced by more than 10% during summer/autumn and 15% in winter (restrictions in place on the River Wylye since 2018).
 - Identify areas in the river favoured by grayling and maintain these as 'grayling recruitment zones' by habitat maintenance including:
 - Retaining reaches with 'naturally' limited growth of macrophytes due to deep water or shading by the canopy.
 - Weed cutting before grayling spawning and/or increasing suitable foraging habitat for young grayling by maintaining or introducing bankside shading to limit seasonal growth of macrophytes.
 - Increasing canopy cover by a program of south bank tree planting and/or

-
- adjusting the management of existing trees to reduce macrophyte cover whilst providing shade to alleviate high summer temperatures.
- Increase pressure on polluters to reduce sediment and nutrient input into the upper Wyle reaches (phosphate stripping is being increased by the Warminster sewage treatment works).



Background

Grayling are a less widely known member of the salmon family. Having a lower tolerance for pollution than trout or salmon their presence can be an indicator of good water quality.

Before grayling ecology was better understood they used to be thought to compete with trout and many trout fishing organisations, including the Piscatorial Society, removed them in an attempt to bolster trout populations. However, more recent evidence has shown that grayling and trout occupy different environmental niches such that the presence of grayling does not negatively affect the trout population. Many of us now enjoy grayling fishing and value these fine wild fish.

However, our grayling populations have been declining in recent decades. Grayling are vulnerable to changes in temperature, river flow, water quality, etc. As with all fish species, grayling have several different life stages from egg to mature adult. Individuals in these different stages and at different ages move from one habitat to another and have different age-specific requirements. This means that the species needs good conditions, in multiple different habitats and locations, to thrive and that grayling of different age classes might be susceptible to different environmental changes. Few studies have tried to tease out the impact of environmental changes on the variously aged fish within a species. The River Wyle in Wiltshire is towards the edge of the range where grayling are naturally found, and this study examined the impacts of many factors on the survival of grayling aged between one and five years.



What they did

The scientists studied several age-classes of grayling in the River Wylye. These included juveniles (less than one year old), one-year-old subadults, and mature adults aged two to five years. They monitored grayling survival in these age-classes from 2003–2019, and gathered additional data for many other variables including:

- River flow
- Air temperature (as a proxy for water temperature)
- Food abundance
- River plant cover
- Abundance of older trout at the site

The scientists then looked for associations between grayling survival at different ages, and changes in these factors.

What they found

Overall, grayling numbers fell by over 75% in all age classes throughout the study. This was mostly driven by a loss of mature adult fish.

Changing river flows were particularly bad for grayling survival, with different effects on the different ages. More days of lower flow in winter were linked to the reduced success of juvenile fish surviving from eggs. More days of very low flow in summer (where amount of water flowing in the river on a given day was in the lowest 10% of days seen) were linked to lower survival for both sub-adult and mature adult fish.

More days of high air temperatures in summer were associated with lower survival for juveniles.

Survival of both juveniles and sub-adults was also affected by the amount of aquatic plant cover in the river – with more cover the availability of suitable gravel for spawning is reduced along with annual recruitment and survival.

What does this mean?

More extreme environmental conditions seem to be becoming more frequent on the River Wylfe, with the number of days of very low flow in summer, lower flow in winter and high air temperatures in summer being above average in the past few years. The impact of these changes appear to have been detrimental to grayling survival, with their numbers falling to less than a quarter of what was recorded in 2003, because of negative effects on all the different grayling life stages. The Wylfe is located towards the southern edge of the grayling's range, and these conditions may also challenge the more northerly grayling populations as the climate changes in future. Also, because grayling are more sensitive to temperature changes than other salmonid species, they can give an early warning of what the future might hold for these other fish species. A better understanding of the environmental factors affecting the vulnerable life stages of grayling can help fishing societies like ours, and conservationists, design management the strategies, outlined in the introductory summary, to help protect them. The new study being carried out by Dr Marsh is focusing on factors affecting grayling growth as well as survival and can be expected to provide us with data to further refine our river management policies to favour the maintenance of populations of larger adult grayling.



Our Keeper Team Electrofishing on the Wylfe

Funding

The Grayling Research Trust, The Piscatorial Society and Wessex Water.

Read the original paper (available in the PS website Library and online)

Marsh, J. E., Cove, R. J., Britton, J. R., Wellard, R. G., House, A & Gregory, S.D. (2021).

Medium-term environmental changes influence age-specific survival estimates in a salmonid population. *Freshwater Biology* <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/fwb.13736>

Society Lunch Party

The Piscatorial Society held their Summer Party on Saturday 21st August at the Bridge Inn beside the River Avon at Upper Woodford. Having been delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic, it was the first and long-awaited social function for the Society in several years and attracted 87 attendees. Judging by the many kind letters of appreciation, everyone really appeared to have enjoyed themselves. There was a warm atmosphere of members meeting up again after such a long absence and the Bridge Inn really did magnificently to give us a party to remember.

In a short address, our President, Paddy Douglas-Pennant, welcomed our official guests: Simon Cain and two of our waterlords, Mr Ed Bailey and his wife Heiki of the Avon at Lake Estate, Mr James Liddell and his wife Rachel from the River Anton. He also thanked Tony Diment for organising the arrangements and Ingrid Burt for her very considerable assistance.

Sincere thanks go to Lorna and Emma van Vuuren and their team at the Bridge for making things work so efficiently and giving us such a sumptuous lunch.

The following photographs hopefully go some way to capturing the spirit and happiness of the occasion:



The marquee set for lunch



From left to right: Anthony Lowes, Geoff Fleming, David Watson, Ingrid Burt, Dick Hawkes



From left to right: Tina Plenderleith, Richard Farrant, Andrea Lightwood, Robin Lightwood, Mel Wellard, Bob Wellard, Tanya Hatcher, Simon Cain



From left to right: Gillian Watts, John Stephens, Sue Welling, Paul Welling



From left to right: Alistair Alexander, Harvey White, Libby Alexander, Jan Barstow



From left to right: John Dart, Geoff Fleming



From left to right: Heiki Bailey, Paddy Douglas-Pennant, Christine Diment, Ed Bailey

Is This a Record?

by Pat Stacpoole

On the desk in the Rod Room lies our elegant leather-bound Avon Record Book. This edition starts in 1992 and continues the unique Piscatorial Society custom of reflecting our commitment to 'Angling and Conversation'. It records the observations, ideas, fellowship and enjoyment of members over the years. Entries have dwindled over the past two years to just two unheeded exhortations by an ex-Honorary Secretary.

Also on the desk are booklets on Health and Safety requirements and a formal printed Visitors' Book to be completed by all visitors stating Purpose of Meeting, etc. Fishing? More information on our activities is compiled in the statistics and comments on our efficient but ephemeral website.

What is the point of all of these records?

This may sound like a moan from a (very) old member. Dismiss it if you wish and claim that you have no time to ponder, write and record but before you do so, flick through the pages and see how members (possibly as busy as you) have found and



The Rod Room desk

given pleasure in writing down the joys that surround the simple business of outwitting fish.

To highlight this I had thought to read through the thirty years written up in this volume noting comments of special interest. I had five pages of notes before I was halfway through. An impossible task so I must generalise in the hope that something will catch your eye and that you will write in some wondrous observation next time you fish.

The pages give lively descriptions of New Members Days, Mayfly Suppers, Grayling Events and less formal and impromptu occasions – not just the names but the celebrations involved. Regular contributors notably Howard Stevens, John Shone, both elegant calligraphers, Anthony Lowes, Nicky and Robin Mulholland give the feel of each season. For thirty years until 2006 that innovative and generous raconteur Claude Batault, a much loved member, gives his inimitable account of his visits and large fish outwitted. Members may wish to take up his offer of a day's fishing on the Seine if visiting Paris.

The great and good from home and overseas are welcomed as guests and, in justified envy, extol the beauty of our well-kept river. Members rejoice in introducing their children and friends to our obsession and in some cases to welcome them years later to the Society as members.

Unusual wild life is recorded -whimbrels, a golden orfe, salmon, early cuckoos, three Polish poachers, an evening fly past by a kingfisher and a Spitfire, a young otter (later identified as a mink and later still as an ex-mink), a tree creeper's nest by the Rod Room, Reeve's apple doughnuts, mating nets and much else. And of course mayflies; worryingly sparse or in clouds as in 1996 on our water and in the 'Spire Fire' at Salisbury Cathedral – where a smoke-like cloud of mayflies was so dense that the Fire Brigade was called out. Views are expressed on bank management, woody debris, swans and much else demonstrating our happy habit of any two fishers having at least three different theories.

Fly patterns are discussed. Is the Rat-faced McDougall permitted? It must be as it was used by Hal Thirlaway, former Water Warden and inventor of the Janus. How was it contrived that Neville Leefe, then sadly confined to a chair, managed to catch his last great eight pound trout in the concrete rimmed 'bathing pool' by the Rod Room, and is a *crouton* a French fly?

The Leat figures largely as the regularly replenished source of what our year Book politely calls '*inappropriate fish*' supplied by our neighbour. The largest of over ten pounds was targetted by Antoine Houlez-Basset and is commemorated by our set of table mats. The Leat is still well fished and recorded by older and less steady members.

We all know the good work that the keepers do but we are reminded how the Rod Room and its historic contents have been developed and cared for. We read descriptions of the spring cleaning, maintenance and development of the Rod Room under the stewardship of Nicky Mulholland, Fiona McTeare and others showing us what has been done to achieve our present elegance and comfort.

As one would expect of Piscatorials, modesty prevails and there are no columns of fish caught. There is a place for that in the annual fishing returns, invaluable for the management of our fisheries. These remain essential for the husbandry of our rivers.

There is also, I believe, a place for chronicling the less statistically definable benefits and delights of a day's fishing. For that reason I hope that members will keep up our

gentle convention of writing down their observations and pleasures. Their comments, in turn, will give pleasure and food for thought to others over the years.

My Six Favourite Angling Related Possessions

chosen by John McGill

Brass 4lbs. Salter Spring Balance c. 1966

This was the first good quality angling item which I bought with my 'Saturday job' pocket money, aged 14. It was used to good effect to weigh the superb Roach which we used to catch by long trotting on the tidal lower reaches of the River Kenn near Clevedon, Somerset. We had to take the bus to get there. We also had to take the bus home but with our waders caked in dark alluvial mud.



Spring Balance

Small Solid Turned Brass Trout Priest c. 1968

I've always been interested in tackle tinkering, building rods and tying flies. I made this priest myself in the metalwork workshop, one lunchtime, while still at school. It has killed countless trout and grayling over the years. I still carry it but use it very infrequently today.



Brass Trout Priest

Stamped, Embossed, Continental, Base Metal Button Stamped 'Petri Heil' c. 1880

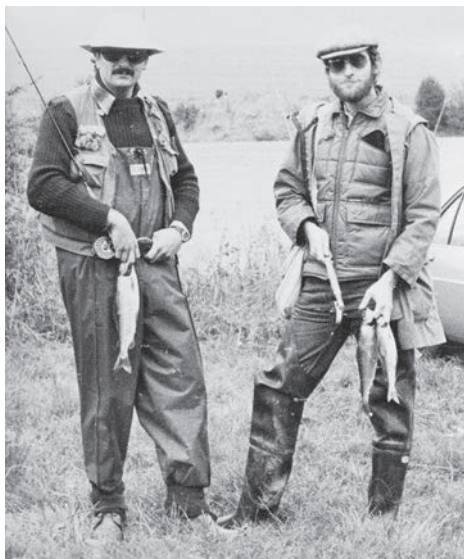
I bought this button at a vintage tackle auction in 1992. It came in a fitted jeweller's presentation case. I had it silver mounted and a brooch pin added. Originally, I think this must have been an award or prize of some sort? I always have it pinned to my gear.



Metal Button – 'Petri Heil'

Back & White Photograph c. 1982

Taken after fishing for grayling on the Wylie with old uni. mate and world's best angling buddy, Kiwi Ned. He's now resident in Australia but we get to meet up every few years. Taken with Ned's camera propped on a fence post and set with a 30 second (poseur) delay. The B&W film stock was 'borrowed' from the uni. labs. I'm the much better looking one on the left.



The Author and Kiwi Ned

**A Mounted Pair of Windscreen Labels
1997/2000**

I was a Founder Member of the Wild Trout Society in 1997. They became the Wild Trout Trust in 2000. It's only c. 25 years ago, but I wonder how many of the original Society labels will have survived?



WTS Windscreen Labels

**'Away You Go Sunshine' –
Watercolour on Paper 2021**
Brown Trout, South Esk River,
Tasmania, Autumn 2015. "... when
there is movement of the larger fish as
spawning time approaches ..."
Caught and released by the artist,
Ned Pankhurst. From an underwater
photo' taken by his son, Sam.



'Away You Go Sunshine'





Presidential Pontification

by Paddy Douglas-Pennant

As I write this in the middle of September I am conscious of the fact that we will be losing our popular Abbots Worthy water on the Itchen in a few weeks' time. We have had a long and harmonious relationship with the Byng family – in particular with our much-loved Tom Strafford who was both owner and custodian there for many years. It is understandable that his son, William, who lives in Durham and who has sons of an age to need the money, should now wish to sell the fishery, and we are very pleased that – fingers crossed as always – he has found a buyer. I am particularly pleased because it means that the Society will receive compensation of £14,000 for surrendering our lease one year early, and that bonus will be welcome as we take on the challenge and cost of managing three miles of the Anton next year.

What became clear from our discussions with William and his agents is that there is a very strong demand for purchasing first class chalkstream fishing and that capital values certainly far exceeded our expectations. This has implications for the Society in that for many years we have been squirrelling away entrance fees and other surpluses into a war chest against the day that we thought we may be able to buy Abbots Worthy. In reality the chances of the Society being able to purchase really first-class fishing are slim so we on the committee are carrying out a review in the months ahead into what we can sensibly do with some of these reserves to improve members' experience generally. We have no hard and fast rules on this, nor will we act as children let loose in a sweet shop! I will report on our conclusions next year.

Meanwhile the Anton is a fabulous opportunity for the Society which we aim to exploit to the full and I have every confidence that members will be pleased with what we have taken on. Bob has already managed to secure near 100% EA funding for a project to improve a 900 metre stretch of the Westover fishery. The work will be carried out by our own keeper staff in October and I must warn members that this might result in some minor but temporary neglect in the normal winter maintenance schedule elsewhere.

My appeal for volunteers to fill various vacancies in our management team turned out to be much more fruitful than I had expected. First of all, and following sage advice from a former president, we decided to improve on the independence and transparency of the Internal Audit Committee by appealing for financially experienced members not currently on the Board to join Dick Hawkes, a long-serving Board member who some

years ago acted as our stopgap treasurer before Hugo was recruited. He thus has a good knowledge of our finances. Our first find was Tim Attenborough, a long-time member who will be known to many (perhaps because he always wears a Society tie whilst fishing!) and whose father Philip was a committee member in the past. Tim has agreed to take on the job of chairing the IAC and I hope that he will be formally voted onto the Board next March. Meantime, under the Society's rules he is participating in all Society management meetings as a "probationer Board member". We then got lucky with Andrew Nolan who also volunteered for the IAC. Andrew is a very new member of the Society which we see as a definite advantage and he will act as the "independent member" of the three-man IAC. That is to say that he will not be a member of the Board. Andrew has a depth of financial experience and a lot of enthusiasm that I am sure will be of great use to the Society in future. We had several other volunteers whose cards I have marked for when there are changes to make. So that's it – IAC sorted!

The other area where we have been extremely lucky is in finding a replacement for Tim Pike as our librarian/curator. We happen to have near the top of our waiting list John McGill whose enthusiasm and knowledge about all things piscatorial, and particularly books, was glaringly evident from the start, and the Board had no hesitation in handing the job to him. We will be hearing a lot more from him and his ideas for rekindling interest in our library and treasures, and I am sure that he will have regular slots in our journal and at our members' meetings.

With these matters now resolved, and with an expert Board of wide experience to keep me in order, I am looking forward with great confidence to what I hope will be a few years of very satisfactory progress for the Society.





Director of Fisheries' Report

by Robert Wellard

Abbotts Barton 10 years on

The Society's lease of the Abbotts Barton fishery commenced in 2010, a year after the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HIWWT) carried out a fairly large-scale restoration project. Much of the restoration followed a low-cost 'dig and dump' style approach to riverbed re-profiling and the creation of very deep pools, glides and riffle sequences in some but not all of the *Main* (Upper) River Itchen and the adjoining fen drains we refer to as *The Upper Barton*, *Chalk Straight*, and *Duck's Nest Spinney*, collectively referred to here as *the Lower Barton Carrier*, which flows through the meadows of the internationally important (SAC/SSSI) Winnall Moors Wildlife Reserve.

Whilst 'dig and dump' may have been the most cost-effective option for improving several miles of historically dredged channels 10 years ago, the reality is there's been very little improvement of salmonid habitats on the Barton carrier and its connected reaches – good trout and grayling fishing is limited to a few short reaches.

On the much larger *Main* River Itchen, best described as a man-made, perched channel, large amounts of gravel were imported and used to raise the riverbed to create pools, glides and riffles in what was a highly canalised reach. This has to some extent improved potential spawning habitats for salmon and trout in areas where gradient and flow is perhaps less of an issue. However, in contrast, much of the lower section of the *Main*, not included in the restoration works, remains a slow flowing, deeply excavated channel, perhaps more suited to coarse fishing.

Where we do see reasonable numbers of wild trout and grayling on the *Barton Carrier* they are located in high gradient reaches where there's also notably more favourable weed species (*Ranunculus*) present. However, these relatively short sections are interspersed with much longer, heavily silted, slack-water areas largely dominated by pond loving plant species (*Sparganium*).

The amount of water flowing into the *Barton* is also major factor. It was also around 10yrs ago we began to see the gradual deterioration of the *Main* River Itchen and *Fulling Mill* off-take structure (sluice), located a mile upstream. Historically this sluice was used by Tom Strafford to regulate the flow split between the *Main*, which flows into the *Barton*



The Upper Barton

Carrier and the *Fulling Mill* reaches where, in previous years approximately 60% of the flow went down the *Main* and 40% the *Fulling Mill*. Recent estimates now put the flow split completely in reverse with just 40% flowing down the *Main* and 60% into the *Fulling Mill*. This is particularly noticeable during late summer and low flow periods. In very low flow years the split may be even less in favour of the *Main*. As a consequence, the character and ecology of several miles of river have been negatively impacted. The effect of the dysfunctional *Fulling Mill* off-take has a knock-on effect further downstream. With greatly reduced flows in the *Barton Carrier* there's also less water in the Highland Burn, which we've always seen as being one of the most important reaches for supporting the recruitment of juvenile wild trout across the whole fishery, and why we don't fish it.

Conversely, following high winter recharge and winter flood events, when the *Fulling Mill* off-take flow split is less noticeable, the banks of the *Barton Carrier* and adjoining meadows very quickly become inundated, which can cause problems with access in the early trout fishing season.

With flows upstream of the bridge reduced, reed encroachment in the spring and summer can reduce channel width in the Upper Barton to as little as 0.5m wide in some areas. The concrete bridge only adds to the problem, impounding the river for c. 300m upstream. Cutting reeds with a weed boat is not the solution. It's damaging to the river ecology, expensive and is not sustainable in the long term.

Downstream of the concrete bridge the carrier follows its historic, excavated route (drains) around the meadows, taking a 90 degree turn into the *Chalk Straight*, a high energy reach, and another 90 degree turn into the *Lower Chalk Straight*, a low energy



Fulling Mill off-take structure showing flow split

reach, before finally it enters the restored section (large-scale bed raising) of *Ducks Nest Spinney*.

In its current form, the *Barton Carrier* (c. 400m – Trust owned) provides suitable habitat for wild trout fishing over approximately one third of its length (c. 465m).

With much of this once prized fishery gradually moving towards becoming a mixed fishery, with pike, rudd, roach, perch, etc., ever more prevalent, I believe its future as a game fishery is questionable.

Given its heritage, it would be a great pity to see any further deterioration of habitats that support salmonids in the *Barton Carrier*.

Unlike upland rivers where fast flowing water erodes, transports and deposits sediment on a relatively large scale, much of this part of the River Itchen is slow flowing and has relatively low energy, so this natural process is greatly reduced or further prevented by the impoundments already mentioned. It's therefore highly unlikely there will be any significant change to the current situation without some form of intervention. Removal of the impoundments and other pinch points, improving gradient across its length, and creating a more naturally flowing carrier stream, with characteristic chalkstream features is now a high priority.

With its bottlenecks removed, the *Barton Carrier* will have a much greater resilience to climatic variations and will naturally adjust to potentially increased flows when the *Fulling Mill* off-take is either repaired or replaced. With the flow split reinstated, and more water flowing down the *Barton Carrier*, wild trout and grayling populations will very quickly recolonise improved areas – the Highland Burn would be transformed – producing enough wild trout to support the whole fishery.



Narrow bridge at the entrance to Abbotts Barton

Discussions we've had with the Trust have been positive – they are receptive to revisiting some of the previous works on the Barton. Much of this has focused on the idea of reconfiguring the whole of the *Barton Carrier* that's contained within the HIWWT reserve, but alongside this is Craig's (brilliant) idea for the creation of a new channel between the fishing hut and *Duck's Nest Spinney*.

In those areas upstream of the concrete bridge, remedial work might include widening the channel, bed raising (importing gravel), reprofiling the riverbank slope etc.; to establish a more natural channel form, where the carrier can continue to function in low, med and high flows; resilient to our changing climate.

In the area downstream of the concrete bridge, the creation of a new channel, perhaps following the tree line along the edge of the meadow, would eliminate the 90 degree bends we see in the drain configuration. The existing tree line would also offer some additional shaded areas.

Discussions are ongoing with our water lords. The new owners of Abbotts Worthy fishery are already on the case with sorting out the *Fulling Mill* off-take structure.

The Environment Agency carried out a 5-minute qualitative electric fishing survey of the Chalk Straight in September – a summary of their results are provided below.

Catch:

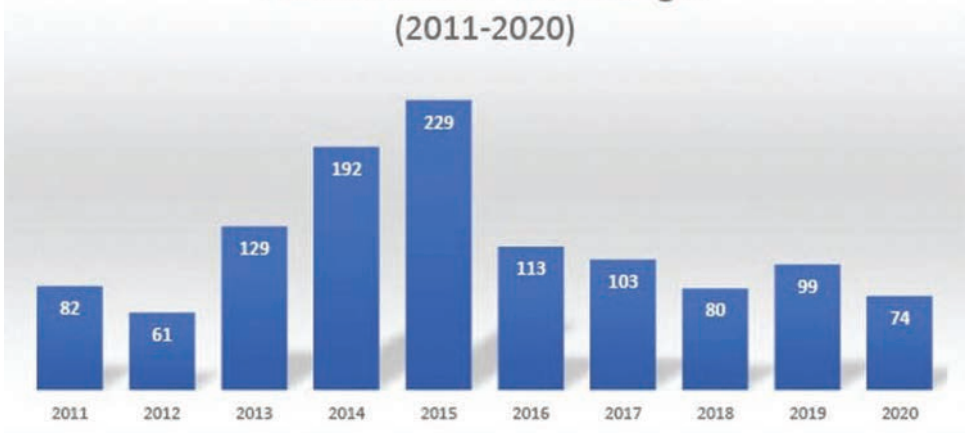
23 x brown trout (74–291mm; mean: 150mm)

1 x European eel (720mm)

18 x bullhead

78 x minnow

Abbotts Barton - Trout Caught (2011-2020)



Catch records

General observations:

One or two large salmonid redds were seen a short distance upstream last winter, so we were investigating whether or not salmon parr were present, which would have been a significant finding this far upstream. They were not present, which suggests that redds may have been those of large sea trout, or that they were salmon but that fertilisation had not been successful, or that none had survived to the time of the survey. The quality of the habitat in the survey reach (esp. prolific *Ranunc* growth) suggests that salmon parr survival should have been good, although water velocity is certainly better suited to brown trout parr, giving them a strong competitive advantage. We recently recorded young of the year salmon parr upstream at *Fulling Mill*, similarly a short distance downstream from large salmonid redds formed last winter.

We pointed out to the HIWWT staff that we routinely survey sites on all chalkstreams in the Solent & South Downs Area and that this reach is on a par with any of them in terms of overall wild brown trout habitat, particularly the plant community. However, we note that this has been a particularly good year for summer flow and weed growth.

We took a look at the new gravel bars on the main Itchen and observed that they provide relatively compact patches of really excellent increased-velocity habitat, and almost certainly support juvenile salmonids. The extension of these existing features, or the creation of new ones, would enhance this otherwise fairly homogeneous reach greatly. However, overall habitat quality on the reach appeared far better than I recall it being in the early 2000s.

Secretary's Soap Box

by Geoff Fleming

In my role I receive many emails from people requesting information about joining the Society and a regular stream of correspondence from members looking for replacement padlock keys, fresh yearbooks owing to the original being sodden 'when I fell in' and numerous requests for new parking passes.

However occasionally someone pops up with a stranger enquiry like the one from a chap in Australia who is writing a book about one of our past members and could I confirm that he had been Secretary. After consulting *The Second Book of the Piscatorial Society 1936–2000* I was able to confirm that J. B. Verbi did indeed hold the position in 1965 and 1966 when the annual subscription was just £68.50.

Then there was a most interesting email from a Mr. Giuliani who wrote from the USA, 'Several decades ago I purchased a ballot box (see photos) and was wondering if it was originally used by your society'. I am unable to confirm this as it does not feature in any of the old photographs I have seen but the period certainly looks right and as secrecy is assured it would be a very useful asset at our Committee meetings!





Keepers' Kaleidoscope



Head Keeper's Review 50 Shades of Grey Goose Nymphs

by Stuart McTeare

Oh yes working long into the candlelit night, quill tensely gripped in hand, that title visited me, knocked me sideways like a thunderbolt. Had the flickering candle light induced a strobe like trance, a state of near seizure? I was in a twilight place surrounded by nymphs clad in shades of grey. Was this work, did I have a quill in hand or were these visions the stuff of being horizontal in bed, a 60 year olds grey fogged memory?

I've often wondered whether we dream in full technicolour or monochromatic shades of grey, silent movie stylee? But yes, what a dullard, 50 shades of grey goose nymphs, how long did I really slave over that one and who really cares? Who cares to think of nymphs dancing joyously and boozing Bacchanalian like quantities of high end French vodka by a candle lit pool. I have never sampled the delights of Grey Goose vodka but I'm sure it must be delicious, aimed as it is at the Ferrari driving, Gucci clad smart set. Perhaps next time I can afford to go out to play I might seek some, like a teenager having a first furtive sip of lager with a palette not yet rarefied enough to appreciate the strange taste and a pocket not really deep enough for a £5 plus pint, yes FIVE QUID for a pint in the village pub, what is the world coming to? Who knows what a shot of grey goose costs and do you really want to down it in one, shot it? A Kamikaze cocktail anyone? As an old boy it seems an awful extravagance to be shottng such an expensive tipple but hey that's the youth of today.

I didn't have Frank Sawyer down as a vodka shotter and I certainly cannot imagine him hanging with the smart set although of course he did hang out with Charles Ritz but I hear whiskey was his thing and any way Grey Goose is as I said a modern sniffer aimed at the uber cool, so he couldn't have been inspired by a drunken vodka session to name his nymph after posh vodka, it must have been the real live bird itself? Or so you would think but hey these things are never that simple and after consulting with Alan Cook, Frank's heir apparent on the Services Dry fly water, apparently there could have been no grey goose herl anywhere near the original Grey Goose nymphs.

Back in the Spring 2021 a member asked if I could tie him some Grey Goose but the examples he had, tied variously by Sawyer's grandson and the Fulling Mill sweat shop in Kenya, weren't quite the desired shade of grey. So what is the correct shade of grey? I consulted my much loved copy of Nymphs and the Trout and here Frank states that he uses the herls from the secondary wing feather of an ordinary farm yard grey goose as the ingredient, so far so simple. Well yes but these days where on earth do you procure such humdrum farmyard feathers. The Funky Fly Tying et al online brochures were all consulted and nowhere were such feathers to be seen. Much scratching of mon tete ensued, so what to do?

Enter as I mentioned Alan Cook. Alan worked with Frank prior to Frank's retirement and then handed the reins over to Martin Brown, the present keepering incumbent at Services Dry Fly Association. Via Martin I was able to have a remote Covid safe audience with Alan. And yes the plot thickens. According to Mr. Cook, the Grey Goose nymph was never tied with goose feathers at all and indeed rarely tied by Frank himself. It would appear Frank ran his very own early incarnation of Fulling Mill Flies, exploiting the natives of Netheravon. Along with his wife and numerous other bored housewife's, Frank had a team churning out his now very collectable cards of his nymphs, which does explain why some of the patterns on these cards look like the ham fisted attempt at matching the hatch by somebody that clearly has never spied a hatch let alone the individuals amassed within it.

I, for years, had my suspicions that the Grey Goose was indeed tied with Heron herls and this may still be the case although more likely to be the ingredients of the Sawyer Swedish nymph but according Alan this is not the case. And now wait for it, the truth of the matter is that Grey Goose nymphs were tied with dyed swan feathers. Does this explain the variance in colour? Why on earth would you dye swan feathers when cygnets have perfectly perfect grey feathers in the first place? This is all really a bit of a riddle and a riddle that we will never ever solve because of course there is the element of things that go bump in the night and what is, what is not and what was never legal. And there my gentlefolk of the angle is where the scent trial comes to an end, unless of course the birds were plucked live?

As we all know swans on chalkstreams have a long history of doing 'damage', this may of course be a matter of perception or opinion? As I may have mentioned before George Melly famously put swans in BBC's Room 101 on the grounds that they defecated on the banks of his beloved Kennet. Alas George what a trick you missed, if only he had mentioned the environmental impact on the wider ecology of over grazing the ranunculus. As we witnessed at Lake this season with 22 juveniles doing their best to destroy a quarter of a mile stretch of what was in June a perfectly beautiful chalkstream picture of healthy SSSI.

We now have a license to legally remove swan eggs and reduce the swan population in this manner which as witnessed at Lake this year isn't always the hoped for silver

bullet but the method has some merit and is a long way from the nefarious antics of yesterday. But should we embrace swans and leave the weed control to them, it would certainly be more sustainable. I often fantasised about having my own bo-beep type flock of swans to move strategically before greed got the better of them but that's another story.

It's Grey Geese that I need now and back to procuring that perfect shade of grey. Symbolic? Nothing is ever black and white? Just shades of grey, but which one? Maybe that's why I spend my sleeping hours lost in shades of grey.

Freefolk, The Grange, Abbots Worthy and Abbots Barton

by Craig Dawson

It is that time of year, already, where the season is almost done and I pen a ditty about what has passed. In terms of river conditions, both here and on the Itchen, we have been blessed with high water levels throughout, good weed growth and abundant fly very much like last season. The only difference being that members were allowed a full run at the rivers without Boris' intervention. Yes, the banks remained boggy, indeed a quagmire in places (some still are) – a small price to pay really, for rivers in such fine fettle. The only real drawback to all that fine angling were the bad habits learned by Joe Public during the previous lockdowns, that resulted in wild swimming and trespass disrupting a few anglers during the brief 'heatwave' of the summer. Mercifully, less of an issue than the previous year and with any luck a soon to be forgotten habit as the world returns to something more normal. Abbots Barton is bit of an anathema in that it has got boggier the longer the season has gone on, a product perhaps of the high water levels on the Itchen in general and recently refurbished hatches down in Winchester? I am sure that the management at Abbots Barton will get to the bottom of that particular issue, in time.

In some ways, 2021 was a repeat of 2020 in terms of how the river performed. Good rains through the winter/spring meant a full recharge of the aquifers (sufficient to see the entire season out, as it happened), early weed growth that once again appeared like it might be a heavy cutting year only to turn out a 'nip and tuck' affair as the summer wore on. Much reduced late summer blanket weed on the Grange and at Freefolk, symptomatic of all that wonderful water. I wish the same could be said for the blanket weed at Abbots Worthy but sadly no, the Half Water beat is thick with the stuff. In fact, the Half Water is so thick with it that the banks became too wet to safely mow after late August. Once again, all that lovely, well behaved weed, meant less interference from us keepers and a boon to all the invertebrates. The early season saw fine hatches of olives and grannom but few hawthorn followed by good numbers of mayfly from around mid-May on the Itchen and a week or so later here at Freefolk. Blue Winged Olive made another good showing through the summer and provided some superb evening offerings for those lucky enough to fish that late. And, as is typical of September, almost the best is saved for last with some excellent days on small olives, Pale Wateries and sedge recently.

The Lakes have performed well again this season and prove to be very popular with members and their guests. Surface algae has been very much reduced in its impact this year and the lakes have had very little in the way of algal blooms (colouring) – probably the best I have seen them in many years. As such, there has been great sport fishing both wet and dry flies to ‘sighted’ fish.

Last Autumn, I wrote that 2020 would be a year most might wish to forget because of the dreaded Covid. 2021 however, is a significant year in that it is the end of an era (and the start of a new) with the end of The Society’s tenure of Abbotts Worthy – once referred to as the Jewel in the Crown of the Society’s waters, will be a sadly missed by many members (and myself). Not all change is a bad thing however, and its replacement with the Anton will, I’m sure, lessen the blow as The Society begins a new era on an exciting (and lengthy) new water.

The Wylye

by Joe Emmett

Following an averagely wet winter the river was looking in fine shape once again heading towards the start of the 2021 trout season. We hadn’t spent the whole winter battling floods and windblown trees thankfully; however, we had seen enough rain to top up the aquifers nicely. The weed seemed to get a head start probably due to the high but clear flows during the late winter and early spring, and everything seemed to be on track for a flying start to the season. The coldest April on record and the wettest May in 50 years soon put pay to a lot of that and the early promise we saw in March went out of the window by the start of the season. Despite spending much of April basking in sunshine the air temperature and mix of sleet and snow showers really slowed things up. There were still some good days’ fishing to be had, and as is often the case in the unpredictable early part of the season it was all about picking the right day and the right stretch to be in with a chance of a few fish. There were still relatively good hatches of Grannom and Large Dark Olives, however the fish were quite slow to switch on to them.

It wasn’t until May that we saw the first glimmer of hope in the shape of the Hawthorn fly. As with previous seasons it was a fairly short period and was very specific to certain stretches, however this was the first time I really saw the fish actively feeding consistently off the surface. By late May things were back on track and the Mayfly started their annual trickle with the best of the hatches in the first two weeks of June again. The hatches were the usual slow and steady variety and seemed to go on until July, with some fantastic evening spinner fishing right the way through. There were some very good quality wild trout caught during the mayfly this year and not always from the popular stretches either. Plenty of reports of multiple fish over 1.5lb and one very special fish of around 2.5lb which looked in fantastic condition.

By late June the early weed growth was really starting to have its effect as in some areas both wading and mowing banks were very challenging indeed. Speaking to several members who fished these weedy sections during the summer, despite overtopping their waders on several occasions they found the fishing to be fantastic, with fish feeding much more confidently in and amongst the weed during the middle of the day. With this in mind I decided to experiment a little with the weed cutting on the Wylye this season.

The weed cutting process itself is both time consuming and labour intensive with the added factor of potentially being environmentally damaging too. Add this to the lack of water by late summer and the over grazing by swans it seems like experimenting was worth a go. Through Middle, Lower Boyton and Heytesbury we cut a lot less weed, retaining the weed on the shallows to hold up levels and leaving plenty of uncut beds in the wider sections to create multiple channels and runs. It certainly worked well initially, however the group of juvenile swans found their way to Lower Boyton and put pay to a lot of the weed there by the end of the season. The areas upstream of the Piggery held out much better and, as a stretch that relies so heavily on weed to provide good fishing, I think it paid off.

In July I arranged for a river walk on the Wylye with the Beaver Trust. This gave Stuart, Craig and I the opportunity to ask plenty of questions regarding the effects that beavers might have on our fisheries and the Trust a better insight into how we manage the Wylye as a wild fishery. The good news is with the abundance of good riparian habitat around the Wylye fishery, beavers will more than likely arrive and settle down in the valley unnoticed. The word on the street is they have already made their way to the lakes at Longleat that feed into the Wylye, so it really is a case of when, not if. The national debate rumbles on and the recent Defra consultation has got plenty of people hot under the collar. The main issue that concerns so many people is the potential negative impacts of beaver dams on migratory fish. The people with the loudest voices seem to be the ones who have presided over the damming up of our chalk streams with weirs and filling them with salmon parr guzzling stocked trout for the past 50 years, so I think the moral high ground is rather limited on this one.

By July and August, we finally felt like summer had arrived even if in reality it only lasted a few weeks. We saw very good numbers of blue winged olives from late June onwards, with some fantastic spinners in that last hour of light when the conditions were right. These continued on well into August and along with the mix of small olives, sedge and Pale Wateries the last few months of the season finished on a high. The river is looking low in places however the areas with good amounts of weed are holding up well.

We have just completed our annual grayling survey and although numbers are still down, we did see an improvement on both numbers of grayling and mix of year classes. This is great news for the future and hopefully we will see their numbers at least stabilising a little now. We also weigh and measure all the trout and it was very promising to see the average size of the trout on certain stretches starting to creep up with the odd large wild fish making an appearance too. There are certainly plenty of grayling still around and have seen some huge ones whilst mowing during the summer. I'm sure those of you who partake in what I believe was once called the weighted nymph trial will have bumped into a few of these big grayling through the summer, but for me you can't beat an autumn grayling and I will certainly be venturing out once it's cooled down a bit to see if I can find a few.

There are no large-scale projects planned for the Wylye this winter, however I will continue with my usual pruning and small-scale improvements as I do every winter. This will include adding in more posts and other access improvements to those hard to reach areas of the fishery. I am also hoping to do some tree planting at Lower Stockton to help create more sheltered fishing and a patchwork of shade for the river. No doubt Mother Nature will be sure to help out with some woody debris this winter and it goes without saying I plan to do my fair share too.

Book Reviews



The Lightning Thread

by David Profumo

Published by Scribner/Simon and Schuster

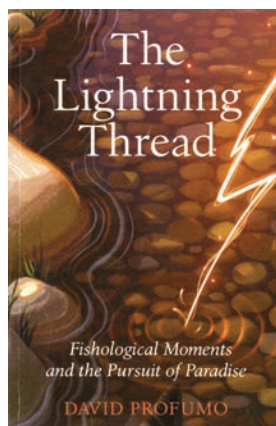
Within a dozen or so pages you know that you are reading something pretty special. The *Lightning Thread* is labelled a 'memoir' but has a flavour of autobiography. Just as Luke Jennings did in *Blood Knots*, it is the welding of life and fishing which makes David Profumo's book so resonant and enjoyable.

He rather dangerously lists early on his own criteria for good, as he puts it, '*pisc.lit*'.

His first is re-readability and as I am already a third the way through a second time, he passes his own first test. But what about the first time? Well, it's certainly readable, very much so. It's not difficult to trip up occasionally on his over wordy and exuberant prose but if you've read some of his other writing you get used to carefully picking up one's synapses and stepping over the verbose bits without stumbling or annoyance.

His second criteria is whether a book conveys the experience of the author's time on the water. That he does from the 11 pounder 'netted' out of the Compton hatch pool to his encounters with various salty creatures. I particularly liked his 'slam' out of Boca Grande. After boating the 25 pound permit 'I gaze at him lovingly, like some lovelorn department store commissionaire watching that girl from the cosmetics counter on her *al fresco* cigarette break'. A man who loves his fish.

Lastly he questions whether he would have enjoyed fishing with the author. Well, I have spent a little time with him on a chalkstream bank and it was thoroughly entertaining. As you will read he is a fish catcher to his roots and having peered into his flybox (certain contents of which some elderly purists would have described as 'un-officerlike') and observed him from a distance (he didn't know I was enjoying his



somewhat multi-directional casting) he is a fisherman you would want alongside you if you needed to catch to survive. I've always maintained that the best fly fishermen are those that start as children catching fish, any fish, no rules and basic tackle. Profumo's deep love of catching fish was born in just this way.

I would add another . . . did it entertain? It does and delightfully so; repeatedly raising a smile both with content and style but it also made me chuckle . . . and I haven't done that with a fishing book since Gierach. In fact I struggled to take the smile off my face throughout the chapter on Ghillies and Guides and his description of eating tarpon soup is hilarious.

It is a thoroughly enjoyable, beautifully written and extremely entertaining read.

Graham Waterton



A Well Travelled Life My Memoirs

by Keith Howman

Self published

Available through the World Pheasant Association.

office@pheasant.org.uk

All proceeds to charity

As many members will know, Keith and his wife Jean have been members of the Society and are regulars at many of our meetings and social gatherings. This 200 page tome is a very personal memoir of his life and travels which have been extensive, having visited 56 countries as a soldier, President of the World Pheasant Association and fisherman. I suspect many such amateur autobiographies start off meaning only to entertain the author and their family. It is usually some well-intentioned member of that audience who persuades you that it could have wider interest and I'm sure this will. Whilst personal, with many references to family and friends, the story of Keith's life is both fascinating and his humour and charm shine through.

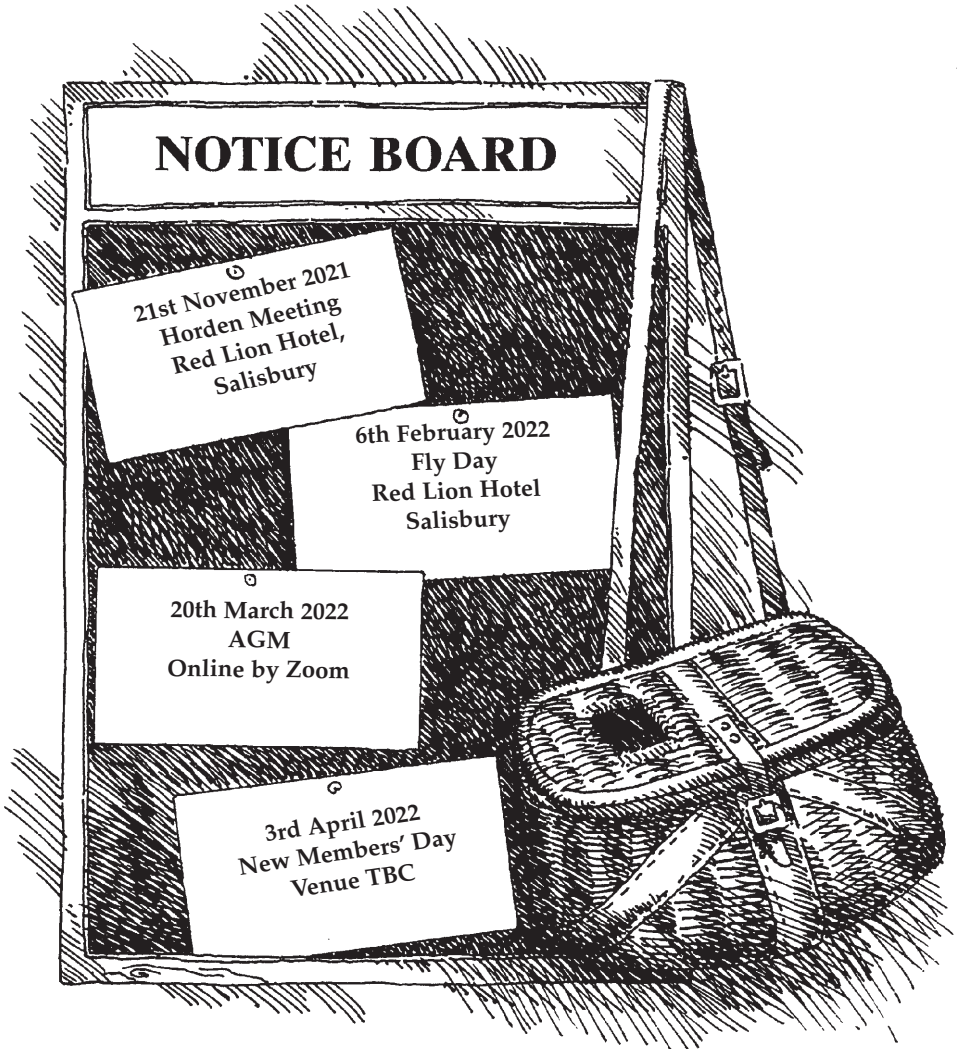
As well as being a member, the Howmans had other connections with the Society. Soon after they moved to Ashmere and developed their four lake fishery, one of our past Presidents, Lesley Cardew-Wood, was a regular visitor who always claimed to fish with a dry fly but was often observed using a 'dirty big nymph' most successfully. Our own Stuart McTeare worked there and has often returned with our Society Photographic Group to show them round.

I haven't room to list all his fishing venues but he fished in 33 of his 56 countries and you will enjoy his many adventures at home and abroad.

Graham Waterton

Coronavirus Alert

Due to the continuing Covid 19 situation and the uncertainty over possible future lockdown restrictions please monitor the website for changes to the dates below and other events



The Angler.
as defined by Dr Johnson.



"A Stick and a string with a Fish at one
end and a Fool at the other."

[From a drawing by John Leech

"THE ANGLER, AS DEFINED BY DR. JOHNSON"



[From a drawing by John Leech

“THE BIGGER THE FISH, THE BIGGER THE FLOAT”



OE Mohican May Sml/Male (9745)



OE G/drake Spent Spinner (9747)



SR Red Tag Retriever (9661)

WE LET OUR FLIES DO THE STALKING



OE Hydropsyche Larva Version 2 (9743)



Sawyer Pheasant Tail (2751)

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After sourcing the sharpest, strongest hooks and the finest fly tying materials from around the globe, each and every Fulling Mill fly is then lovingly crafted by one of our highly skilled in-house artisans. We are 100% focused on quality and this means that each and every Fulling Mill fly in your box is a little work of art. With over 2,500 proven patterns to choose from, we've got you covered. Just be sure it's "Fulling Mill".

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