

The Piscatorial Society

Journal No. 149

Autumn 2022



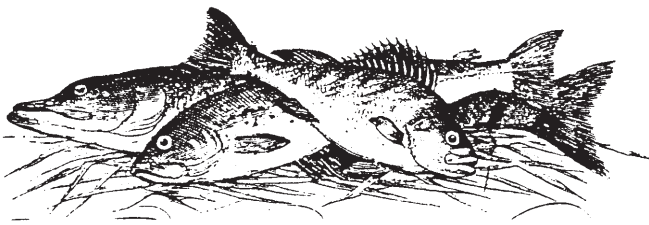
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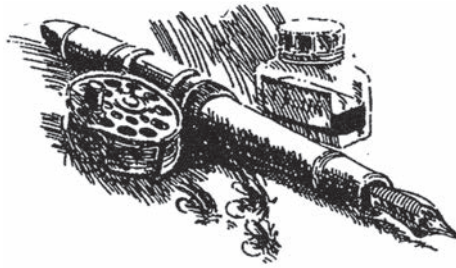
The Journal of the Piscatorial Society No. 149 Autumn 2022

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Front Cover: Grey Wagtail on the Anton. Photograph by Dick Hawkes
Mr Fish drawings and some others by kind permission of Martin Mayhew

Editorial



The season has been dominated by drought. The combination of low flows and high water temperature affects the chalkstream habitat, specifically the fish and invertebrate life. There were many times during the summer when the conditions were at their most extreme and I felt we should not have fished. The rivers looked exhausted, little fly life and the fish inactive and stressed. A couple of hours at first and last light were enough. Thankfully there was a good showing of self-restraint but I suspect it was more often fishers' comfort than their worries about the rivers that was in evidence. Much more from our keeper team on their season later in this edition.

As you will read in Presidential Pontification we have acquired a new fishery and given up another and the President clearly outlines the reasons. The Society's evolution continues with a continuing desire to provide the best wild trout fishing. I spend much of my season on the more commercial beats and in the main, thoroughly enjoyable they are. I also however have the opportunity to fish a lot of wild chalkstream beats and as I write this, only yesterday I enjoyed a few hours on one of those wonderful upper Itchen beats. On a cool rainy overcast day the olives started popping at 11am and continued steadily for several hours much to the delight of an incredibly healthy population of wild trout. As I stood in my leaking waders in pouring rain shivering while trying to tie on an 18 CDC emerger which was wet before the first cast with several rising fish in front of me I could not have been happier. A healthy river, managed with a light touch giving good fly life, and a habitat in which trout flourish and lightly fished is what we aspire to provide and these recent changes to our fishery portfolio move us on that track. The fish mainly fooled me yesterday. As my host stressed it was all in the presentation and combating the complex issues of micro drag was the solution. A single trout fooled on a day like that was enough. Simply sublime.

I'm reprinting from 1987 an article by Oliver Field about the Windrush and there are two reasons why I plucked this one out of Journal No. 79. Firstly, a couple of years after he wrote the article but nearer 20 after he fished it, I fished and looked after a beat, further upstream near Great Rissington. The owner's management principles extended to me mowing the banks and tipping in a vast number of brown trout around a pound. At that time I was happy with both. The article was a lovely reminder of a happy couple of seasons. Scenically, a delight but ponderous in flow and more often than not a distinct lack of clarity. As Oliver notes in his article, a wonderful fishery during the mayfly but tough for the rest of the season particularly with a dry fly.

The second reason is the work done by two retired men who live on the banks of the Windrush, one was a professor of machine learning, the other was a detective superintendent. Despondent at the state of their beloved river, now polluted and fishless in its lower reaches and through freedom of information requests and specifically environmental information requests to the privatised water companies, they produced the staggering statistics highlighting the extent of their illegal discharges. The tenacity of the sleuth and the analytic approach of the scientist has produced data which has been used by countless campaigners in the fight against pollution. They started Windrush Against Sewage Pollution in 2018, now a registered charity, and we have a lot to thank Peter Hammond and Ashley Smith for. I thoroughly recommend an internet search of WASP (write it in full or you get unwanted information about stinging insects and White Anglo-Saxon Protestants – not recommended reading) which will lead you to their website but also countless articles singing their praises. As I say, we have a lot to thank them for.

Our Librarian and Curator, John McGill, continues his History of the Society with two instalments in this edition. This is not a panicked editor short of copy but as you will read, the interconnected story of Francis Francis and The Booker Cup best read together but in the order printed.

It's been a busy and hot season for the keepers and as ever, we are grateful for all their efforts providing us with such wonderful fisheries.

Have a good winter.

Graham Waterton
watertongraham@gmail.com

Return to Patagonia

by Keith Johnson

It was over twenty years ago that I first travelled down to Patagonia to fish for the sea trout of the Rio Gallegos on Estancia Bella Vista. I had been invited by a good friend who had been the previous year, and much as he had expected I was enthralled by the whole trip, with the challenging but rewarding fishing combined with top quality accommodation and hospitality.

As a result, over the next decade I returned on a regular basis until, sadly, the early passing of my travelling companion, combined with some management changes at the lodge, encouraged me to explore alternative destinations.

More recently, I had developed something of an obsession with making one more trip back to the Gallegos, and entering my fourth, and presumably last, quarter century complete with a brand-new hip joint seemed as good an excuse as any.

I decided that travelling that far required firstly a comfortable journey – fourteen hours in economy no longer had any appeal – and secondly that to make the extra expense worthwhile I should add on a second week of fishing. But where to go? Trout fishing in Northern Patagonia sounded attractive, but would require travelling back via Buenos Aires. Golden Dorado on the rivers north of BA would involve higher summer temperatures and humidity than I consider at all comfortable. It was then that I found

information about a new operation in the headwaters of the Gallegos combining some further sea trout fishing with brown trout on two tributaries.

So it was that after an enjoyable week's sea trout fishing on the middle river, I found myself travelling westwards along Route 40 towards Estancia Glencross, situated not far from the Chilean border and within view of the foothills of the Andes. My companions were guide Carlos and fellow guest Eric, who hailed from Toulouse, and bore an amazing resemblance to a younger Gerard Depardieu.

Our accommodation was in the original owner's house, built in the early years of the 20th century and virtually unchanged apart from the addition of some modern conveniences. The estancia is owned by the Menendez family, and was originally occupied by Jose Menendez and his wife Maria Behety, familiar names to anyone who has fished in Tierra del Fuego. Originally from northern Spain, Jose had arrived in Chile where he set up a shipping business. When the Argentinian government underwent one of their occasional financial collapses in the late 19th century, areas of land in Southern Patagonia were offered for sale as an attempt to raise funds. As the land was at the time considered virtually useless agriculturally, prices were low, and large areas were purchased by the Menendez family, both on TDF and on the mainland.



A 15 pounder going back

Jose had visited New Zealand and had realised that these 'useless' lands could in fact support sheep of a breed similar to those that he had seen there, and he was the first to import the Coverdale variety (a Merino cross) which was well suited to the dry conditions. He initially set up estancias in TDF, where the main tributary of the Rio Grande bears his name, before turning his attention to the mainland, and Glencross. At one time he was known as 'El Rey de la Patagonia' such was his influence, and in true royal fashion he negotiated the marriage of his daughter into the Braun family, the other major landholders in the region, and, coincidentally from my point of view, owners of Bella Vista.

The estancia house was full of mementos of earlier days, from family photographs to condor feathers, and prizes won by the family at the 'local' agricultural show. Many of the estancia buildings were original, and, given the remote location, included housing for gauchos and their families, a school, and bases for estancia craftsmen such as carpenter, farrier and butcher. It remains very much a working estancia, and the deputy manager, who had in fact been a pupil of my guide when at school, proudly invited me to inspect their most recent purchase, a prize Coverdale ram who seemed admirably equipped to carry out his duties!

The estancia encompasses Puerto Blanco, the river crossing on Route 40, just above which the Rios Penitente and Rubens meet to form the uppermost section of the Gallegos. Fishing is therefore available within easy reach on all three, and the daily schedule is decided in discussion with the guides and dependant on prevailing water and weather conditions. It was this variety that had attracted me, and on most days morning, and evening sessions, were split between two rivers.

Both Penitente and Rubens hold good stocks of brown trout. These grow to a good size and are in excellent condition, somewhat surprising given that the rivers seem to be virtually weed-free apart from some marginal growth. Clearly there is still plenty of food, and it would have been interesting to carry out a kick sample, however no fine mesh net was available to do so. Of course, the frequent windy conditions also provide a variety of terrestrial casualties.

Visits to both rivers produced decent catches of fish up to around 4lbs. In windy conditions the water colours up slightly and something like a Woolly Bugger fished across and downstream was favoured, although on one very calm day small nymphs fished upstream were required. However, on most occasions a moderate breeze favoured the dry fly – but fished in decidedly non-Pisc Soc fashion! A large buoyant fly such as a Chernobyl Ant or foam-bodied hopper was cast across, and retrieved in a series of twitches to cause a surface disturbance. Not very purist but certainly exciting with lots of explosive takes and some near-misses. A particular highlight one day on the Rubens was the appearance over the opposite high bank of a condor, which glided across the river no more than 30 feet above my head.

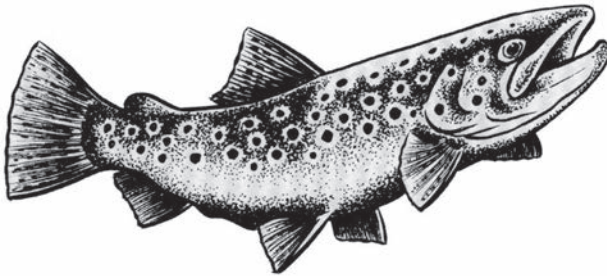
Somewhat to my surprise, on the main river the number and size of sea trout seemed to be similar to those found further downstream. Given lowish water, small nymph patterns, most with the ubiquitous rubber legs, on long leaders were most productive.

Eric, my new French friend, hadn't caught sea trout before, so having found a likely pool, and landed a cock fish around 15lbs, in the interests of the 'entente cordiale' I invited him to take my place. Much 'bonhomie' followed as his first ever sea trout pulled the weigh net down to 17lbs! I'm pleased to say that English honour was restored the following day with a 19lb hen fish, amazingly sparkling fresh despite having travelled 150 miles from the tide.



19lbs of silver 150 miles from the sea

Eric had to return home midweek, and for three days I had the luxury of the whole place and Carlos to myself. I'm pleased to say that we shared a similar relaxed approach to the rest of the week, more fish were caught, but we also enjoyed lingering somewhat over the excellent meals and local Malbec, and soaking up the whole ambience of the place. As the week came to a close and we drove back towards the airport, I began to feel that perhaps this wouldn't be my last visit to Patagonia after all.



How Environment and Competition Affect Grayling Growth at Different Life Stages

by John Dart, Jess Marsh and Bob Wellard

This is a synopsis of the second study from Jess Marsh and colleagues, part-funded by the Piscatorial Society, and utilising 17 years (2003–2019) of the Society’s data on brown trout and grayling populations in the Wylde. This study focused on factors affecting grayling growth whereas the first study evaluated factors affecting grayling survival for which a summary is available in the Autumn 2021 Journal, pp. 24–7.

Background

In brief, grayling, at one time persecuted by many trout fishing organisations because of their perceived adverse effects on the trout population, have been shown not to compete with trout because they occupy different environmental niches. They are now regarded by many of us as prized wild fish. Grayling populations have been declining in many locations in recent years. The species is at the southern edge of its range in Wiltshire and Hampshire and likely to be affected by climate change. Our studies are amongst the few to examine the impact of environmental changes on the different life stages of grayling; we need to understand these if we wish to modify our river management activity to mitigate these effects and maintain grayling populations as far as possible.

How the scientists did the study

They used the same Piscatorial Society dataset from 2003–2019 as was used in the survival study. This study focused on factors affecting the growth, using the data on fish length, for the same age classes (taken from scale readings) of juveniles (less than one year old), 1+ year sub-adults, and 2–5 year old mature adults. Older grayling of up to 7+ years were recorded but numbers were too small for analysis. Our data were used to estimate expected length at age for each age class. The scientists also sourced additional data to derive variables that might be expected to affect growth including flow rates, temperature, river plant cover, invertebrate abundance (food), and competitor abundance including both grayling and trout. The next steps involved sophisticated modelling to test hypotheses regarding the influence of the environmental variables on growth. For example, high competitor abundance was expected to reduce the growth of individual grayling by antagonistic interactions and reduced food availability leading to smaller length at age. Hypotheses were applied and tested for an additional 7 environmental variables to see whether these were supported by the real-life data.

What they found

This study has shown that some factors are shared with those affecting survival whereas others differed:

Temperature effects

1. Juvenile growth was positively associated with higher temperatures during spring–autumn, contrary to the finding for juvenile survival, but higher temperatures were linked to reduced sub-adult growth.
2. Sub-adult and adult growth were instead positively associated with higher temperatures during autumn-winter.

Flow effects

3. Sub-adult and adult length were negatively influenced by low flow (expected length of sub-adults reduced from 228–221mm as days of low flow increased from 0–60). Consistent with the findings of the survival study.
4. Sub-adult and adult growth were positively influenced by high flows.
5. Juvenile growth, by contrast, was negatively influenced by high flows (expected length of juveniles reduced by 10mm as days of high flow increased from 0–60 days).

Invertebrate biomass (food)

6. Sub-adult and adult growth were positively influenced by invertebrate biomass, a finding consistent with the influence of invertebrate biomass on sub-adult survival, whereas the effect was weakly positive for juvenile survival and weakly negative for adult survival.

Macrophyte cover

7. Juvenile growth was negatively influenced by high macrophyte cover consistent with the effect on survival.

Trout abundance

8. Juvenile growth was negatively influenced by juvenile trout abundance – in contrast, adult and sub-adult trout abundance had no effect on adult or subadult growth. In the survival study, trout abundance was positively associated with sub-adult grayling abundance.

Grayling abundance

9. By contrast with the different effects of temperature, flow, food, macrophyte cover and presence of trout on juvenile grayling compared to sub-adult and adult grayling, the growth of ALL age classes of grayling, and adults in particular, was consistently negatively influenced by increased grayling abundance.

Factors which had no measurable effect on growth:

- a. large trout abundance on sub-adult and adult expected length
- b. invertebrate biomass on juvenile and sub-adult expected length
- c. low flow on juvenile expected length
- d. macrophyte cover on sub-adult and adult expected length
- e. mean temperature during spring-summer on adult expected length.

Summary

- More days of higher summer temperatures, and more cover with river plants were both associated with reduced survival of juvenile and sub-adult grayling although higher average temperatures were linked to increased growth in juveniles.

-
- Low flows in summer were associated with negative sub-adult and adult survival and growth, whereas high summer flows were linked to reduced juvenile growth (although high winter flows positively influenced juvenile survival).
 - These conditions are becoming more common on the Wylfe and could partly explain the recent decline in the grayling population.



Juvenile Grayling

What does this mean?

Juvenile grayling growth has different environmental requirements from those of sub-adult and adult grayling and differ a little to those that promote survival of this juvenile class. These environmental effects, even high flows and temperature can be mitigated to some extent by maintaining a heterogeneous environment to include some areas of tree cover and macrophyte shade (to reduce water temperature), optimising flows and providing refuges suitable for different life stages that will promote both survival and growth which are sympathetic to both grayling and trout. For example, impounded areas with reduced flow with poor macrophyte cover and variable shade provided by bankside trees and vegetation are needed to provide the range of environments required to foster grayling populations whereas external drivers (e.g. the Water Framework Directive recommendations to enhance the ecological potential in heavily modified channels) and

policies for trout may differ by encouraging removal of impoundments and reintroducing stream gradients and associated higher flows and macrophyte (*Ranunculus* for example) cover that we associate with a “good” environment for trout. We need to ensure that we provide a mosaic of habitats to support all chalkstream fish species throughout their life stages. These considerations are relevant to our proposals for the Anton and will be evaluated in the ongoing project there.

Funding

The Piscatorial Society & The Grayling Research Trust

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

Marsh, J. E., R. J. Cove, J. R. Britton, R. G. Wellard, T. Basic and S. D. Gregory (2022).

“Density-dependence and environmental variability have stage-specific influences on European grayling growth.” *Oecologia* 199(1): 103–117.

The study can be accessed at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/35507086>



A History of The Society in 100 Objects – 2

by *John McGill*

The Bi-Centenary of the Birth of

Francis Francis

(b.1822, d.1886)

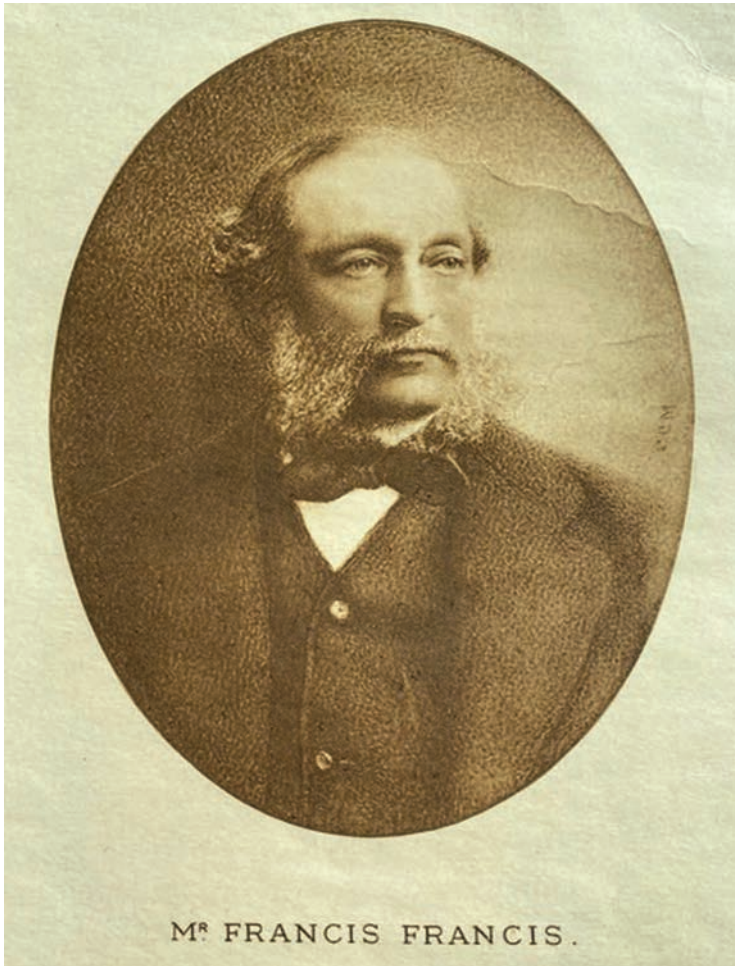
In the last issue of *The Journal* (No. 148, Spring 2022) we featured an article on Dr. J. C. Mottram. However, we omitted to point out that Mottram had been a member of the Piscatorial Society and will be remembered as one of our ‘illustrious alumni’.

In this second article in the series, we feature another of our past members, Mr. Francis Francis. This year, 2022, marks the bi-centenary of the birth of one of the Victorian angling greats.

Originally born Francis Morgan, he changed his name to Francis Francis in order to qualify for a substantial inheritance once he reached twenty-one. He had trained as a civil engineer but, because he was now of ‘independent means’, he became a gentlemen angler and an author.

In addition to numerous magazine articles and contributions to other volumes, he wrote a total of seventeen books, eleven of them on angling. He is best remembered for his ‘*A Book on Angling*’ (1). Francis was the angling editor of *The Field* magazine from

1855. He was a founder member of the Fly Fishers' Club in 1884. He was also, for many years, a prominent member of the Piscatorial Society. Andrew Herd provides more biographical information on Francis in his volume 'Angling Giants', published in 2010 (2).



Portrait of Francis Francis taken from 'British Sports and Sportsmen, Past and Present' (3)

There is a memorial plaque to Francis in Winchester Cathedral in the form of a profile bust. The Fly Fishers' Club in London also has something similar on display. In addition, The society used to have another of these plaques in our Club Room in London but somewhere along the line this has been lost and its current whereabouts is unknown. Francis was renowned for his prowess in catching both coarse and game fish. He was 'famous for' often using a single (horse) hair tippet. Across his lifetime, he certainly

caught some impressive specimens. For example, his ‘personal best – P.B.’ barbel weighed over 12lbs and he is also recorded as have caught more than one Thames trout in excess of double figures.

During the 1800s, the Thames developed a reputation for producing large brown trout, more particularly from the several weir pools. Writing in 1836 in his book ‘An Angler’s Rambles’ (4), Edward Jesse records “. . . I do not mean to say that all Thames trout are taken by anglers while in this position (from the weir pools), as some persons troll from boats or the banks of an ait, but the best, and generally the most successful fishing, is from the tops of the weirs . . .”

As a tribute to Francis, the capture of his P.B. Thames trout is narrated, in his own words, in the following extract, taken from his book ‘Hot Pot or Miscellaneous Papers’, published in 1880 (5). There is a copy of ‘Hot Pot’ in the Rod Room library and so this book is the second object chosen to highlight the history of the Society.

Sadly, the date of this capture is not recorded. However, as ‘Hot Pot’ was published by The Field and Francis was the magazine’s angling editor from 1855, it’s probable that the capture was made at sometime between 1855 and 1880?

From Francis Francis’ ‘Hot Pot’ – Chapter: ‘Bankers and Tinkers’

“. . . There’s a big trout in the corner of Sunbury Weir, Tim, I said to the Tinker one day; I have tried for him for a week, and can’t get a touch of him. I have seen him feeding feeding all over the weir several times; but he won’t look at my bait, and he is a real big one. I wish you would come up and take a look at him. Tim nodded, and said, “I shall be through there tomorrow afternoon, and am going to stop the night there, and, if you’ll be up early in the morning, we’ll give him a look-up. It must be pretty early, too; for, if he’s there, that ‘ere Screwgem knows on him, and he’s aweer o’ Screwgem and knows a bait above a bit; but, if we’re ‘arly enough before he gets up, d’ye see, we’ll happen to take him unaweeres.”

Very well, Tim; come and tap the side window at the Flower Pot, and I’ll be ready. “Give us two or three triangles and a strand of gut, and I’ll tie a proper tayckle for him.” Take what you like, Tim, and I handed him my box of ‘all sorts’, from which he selected what he wanted.

Five o’clock next morning found Tim at my window. “Nothin’ like the hearly morning’ for a big un,” said Tim; “they’ve had the night to rest in, and arn’t frightened like they are when they’ve had twenty boats and punts over ‘em; and the first time in the day as a trout feeds is the most safest for a run from him. I see the fish a week ago and he lies in that corner where the heavy stream is,” continued Tim, as he punted the weir, singing as he poled along, in high spirits, a doggerel affair I had heard fragments of before, the tune being something like that of the old glee, ‘Little Pigs’:

*A werry big trout laid under a root –
Root, root, rootletum toot –
A werry big trout laid under a root;
Whack-fal-larity, whack-fal-larity!
Oh, what a big feller was he!*

(The doggerel gets worse, not better, so we can be spared the next four verses, in similar vein).

Meantime, I fixed the tackle, and put on a bait. When we reached the spot, however, Tim declined my arrangement. "It won't do, nohows. I see the fish a-feedin', and I've seen many a big trout a-feedin'. If he was a four or five pounder, that 'ere little bait mout do well enough; but this 'ere fish is a dozen pound or more, and the baits them fish goes for is real sizeable ones – roaches or daces of four to the pun". Diving into the well, Tim fished out a dace of what I thought portentous size for a trout. It was a big jack bait of close on three ounces. He fixed it on the hooks he had prepared, fastened it to the trace, tried it two or three times till he made it spin to his fancy – no easy matter. "Now," he said, fixing the punt temporarily to the side of the weir, "you wait there; I'll spin the weir, and, if I hooks the fish, I'll drop the rod down to you; you play him till I runs round to you, and then, when we're both in the punt, I think we can handle him, for we must get him away from the weir as soon as we can, as there's a pile or two in it wot is old friends of his'n, I reckon."

In two minutes he was up on the weir beam, lying down flat upon it, and spinning the bay where the trout was supposed to be with wonderful ease and skill. Ten minutes passed, and the bait spun into and out of the stream, now up, now down, but nothing happened. Another ten minutes passed, and I saw the big fish roll over the top of the water some yards below, and then make a dash down in front of Tim's bait; the baits were leaping into the air and flying in all directions, and they *were* big roach and dace, and not 'Broughham's Babies' by any means. Little by little the line was paid out, and the bait dropped down a few yards, across and across, from eddy to eddy, yard by yard. In about ten minutes more the fish had gorged his first bait, and came up for another. I was looking on with breathless interest, when I saw the big fish roll up, with half his back out of water, and pounce upon Tim's bait like a tiger. Tim was on his feet in a minute, and I heard the reel give one prolonged screech as the monster dashed down to the tail of the stream, and Tim came slipping along the weir with rod bent double, and the fish fighting at the end of the stream, with fifty yards of line out. "Now look out!" roared Tim, above the cataract; "the moment you gets the rod, get the line tight agin. He's on safe ground where he is now, and it'll take him minute or two to come up, and by that time I'll be along with you."

Keeping the rod upright, and the line as tight as he could, he dropped the butt gently into my hands. The fish was well on, and I had scarcely hold of the rod when he began to head up, and I wound in the line; and, by the time he had reached his feeding ground again, Tim was in the punt, and we had got below him. Two other fine runs he made down to the tail of the weir, and the second time, with a little gentle pressure, we got him into the sharp but steady, stream below, and worked him away from the weir pool into a neighbourhood where he was more of a stranger; and here it was only a question of time and a good hold. Tim managed the punt like a master, only giving a brief word of caution now and then, and not many them, for he had "confidence in the rod," as he expressed it, and never liked to flurry the angler. Presently, as the trout began to run short, the punt was grounded on a gravelly shallow, where there was plenty of slack water outside, into which I coaxed the fish. The pole was laid down, and Tim took up the net, kneeling down and sinking it, ready for the last act of the play. I gradually led the fish nearer and nearer, and, when I saw him under the rod point, and what a splendid fish he was, I confess that my heart was in my mouth. Oh! if anything were to happen, and he got off now! I felt that I should hate myself for ever. But my fears were groundless – steadily the net was thrust forward deep into the water. The fish came within reach, and, with an upward sweep, Tim had him, and he was flopping in the bottom of the punt. Whoo-ooop! hoop!

hoop! hoo-oo! Thirteen pounds and a half, by the Lord Harry, and what a splendacious creature! A king of trouts, with all his jewels on, gold and silver and rubies. Twenty-eight inches and a half! He's the finest of fish I ever caught, Tim.

"Yes, sir, I 'spect he is, for he's a rael beauty, and worth gettin' up for, and I sees as Mr. Screwgem's of the same opinion, only he don't get up quite early enuff; for here he comes. We was only just in time, Sir. Lor, Sir! the sight o' this'll be galls and wormholes and wuss than the toothache to him; for he, you may lay your life, he meant to 'ave him, only, ye see, we've got him." And Screwgem, who came up just then, didn't look too delighted, though he vastly admired the fish, and drank doch-an-dhurris (more correctly, 'deoch an doris', a final drink before parting) with us.

We reached the landing place, where I gave Tim a sovereign, which I had much difficulty in forcing on him, and collared my trout, which made what Tim called 'a nero' of me for a week or two in piscatorial circles. "Mind, sir," said Tim, turning to me as he was going, "whenever you wants to catch a *big* Thames trout, use a big bait, and don't go foolin' around with a footy little bleak as he won't pick his teeth with." And so for a time we parted . . ."

This was undoubtedly a fine specimen of a Thames trout. During the 1800s, The Thames developed a reputation for producing Brown Trout which had attained large size by adopting a predatory habit. Over the years, several double figure fish were reported up to in excess of c.20lbs, but some of the largest specimens were not necessarily authenticated. Also, from the viewpoint of the Piscatorial Society, we must recognise that:

- Firstly, that this 13lbs + fish was not caught from one of the Society's waters. Indeed, we didn't have any waters of our own at that time.
- Secondly, it was caught on a spun dead bait and not on a fly.
- Thirdly, this might not have been a wild trout as extensive stocking of The Thames with trout was carried out during the nineteenth century.
- Fourthly, it was actually hooked by Tim the Tinker before being landed by Francis.

We can wonder why Francis let Tim hook the fish for him? The answer might be found by looking again at Edward Jesse's 'An Angler's Rambles' (4). He describes the practice of having to balance, precariously, on the top of the narrow top beam of the weir in order to fish. On the early, wooden built weirs, there was no walkway or handrail . . . "The art of fishing for trout from the top of the weirs of the river Thames is, I may venture to say, confined to very few and those in the habit of practising it for a considerable length of time. It requires good tackle, great skill and some nerve . . . The angler sits or stands on top of the piles of the weir, the foaming water rushing through them with great force and noise. The current then forms eddies, and little whirlpools in the basin below, and from which as the water expands itself, it again resumes its calm and stately movement. In the position I have described, the angler has to cast his line into the foaming basin, and this a skilful practitioner will do a distance of from thirty to forth yards . . . When the position of the angler is considered, this is no easy task, especially as the loss of his balance might precipitate him into the torrent below . . ."

A descendant of Francis, in an historical pamphlet published in 1991 (6), points out that a well-known expression among anglers at this time for big fish like Francis' trout, was 'stock-dollager', later spelled 'sockdolager'.

It's not known whether or not Francis' 13lbs + fish was set up (Francis family, 2022,

pers. comm.), but it definitely would have qualified for the title ‘sockdolager’ of a trout. We will explore this term a little more in a companion article, later in this same edition of *The Journal*.

Francis Francis will forever be remembered as one of the Piscatorial Society’s illustrious alumni.

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Big Fish on Split-Cane

by Clem Booth

The first part of my fly fishing life didn’t involve split-cane rods, although this was due to fiscal constraint rather than desire. As a young lad, I worked several afternoons each week, Saturday mornings too, in the fishing department of a sports store in Cape Town. The fly rod rack included a clutch of Hardy split-cane rods and I vividly remember their bewitching warmth, beauty and grace. Given that they retailed at roughly five or six times the price of best quality glass-fibre rods (carbon fibre hadn’t yet appeared on the scene), the chances of owning one were non-existent!

Around two decades later, by then well into a career that involved not only a more respectable wage, but also international travel, the yearning to get my hands on a split-cane rod had not dissipated and, in fact, was as strong as ever. Carbon fibre had thoroughly usurped glass-fibre as the weapon of choice and I, like many fly fishers, couldn’t help but be impressed by the new material. I had accumulated quite a number of fine graphite fly rods even though split-cane remained firmly on the agenda!

On a break in a business trip to London in the late 1980s, I made my way to Pall Mall, first to the old Hardy store, then back towards Trafalgar Square, to the old Farlows emporium. The Hardy rods were as gorgeous as ever but still seemed eye-wateringly expensive. In Farlows however, I found a lovely little 6 foot, 3/4 weight cane rod aptly badged ‘Farlows Stream Series’.

I bit the bullet, parted with 250 quid and became the proud owner of a wonderful little rod that served me admirably over many years, until I eventually auctioned it in support of the Red Cross Children’s Hospital in Cape Town. I didn’t fish it all the time but loved it whenever I did. It was possessed of ‘soul’; my graphite rods were very efficient tools but my heart had been captured by split-cane.

My career took us to Germany in 1999 and, later in 2003, to the UK and, like many fly fishers before and after, I signed up as a member of the Salisbury & District AC. On the back page of the 2003 Yearbook was an advert posted by a rod maker, one Edward Barder of Newbury. I went to see Edward and after a lovely chat – something I still do regularly

– ordered a 7½ foot, 4 weight rod, which turned out to be a great small stream stick and one that I still use and cherish today. My passion for cane had ratcheted up a couple of notches, as had the fiscal outlay, but when I think of the pleasure that little rod gave and still gives me, it was a bargain.

I'm sometimes asked if cane rods aren't 'too heavy' and I am instantly reminded of an amusing chat around 2007 with George Maurer, one of the many great American rod makers. Having just concluded an order for a 7½ foot, 5 weight – which George had in stock – I asked him what it weighed. George's answer was both instructive and direct, 'I don't know Clem, but if you can't pick it up, you're in trouble!'

Yes, if you go back to the longer 10 or 11 foot single-handed English rods of the earlier part of last century, most are indeed of a weight and action that renders them more or less useless for today's conditions. Remember however, a century ago, English fly fishers were often fishing downstream with wet flies and for this, these long, slow-actioned rods were just fine. By contrast, the East Coast fly fishers of the US had already adopted the dry fly as the preferred method and a century old split-cane rod made for the Catskills is perfectly serviceable on our chalk streams today.

George had, in his comment, made a very valid point; the weight of a fly rod is only one dimension, far less important than taper or length. As a rule of thumb, one is advised to be careful of split-cane rods longer than 8½ foot, as they might very well disappoint. The sweet spot for bamboo is between 5½ to 8½ feet, and I venture to suggest that in these lengths – for me anyway – it remains the superior material for our conditions.

Cane rods load far more easily than graphite and, as a consequence, considerably less false-casting is required. This, combined with a slower casting stroke, more than compensates for any minor weight differential versus graphite. A fly rod is simply a lever, and with split-cane, one is advised not to attempt to overpower it as this is neither productive nor necessary.

In the event, George – who was sadly to pass away just a year after our chat – called me back and told me the rod weighed ¾ ounces which, I think we can agree, is as light as makes any difference.

At some point over the past two decades, I increasingly became inclined to fish split-cane all, or, at least, most of the time and this pretty much describes my fly fishing life today. I fish graphite by exception – for example when the wind gets up in Patagonia – but for the most part, it's split-cane that accompanies me on fishing trips near and far.

My bamboo collection has grown quite a lot over the years but I'm not a 'collector' in that all are fished. In fact, if a particular rod remains unused for a season or two, we sit down to a serious conversation about its continued membership of the squad.

My split-cane adventure doesn't only embrace regular trout fishing and I also enjoy a number of purpose-built rods in heavier line weights for predator fishing and the like.

I've already mentioned Patagonia; when the wind dies down a bit, I fish an 8 foot, 8 weight split-cane rod and have accounted for wild rainbow trout of up to 17½ pounds, which is a bit of fun I can tell you!

There have also been plenty of big trout on UK rivers – up to 7½ pounds – and just this season, I was blessed with what was for me a holy grail – a grayling of well over 3 pounds – on a 4 weight split-cane rod.

Two fish will always remain unforgettable. The first was a magnificent, regal chub of 6½ pounds from the River Loddon, taken on a Barder 4 weight cane rod. It was an extraordinary fish with a girth that suggested a continuous and never-ending diet of signal crayfish!



Releasing a big double figure trout at Lago Strobel

And then there was that Thames pike. I've caught my share of pike on fly over the past twenty-something years, sometimes on cane, other times using graphite, but on this particular January 2022 morning, I'd decided on an 8½ foot, 8 weight split-cane rod made by Leen Huisman, the master rod and reel maker from the Netherlands. This rod weighs just under 6 ounces, which on the one hand sounds a lot, but on the other has all the advantages of easy loading and slower casting stroke, and I can safely say is no more tiring than an equivalent graphite stick after a day on the water.

To be clear, if you need to cast ultra-long distances – say 80 feet or more – or if the wind is fierce, then go for the graphite rod! I certainly do. Cane rods are not distance instruments, although in well-practised hands, they put out a more than decent line.

But, back to 'the pike!' The Thames was unusually clear for January, a function of abysmal winter rainfall, but, on the positive side, this afforded an excellent opportunity to have a go at the bigger, pre-spawn fish that often go on a bit of a feeding frenzy at this time of year.

In fact, I'd already had half a dozen big fish – up to 20 pounds – the previous December, so I was feeling reasonably confident.

The take was typical of big pike – these apex predators most often simply inhale the streamer fly – it was solid, almost immovable, and there was the inevitable millisecond when I wondered whether it was a fish or the bottom. Then, as they say, the bottom moved!

I'd been casting towards an overhanging tree when it took and what was quite obviously a big fish powered directly towards us and then under my boat. My split-cane



Weighing a 20lb cane rod caught Thames pike

rod was thrust deep into the water to clear the keel, and luckily the fish turned. We slugged it out for a couple of minutes deep down in typical big pike fashion before it showed signs of surfacing.

My friend Mark was manning the landing net, calm as you like but when this immense creature showed itself, we were both stunned. He kept it all together though, and quick as a flash, he eased it into the large bamboo hooped landing net whereupon we both fell back onto the deck in utter wonderment.

After unfolding the unhooking mat, we gently lifted this giant pike into the boat, took a couple of photos, before slipping her back with minimum delay; these big fish are

surprisingly fragile. She was the better part of 4 feet in length, 37 pounds, and still today, I shake my head and wonder whether any of this actually happened. I didn't fish any longer that cold January day and instead we motored the two hours back downstream to the marina, mostly in reflective silence. It was certainly a day we will never forget!

My adventures with split-cane have included Golden Dorado on the Parana Delta north of Buenos Aires, big carp to 20 plus pounds and a host of other species too. On my 'to-do' list are Atlantic Salmon – I've not yet had one on split-cane – and Sea Bass in the West Country and hopefully there will be the chance to tick those boxes before too long. Maybe a barbel too, who knows!

And, by the way, split-cane rods are pretty tough. Over the past decades, I can recall breaking at least half a dozen graphite rods but only one split cane rod. I had a tip splinter while fishing for pike in the Netherlands, this was most likely caused by the big streamer fly striking the tip at some point. Other than that single mishap, they've been as good as gold!

Split-cane rods have taken centre stage in my fly fishing life for a very long time now and catching some memorable fish along the way has been the cherry on top. Long may it continue!

My Six Favourite Angling Related Possessions

by Pat Stacpoole

What an inspiration! I rose avidly to John McGill's account of his six angling treasures and decided that I would list mine. No. Better still, I would paint them as I enjoy splodging oil paints about. Posing them for a still life would be the way to do it and there on floor I laid out my treasures against the backdrop of my aged patched fishing weskit (it is that old). The first draft of the painting looked adequate to me. "Interesting!" said daughter-in-law, turning the picture upside down "but would it not be better as an abstract?" Sadly she is not a fisher but a talented designer and she had a point. However I thought that a precise representation might be of more interest to me and possibly Piscatorials so herewith the oil painting.

Stacpooles have spent a great deal of their lives fishing so I thought that here I would span the last three generations. Our three sons, all fishers, can add their P's later if they wish.

The waistcoat pockets are, or have been, filled with fly boxes, tangled nylon casts, sandwiches, fragrant fish and the Piscatorial rules, of course. Attached are scissors, a floatant bottle and an elegantly crafted amadou fly drier. This was made for me by a German friend who receives regular reports from Herr Amadou of our exploits during the season.

Then there is the canvas hat, from New Zealand, therefore pronounced "het" or "potai" if you speak Maori; a thing of beauty which has protected me from sun and rain for over thirty years and, in emergencies, has landed fish.

There is no room for three generations of relevant rods – possibly Enright's Castleconnell greenheart, four pounds in weight, from my grandfather, assorted Hardy



The Oil Painting

Palakonas from my father and my talented Sage which places my fly precisely and unaided. However the reels are there. Grandfather RJS used a five inch diameter Slater wood and brass reel made in about 1900. The ratchet of the reel must have "Kraaaarked" like a mad rook to the salmon in Norway in 1902 and all over the west of Ireland. Father RHS's Hardy Perfect purred from Kashmir to the Camogue and Castleconnell. I treasure the late James Hunt's golden Orvis reel given to me by Charlotte. It is a thing of beauty produced for the Society's 150th anniversary. It may sound petty to complain but now, thirty-five years later, sometimes the line gets caught in the rim of the reel. This is possibly due to my running over it. My rod also broke twice for the same reason. Even though the rod was instantly replaced by Sage one wonders whether tackle these days is as robust as it should be.

Though they are mere blodges of colour in the painting the flies are the stars. My grandfather's are in a thick leather wallet. The larger flies are eyeless tied to gut and the smaller ones have gut eyes – an exciting new development in his time. To digress – what a relief it is now not to have to soak your cat gut cast in water before using it. I just missed that era with the arrival of nylon. As I reckon one can only manage with two technologies in one's lifetime I have not gone on to this modern polypropylene or whatever it is. In my father's Hardy and Ogden Smith's compartmented jappaned and

aluminium boxes there are familiar flies – sprightly and elegant Greenwell’s Glorys, Alders and Iron Blue Quills. Then and solely to give colour contrast to the picture, there is my garish red plastic box of Unspeakables enjoyed by the still water innocents which are about all I can reach now.

Finally I have included our fishing books which we have all kept up assiduously. My grandfather’s pocket sized Angling Register is a more regal red, as one would expect, because Mr. J. C. Vickery of Regent Street held Royal Warrants to the King, his late Mother, Queen Victoria and the Kings of Portugal and Denmark. All keen fishers?

My father’s entries in his fine blue Morocco leather book are more informative and frequent though with gaps from 1915 to 1917 and 1939 to 1941 when he did not fish but went shooting. Germans mainly. My own diaries, again fine leather, are decorative and with more comments; evocative.

How lucky we fishers are to have artefacts like these to conjure up such a treasure trove of memories.



The Windrush

by Oliver S. Field

The Windrush winds in and out of some of the loveliest parts of the Cotswolds. For miles it wanders through water meadows and under hanging willows, past thick beds of reeds and over rapids of Cotswold stone.

Of all the trout streams I have fished, it has always been one of my favourites. Even now after twenty years, it is still the peaceful retreat that I remember as a boy. The trout of the Windrush are poor risers and in fact for eleven months of the year they take practically no notice of the surface of the river. Then in late May when the mayfly first comes up, these fine fish rise from their holes in the river bed and their nooks under the bank and take the fly with abandon. For a few days they will feed well then as the quantity of the fly becomes greater and the fish fully satisfied, they stay in their lies taking one fly in a thousand.

Over fifteen seasons I have caught forty-five Windrush trout, which is not a great number, but a dozen of these have been about the two pound mark, and from a table point of view, I know no better fish. They are very pink of flesh and silver of flank and this may well be due to the fact that the Windrush is full of fresh water crayfish. There is a crayfish under almost every large stone on the river bed and they must take up a large proportion of the fishes’ diet. The Windrush also has more than its fair share of minnows as these small fish abound in every pool and eddy. With all this fine food supply it is

hardly remarkable that the fish seldom bother with the sprinkling of olives or iron blue that I have seen on the water in the spring.

They will on very rare occasions come up well to the grannom and I once took a fish in late April of over a pound on this fly. Later in the summer a fish may be caught by fishing the likely lies of the mayfly with a large sedge or daddy-long-legs but this will be more luck than anything else. The bigger fish sometimes take up stations in the evening and rise to the odd fly that is about, and such fish can be caught.

From the above it can be seen that the mayfly is the only time to be by the Windrush if you wish to catch a good trout on a dry fly. This may not be true of the upper water above Burford, but for the water below that pretty little township, it is. The earliest that I have ever caught a trout on the mayfly is the 14th May, although it is usually a week later than that. The latest I have taken a fish on the mayfly is the 10th June, though I am sure that they would still rise for a week after that, if a fish is seen.

Now come with me and enjoy two fine trout that I caught on the mayfly several years ago, one fish I feel I deserved, the other, luck played the greatest part in my catching.

It had been a hot day, my boots were gold with the pollen of buttercups from hours of walking along the bank. The water was glassy and few fly had bothered to hatch. I went into the Swan at Minster Lovell for a pint of shandy to quench my thirst before going up the river to see if there would be a late hatch, as often happens in the early part of the mayfly. In the Swan was another member of the club and after our drink, we set off together up the river.

By now the sun was low in the sky. It was warm and still, birds sang while swallows tripped up and down the surface gathering the first mayflies that heralded an evening hatch. We stood under some willows and watched the water. As we chatted a trout rose under the far bank. It was a savage rise and obviously a large fish.

"Have a go?" I said to my friend. "No," he replied, "it would be impossible to cover him from here." "He's a good fish you know," I continued, "well worth catching." "Very true, but with all these overhanging willow it would be too difficult." Well, I think I'll see what I can do," was my answer. "Do you mind?" "Not at all, I hope you catch him," but I could see from his expression that he had no doubt that I would fail, if I ever got a fly over the fish. So we parted, he going off up the river to look for an easier fish to catch, and I settling down to cover my friend under the far bank.

The fish continued to rise at almost every fly that came over him. There was a fair hatch, but not too much. I worked very hard indeed, but the more I tried, the more impossible it seemed. Every other cast, I had to put rod down my rod and creep back to untie my fly and cast from some branch or bough. Each time I did this, I would remove the branch and clear any high grass from the area.

Half an hour later, I was still no nearer success. Already the sun was setting and long shadows fell across the fields and meadows. I heard a distant clock strike nine and noticed that the flies were becoming far fewer. My fish continued to rise, moving over an area of about six to eight feet, up to some flies and down to others. At last I got a long back cast behind me and felt the line come forward without a hitch. The fly fell at the top of his beat. It sat there and began to drift down, there was no drag, and I held my breath. It floated the whole length and nothing stirred. I was on the point of lifting the rod in disgust when it happened. There was a swirl the fly had gone. By then the fly was very wet and battered and I'm sure he took as a hatching nymph.

I hardly needed to strike as I was already lifting the rod point. I felt a savage tug and the fish shot off upstream straight into a thick clump of rushes in mid river. I felt the line,

it was solid. I pulled and tugged gently but nothing happened. I gave the rod tip a thump with my fist for I was not sure what to do next, when suddenly I felt a distant movement and several heavy kicks. The fish was out and trying, the battle would soon be won. A minute or so later he came across the stream on his side and I steered him towards the folds of my net. There was a splash and I lifted him from the water. A beautifully shaped fish of eighteen inches and weighing over two and a half pounds.

The second fish was very different. On this occasion I had gone to the Windrush after work, not expecting to see the mayfly up. It was the 18th May and too early, I thought, for the fish to be up. I was only going as a reconnaissance, though I had put a rod in the car just in case.

I arrived at about seven and at once noticed that there were several mayflies drifting under Minster Lovell Bridge. I put on my boots and took the rod from the car. A few minutes later I was walking up the river glancing at the haunts of trout from previous years. I reached one favourite spot and stopped to watch.

As I stood in the uncut hay gazing at the gently flowing water, a fish rose dead opposite me. It was a fine trout and looked well over two pounds. I hurriedly put my rod together, not bothering to grease my line, and tied on a large mayfly that I had tied the previous week-end. I crept quietly downstream and made my first cast. It was a little short but the next time it covered him and with a gentle head and tail he took it. I struck and the fish leapt high in the air then turned and rushed past me downstream. (This run I later paced out and found to be thirty-five yards.) He then dived under the far bank. I got him and brought him to the surface. At this moment, I saw to my horror that the fly was only just holding on the outside of his jaw.

I unhooked my landing net and promptly caught it in a piece of barbed wire in the long grass. As I struggled to free the net, the fish made a final dash for freedom. I held him in a circle and brought him back with one hand while I freed the net with the other. I slipped the net under him and at that moment, as the tension slackened, he fell off the hook. He was also two and a half pounds, but only seventeen inches. Within half an hour of reaching the water, I was on my way home for in fact there was very little fly about and that was the only fish I saw rise.

Such is fishing, and I often feel that these two fish illustrated to me more than any others how luck and determination can play their different parts, and I am sure we all need a little of both!



Upper Limb (Shoulder to Hand) Problems Associated with Fly Fishing

by Grey Giddins

As people age they often move from a more vigorous sport to a less active one. This is typically driven by problems in the legs such as arthritis or cardiovascular (heart) problems. Less dynamic pastimes such as flyfishing can also be inhibited by various ailments especially in the upper limbs which is where the skills of a fly fisher are exhibited.

Shoulder

Shoulder movement associated with casting a fly is over a small range of motion. Although a repetitive action it is not typically a heavy one so there should be minimal risk of causing a new shoulder problem (other than by falling heavily on the riverbank). Nonetheless, simply the process of holding the rod for a long time in the day and moving it may exacerbate a pre-existing shoulder problem. The most common will be subacromial impingement also known as rotator cuff problems. This is where the small muscles that run over the top of the shoulder joint proper can become irritated. In the main, this is a constitutional problem, i.e. some people have an inherent tendency to it. Although it may be exacerbated by an overhead activity such as the serve at tennis or fast bowlers at cricket or at work, fly fishing is unlikely to cause it but if someone has an underlying tendency to it fly fishing may exacerbate that. Typically this can be treated successfully with physiotherapy in the first instance, steroid injections and only occasionally is surgery needed.

Elbow

Arthritis in the elbow joint typically only occurs in male manual workers in their 50s. Even having had an elbow fracture (break) does typically not cause significant elbow arthritis later in life. More common is tennis elbow (lateral epicondylitis); this is a degenerative problem where the tendon for the muscles that cock up the wrist (for tennis elbow) attach to the outer side of the elbow respectively. This is also a constitutional problem in most people but could be exacerbated by fly fishing. Research has shown that when gripping, the extensor muscles, i.e. the ones on the back of the forearm used for cocking back the wrist, are activated more of the time than the stronger flexor muscles, i.e. the ones that bend the wrist down. The effort used to lift the line off the water if performed aggressively or with heavier rods might exacerbate an underlying tendency to tennis elbow but would be unlikely to cause tennis elbow per se. Once tennis elbow occurs, it typically takes a long time to settle, i.e. many months, sometimes 1–2 years. The key is to settle it early with activity modification, i.e. avoiding provocative activities and, if that is not working, specific physiotherapy. Sometimes changing the grip on a fly fishing rod may help. That would be very much a matter of trial and error. Using a grip with the thumb on top leads the wrist to go more into radial deviation rather than extension and radial deviation (see below), which is likely to be more comfortable for a patient with tennis elbow (see below).

Golfer's elbow or medial epicondylitis is really a problem of pronation, i.e. turning the palm down. As there is very little of that with fly fishing there should be no real exacerbation of this from fly fishing.

Wrist

The most interesting joint from a biomechanical viewpoint is the wrist. In order to understand the possible problems with the wrist it is useful to understand a little of the biomechanics of wrist movements. It is easy to assume, as was done for centuries in medicine, that the wrist moves in simple extension, i.e. cocking back, and flexion, i.e. bending down movements or side to side movement, i.e. towards the thumb side or towards the little finger side. In truth it primarily moves in a plane of extension and radial deviation, i.e. cocking up and then tipping towards the thumb side in "extension" and ulnar deviation and flexion, i.e. bending down and tipping towards the little finger side. For obvious reasons this is known as the dart thrower's arc of motion; it could easily have been called the casting arc of motion. This particular movement is now considered a fundamental part of human evolution, i.e. it is an advance over other primates who can only flex and extend their wrists, so when they throw they cannot throw with the same accuracy as humans as they cannot throw along the line of sight. It is used in many daily activities not least throwing and probably has a role in how we avoid injury when we fall.

Flyfishers who hold their rods with the "V" of the first web space uppermost will cast with a dart-thrower's motion; flyfishers who fish with their thumb on top will cast with wrist be in the radial-ulnar deviation arc. There is less movement in the latter axis which may suit some fishermen; it will help restrict "excess" wrist action. Neither action should cause any wrist problems save that retuning to a vigorous radial-ulnar deviation cast after a long lay-off may in theory predispose to De Quervain's syndrome, an irritation of the tendons on the radial (thumb) side of the wrist. It is much more likely that any wrist problems associated with fly fishing will be an exacerbation of an underlying problem typically wrist arthritis. This is best addressed initially by restricting wrist movement a little, typically with a wrist strap and considering using a lighter rod.

Hand

As with the more proximal joints, fly fishing is unlikely to cause hand problems but hand problems may cause difficulty fly fishing. The commonest condition in the hand is carpal tunnel syndrome; median nerve entrapment at the wrist. This causes numbness and tingling classically in the thumb, and index and middle fingers. This can reduce dexterity in particular making fly or knot tying more difficult (or impossible). Fishing in cold water may further exacerbate the problem short-term. As carpal tunnel syndrome is eminently curable with injections and sometime surgery, and often gets worse with no treatment it is best to seek help.

Next most common is trigger finger (or thumb)/flexor synovitis. There variants of the same problem with inflammation of the finger (or thumb) bending tendons which rub a little with every bending motion. It can present as pain in the palm or in the fingers worse with gripping. Triggering is where the finger catches in a bent position and then straightens with a jerk which may be painful. Sore or catching fingers will at the least make fishing less enjoyable. Wearing a glove to limit full bending can help as can increasing the diameter of the fishing rod grip. Trigger finger (and especially trigger thumb) often settles on its own; if not, steroid injections are typically very successful.

Dupuytren's disease is a common problem, particularly in Anglo-Saxon males in later middle age and onwards. It presents first as thickening in the palm and then contractures of the fingers. This is seen strikingly in the hands of the actor Bill Nighy who most hand surgeons consider has Dupuytren's disease that he has decided not to treat. As the contracture does not prevent gripping rod until very late on. It is not typically a problem for fly fishermen.

Overall flyfishing should not give upper limb problems; if it does there is probably an underlying abnormality that can usually be improved if not resolved.

Desert Island Flies – 4

by Richard Tomiak

So, another hurricane season, another stranded member on Piscatoria. This time it is Mike Davis, a recent member (though he has fished chalk streams for nigh on 60 years) and is active on the PS fly-tying forum, who has to dash into the waves to rescue his eight favourite flies from the waves as his ship goes down.

One of the interesting aspects of writing this piece is the interviewee's back-story and how they came into fishing. I have often wondered if there is a fishing gene or it is more nurture than nature. In general terms, over the years of talking to medics and scientists on this topic of genes vs environment, most are mainly now in the genetic rather than environmental camp though inevitably the two are frequently very intertwined. In Mike's case there was no escaping either his genes or environment as both his grandfather and his mother were both keen fisherfolk as indeed is his elder brother. Environmental factors were doubled down by an education in Winchester College, where in the summer, the school, generously allowed pupils to fish on the school's three miles of Itchen, rather than play cricket. (Blimey I hear you say but then Winchester College is the home of some of our great anglers such as Skues, Marryat, Lord Grey and Dermot Wilson which may explain a lot).

He then entered the world of advertising which offered many opportunities for travel and of course fishing, including in the lee of Mount Fuji! Mike has also been lucky enough to make several visits to fish in and around Yellowstone Park USA, about which his grandfather wrote the first book in the 1930s – see below – trips aided by having an American wife who fishes!

By happy chance, through work, Mike met Neil Patterson, who had been Goddard & Clarke's collaborator when they wrote *The Trout & The Fly*, partly at The Wilderness on the Kennet, where Mike fished with Neil for 25 years. Neil wrote *Chalkstream Chronicle* and created several fly patterns that Mike now uses. Through Neil, Mike met Peter Lapsley who first put Mike in touch with the Society back in 2003.

Over the years he has fished some of our waters before they were ours including Lake when it was run by a solicitor from Amesbury, Abbots Barton when it was run by Roy Darlington, and the Anton at Westover, providing him with then and now perspectives on our waters.

We reflected on why Abbots Barton is such a vexing water. Under Roy it was run as a stocked fishery and the streams were wider and less overgrown. Overall, it was an easier place to fish but I don't think it has ever been that easy, as noted by Skues and latterly,

John Goddard. Goddard ascribed it to the slow water and lack of cover for the angler, and of course now we have a larger cohort of wild fish which are easily spooked. It does have its moments and the mayfly season generally seems to yield more success amongst members

So on to his fly selection. Mike has been tying flies since childhood and likes to keep things simple “my ideas are more nimble than my fingers!” Thus, thoraxes are more likely to include plucked hair rather than hackles to simulate legs, and wings are CDC rather than deer hair which he finds challenging to tie (join the club . . .). He is a fan of CDC as he feels it gives great mobility and life to the fly, and results in a softer landing. Grey is a favoured colour for flies, in his support quoting the Adams, Grey Wulff, and Grey Goose nymph. It is clearly an important colour though he noted that Skues and the late Peter Lapsley were supporters of orange which does seem to work well with salmonids – Skues’ orange quill for the Itchen in July, partridge and orange on Northern streams, orange lures for rainbow trout and arctic char and a plethora of orange combinations for salmon flies.

He is a convert to the Optimal Forager Theory (as I am, see book *Trout and Flies: Getting Closer* by Peter Hayes and Don Stazicker) which is basically trout go for an easy meal, not something that is about to run away! This is reflected in his choice of flies with emergers and cripples (though I prefer the more accurate term “failed emerger”) to the fore.

Finally, he likes to “show the fish something a bit different” believing that the most used patterns do become recognisable. He comments that to fish virgin waters all you need would be a Para Adams and a Grey Wulff in various sizes, and one of a PTN or GRHE nymph, but the waters we fish are far from virgin.

1. CDC Emerger

His first choice is a classic CDC Emerger which he ties primarily in grey, and also in a pale olive or a primrose & Tup’s colour scheme (which grayling love). He fishes this fly in the smallest appropriate size – he finds fish less suspicious of a tiny fly.

In dark grey and smaller sizes this fly works when Iron Blues are up.

Tip: Mike drops each fly into a glass of water to see that it sits well, body below the surface and wing reasonably upright; those that don’t should be cut back to the hook to start again!



Hook: a Klinkhammer, 16–22

Thread: Grey Semperfli Classic Waxed Thread in 8/0, or slimmer or Semperfli Nano silk for the very smallest sizes.

Tail: none.

Body: the tying silk, ribbed with extra fine silver wire, to ensure the lower body sits below the surface film; for the smallest sizes you can omit the rib but coat with UV resin to achieve the sinking result.

Wing: natural undyed CDC plumes, 2 to 4 depending on fly size.

Thorax: cut off the CDC wing leaving a base of a thorax then add a hare's ear dubbing mix or finely chopped natural CDC dubbed over it (paler with yellow & pink hints for the alternative version).

2. Crippled Dun

His second choice is a Crippled Dun that he has adapted from a Kelly Galloup crippled spinner pattern (see his Youtube video). Mike very often fishes the Emerger, above, or this Cripple even when fish are taking the fully formed dun – it is an easier and more reliable meal than a dun that can fly off at any moment. This fly is designed to lie on its side, allowing the curve of the hook to look like a bend in the fly's body lying on the surface, hence the positioning of the wing and the trimming of half the hackle.



Hook: Klinkhammer, 16–22

Thread: Grey, or chosen to match the hatch.

Tail: a thin straggly shuck, grey Zelon or similar.

Body: Semperfli kapok, colour to match hatch, Mike uses Adams, and also Pale Olive with Adams overlaid (not mixed in) shown in the photo; Superfine dubbing is an alternative.

Hackle: any with a black & white barred or speckled effect.

Wing: just one, pointing upward as you tie it in the vice, pale grey polypropylene or EP Trigger Fibers PMD shade.

Thorax: dubbed as body but slightly darker and perhaps one third of body length.

N.B. Half the hackle is trimmed on one side, i.e. leaving a 180 degree hackle so that fly lies on its side. In the photo the hackle has been trimmed on the side away from the camera: the camera angle is in effect showing the fly as you would see it from above as it lies on the surface.

This fly can also be tied as a spinner cripple: just add tails rather than a shuck, and use appropriate colours.

3. Hotchpotch

His third fly is Neil Patterson's Hotchpotch (named by Neil for John Hotchkiss with whom it was first fished). Mike finds this to be an extraordinarily effective pattern at any time when sedges might be around. This fly is all about the design and profile. The colour shown here is one of Neil's original mixes but can be changed to match the hatch. Key is no body hackle, so a juicy body is visible, but long dense thorax hackles and a long flat wing, so that if the fly is tweaked it falls back on the wing leaving a wake, just as a skittering caddis does.



Hook size: 12–16 dry fly with straight shank, Mike uses 2x long.

Thread: to match hatch, here it is tan.

Wing: zelon or poly-yarn, tied in to initially extend forward over the eye, and then taken back and tied down at rear of thorax hackle, after the body and hackle have been tied.

Body: colour of choice, in this case a creamy dubbing e.g. Superfine in Light Cahill or Semperfli Kapok in Danica, quite a fat body.

Hackle: to match, dun shown here, tied in from eye to where body starts in 6 to 8 tight turns – then cut a wide V in the top of the hackle, where the wing will be folded back to lie along the body.

Finish: fold the wing back though the V in the hackle, tie wing down where hackle meets body and whip finish at that point.

N.B. the wing should lie flatter along the body than normal, as shown.

4. P.T.H.E. Nymph

Next up is a nymph, a hybrid pattern given to Mike by another fishing pal, the late Peter Lapsley

Hook: straight nymph hook 14–18

Thread: brown.

Tail: cock pheasant tail fibre tips.

Body: the pheasant fibres, ribbed with fine gold wire.

Thorax: hare's ear & guard hairs picked out to be distinctly leggy.

Wing case: the good side of a bunch of cock pheasant tail fibres.



N.B. If a bead head is to be added Mike prefers a grey or black bead.

5. French Partridge Mayfly

For mayfly time the French Partridge strikes again! This is Mike's banker (his pun, intended). He varies the colours according to the prevalent stage of the fly. Shown is his early season version with a yellow, white & red theme.

Hook size: 10–12

Thread: yellow.

Tail: cock pheasant tail fibres.

Body: mix of cream & yellow dubbing, e.g. Kapok or Superfine, ribbed with doubled up red silk (two turns at tail).

Hackles: body – white & yellow palmered, throat – natural French Partridge.



Once spinners are dominant Mike switches to a cream body with dark brown ribbing and sometimes lessens the body hackle so the spinner sits in the film more or drops the body hackle entirely.

6. IOBO

Next up is the all-purpose IOBO – “It Oughtta Be Outlawed” created in the USA in the 1990s. It covers, depending on size, midges & smuts, beetles & ants, and just hatched olives or iron blues.

Hook: straight hook 16–24, especially the smaller sizes – it is very easy to tie.

Thread: grey, tan, or dark olive.

Tail, body and wing: natural undyed CDC feather tips, from 1 to 4 depending on size.

Sequence: take thread from eye to tail, where tie in CDC with tips pointing to rear about 1.5 to 2 times hook length, don't trim CDC butts. Wind thread back to eye in open turns over the butts allowing a CDC body, then trim butts. Pull the CDC tips forward from rear, letting a few fibres drop back to form the hint of a shuck, bringing the tips over the back and tie down behind the eye, using turns in front of the CDC tips to stand them up as a wing. Whip finish.



7. Funnelspinner

Another Neil Patterson pattern. Neil developed the Funneldun and this was the natural spent spinner evolution. Mike says that he finds fishing spinners the most challenging of all hatches or falls, with so many refusals to apparently well-presented flies. This wingless, hackled, upside-down pattern sits in the surface film and Mike thinks has a slightly crippled feel to it (lacking a fully formed set of wings) which might contribute to its effectiveness. He admits to slightly simplifying the tying, and not always funnelling the hackles as forward as originally intended.



Hook: ideally a straight-eyed or up-eyed hook 14–18.

Thread: colour to match the hatch: orange is the primary one; the thread will be the body. (Mike ties a bright pink version for use at last light).

Thorax: first dub the thorax, either rabbit or a pale hare or CDC mix.

Hackle: a cock hackle with flues the length of the hook, to provide the 'wings', colour – blue dun, or white, or orangey/red (Neil matches to the light conditions), tied in behind the thorax. Tie hackle toward rear, funneling fibres forward toward & over the eye with thumb & forefinger, bind thread over roots of hackles to lock in funnelled effect.

Tails: take thread to tail and tie in white microfibre or soft white paintbrush fibres – slightly round the hook bend so these point down a bit.

Body: take thread back up to behind base of hackle, dub a further small thorax there and whip finish.

Trim Hackle: clip the upper (whilst in vice) half of hackle, leaving 180-degree hackle on the underneath, which will be uppermost when fly is 'upside down' on/in the surface film, hinting at flimsy wings.

N.B. if fully funnelling the hackle forward tie it on one size smaller hook than the desired fly size, as the forward pointing flues add to the overall size impression.

8. Micro Glass Bead Midge Pupa

His last fly is a small black midge pupa. Where there is water there are midges and fish that feed on them when the midges are not feeding on you! This applies to rivers as much as lakes. And he is in good company: John Goddard was exceptionally keen on midge patterns for river fishing.

Hook: 16–20 a curved nymph or grub hook, heavy if you want more depth.

Thread: black waxed 12/0.

Bead: 2mm glass.

Rib: silver wire, Semperfli 0.2mm – the bead being ‘too big’ for hook allows

wire to be threaded through & around the bead once before locking bead in place.

Body: black thread, ribbed with the silver wire.

Wing/breathers: white poly-yarn.

Thorax: Hends Spectra dubbing shade #46 (like peacock herl).



N.B. this could be tied on a silver hook, to show through the glass.

For the also rans there is quite a list, showing just how hard it can be to slim down one’s choices.

There is no pattern that will cover a Hawthorn here but that was a sacrifice Mike was prepared to make. (As an aside he ties his Hawthorn with a roughly dubbed black body ribbed with pearl mylar, black knotted PT legs, wing of white poly yarn and a black cock hackle).

For an up-wing dun, an adapt of Montana’s Blue Ribbon Flies’ Improved Sparkle Dun with zelon shuck, thread body, a dubbed thorax, and a wing of zelon behind CDC, colours can match the hatch but Mike relies on grey. Mike recommends watching BRF’s videos online on how to tie their excellent patterns.

A Daddy almost made it into the top eight: a simple ginger hackled, no-wing version, with trailing knotted cock pheasant fibre legs, and a peacock herl body with a fluoro orange butt, or better still – a bright orange foam detached body.

Mayfly reserves: a CDC winged version of the commercially available Baz’s Mayfly, with picked-out CDC thorax rather than hackle, and Neil Patterson’s two Socks patterns, his Andelle, and his Deerstalker – all detailed in his book ‘The Chalkstream Chronicle’.

A Beacon Beige (stripped quill body, tail & hackles both ginger and grizzle cock), and a hackled Tups both in small sizes 18–20.

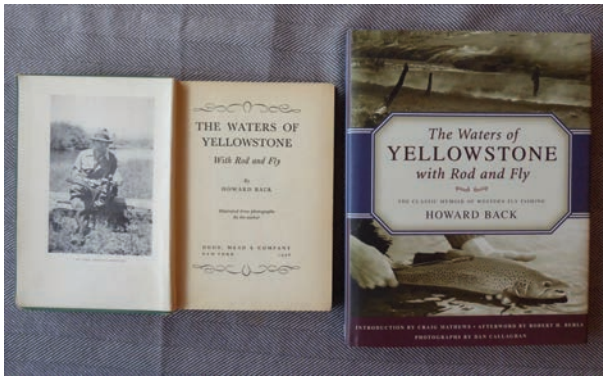
Sedge reserve: a simple F Fly sedge, thread body (rusty orange), ginger cock hackle, CDC wing.

Finally in the also rans Paul Proctor’s All Purpose Terrestrial, see his Youtube videos (one for materials then the other for tying).

Lastly, we come to the one book and luxury to take.

For Mike the book has to be “The Waters of Yellowstone Park with Rod and Fly” written by his maternal grandfather, Howard Back, who immigrated to the US between

the wars, and fished those waters in the 1930s. In 1938 his book was published, the first on the subject, which is still in print today. Mike would take his grandfather's old personal copy, rather than the latest Lyons Press edition, of which the cover notes say it "has been revered as a classic for sixty-five years."



The Book

For his one luxury he has selected his lightweight Danwise with its box filled up with the basics he'd need to tie a grey fly or two to fish the sparkling streams he hopes to find on the desert island.



The Luxury

So, once again, a very interesting personal selection of flies based on years of experience. Like the other contributors, Mike is not constrained by traditional patterns and is willing and keen to experiment with new concepts, materials and philosophies which is as it should be. That being said, this is now the third time that the French partridge has been selected which tells you something about the durability and qualities of this design: if it ain't broke don't fix it!

*The author's most recent contribution on this subject was published in Journal 146, Spring 2021.
This is his latest . . .*

Pre-posthumous Postscript to Piscatorial Society Secretary on Modes of Address

by Pat Stacpoole

For booking beats upon the Styx
The Devil's scribes are sticklers.
Name, initials, rank, prefix-
Correct in all particulars.

I have written through the years
To Secretaries, since retirement
Initials – **PMR not P**
Fulfil the Scribe's requirement.

Copy to:
bookings @ infernal.com
Stacpoole, Lieutenant Colonel

*Pat . . . or should I say Lieutenant-Colonel PMR Stacpoole . . .
suggested that I postscript this poem with
"Correspondence on this subject will now cease"*

*Sorry Pat but no . . . I await the next one . . .
Editor*



A History of The Society in 100 Objects – 3

by John McGill

Sockdolagers & The Booker Cup

Previously, we featured the capture of a large trout from the Thames by one of our illustrious alumni, Francis Francis. This article provides a back story to that capture.

Throughout the 1800s, despite increasing levels of pollution, the lower Thames was regarded as a 'commercial' fishery and a source of food. Alongside angling, spearing, netting and trapping were all widely practiced and persisted until comparatively recently. For example, with reference to spearing, David Solomon records in his 'A History of Fish and Fisheries of the River Thames', published in 2021 (1), that . . . "National legislation made spearing illegal in England and Wales for taking salmon in 1861, trout in 1878 and freshwater fish in 1923 . . . Use of eel spears continued to be legal . . . However, (in the Thames) the use of a spear upstream of London Bridge for any species, including eels, was prohibited by the Thames Conservancy Bye Laws of 1893 . . ."

During the nineteenth century, most of the Piscatorial Society's members would have lived in or around London and for logistic reasons, most of their fishing was carried out in the Thames and those tributaries in or close to the capital. Here, they would have been exposed to a prevailing background of 'catch and kill' attitudes. These attitudes were reflected in the Society's custom to hold weekly meetings at our London headquarters and it was expected that members would kill fish and submit their catch for formal weighing-in.

It's recorded in the first (Centenary) Book of The Piscatorial Society, published in 1936 (2), that it was also the custom, which lasted for many years, to fine members for too infrequent attendance at meetings and/or for failing to display fish from time to time. In order to celebrate the carnage, a diversity of prizes were offered, including:

1st Prize For the heaviest weight of fish during the whole season.

2nd Prize For the heaviest weight across three separate days.

3rd Prize For the best single fish over the following qualifying weights . . . The list includes Thames trout 3lbs and river trout 1lb. Grayling did not figure in the list presumably because they were not encountered in the Thames or any of its tributaries which were accessible to central London. The qualifying weight for pike was only 7lbs.

4th Prize For the greatest number of fish during the season without restriction to weight etc.

So in order to qualify for a prize, members had to kill their fish and have them weighed and witnessed at one of the regular meetings of the Society. Prizes took the form of cash, cups and medals, reels and other tackle and, for some of the most notable specimens, the fish was set up by a taxidermist at the Society's expense and displayed in the Society's 'museum'.

Thankfully, interest in the annual competitions gradually declined over time. In 1892 it was finally decided to abolish money prizes and challenge trophies took their place. One

such challenge trophy was the Booker Cup which is the third item chosen to illustrate the history of the Society.

Based on the diligent researches of a previous Society Librarian, Nicky Mulholland (3), we know that “. . . The Booker Cup first appears in the red membership and rule book for 1889. Mr. R. E. Booker presented this fine silver cup to the Society to be awarded to the member who caught the largest trout from the Thames. The cup carries the inscription: ‘*The Piscatorial Society Challenge Cup for Largest Thames Trout*’. On a small silver shield, the base carries the inscription: ‘*Booker Challenge Cup*’ 1889”.



The Piscatorial Society's Booker Cup

In 1979, Piscatorial Society member Lord Penney asked the Goldsmith's Company to examine the cup and provide information on its hallmarks. They responded with the following report:

“The cup is sterling silver and is properly marked. It was made by the firm of James & Josiah Williams of Bristol and was marked in Exeter in 1867. This firm was the main user of the Exeter assay office and when the firm closed, the Exeter hallmarks were soon brought to an end (1882 was the last year).

The cup was to be awarded to the member who caught the largest trout from the Thames (anywhere on the Thames and by any angling method) and was to be held by the successful member for the ensuing year, but must be won three times before becoming the property of such member. Clearly, the latter never occurred for the cup is still in the possession of the Society . . .”

The Booker Cup can still be seen in one of the locked cabinets in the Rod Room. We have records of the winners from 1889 through 1904 although not every year saw a winner. During the 1900s the Society moved progressively away from the Thames and more importantly, the quality of Thames trout declined in relevance and popularity.

At the Society’s Centenary dinner in 1936, the cup was presented to Air Marshall Sir Robert Saundby, President of the Society since 1932 and it remained in his possession until 1965 when it was passed back to the Society at the Annual Dinner. The Committee then decided to put the trophy to use and so for some years (1966 through 1983) it was awarded to the runner up to the Mayes Spoon. The Mayes Spoon was a trophy which, starting in 1960, was awarded annually to the member who landed the largest brown trout taken on fly from the Society’s waters. We will feature the Mayes Spoon in a future article in this Journal.

As the ethos and emphasis of the Society was changing toward ‘catch & release’ and more especially toward the pursuit of wild fish, the awarding of the Booker Cup and the Mayes Spoon have both become less relevant. The Booker Cup was last awarded in 1983. The Mayes Spoon was last awarded in 1990.

Thames Trout

During the nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries, the River Thames and some of its tributaries, gained a reputation for producing large trout, several of them running into double figures. In order to reach and then to maintain that weight, these fish would, in large measure, have had to be feeding on small fish. These ‘spotty pike’ tended to inhabit the deeper water of the several weir pools and the most common method employed to catch them was with a spun dace, bleak or gudgeon dead bait mounted on a ‘Thames Flight’. The ‘Thames Flight’ consisted of a large single hook to gut which, when lip-hooked, supported the weight of the bait. Below this were a row of either two or three small treble hooks lashed to a short continuation of the gut trace, depending on the size of the bait.

Anglers had always tended to concentrate on the Thames weir pools when spinning for these large predatory trout but this focus was increased after 1894 when the widespread practice of trolling, trailing or harling was made illegal by a Bye Law in The Thames Conservancy Act which read: “No person or any vessel under way upon the Thames shall draw or cause or suffer to be drawn in the direction in which said vessel is proceeding any line with hook or bait attached thereto, whether such line be attached to a rod or otherwise.” No doubt large trout still inhabited parts of the river other than the weir pools but they were harder to locate if you were no longer allowed to cover large areas of the water from a boat and were now forced to rove, spinning speculatively, from the bank.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, several prominent anglers made a speciality of spinning dead baits (or even live baiting) for these large, weir pool trout, not least some members of the Piscatorial Society.

One of them was the famous angling writer Francis Francis who is featured in a

companion article earlier in this edition of the Journal. Francis was a member of the Piscatorial Society as was Dr. John Brunton. In addition to his membership of the Piscatorial Society, Brunton helped to found the Gresham Angling Society in 1881. We know from the centenary report of the Gresham Society, published in 1991 (4) that, similarly to our own Booker Cup, Brunton gifted his own challenge cup to the Gresham Society in 1911. The inscription on that trophy reads: *Challenge Cup To The Gresham Angling Society For Thames Trout Taken by Spinning or Artificial Fly from John Brunton M.D. Gifted in 1911*. We should note that this later trophy specifies spinning or artificial fly.

These large trout made impressive mounts and many were set-up. Some specimens are on display at 'The River and Rowing Museum' in Henley-on-Thames. These were caught by another Thames angler, A. Edward Hobbs, who specialised in catching them and as late as 1947, he published a book recording his exploits titled 'Trout of the Thames' (5). This little book narrates Hobbs' exploits, starting in the late 1800s. He caught an impressive number of Thames trout, mostly by spinning dead baits. Hobbs states, "... In the fifty-five years, including 1945, it has been my pleasure to catch 878 Trout over 3lbs each, and a large number over the 16 inch limit and up to 3lbs. Of these I have ten mounted whose average weight was 9lbs 12ozs. In addition to these, 56 ranging between 6lbs and 8lbs 13ozs came to my landing net ...". Several other authors mentioned Thames trout in their various books. More recently, Peter Rogers has published an interesting anthology of these writings in his 2008 book 'Below the Weir' – Methods and Memories of Thames Trout Angling (6).

Sockdolagers

The lexicon of angling is constantly evolving and not necessarily for the better. For example, I've only just discovered what 'spodding' is and when did you last hear of anyone 'stret-pegging' with 'gentles' close against the 'camp-sheathing'?

Another term which was once in common usage but which has gone out of favour is sockdolager.

In the article on Francis Francis, the large Thames trout of 13lbs + which he caught by spinning a dead dace in Sunbury weir pool would definitely have qualified as a sockdolager.

Reference is made to the use of the term sockdolager by Francis & Urwin (1991) in their biographical pamphlet on Francis Francis (7). Apparently, this was a well-known expression among Victorian anglers when referring to a specimen fish. Sockdolager is an interesting term. The definition is set out below. Perhaps it should be reinstated?

Sockdolager (noun). A US slang term of uncertain origin. Various speculative etymologies have been suggested. But there is an accepted range of meanings:

- A decisive blow or remark.
- A conclusive argument.
- An outstanding person or thing.
- Something large or otherwise exceptional.
- A whopper.

Various alternative spellings are listed including: stock-dolloger; sockdollager; sockdolager etc.

As an aside, it's been suggested that sockdolager was almost the last word that US President Abraham Lincoln heard. During the performance of Tom Taylor's 'Our

American Cousin', assassin John Wilkes Booth (who knew the play well) waited for the laugh-line "... Don't know the manners of good society eh? Well, I guess I know enough to turn you inside out, old gal – you sockdolagising old man-trap ...". Amid the noise as the audience responded, Booth fired the fatal shot (8).

Sources

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Presidential Pontification

by Paddy Douglas-Pennant

When I last wrote this column in March I was concerned about what I referred to as a "dry spell" then. Little did I guess what was around the corner with the extended drought of the last four months which at time of writing in September has practically brought fishing to a standstill except for those members prepared to fish very early and very late, and which has left most of our fisheries in a sorry state. I think that the only positive to come from this dire situation is the much-increased awareness by the public and politicians of the degraded condition of our rivers. We, that is the Society, will continue to do as much as we can to highlight the situation as it affects our own fisheries, and play our part in the battle to improve the purity of UK rivers in general.

Members may like to know that our Abbots Worthy fishery was successfully sold this year to a private syndicate after a good deal of difficulty, and as a result we have received compensation for the final year foregone on our lease. But with the loss of one fishery comes the gain of another, and I'm pleased to report that the Anton has proved to be a great success with members despite the alarmingly low flows that we are experiencing. Phew, I can breathe a sigh of relief! It's never easy taking on a new fishery and this was a

major undertaking with no less than four miles of it split into six beats over two estates. My only sadness is that my dear friend, James Liddell, the owner of Fullerton, died after a cruelly short illness earlier this year. He was an exceptionally nice man and my deepest sympathies go to his widow and family. Happily, his son Tom, who has managed the estate with his father for many years, will now take over a sole managerial role and I am not expecting there to be any changes that might affect our plans for the river or our tenancy.

With a few isolated exceptions members have behaved in exemplary fashion in this first season on the Anton, and I have heard on a number of occasions from both of the owning families about how pleased they are to have us around. Do remember when it comes to any of our fisheries, and not just the Anton, that you never know who you might meet walking beside the river so please always establish identity before remonstrating, and if it's an owner or a member of his family please go out of your way to be polite even if they've just walked downstream along fifty yards of the bank you are about to fish. I hope they wouldn't do that, but you never know! They are just too important to the Society for us to be concerned about such minor matters, and these days, when renting our fishing is our likely future, good relationships with our waterlords, their families, staff and neighbours are absolutely vital. Word gets around in the riverside community and one bad experience can have serious repercussions elsewhere for our reputation as lessees.

Members will, I hope, be pleased to hear that Graham Waterton and I have managed to negotiate with the owner an amendment to our Westover lease on the Anton to incorporate the Westfair, a major carrier, into what we have already. This fishery is currently operated by Aardvark McLeod on a heavily stocked commercial basis. This has always been of concern to us in our efforts to re-wild the Anton as a whole, as the presence of large numbers of over-wintering stockies intent on hoovering up wild fry in what is the most important nursery stream on the river is not a good idea, so this addition to our portfolio of fisheries is most welcome. We take over with effect from 1st November this year. Bob will report elsewhere on our plans for it but one stipulation that the owner imposed during the negotiation was that he wanted more use made of the Westfair fishery for educational and/or scientific purposes. We were happy to agree to this, not just because we had no option, but because it chimes with what we, as one of the leading fishing clubs in the country, would want to be involved in. So we concluded that if members will only be able to fish the Westfair on six days of the week that is not much of a hardship when compared with the opportunities that having full control of the whole of the Anton from Goodworth Clatford to its confluence with the Test.

Taking on the Anton has been a major undertaking for Bob, our keepers and their contract help over this last year, but I'm glad to say that they have all coped really well in what looked like being a difficult year that was salvaged to a certain extent by the fact that there was less weed cutting than usual due to the drought. The ability of our three keepers to manage the extensive mileage that the Society now has – probably about 25 miles with the Westfair – needs to be very carefully monitored if we are not to find the team overstretched, so this is something that the Board has paid careful attention to when considering our existing fisheries and possible new acquisitions.

Our fishery at Abbots Barton on the Itchen has been deteriorating in recent years due to factors outside of our control and we are unlikely to be able to bring it up to an acceptable state in the foreseeable future. Now that we have the Westfair it has become clear in discussions with Bob and the keeper team that it would be very difficult for our

existing staff to manage both that and Abbotts Barton as well, so the Board has taken the decision to surrender our lease on Abbotts Barton with effect from the end of December this year. I know that this is sad – and will be unpopular with some of our members – but times change and we can't go on flogging dying horses without the means of revival in our hands. We feel also that it is more important than ever now that our fisheries are grouped with an eye to efficiency of management by our existing team, and that is now the case with what we have on the Avon, Wylve and the Hampshire trio of Freefolk, Anton and the Grange.

Board members have been busy as always throughout the year and I am very grateful to them all for their contribution which comes at no cost to the Society. In particular David Watson, our veteran committee member of 13 years' standing and to date irreplaceable, has been busy managing our excellent intranet and also with leading on discussions over uses of our development fund. This work is ongoing and it would be premature for me to report on it now. But all of our Board members have done sterling work in leading on their assigned subjects and this makes the overall management of the Society run smoothly. Our collective thanks also are due to Bob and the keeper team as we approach the end of another trout season. All those who make the Society tick – that is staff and Board members – richly deserve these thanks and congratulation from us all.





Director of Fisheries' Report

by Robert Wellard

River Anton

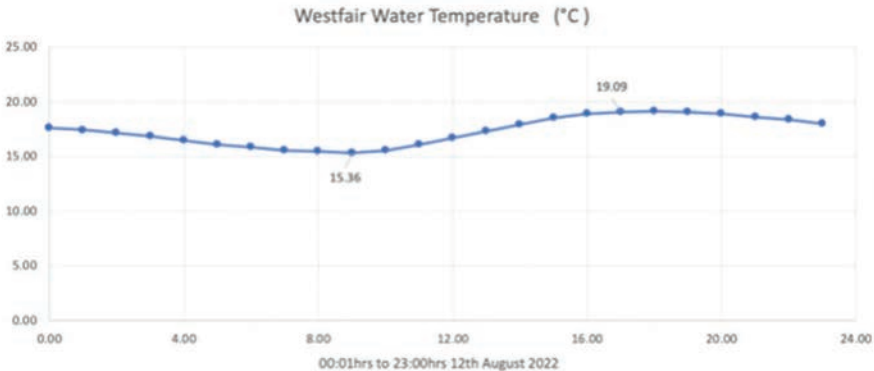
2022 has been a challenging year with the drought, with record-breaking air temperatures being widely reported across the UK. Despite this, the keepers and contractors continued to maintain riverbanks, trim weed, to help maintain water levels, and generally keep things in reasonably good order for those who did venture out. No doubt the keepers will give a more detailed account of their activities across our waters elsewhere in the journal, and I'll be adding my penny's worth at the Hordern by way of a recap on fishing activity (or lack of it) as we move into the autumn grayling season proper.

As I write this on 31st August the hot weather has at long last given way to light showers but there's still a long way to go before we see a recharge of the aquifers across each river catchment. We can only live in hope that we don't see a repeat of the minimal rainfall we've seen over the last 12 months or so.

With high water temperatures also breaking records, particularly in Freestone Rivers, it wasn't surprising to see major English and Welsh rivers being closed to angling to help protect already endangered Atlantic Salmon stocks. We were at least a little more fortunate in that our ground-fed chalk rivers remained a little cooler – that said, by late July water temperatures in the lower reaches of the Test, Itchen, Avon and tributaries were rising towards critical levels where all salmonid species were being impacted – see notes added to the library on the impacts high water temperatures have on fish.¹

In late July I installed a water temperature data logger on the Anton, which gave some interesting results, with temperatures peaking at 6pm on 12th August at 19.17°C, entering the critical upper tolerances when wild brown trout stop feeding; the lowest temperature for the same day being recorded at 9am at 15.36°C (within the preferred temperature feeding range 15–19°C) and probably the best time to fish.

Our work to restore and rewild the River Anton continues. However, I am delighted to see how the work carried out in October on the main river Anton (Beat 6) is already paying dividends with footfall, and catches of both wild trout and grayling showing a marked increase compared to beats 4 and 5 immediately downstream. What has been really noticeable in this low water (drought) year is how the flow feeding the Westfair carrier is having a direct impact on the main river.



Westfair Water Temperature

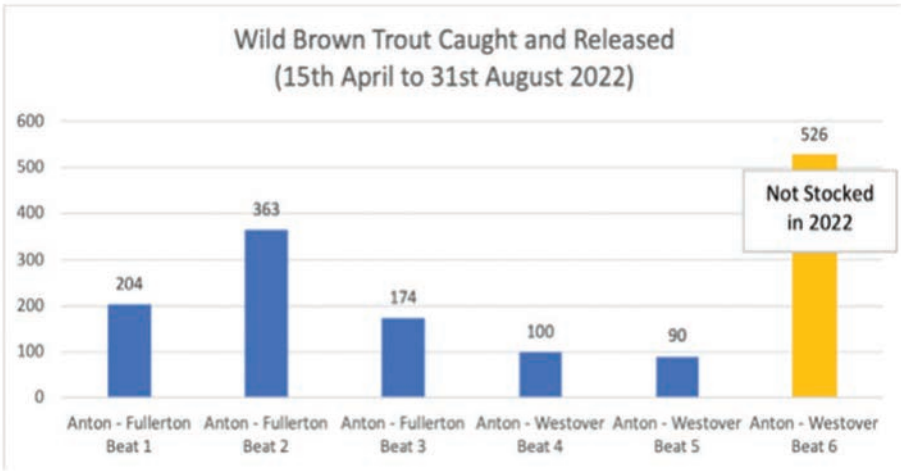


HOBObutton - Water Temperature Data Logger²

A waterproof temperature logger using the power of Bluetooth to deliver accurate data straight to a mobile device using Onset's free [HOBObuttonconnect](#) app.

Designed for durability, this compact is ideal for measuring temperature in rivers, streams, lakes, oceans, and soil environments.

HOBObutton - Water Temperature . . .



Wild Brown Trout Caught and Released

As already mentioned by Paddy in his Presidential Pontification, the Society will take on the Westfair channel (1 mile) from October 2022, thus giving us total control over the flow split between the two channels – crucial to delivering our long-term strategy for improving the whole of the lower Anton fishery for wild fish.

Working closely with river restoration specialists, Cain Bio-Engineering, and the Wessex Rivers Trust, we have carried out topographic surveys and detailed designs, and have secured a further c. £120K of funding from the Test and Itchen Catchment Partnership (TICP) to improve the upper reaches of the Westfair (450m) as Phase 2, which we plan to deliver in 2022/23.

Whilst much of the main River Anton and Westfair still needs improving in terms of reintroducing gradient and its natural function to support wild fish populations, being able to address the flow into the Westfair is clearly the logical next step. Our plans will therefore focus on optimising a single-channel flow into the Westfair channel to meet TICP’s ‘drought resilience’ funding priorities as well as our shared objectives:

- **Modified Channels** – Reinstatement of natural process and function to the engineered channel by optimising the following key features – Flow velocity, Gradient and Sinuosity.
- **Greater Resilience** – Improve climate change resilience of the Westfair Channel to low flows and drought conditions and to ensure habitat continuity in the event of such events.
- **Building Relationships** – Strengthen relationships between delivery partners and catchment stakeholders through collaborative working and providing opportunities for education and community engagement – this will also help us to meet the terms of our lease agreement with the Westfair being closed one day a week for educational purposes (or to be rested) – as stipulated by the owner.

-
- **Proof of Concept** – We will continue to expand on the Piscatorial Society’s ambition to deliver a flagship project, backed up by scientific evidence, to further the Society’s commitment to sustainable wild fishery habitats and to establish a Wild Fish Protection Zone throughout the River Anton catchment – with a gradual phase-out of stocking in line with project delivery.
 - **Improved Connectivity** – Help to address additional issues and pressures that are preventing the achievement of good ecological status on the Lower River Anton – a key driver of funding.
 - **Improved Habitats** – Restore and improve key habitats for endangered species including Atlantic Salmon and to identify and implement actions to stabilise and protect threatened salmon stocks, wherever possible, in the River Test catchment.

As already mentioned, a condition of our lease imposed by the owner is that the Westfair should be made available for scientific or educational purposes on one pre-selected day of the week, and if it is not used for that purpose the water should be rested. Whilst clearly this needs to be managed carefully it also fits nicely with the Society’s ambition to make an exemplar of the Anton site. To this end the Society is continuing to gather evidence to support its efforts to improve and enhance the chalk stream environment and will work collaboratively with a number of stakeholders towards achieving mutually agreed outcomes.

Our on-going ambition is to build on the principle of ‘proof of concept’ as we see this as key to the future of sustainable wild fishery habitats at a time when weather, rainfall and flow volumes are so unpredictable. Monitoring change and habitat gain over time is extremely complex and time consuming – to help meet this objective the committee has recently agreed to provide 50% of the cost of a PhD student (partners SOTON) to help quantify:

- The physical characteristics before and after restoration implementation and compare responses with reference reaches (BACI design). State-of-the-art technology, including an Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (ADCP), will be used to map bathymetry and 3-D velocity profiles, and topographic surveys (longitudinal and lateral sections) using data gathered across Westover, Westfair and Fullerton in early spring 2022.
- The chemical characteristics (e.g. temperature, dissolved oxygen, nutrient composition, faecal coliform counts) before and after the restoration initiatives and compare responses with reference reaches.
- The ecological response to the modified physical and chemical habitat template created through the restoration activities, focusing on macrophytes, macroinvertebrates and fish. In particular, the distribution of salmonids in response to channel modifications such that associated movements may be investigated using appropriate telemetry techniques.

We believe the PhD study and any additional scientific evidence gathered through engagement with educational providers presents a unique opportunity to strengthen relationships between delivery partners and catchment stakeholders on a scale not seen before. In addition, the Society’s fisheries’ team will continue to carry out annual electric fishing and invertebrate (SMART River) surveys in the Anton and Westfair for the duration of the project.



Gravel exploration – Westfair meadow 13.07.22



Pristine gravel excavated from Westfair meadow – the pre-existing river Anton channel

Phase 2 of the project will seek to create a high-quality, geomorphologically diverse channel using locally won gravels, where recent case study evidence demonstrates significant habitat gains for a wide variety of flora and fauna, including provision of habitat and flow conditions vital to endangered Atlantic salmon spawning and recruitment in the upper Test catchment during low flows.

Initial bank-profile inspections of the Westfair suggest it was originally a significantly larger watercourse and most likely a pre-existing primary river Anton flow-path or major off-take braid.

Whilst our initial thoughts focused on prioritising flows to the main river Anton, we are now looking to optimise flows to suit a pre-determined channel depth to width ratio so that both channels will function in low, medium and high flows where wild trout and grayling can flourish.

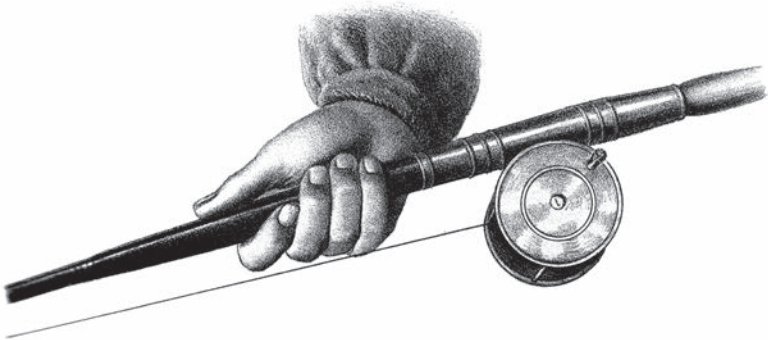
We continue our efforts to secure funds for the whole restoration – currently costed at up to c. £1m.

I will provide more details and be happy to answer your questions at the Hordern.

Bob Wellard
Director of Fisheries

References:

1. The thermal biology of brown trout and Atlantic salmon Author(s): Dr D. J. Solomon & Dr G. W. Lightfoot
2. HOBO Water Temperature data logger – <https://www.onsetcomp.com/products/data-loggers/mx2202/>



Secretary's Soap Box

by Geoff Fleming

Find that Bigger Wylze Trout

There has been considerable investment in new fencing this season. Most notably from Torpedo Pool up to Tytherington Bridge on the Heytesbury beat of the Wylze (map 2 in the Year Book). This has provided a wider margin for riverside plant life. New gates allow easier access to the return path and a better pathway around the garden of River House which is owned by Stefan Tryggvason who contributed to the fencing costs.

In addition at about 50 yards on the south side of Tytherington Bridge the old farm gate has been replaced. So members wishing to visit the Parsonage beat using our designated parking spaces (map 1) can walk back toward the bridge, climb the farm gate (on the hinge side please) and get into the river through the gate by the cattle drink in the picture. Fishing upstream under Tytherington Bridge – a rarely fished, tree covered stretch – provides a couple of hours' excitement with the reward of access to the garden of the Red Lion for a refreshing ale. Chest waders are required as it can be quite deep under the trees, but it is here that I caught my largest Wylze trout of about 14 inches.



The cattle drink at Tytherington

Keepers' Kaleidoscope



Head Keeper's Review Elephants

by Stuart McTeare

As the going was getting really hot in the kitchen, late 30s C, back in the summer 22, I stepped out, escaping northwards for a few days respite to my beloved's Lakeland. It was 10 degrees cooler but still unusually warm with cloudless azure skies for the entirety of our visit. Crazy, I've never seen so much exposed flesh and ink on the usually colourless grey streets of Penrith. With my mind turning to flesh, a thought provoking back-side encounter I experienced whilst on my sojourn is conjured.

They say caring is sharing but when pushed into a corner to have a thought or two about sharing our waterways as anglers, I feel we may all be a tad uncomfortable with the notion, like an Irvine Penn model posed in his classic corner portraits from the late 1940s. Penn said the unnaturally tight corner made the sitter comfortable which is almost counter intuitive. So all you anglers out there when you are backed into that corner how do you feel and react to the idea of sharing your favourite pool? As an angler I felt I had an answer but I now know the answer might not be as straight forward after my epiphany at the remote fellside beck setting, my slant is less angled.

It's just a case of how we share, do we have a choice? For the future of our rivers if we are to preserve them, counter intuitively we need to share them. Is it like that moment as

a child when sharing becomes something that you aren't grasping, but being given. What a moment in our development as humans?

Just prior to my trip north, the Avon had become increasingly populated by paddle boarders on the Broads beat. Apparently the good folk of the paddle boarding fraternity have decided to share the location via not one but two separate dedicated paddling apps. If you are a paddle boarder what could be better. Go on the app and find a 'Location near Me' . . . ping: the Broads. All fine and dandy but there are many buts but not the but that I encountered in Cumbria, that comes in a moment. The app issue is a conundrum but a conundrum that is beyond me, simple if we lived in a National Park but. It's currently being dealt with by our in-house legal advisor.

So back to that encounter in Cumbria. The elephant in the room or the hefty lump in the pool? When will anglers learn to share their glorious resource with fellow human beings so they too can glory in nature, appreciate it and fight to preserve it. Without truly immersing yourself you will never fully understand it or what is on offer, so how do you truly immerse yourself without access?

I was totally immersed, fishing a favourite tiny tumbling beck with equally proportioned tiny trout, if ever a fish of a pound were to turn up, a shock wave of incredulity would swamp the lilliputian pools. Wading the cool mountain water with the sun beating, the trout as ever were remarkably responsive. I had teased a good half dozen when I became aware of the unveiling of startlingly bright white acres of flesh, so dazzling it put the blazing sun in the shade just yards upstream from me. Surely the dazzle was not to be dimmed with a swim, sliding into the water unannounced and unnoticed?

Without more ado the rather voluptuous vision entered the pool with no prior discussion with myself, were I wading any deeper I fear the displacement of water could have over topped my waders which may have had a delicious cooling effect on my ardour. Let's say they were a they in modern parlance, their mien suggested the whiff they may identify as a they, but at the risk of being perceived as an old leech their Rubenesque qualities left me with no doubt, sharing is caring. With the Carry On qualities of the situation I carried on, going through the motion, wafting my Sage, plying my line up the pool until I could see the glaring whites of their eyes, then I exited stage left. Did they not care for the torture of tiddly old trouts? I felt the fish were safe on their arrival anyway but once they were in the pool the water's depth had greatly enhanced the trout's chances of survival, that displacement adding to the feeling of security. We did not utter a single word to each other, I threw them an unreturned smile and carried on fishing a little further upstream departing once the sun had finally got the better of me. Perhaps it was a day more suited to a dip?

Yes if we all care about our rivers sharing them with the wider public will be essential but how do we control access, do we need to control access? Will the wild life adapt? That really is the conundrum, how do we control access when we want people to be engaged and appreciate our river's glories and help to protect them?

I have to say I am very excited about the addition of the Westfair to our portfolio, particularly in the light of the desire of our Water-lord for one day a week to be used for educational purposes, perhaps this is the future. We need to future proof our degraded chalk streams in every sense. Unsurprisingly the physically degraded reaches fared the worst in the drought of 2022, looking sick in the low August flows. We share our rivers with all creatures great and small, we need to open the eyes of everyone to their plight.

During last summer I'm not sure I'd like to have swum in a chalkstream knowing what

I know about their chemical makeup, with the diminished flow any effluent would have been even more undilute than ever. Tempting as it is, total immersion in the toxic soup that is the chalkstream environment is not my idea of fun. A group of hapless teenagers who had a swim in the river in Amesbury and got seriously sick can testify, the water ain't fit for man nor beast. Now that is cruelty, thank something or other at this point the fish are hanging on in there. Ignorance is a killer lurking in the most unlikely of places.

Freefolk, The Grange, Abbots Barton and The Anton

by Craig Dawson

Well, that was different – 2022, a year much unlike the preceding two. A very dry spring followed by a scorching summer exposed the frailties of our rivers and reinforced the need for their 'future-proofing' through extensive engineering. The Anton, particularly beats 4 and 5 (this season), highlighting what the future holds for rivers that are not developed/extensively worked on (improved). Thin watered, weedless, steep sided and devoid of energy with virtually no habitat/refuge save a couple of deep pools into which most of the fish have hunkered. Not at all what a chalk stream should be and very much the reason why the Society's proposed restoration plans for the entire lower Anton be adopted and put in place. In direct contrast to the Anton, the Grange Estate beats 1 and 2 and Freefolk, where significant work has been carried out to improve the river, the water levels have held up well and weed growth has been prolific despite the drought. The one drawback being the profusion of blanket weed as the phosphorous concentration levels increase through reduced dilution. The water companies much in the news for their continued and flagrant pollution of our rivers and oceans, the result of protecting profits and lack of infrastructural expansion to cope with the increase in construction over the last 20 years or so, need to be brought to task. Blanket weed, now accepted as the norm come late summer, was never seen on the upper chalk streams when I began my journey as a river keeper. Back then, all evils were laid at the farmers' door, probably with good reason but I suspect, not the case anymore as agriculture has greatly cleaned up its act over the same period.

By way of departure from my normal precis of the season thus far, it has after all been one of extremes, I thought I might open a can of worms or is that a box of nymphs? I have, like many I'm sure, been a keen sportsman and follower of sport all my life. Sport is (for me) a challenge between oneself/team and an adversary/quarry conducted with respect for each other within the bounds of a set of rules. The rules are there to maintain the respect and ensure a fair contest. In order to get better at a sport and improve one's odds of triumph, one practiced, honed one's skills and studied their opponent. One never 'bent' the rules or cheated, to gain an advantage as this was/is unsporting/dishonourable and a hollow victory should you triumph. The golfer who kicks his ball in the rough to improve his lie, might hit a better recovery shot but how much better would that recovery shot be, made from the original lie? The best of his life? He would never know as he never gave it a chance nor even the added challenge of taking a drop under penalty. And surely, the greatest achievement would be learning to

play the ball as it lies or make the par with a drop under penalty. A challenge too far for many? But golf is a game with a myriad of rules, the infringement of many resulting in penalty strokes added, disqualification and indeed the ignominy of exclusion by one's peers should the offence become habitual. Imagine being that member at a place like Muirfield or The Augusta National and the shame that would follow you. The Piscatorial waters are indeed the Muirfield and the Augusta National of the chalk streams and deserve to be treated with commensurate respect. Having reached this angling pinnacle one would like to think that the 'players' were at the height of their prowess/experience, respected the rules (few that there are) and indeed relish the challenge presented by the 'course'. Why then, I ask myself do I find so many goldheads, heavy nymphs and other noxious barbed (yes, barbed because most of this gaudy arsenal is not supplied in a barbless version as this might imply a skill requirement from the user?) objects dangling above our waters through the spring and summer? A few years ago, the use of any nymph (dipping below the surface) on the Society waters was frowned upon, everything was dry, fished upstream to an actively feeding fish and with the utmost respect for one's quarry. It would seem times are changing – although we are 'Muirfield', kicking the ball in the rough would now appear, de rigour. Soon, I fear, I may be asked to fill in all the bunkers and put buckets where once there were holes.

I appreciate that as the Society creeps ever more down the road of self-sustaining wild fisheries, surely the only road to travel, the greater the challenge will be to the angler. Is it not up to the angler then to raise his game to meet that challenge?

The Wylie

by Joe Emmett

After one of the mildest and driest winters I can remember I was feeling very apprehensive about the coming season. It wasn't so long ago that I was reporting one of the wettest winters I could remember and reflecting on how much the river and the fish had benefitted from it. Although it can be destructive and puts my woody debris structures to the test, I think the benefits usually outweigh any damage. As well as the obvious topping up of the aquifers a nice floody winter mobilises a lot of food for the fish, scours out holes, cleans the gravel and moves the silt into my many silt traps. Once the levels start to drop and the water starts to clear it reveals an almost new fishery with gleaming gravel, new features and fat looking trout.

Unfortunately, this wasn't the case this year and before spring had really got going the river was looking like September following a long dry summer. One bonus with the dry sunny weather was the weed did get an early start and despite getting less than 40% of the average rainfall for January/February things weren't looking quite as bad as I had feared. This glimmer of hope soon dwindled as we continued to experience the warmest driest month on record each month in what was to be a year of record-breaking weather.

The fly didn't mind this mild weather and the early part of the season saw good numbers of all the usual suspects hatching throughout a large part of the day. There were plenty of grannom and large dark olives early on and even the hawthorn were around in numbers for at least two weeks. The fish were more than happy to feed off the top in the mild weather and this made for good early season sport. By the time we got to May I was

already praying for some rain however Mother Nature had other ideas and only seemed to provide us with wind. This made the mayfly fishing challenging and really reduced the amount of good spinner fishing in the evenings. That said, if you picked the right day, the right evening or the right stretch to fish the fishing was as fantastic as ever. Again, the mayfly trickled right on through the second half of May, most of June and I even had reports of some big hatches into July.

By July we were starting to experience some seriously hot and bright weather with temperatures hitting the mid 20s most days and even going over 30°C on several occasions. This was coupled with absolutely no rain at all, and it looked as if we were heading towards Armageddon. After last year's experiment of reducing the amount of weed cutting, I felt that it had helped in all manner of ways and would go as far as to say it had actually improved the fishing through the summer. This year seemed to be the perfect opportunity to cut even less weed and with a couple of groups of swans decimating large areas of the fishery this is exactly what I did. Some stretches maintained fantastic levels right through the heat of the summer and where I was seeing reports of rivers drying up across the country, we were lucky enough to still be almost overtopping our waders in some places. I also changed the way I manage much of the marginal vegetation on the areas of the fishery that are mainly waded, leaving a lot of them long to help create more shade and protection from the endless sun and heat. I still cut plenty of gaps and access points and with stretches such as Heytesbury Mill, Boyton and Upper Knook I continued to maintain these with some bank fishing in mind. The feedback I've had from members has been all positive, the increased wildness of the fishery has only seemed to improve fly life, increase the amount of time fish feed and make for a much more challenging and fun experience.

August was a scorcher with the temperatures in the high 20s and 30s for the whole month and although we did have a few thunderstorms it was again another dry month. By now the swans were starting to munch their way through every scrap of weed at Stockton and Boyton and by the end of the month there was very little weed between Suffers Bridge and the bottom of the Stockton fishery. There were still plenty of fly around but the evenings were really the time to fish, the blue winged olives, pale wateries and sedge were around in good numbers and the heat of the day seemed to concentrate their activity to the hour before dark. I saw very few members between the end of June and the end of August, and I think most people were sensible enough to either fish very late or to give it a miss altogether due to relentless heat. Obviously, there are always some that must fish at any cost, and I think when catching fish in almost 40°C just so you can share the pictures on social media becoming more important than fish welfare, we must start questioning why some people fish.

Thankfully now in mid-September the weather has improved, the heat of the summer seems to be fading and finally a bit of rain is starting to fall. The river seems to be staying fairly low and stable despite the rain and I think it's going to take a good few wet months to really start to turn the tide. Hopefully this will give me plenty of opportunity to get into the river this side of Christmas to prune and continue with the ongoing improvements. In seasons like this you can really see the benefits that the trees and woody structures have on the flows, water height and the fishing itself. Many of our stretches on the Wylye would probably have been no more than an inch deep this season if it wasn't for these structures and reduction in weed cutting. I think it's safe to assume that with global warming these types of extreme weather years will become more common and whether its summer droughts or winter floods we need to be one step

ahead in making our fisheries more resilient to these changes. One thing's for sure though, with the cost of heating our homes set to increase by a further 80% I won't be complaining too much about a mild winter this year.



Before . . .



and After

Book Review



A River Runs Through Me

A life of salmon fishing in Scotland

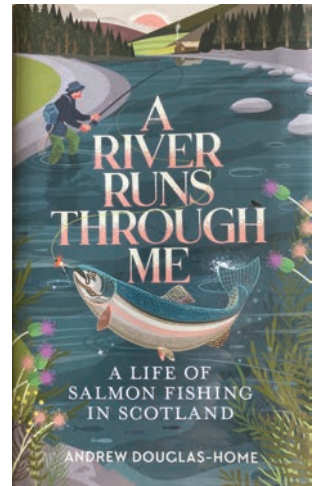
by Andrew Douglas-Home

Published by Elliott and Thompson £14.99

I am nervous about reviewing this book firstly as two of our eminent literary members, Jeremy Paxman and Tom Fort, have already done so in other publications which I will try not to plagiarise, and secondly because the author is a friend of mine which might not always lead to a totally impartial assessment. That said, this is a “must read” for anyone who fishes for salmon, and particularly for those who fish the Tweed.

Andrew has led, by any standard, an enviable life as a salmon fisherman. He was brought up near Galashiels where his father owned a farm and more importantly Upper Pavilion, a beat on the middle Tweed to which he and his brothers had free access and of which they made full use. This was in the 1960s when the numbers of salmon caught were quite staggering and Andrew’s brother, Simon, in the year he left school, managed to catch 99 salmon from that beat in just one season. Why he did not persevere to catch the hundredth must remain a mystery! And to add to that extraordinary start to Andrew’s fishing career, fortune smiled upon him later in life when a godfather bequeathed to him the Lees at Coldstream, which is one of the most famous and prolific beats on the whole river Tweed. So he was indeed born with a silver spoon in his mouth but that does not detract from the good sense that runs through the whole of what is essentially an autobiography of a very fortunate fisherman.

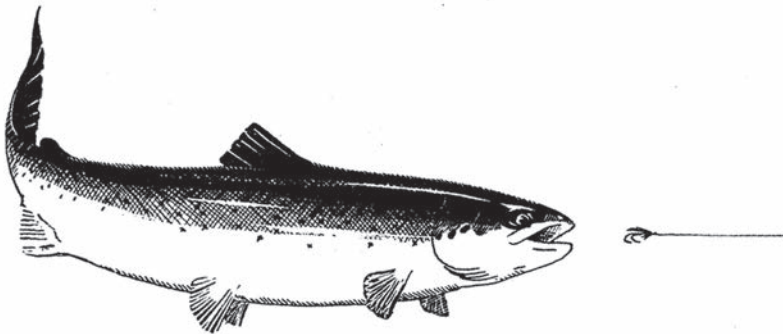
Andrew is a man of trenchant views on salmon and their current crisis of survival which he tackles head on with his own sensible opinions on all of the topical issues of our time such as hatcheries which he thinks do not generally work in salmon rivers, and

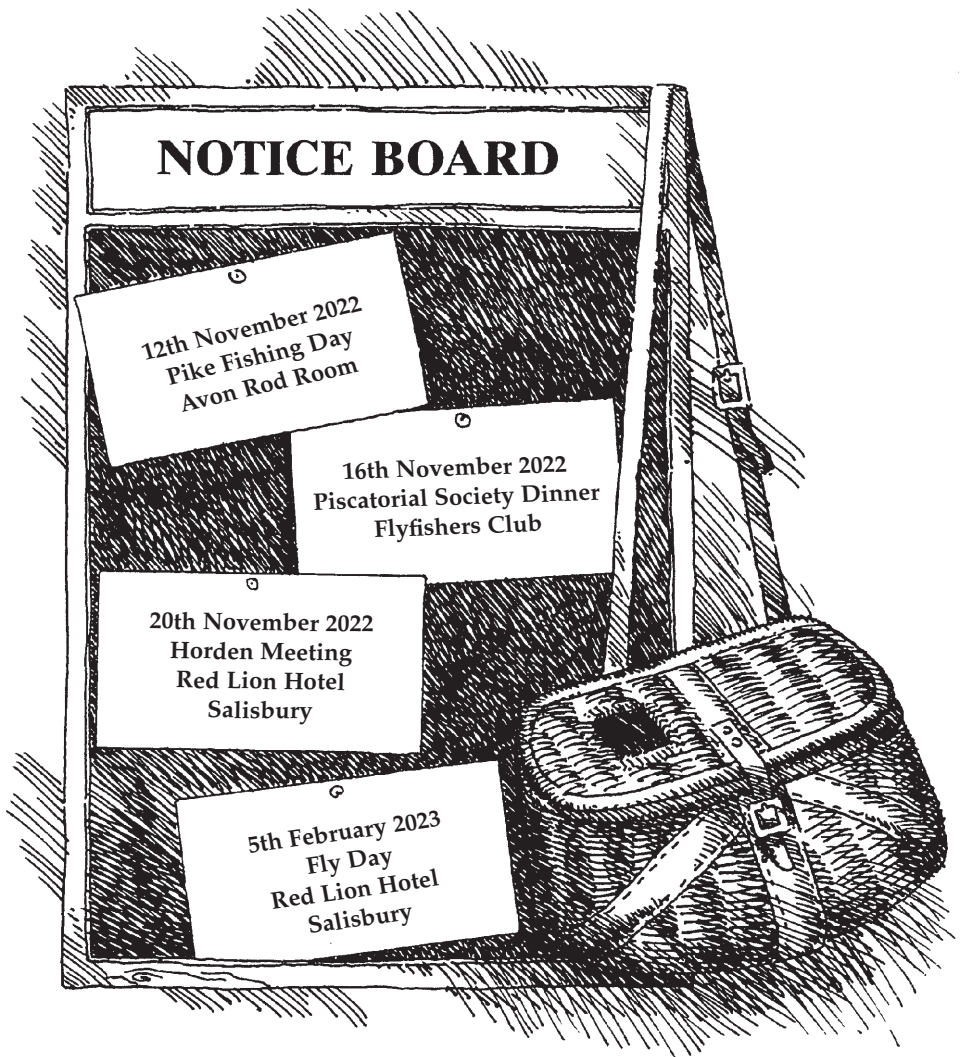


his concerns about the proliferation of seals on the east coast of Scotland which he thinks Hoover up an inordinate number of the Tweed smolts heading north to their feeding grounds. He also tackles the essential illogicality in the fact that one can fish for trout on a Sunday in Scotland but not salmon. His views are very definitely not those of a privileged fishery owner but rather are based on a lifetime of intelligent observation of his beloved river where he served as a Tweed Commissioner for 27 years, and where he acted as their Chair for eight of those years resulting in the award of an OBE for his services to fishing and to Scottish culture. The book takes many turns through his extraordinary score of salmon caught to date (he won't tell us how many as like his famous uncle Alec he is not a "numbers person" though not to be outdone by his brother's record he admits to catching 100 in 2007!) to some intensely personal and moving recollections of the cot death of his third son and the impact that had upon his family.

But for me perhaps the best aspect of the book is that it is divided into 59 very short chapters of a few pages each that suit my bedtime reading habit of being unable to concentrate for longer than ten minutes before overcome by sleep! If you care about the future of our salmon buy the book; I know that you will not be disappointed.

Paddy Douglas-Pennant







THANK GOODNESS! FLY-FISHING HAS BEGUN!

Miller. "DON'T THEY, REALLY! PERHAPS THEY'LL RISE BETTER TOWARDS THE COOL OF THE EVENING
THEY MOSTLY DO!"



NORMANTON HATCHES



— *The* —
PISCATORIAL
SOCIETY
— *Founded 1836* —