



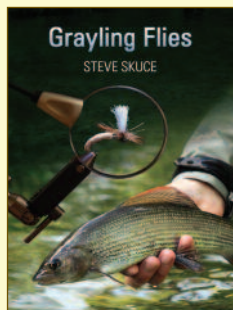
Grayling

The Journal of The Grayling Society

Volume 27 - Number 4 ■ Spring 2017

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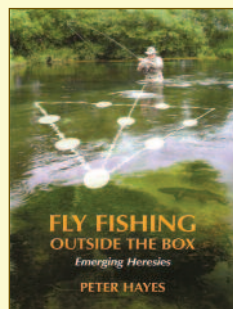
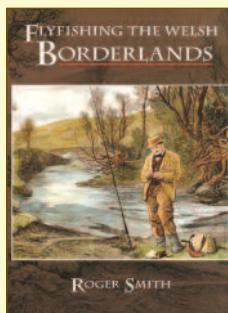
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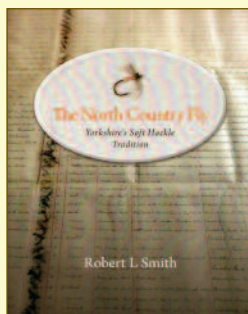
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The Official Journal of
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ISSN 1476-0061

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Advertising - Rod Calbrade

Subscriptions per annum:

Full £28.00, Joint £47.00

Senior (over 70) £22.00

Junior (under 16) £5.00

Details available from the

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Society Web Site

www.graylingsociety.net

© The Grayling Society, 2017

Printed by Cambrian Printers

Aberystwyth SY23 3TN

Cover Illustration

Steve Skuce fishing the Wye

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Welcome to the first Journal of the new schedule. From now on we shall be producing three Journals a year, at roughly four-monthly intervals, instead of the previous two.

The new Journals will probably be a little smaller, but if I get plenty of contributions, I can promise that they will not be ignored. The Newsletter will now come out once only, and that early spring edition will be devoted, as it was this year, to the AGM and Symposium.

Committee changes

The committee has changed since last year, with Dyfan Morris as our Membership Secretary, and Rob Hartley as the Chairman. We welcome three new Area secretaries, Chris Thomas to Area 12 in Scotland, John Walker to Area 6, Gwynedd and Clwyd in Wales, and Alan Swann to Area 10 in the North-West of England. If you are in their areas, I'm sure they would be glad to hear from you.

On that topic, may I remind members that our communications as a Society are very important to our smooth running and effectiveness. If our Area Secretaries can reach members quickly and easily, then events can be organised, opinions sought and all kinds of useful exchanges can take place.

If your Area Secretary doesn't know your **telephone number**, and/or your **e-mail address**, **PLEASE TELL THEM**. If you aren't sure, contact them anyway and check – it's a good reason to get in touch.

We never share your private information or contact details with anyone, unless you give written permission, so your details are secure. It just makes communication so much quicker and, it must be said, less expensive, than "snail mail".

Also, don't forget the Society's website and Facebook page. News travels fast these days, and we can share and comment on matters of mutual interest.

As another season comes to its close a bit of reflection is probably justified. Down here in

Wessex our grayling season has been affected by the very low water levels that have plagued us since the end of July. Exceptionally low rainfall locally and higher than average temperatures have put the rivers under great stress.

All the usual suspects were present; diffuse pollutants become more concentrated – the same amount of chemical in less water, more organic material in the river to decompose, higher water temperatures. Sensitive plants, especially Ranunculus species, failing to thrive, and more silt settling out, clogging gravels.

All doom and gloom then? Amazingly, no it wasn't. The fishing has not been easy, but the river has, once again, surprised me by its sheer resilience. By the end of the trout season the river was very low, but good grayling fishing continued until Christmas. I noticed that there was a healthy spread of age and size among the fish that I caught, and others agreed. Plenty of 1+ and 0+ fish suggested that the 2015 and 2016 spawnings had been successful, with good survival rates, and there were enough bigger fish to keep us happily hopeful.

Fresh water

The brief surge of fresh water following the first named storm had the salmon leaping for joy (or something), and our trout spawning went well if the number of visible redds is anything to go by. Last week (w.b. Feb 21st.) fellow members commented to me that the grayling looked really fit and well, as water levels at last began to rise and stay up.

It would be so nice to be able to claim that this resilience, this ability of the river to cope with stressful conditions, is entirely due to careful management and enhancement programmes, carried out mostly, if not entirely, by anglers. That might be saying too much, but we can claim a lot of credit. Our river keepers, both professional and amateur, the volunteers who help out with bank and channel maintenance, clubs working with the Environment Agency

and national organisations like the Wild Trout Trust, are all doing a great job. We should feel some pride, nothing sinful, when the rivers show real signs of recovery and improvement. There's a long way to go yet in so many places, but we can take heart from small successes.

Symposium Update

Many apologies for the slip up in the price quoted on the booking form, I hope that we caught a good number of you with follow up emails before you sent the booking forms to Barrie Davidson. Anyone who has paid the extra money will be re-imbursed at a later date.

Just to re-iterate, the price of the fishing day is **£15.00**.

The hotel had 20 room bookings over the first few days, so please make your bookings, both for the hotel and the Symposium as soon as you can.

We are still preparing our plans for the newly introduced "Partner Days", so tick the box on the form if you feel your partner could be interested in one or two days out.

Another correction

The Red Tag Bug shown on page 5 isn't that at all, it's a Purple and Pink Peril! Must get these things right for the Dee grayling!

Copy deadline for the Summer Journal is
Saturday July 1st

A proper winter morning on the Itchen - see Area 2's Fishing Day report



Grayling – Spring 2017

Robert "Bob" Milne's Hampshire & Wales Fishing Tour – October/November 2016

I thought I would give you report on my trip down to the South of England and the Welsh Borders at the end of October, early November 2016.

I drove down to Winchester and was booked in to the wonderful Wykeham Arms in the city centre for 2 nights. The Wykeham has simply one of the very best bars I have ever been in, up there with the likes of Dirty Nellie's in Beverley, East Yorkshire. Real fires, real ale, real food and real people.



The Wykeham Arms

Myself and John Shemmings had stayed here for four days a few years ago on a fishing trip and had a great time. On that occasion we fished the Test, we won a day on a very private beat at an auction, guided by Tom Fort, well he showed us the boundaries and then sat down and continued writing his latest book but he was a good guy and that's all we needed. We caught lots of fish and John caught his first ever Grayling on the beat. We also fished Dever Springs the big fish stillwater and the River Dever as well as the and the Meon (thanks to Greg Payne). At Dever we managed to catch a few fairly substantial Rainbows and although we wanted to fish catch and release fishery rules stated we had to keep some fish so we took the fish back the Wykeham and chef kindly agreed to keep them in his freezer for us until we were due to set off for home. Well, we set off home

eventually and about 2 hours up the motorway I said to John "where did you put the fish John", to which he gave me a puzzled look and said "I thought you had them". Well what a to do.

I phoned up the Wykeham later and told them we had left the fish in the freezer and the lady said she knew and they had already scooped one of them thank you very much !

Anyway that trip is another story, a good one mind, maybe I'll tell you that another time.

The morning after arriving in Winchester I headed off for a day on the Test at Lower Mill Fishery at Longparish which I had booked some weeks before. What a lovely place and the weather was just amazing for the time of year, literally shirt sleeves. The river was pristine and crystal clear and the grounds extremely well kept. I met the keeper Mick Blocksidge who walked me around the beat and was really helpful and left me to it. The fish at the section nearest the fishing room had obviously seen everything in a fly anglers armoury over the past few months so although I could see the fish they were difficult to tempt apart from a lovely wild out of season Brownie, quickly and safely returned.



River Test Grayling

I wanted to have crack at the whole beat so I wandered on casting here and there. There were a couple of small shallow carriers on the beat where it was not so manicured, the bump

on my napper can vouch for that as looking at the water I walked right into a very stout branch of a bankside tree, the fish were ultra-spooky in these carriers. Anyway all told I managed 4 Grayling and another Trout, a cracker of 2 pound (weighed in my trusty Mclean weigh landing net). I got all these fish on a dry. The biggest Grayling was 11lb 6oz which I was quite chuffed with as the keeper had said they ran to about a pound and half at Lower Mill.

There was a very deep, swirling hatch pool on the beat and although I covered it with a dry had no success it was crying out for a heavy bug / nymph to be run through it. Well my heart is still going like the clappers recounting this because I hooked into a monster Trout (well it certainly was for me) which came to the surface and looked well over 6 pounds, I kid you not, it shot across the river and "ping" fish gone. It was a hard balancing act because the water was so clear and the beat, although only 2 rods a day allowed on it, had been well hammered over the Trout season so unless you went fine the fish would not look at the fly. That's my excuse for losing that fish however even with a 10 lb tippet I would still not have got it in !

The next day I met up with my old pal Greg Payne and Rob Hartley from the Grayling Society to fish one of Greg's club stretches of the Itchen. I found this a bit hard going to be honest and was well out-fished by both Greg and Rob on the day. What's my excuse ? Well I stuck with a dry fly while the lads went sub surface, Greg got two cracking Grayling amongst his haul and Rob had quite a few and some Trout.



"Monster" Itchen Grayling

I had a lovely Wild Trout and my smallest ever Grayling, perfectly hooked on the lip. Actually now I come to think about it I believe I did catch a similar one on the Cumbrian Eden! I have also



Greg Payne and Bob Milne on the Itchen

caught a similar sized Trout by the way in the past. Well I tell you I was not bothered just great to be on the waterside with good guys in lovely weather (but not much rising). Actually I was bothered but don't tell anyone. I did however bounce back a day or so later, read on.



Northern lads and Grayling Society: L-R Roger Walker, Bob Milne, John Mycock, Iain Gibb, Steve Skuce, Bob Lomax

I moved my digs to the outskirts of Winchester to the Marwell Hotel next to the zoo for a 3 night stay for the 40th Grayling Society AGM and Symposium. Now I have stayed here before and I am sure many of you know of my "safari" the last time I was here, if you don't catch me when you can and I'll let you in on it. Now I have to say the Grayling Society AGM weekend is one of the highlights of my year. It's not just about the day we get fishing on waters often never made available to the public or even the excellent speakers at the Symposium but getting to meet up again with the marvellous people who are members of the Society.

Speakers at the Symposium this year included the widely travelled fisherman and author Neil Patterson, big fish man Doctor Mark Everard and young guns and brilliant fishermen Lewis Hendrie and Alex Jardine (son of Charles) who gave an excellent and informative talk and

demonstration on the various Nymphing Techniques and how such as the French Leader, Spanish Leader, Czech Nymphing, etc., differed and how they had managed to combine the best of the techniques into a style called European Nymphing.



Symposium guests Lewis Hendrie and Alex Jardine

Lewis later demonstrated outside how to cast a very long leader, well over 30 feet, with no fly line out! Not only that he gave us a glimpse into his fly box, wey hey! After the actual AGM, which followed the Symposium, we had the evening dinner and auction which, as always, was highly entertaining led by Pat Stevens. As it happens I managed to get away without winning anything although I did donate a pile of books myself for the auction.

Come Sunday and myself, Bob Lomax, Roger Walker, John Mycock, Iain Gibb and Russ Pittham (northern lads who like to hold hands as Grayling Society Chairman Steve Skuce had put it) were allocated beats on the Avon.

There was the Services Dry Fly Association water which had Frank Sawyer as "The Keeper of the Stream" and was fished by Olly Kite so we would be stepping in the footsteps of giants. We were split up once we got there into twos by the gentleman who greeted us and who was to direct us to our fishing. Bob Lomax and myself got allocated the "Tank Bridge" section. Well this was not called the Tank Bridge for nothing as army vehicles from the nearby camp rumbled over it on a regular basis. The guys were great and always gave us a friendly wave when we were nearby. On first appearance Bob was not a happy bunny, not what he expected from a chalkstream at all. We were allowed to wade (on some waters down this way you must fish

from the bank) but access was difficult due to the mud/silt bottom near the bankside. If you could get in you were then OK. Well I managed to wriggle my way in and was doing well on the dry fly (you could use nymph however as it was Services Dry Fly Association water I felt I should



Bob Lomax with an Avon "Lady"

enter into the spirit of the river) and had caught a few nice fish including a 1 1/4lb Grayling when the gentleman who greeted us and split us up into beats came along to see how we were doing. Now this water belonged to the Services (as in the armed services) and the gentleman who was very friendly (I would say to helpful - hang on a minute) was actually a Brigadier.

Well he had a bit of chat and I said I was doing rather well, which was true, however access and egress was a bit of a problem. I said I had managed to get in further downstream so would go out the way I had come in as it was only about 25 yards away. To which he says don't bother doing that come out here, it is no problem.



Bob Lomax fishing the Avon weir pool, a very quintessential English scene



Grayling - Spring 2017

He then disappeared not to be seen again. Time comes to get out of the river and move further along and the Brigadier's exit strategy was rather flawed as I sunk in the mud and silt like quicksand to well above my knees and was being sucked down further. With a bit of panic I thought of leaving my waders behind, if I could get them off, chesties, but instead flung myself forward so as to make myself flat and sort of crawled / swam to the bank across the crud. Well when I came across Bob he said what have you been doing, yes, I was looking like the monster from the black lagoon. I told him I had just escaped being swallowed whole and he said he knew exactly where I meant because he had already made a half-hearted attempt to get in the river there but gave up after his wading staff almost disappeared out of sight as he probed the depth of the mud. Anyway we eventually managed to gain the upper hand on the river and enjoyed excellent sport.

We headed upstream of the bridge picking up fish as we went and came across a wonderful weir pool with a thatched cottage alongside it, quintessential artist inspired England.

I saw a few rises towards the tail of the pool and crept into position. First cast and a big trout leapt clear of the water and straight over my fly, missing it completely. Just then Bob came up to the pool and immediately pushed me out of the way even though I had spent about 15 minutes getting into a good position without scaring the fish. Actually Bob is such a gentleman he would never do that - I invited him in to let him have a go. Half an hour later with Bob having tried about a dozen different flies at a particular regularly rising fish I persuaded him to move on, which he reluctantly agreed to do. We slowly worked our way back to the bridge and at the last knockings went in the run below the bridge and started getting really amongst the fish in what had already been a fish filled day. I reckon I had around 20 or so Grayling all on my favourite dry fly (check out that picture of the tiny Grayling in close up for a clue) and Bob had a lot too, Bob also lost two big trout and I lost one, out of season so they would not have counted anyway.

Certainly two very happy chappies headed

back to the Marwell Hotel to meet up with our four friends who had fished beats higher up the river to see how they got on. Well it turned out the lads had a great day too, with even one Pike caught on a squirmy wormy as well as a Roach caught and quite a lot of Grayling between them. What really made me just a tad jealous though was the fact the guys had sat on the seat dedicated to Frank Sawyer and I hadn't, naturally the boys rubbed it in for all they were worth, I would have probably done the same myself if it was the other way around.



Frank Sawyer's seat on the banks of the Avon

The evening was rounded off with the boys producing the Malt again, they had 6 different bottles with them, well maybe it was 7 or 8, quite a lot but no more than par for the course. As most will know I am not a whisky man however my arm was twisted especially as I had brought a couple of Monte Cristo cigars back from Cuba (hand rolled on a dusky maiden's inner thigh) for Big Rog, so I did have the odd tiddle to be polite, it would have been churlish to refuse. What a great day and a great end to another fantastic weekend with the Grayling Society.

The following day I drove over to Chester for 3 nights as I was to be fishing the Welsh Dee. Anyone who knows the Dee knows it can be a bit of a beast of a river nothing at all like the chalkstreams but a wonderful water all the same, no manicured banks here that's for certain.

So the next day saw me meeting up with Phil Dixon, currently a member of the England International Fly Fishing Team who is not only a superb angler but also good company to boot for two days together after the Grayling for which the river is renowned. We were going to be



A fine Dee Grayling in the net for Bob Milne

fishing a very private beat only fished by the owner and a select few who now included myself. Were they sure what they were letting themselves in for? Well the Dee is notoriously tricky wading so you had to be careful however it was not long before we were amongst the fish. A combination of tactics were employed from dry fly through French Leader to heavy bugging under a large indicator and standard nymphing techniques. On this first day I managed quite a few Grayling including a beautiful 1 ½ pounder. Talking of 1 ½ pounders I actually at one point caught a Grayling on that weight breaking strain tippet! Phil also had a

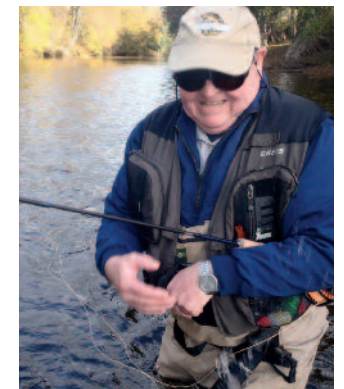
near the top of the beat although it was a bit of an effort to get there. A bit of an effort? Forget Marine yomping through Dartmoor, this was the real thing. The banks were steep going into deep, fast water and we really should have had a machete to get more than 3 yards in 5 minutes. For being the best pool on the river it did not seem very popular due to the lack of any sort of pathway or trodden down thicket so I was beginning to have my doubts about the wisdom of this foray, after all I was quite happy be fishing the sections before the "wilderness" were the fish were coming steadily if not none stop. Eventually we made it. Everest can be



And a brace of lovely Dee Grayling



Grayling - Spring 2017



Oh Oh - There was a fish there, honest Guv!



The Dee in all its Autumn Glory



Phil "Two rods" Dixon

conquered as the saying goes. Was the effort worth it? I'm not so sure, I had one fish or was it two and lost a biggie while Phil had 3 including a really nice one. Perhaps the effort was worth it after all because Phil produced 2 pork pies which went down a treat I can tell you. After a while we decided to start back and Phil decided to try another route for the first time to avoid "The Jungle" and discovered if we went straight up a very steep climb from the pool we could get over a barbed wire fence and be above the riverside bank that had claimed so much of our sweat earlier. Before we called it a day we had a last try in a deep run very close to the bank and I had a take off another really big fish which came off, I then deposited an ultra heavy bug and its partner in a tree above my head over about 8 foot of rapidly running river so that was it. Honestly a brilliant couple of days on the Welsh Border with a great guy, I was knackered but a very happy man.

So there you have it, I love fishing I do, but it's not just about fish, it's about being a beautiful countryside, seeing marvellous wildlife with wonderful people, that's what it's all about.

The Catgut Bug (aka The Maxply)

I can't remember exactly when I first saw nymphs and bugs tied with catgut, but there are quite a few patterns out there. I came to this one independently, and it has worked well. It started with a Facebook post; the bug looked really translucent and attractive, so I decided to try and emulate it.

(By the way, as I'm sure you know, catgut isn't made from cats' insides, it's made from sheep's insides, specifically, the tough connective tissue around the intestines.

You can, of course, buy ready cleaned, dyed and sized gut on neat spools, but sometimes I just like to do things the hard way!

I had a hunt around the attic and found my ancient Maxply squash racket, which had natural gut strings – a big selling point all those years ago when I was still playing squash. I liberated a couple of metres of thick, rather grubby gut and gave it all a good wash in soapy water to remove the residue of countless squash balls.

Natural gut is tough and opaque when dry, but when well soaked it becomes softer, a bit more elastic and semi-clear. I liked the idea of a coloured underbody "glowing" through the translucent gut, and the possibility that the softer chewy texture might make fish hold on a

bit longer. Grayling seem to have a thing about pink, so I tried a pink underbody. After a couple of attempts the following pattern emerged (if I can use that word!). Its a simple tie, and has been very effective this last season. Grayling love it, especially in clear water, and the odd trout has fallen for it too.

Materials

Hooks: Curved shank sizes 16 to 10.

Bead: Tungsten, colour and size to suit. Black and copper have worked well for me, with fluo pink as a coloured water back-up.

Thread: Fine strong white thread. (I like Griffiths Sheer and Veevus 14/0, but others are available.)

Underbody: Fluorescent pink floss, fine. I use Glo-bright, but am not sure of the number.

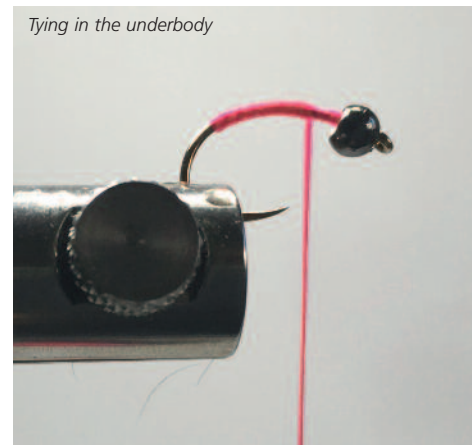
Body: Natural catgut, stranded out to suit the hook size.

The recipe:

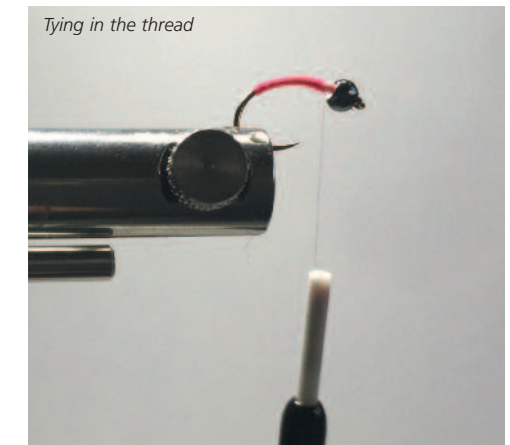
Soak the gut thoroughly for about 10 minutes in warm water. It will appear more translucent and be quite soft when it's ready. Blot on a paper towel to make handling easier.

Position your choice of bead on the hook. (My favourites are size 14 and 12 Czech nymph style hooks with 2.8 and 3.3 mm bead respectively.)

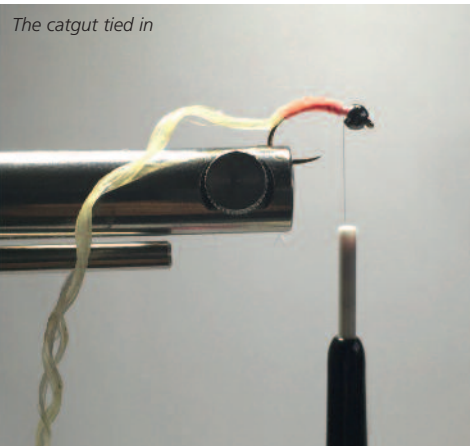
Tie in the fluoro floss at the bead and wind down to the start of the bend, then wind back to make a double layer and whip finish. Cut off the floss. (I keep mine on a bobbin to make



Tying in the underbody



Tying in the thread



handling quicker and easier. I tie several underbodies and then finish the bugs in turn.)

Tie in fine thread at the start of the floss body and trim the waste end.

Strand out the gut to a suitable thickness (unless you are using ready sized gut).

Tie in the gut on top of the shank and bind tightly down along the top with quite open turns of thread to the end of the body.

Bring the thread in open turns back to the start of the underbody.

Now wind the gut. You may find it tricky to handle at first and it can look less than tidy. The fish will not care. Wind in quite tight turns, twisting the gut strands to make a segmented body. It shrinks a bit as it dries.



Tie off a bit short of the bead as neatly as you can.

Spin some ginger or brown hares ear dubbing, or a synthetic if you like, and wind a small collar. Brush it out if you like.

Whip finish behind the bead.

Fishing

The gut needs a decent soak to look its best. I have taken to putting mine in a small specimen bottle with a spoonful of water as I set out along the river – by the time I'm ready to fish the bugs are well soaked. I drain out the water and keep the spare bugs in the bottle to stay wet. What does it represent? The best answer is "food", and that, I suspect, is the case with most of the flies that we use.



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REFLECTIONS ON SKUES

by John Davison

George Edward McKenzie Skues is one of the most famous of those who developed the art of fly fishing of the 20th Century and his contribution to the development of Fly Fishing is immense.

Members will no doubt be aware he fished Abbots Barton Water from 1883 to 1938 although it was slightly different to the water today as the river has been altered in The War.

When fishing that water you are standing in the footsteps of a giant. He was the first to discover artificial nymphs could be used effectively on the Chalkstreams. He designed and popularised a large number of flies, used the marrow scoop and baby plate to autopsy stomach contents, invented "picking it off" - a method of casting to relieve strain on a rod, popularised Amadou, backed use of light rods, used artery forceps for fly tying, and discovered and explained side strain.

I first set eyes on the Piscatorial's Avon water as a guest in 1981 and I continued to make visits to the Society's waters as a guest over the years.

So what has this to do with Skues the reader may ask. Well as a result of fishing the Chalk I had clearly become aware of his writings but it was not until the trip to Sweden in 1986 when the matter came to the fore.

It was 1986 Members of the Grayling Society went on a fishing holiday to Sweden hosted by Lars Olsen the then Swedish Secretary.

On that holiday we camped out one night on the river Kaitum 200 miles north of the Arctic Circle and on the way back we were caught in a large thunderstorm. We also ran out of petrol and had a long row home!

Conversation in the boat turned to our favourite food and then to our favourite fishing quotes. Lars Olsen the then Secretary of the Swedish Grayling Society and our host said his favourite fishing quote came from the last few paragraphs of the book written by Donald Overfield "G.E.M. Skues, The Way of a Man with a Trout", a book I can highly recommend.

"And so the final act is carried out, there is no



more to be said. The old gentleman lies beside his beloved Itchen, placed there by a friend and angling companion of many a long summer's day. To rest where trout sip down the spinners of the late evening and the early night wind rustles the waterside grasses.

That all fly fishers should end their days beside well loved streams would no doubt be George Edward Mackenzie Skues' final wish, while to him we say "resquiescat in pace" beside your quiet Itchen, for your immortality is assured while anglers cast their fly to chalkstream trout."

Myddleton Angling Club on the Wharfe like the Piscatorial Society has a reading at its AGM. The quote became "the reading" to the Myddleton Angling Club in 2002 but sadly that year but Secretary of the Club passed away falling dead on the golf course which runs through the middle of the fishery. There were no more obituaries!

Shotting for Trotting

- a different concept

By Louis Noble

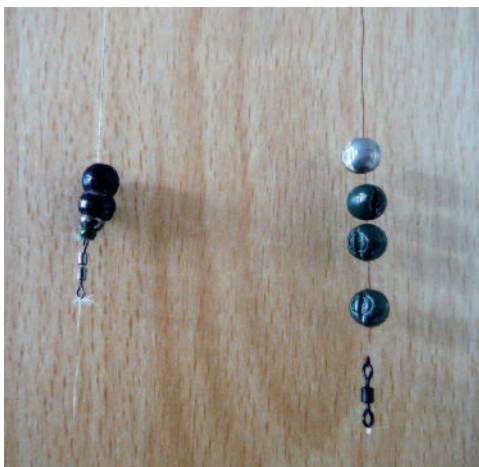
As we know, long trotting is perhaps the most traditional method of grayling fishing – commonly practiced in the winters of old with snow on the bank and freezing rod rings. Dare I also add that the grayling population would have been greater, leading to catches of many more fish. The winters today are so different and high water combined with higher temperatures means that trotting is often the only logical method. I suspect that trotting is growing in popularity but beginners often struggle to get a good tackle set-up. Basically it's not complicated but experienced anglers will know that things have to be just right and a crude approach often won't bring results.

Highly important

We love to talk about centre pins, braid line, swivels and the best hooks, plus of course the best type of worm but I'd like to suggest that shotting is highly important and open to improvement. Depending on your viewpoint it's a shame that lead shot is no longer allowed so we have to use alloys which are substantially larger and often difficult to use, depending on quality. Shotting patterns are interesting and we could opt for bunched shot or strung out and results can vary considerably on which you choose. On the type of waters that I fish, mainly the Welsh Dee, a strong current necessitates getting the bait down quickly so bunched shot are better. Strung out shot are better suited to general coarse fishing, taking longer to sink and allowing subtle control, not particularly necessary with grayling in heavy streams.

However, let me now come to what I consider to be a major improvement that I've used for the past two seasons. I readily acknowledge that some of you may already have tried it and I have no wish to teach granny to suck eggs so apologies in advance. A mistake that beginners often make is to use too small a float which won't carry enough shot and gets drowned in turbulent water – I find that most experienced

anglers opt for large Avons similar to dear old Reg Righyni's which the Society sell and these can require between 3 & 6 AAA shot or even more BB. These certainly get the bait down but are prone to issues that used to irritate me. If your float carries say, 5 AAA then the tackle can land with a fair old splash – these large shot



when squeezed on may not all be in line, i.e. some may stick out more to one side than the other. When retrieved this eccentricity will cause turbulence, particularly near the surface as you bat it back at speed – the hook link can also tumble onto the shot thereby causing a tangle – shot squeezed on tightly can cut the line and fall off if not squeezed enough, and finally, several shot in clear water, not too far from the bait must be visible to fish. I did use the rugby ball shaped shot for a long time, which are more aerodynamic in water, but quite large and even went to the trouble to paint them green. I imagine that these are now easily available from coarse tackle shops.

A different approach

So now I come to the subject matter, a different approach, which I'm totally sold on and

I'm sure has caught me more fish. It's very simple and possibly quite obvious but all I have done is dispense with squeezed on shot in favour of tungsten beads. The size I use is 4.5mm plus a smaller one to prevent them slipping over the s24 swivel I use. You can see from the picture that the two main beads are the weight equivalent of the four normal shot. I added a 2.5mm just to get the loading right. The advantages are a far less splashy entry, no risk of

cutting the line and much less visible to the fish. They do slide up the line but this doesn't cause any problems. There's no turbulence on a fast retrieve and I don't get tangles in the hook link.

I only used that size bead because that's what I had but you can use whatever suits you.

There you are then: I'm very happy with the set-up and will never revert to conventional shot – hopefully I've given you something to think about for next autumn/winter's fishing.

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Full details of Trade and Corporate Membership can be obtained from the Editor

Area 2 Fishing Weekend 19/20 November

A Tale of Two Rivers...



Meeting at the Lower Itchen Fishery

A total of 18 anglers were booked in for the Area 2 fishing weekend held at the Lower Itchen Fishery on the weekend of November 19 and 20 - 8 for the Saturday and 10 on the Sunday.

Saturday brought a nice crisp, frosty and occasionally sunny morning. Upon arrival in Salisbury to pick up Bob Male the thermometer registered a toasty zero degrees – perfect



Tackling up

Grayling stuff... much excitement for the day ahead as Bob and I shared the 30-minute drive to the fishery.

Upon arrival the river looked inviting – gin clear, nice depth and a reasonable flow. A small number of 'bait anglers' were already trotting through the lower section of the river and had landed a couple of decent fish. Two or three of 'our guys' were in the car parking area and were assembling gear. The river looked beautiful and inviting as the mist lifted off and a quick coffee later and we were all assembled. Informal lunch arrangements were briefly discussed before we all headed off – largely in different directions to chase the ladies.

The first hour was later reported to be fairly quiet with a reasonable number of fish arriving at the net over the next couple of hours.

Grayling – Spring 2017



River Itchen on arrival Saturday morning

By lunchtime everyone had been into fish with the successful patterns being largely Pink or Purple Shrimp although a good number had fallen to Snipe and Purple Spiders, White Beaded Nymphs, and the odd one to a dry.

Lunch was taken and washed down with a combination of hot coffees and a warming red wine before we headed back out. The weather started to show signs of change as storm Angus moved over and short spells of rain occasionally threatened to dampen proceedings. The fishing, however, was largely unaffected and a good number of early afternoon Grayling were heading towards waiting nets. Bob Male in particular had a lovely fish just shy of 2lbs. By the end of the day we had managed around 80 Grayling between the group and a few decent specimens graced us with their presence.

Driving back through to Salisbury with Bob the weather had changed noticeably and for the worse. The storm was hitting hard and flooding was evident on the roads as the rain relentlessly came down and the winds picked up.

Sunday morning came around and the rain had at least stopped. Not too much surface water on the roads as we made our way to the

Grayling – Spring 2017



Bob Male with one of many Saturday Grayling

fishery for day 2. However as we drove into the fishery entrance and managed a first glimpse of the river, the contrast from Saturday could hardly have been starker. The storm had clearly hit hard. The river had risen considerably, was belting through and the gin clear water had been replaced by a lovely dark chocolate soup.

Fishing looked like it would be tough, and so it proved. Both Peter Davis and myself had fished the day before so had seen the river in two completely different states. Not that that offered any crumb of comfort to either of us or the other 7 expectant anglers. We shared details of the previous days successful flies for what that was



worth. By lunchtime 3 Grayling had been landed between the 9 anglers to very large bright Pink Shrimp patterns. Coffee, wine and food warmed us up and at least fuelled some excitement and expectation for the afternoon session. The river had lost a little bit of the chocolate soup complexion and now resembled a reasonably strong coffee with a little milk added. Two further Grayling were added in the afternoon session to take Sunday's total to 5 from 9 rods. As tough as we had feared upon arrival and a reminder that nature can be cruel and weather forecasters, occasionally, correct.

Early Sunday morning anticipation changed quickly to reflection...

Despite the tough conditions on the Sunday we had all enjoyed a weekend of fishing for our target species and all look forward to more Area 2 outings in due course.



White Beaded Nymph – one of the successful patterns

The team at Sunday lunch.
Time for reflection...





Wilton Fly Fishing Club

If you would like to fish for wild trout and grayling on a beautiful Wiltshire chalk stream, the Wilton Fly Fishing Club has spaces on its waiting list.

For further information, please contact Mike Tebbs, the Membership Secretary, at: miketebbs@btinternet.com
Tel: 01985 841192



Bears, Bullocks, Bats & Sub Machine Guns!

By Steve Skuce

Why is it that, when you are nicely sorted with some lovely water to fish and ideal conditions along come wild creatures to mess up your day?

Well here are a few of my experiences with said varmints!

Bears

We come face to face regularly with wild creatures or signs of them when we are out fishing. Whether it be sheep or cows or deer or the fresh and steamy bear poo that Honor and myself found as we walked down the banks of the De Puy's Spring Creek in Montana! Well, we had paid \$100 each to be there that day so no miserable, slaving, wild eyed, man eating monster of a bear was going to stop us fishing. Yeah, right! Big words but we were extremely nervous as we walked along singing 'Old McDonald had a Farm' at the top of our voices in an attempt to scare off anything that fancied us for lunch! I made Honor walk in front of course!

After a while, happily with no appearance of Yogi, we met a New Yorker who had been watching with great interest as Honor and I caught several cutthroat trout on a size 18 Sawyer PTN. He explained that it was, indeed, fresh bear poo and that we should get a 'bearosol'. When I asked him what it was and how you used it he explained that it was, basically, a pepper spray aerosol, which you fired at a charging bear's eyes – from less than 25 feet away! Oh yeah, I could see me doing that – not! I think I'll stick with Old McDonald because my singing voice is so bad it could scare every bear in the state. He also told us his own bearosol was more like a scuba diving tank in size and, in any case, he was licensed to carry a concealed firearm in 32 states. That sounded a more promising way to deal with them to me.

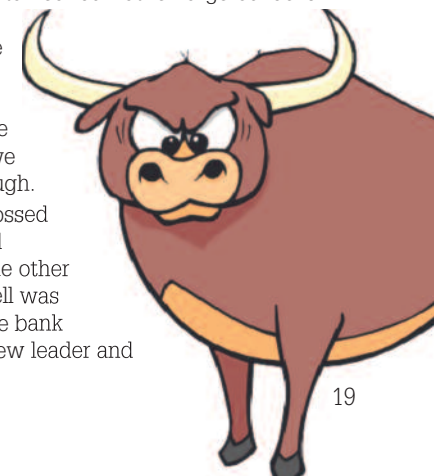
He was a nice and helpful character and wandered off quite happily clutching the couple of PTN's I had given him, and we never saw any further evidence of bears on our whole holiday, thankfully.

Bullocks

Take bullocks - please! I'm not sure about them. Cows are OK but, having been set upon before, I now avoid them if they have calves. Bulls I definitely avoid but, thinking about it, I wonder how they would react to a quick blast from a bearosol? Bullocks – well they are just unpredictable. Big Brian Clarke – yes OUR one – once stood guard for me whilst I fished the Barlow Brook alongside a herd of 20 or so potentially frisky bullocks. Well, I am only little and I thought they would just trample over me.

But the funniest encounter, and the most frightening for the lead actor concerned, saw me as just a member of the chorus with our then Membership Secretary, Mike Tebbs, taking the starring role. There were four of us fishing the Ribble just below Settle on the Sunday after the 1995 Symposium. Russell Murray and myself had just walked down through three fields, one of which contained four rather large bullocks. Fortunately these bovine hooligans were at the far end of the field when we passed through.

We had crossed the river and settled on the other bank. Russell was sitting on the bank tying on a new leader and



I was fishing for the only pod of grayling we had seen all morning. Then along came Mike and the other guy. That is when the bullocks decided to charge! The other guy disappeared somehow but Mike, being forced towards the river by a ton of thundering beef, just jumped into the water about 6 feet below him!

Unfortunately for him the water was at least a foot deeper than his thigh waders so he was just a tad wet as well as frightened and embarrassed!

It didn't help when all he got for his spectacular wetting was a droll remark from Russell, who is very laconic, that he would give Mike 7 for effort but only 3 for style! And all he got from me was some choice Anglo-Saxon because he had scared away what seemed to be the only grayling in the whole of the Ribble!

Sheep

Sheep are a rum lot. I like to have them around when fishing because the bleating somehow seems to remind me that I am in the country. Why I still feel like this after 11 years living in Wylfe totally surrounded by them I don't know, but it is a pleasant, reassuring, sound. Anyway, other than that they are a real pain. A farmer friend who has sheep once told me that they are the most stupid animals and spend their entire life trying to find ways to die! Many times my

fishing has been interrupted, or not even started, by rescuing sheep from some catastrophe or other. The two favourites seem to be getting stuck in barbed wire fencing and falling over onto their backs. And the usual thank you when you have released them is a kick in the knackers as they run off! And, frankly, I don't think I could ever get used to the smell! Mind you lambs wool is very good as an indicator when nymphing!

Llamas

Don't go fishing near llamas! They are horrid creatures who either want to spit at you or bite you. I once fished on the West Dart and turned round to

see half a dozen of the things just lining up to have go at me – on Dartmoor! I am not too sure about alpacas either but haven't yet seen them by the river, just in the President's paddock and I don't like them either.

Bats



Bats are very partial to a Greenwell's Glory fished dry on a late summer's evening. At least the one was which seized my fly on the back cast one evening when I was fishing the little River Bourne in Wiltshire. The other bat experience was a bit more flesh creepy. Our revered General Secretary, Rod Calbrade, was fishing with me as my guest one balmy summer evening on the Wylfe. It was getting quite dark and, truth be known, we should have been in the pub by then. But, one last cast and all that! He lifted his line and there was something on the end. It looked just like a largish leaf flapping in the gentle breeze so I happily told him to swing it over to me and I would grab it and pull it off. I don't know who was most surprised, when I grabbed this 'leaf', me or the bat! I soon let go I can tell you!

Birds

I once 'lassoed' a swift on my back cast. The leader wrapped neatly around its wing and brought the poor creature crashing down to earth. Fortunately I could release him easily and he was none the worse for the experience as he headed into the sky following an assisted take off!

More upsetting was the time Mike Tebbs and myself found a waterhen which was wrapped in nylon around its legs and attached to a tree. Quite a lot of careful untangling was required before it was finally freed. My reward was to be heavily pecked and then the poor thing flew straight into the river and started eating like it was starving – which, of course, it was! Please, please do not discard nylon but, if you feel you must, then please cut it into small, 1 inch or less, strips then it can't wrap around anything. I have a nifty bit of kit called a Monomaster, which seems to be sold exclusively by Orvis, and is very simple to use to collect and store my old nylon. When I get home it is a matter of moments to open the kit and remove the nylon into the bin or fire.

FINALLY – Police with Sub Machine Guns!

Oh yes! It can be a bit wild with the scuffers! The most bizarre incident I have ever had when fishing was one autumnal morning when I went to fish at West Amesbury on the Wiltshire Avon. I had turned off the road by an old and rambling house and then over the railway sleeper bridge and into the car park in the woods. As I was turning off the main road I noticed a couple of black cars outside the house and some men in dark suits, with close cropped hair, and what appeared to be fat wallets in their inside breast pockets, if you get my drift! Anyway, I thought nothing of it and went about my business moving about 300 yards upstream to fish.

It was after I had been fishing for a short while that I felt the hairs on my neck starting to rise and sensed a 'presence' behind me. I turned round to see a policeman standing right behind me, complete with a Heckler & Koch MP5 sub-machine gun and a Smith & Wesson revolver! And this was in a field in Wiltshire!

He didn't seem to appreciate my attempt at humour when I asked him if he thought he might be a wee bit excessively 'tooled up' to check my rod licence but merely asked me, a bit grumpily, what my name was. I told him, of course, because, lets face it you don't mess with armed men. Anyway, after I had also told him the make and registration number of my car I thought the situation needed lightening a bit. So I looked at his sidearm and asked him if it was a Smith & Wesson Model 19, which it was. He got quite a bit prickly then and wanted to know how I knew what it was. I told him I had one, which was nearly true - actually mine was a Model 586 but close enough – because, in those days before the horrors of Dunblane, I was a big target shooter with both rifle and pistol. Anyway, that seemed to lighten things up a bit. But he wouldn't tell me what was going on at the old house although it was obvious something was afoot.

Funnily, about a week later I was in the same place early in the morning again. This time it was another copper who crept up behind me, similarly armed, who just nodded when I told him my name and said something like "Oh yes,

and yours is the Merc parked down in the woods isn't it?"

Funny goings on and the daft thing was that when I asked the first copper why he looked like a one-man SAS squad all he said was something like "We take policing seriously in Wiltshire." After that remark I just about kept a straight face, you know the one where you suck your cheeks in hard because you are scared of bursting out laughing! Once he had gone I just let go and fell about with laughter at that stupid remark!

So, whenever you are out fishing, especially when on your own, remember the catchphrase of Sergeant Phil Esterhaus in Hill Street Blues and 'Let's be careful out there'!



With apologies to "Bennett" Chattanooga Times Free Press

ARTICLES WANTED

There is always a need for material for the Society's publications, both the Newsletter and the Journal. The editor will welcome anything that relates to your experiences of grayling and their habitats. Perhaps there have been improvement works on a river in your area, or problems with the creation of better habitat; perhaps some notable or not so notable catches – just a good day's fishing that you would like to share. Words or pictures are welcome, concerning places fished, new or familiar flies tied and used, tales of anglers from the past, or your own observations on grayling and grayling fishing in general. Contact the Editor, Bob Male, by any means you wish. All contributions are gratefully received.



Grayling & Adult Caddis

by Dave Southall

Adult Caddis may feature less in the diet of grayling than do the larval and pupal stages but there are times when imitations can be very effective. Although I've had many grayling on various adult caddis imitations in the UK I've only ever had one really big grayling on a dry caddis pattern (Elk Hair Caddis), a fish of just under 3lb from the Mulberry Whin Fishery on Driffeld Beck; however in Sweden friends and I have had great sport with good-sized grayling on dry caddis/sedges, the best a fish of 56cm, caught by my friend Steve Donohue in 2007.



Hackleless Elk Hair Caddis

I have two favourite patterns, both very simple to tie, the Hackleless Elk Hair Caddis and the F Fly. Both have the correct profile for an adult caddis. The former tied with bleached elk hair is clearly visible in low light or against dark backgrounds (plus it casts well into the wind). The latter shows up well against light backgrounds and when fishing into the light at dusk.

The only other pattern that I feel I need is a Glen Pointon Bubble Caddis. Glen is one of the most thoughtful fly fishers and most innovative fly tiers that I know. He had the genius to use watch makers luminous dust to make his nocturnal dry flies glow in the dark when given a blast of UV light from a small torch. I've successfully tried them on trout and grayling: what a revelation! It is a surreal experience to see the glowing dot that you've cast onto the water just disappear and even more surreal when on striking you see the glow zooming about as you play the fish. It also helps when landing the fish in total darkness. I coat the foam with wet Super Glue then dip into the luminous dust. (Glen has also devised another

devastatingly effective grayling pattern, the Soft Touch Shrimp tied with clear Silicone sealant over a dubbed body:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=L0Kqg17sMxg).

Hackleless Elk Hair Caddis

Hook: 20 to 10 dry fly

Thread: Tan 8/0

Body: Dubbed hare's ear, hare's mask or squirrel fur with plenty of guard hairs

Wing: Bleached elk (brown elk underwing optional)

F Fly

Hook: 20 to 12 fine wire dry fly

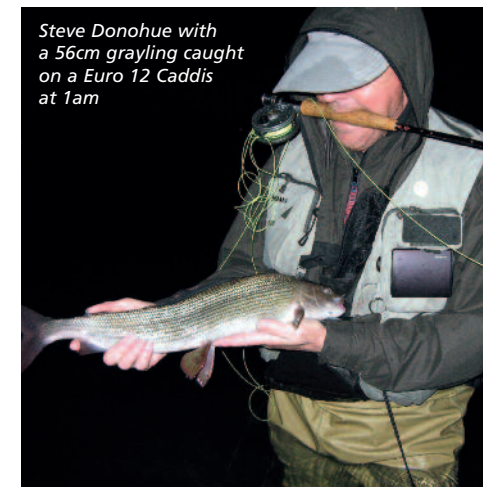
Thread: Tan 8/0

Body: Thread (roped CdC optional)

Wing: 3 to 5 CdC feather tips



F Fly



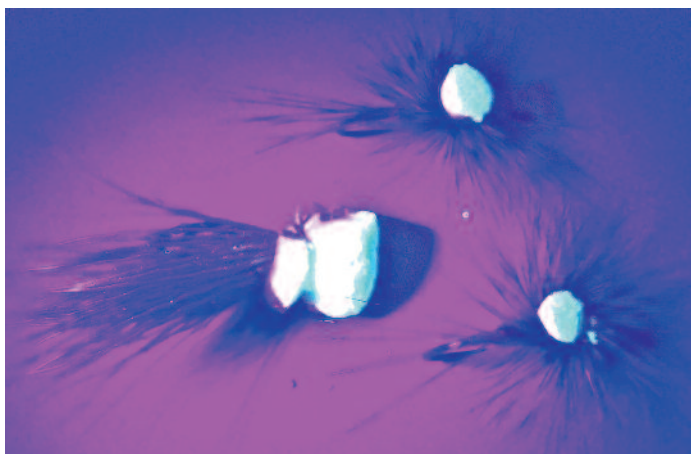
Steve Donohue with a 56cm grayling caught on a Euro 12 Caddis at 1am



Euro 12 Caddis, a pattern used in Sweden



22 Playing a big Swedish grayling at midnight



Grayling - Spring 2017



Glen Pointon flies with foam posts coated with luminous dust. UV light activates them

Grayling - Spring 2017

CHALLENGING NORDIC

by Kris Kent

The major benefits of the growth of the 'low fare' airlines is that it has significantly reduced the cost of international travel and opened up access to new destinations. This has been a boon for the travelling angler, like myself. In the last decade I have had the opportunity to fish in Slovenia, Bosnia, Poland, Finland, Sweden and Norway. With plans afoot to visit the Pyrenees, Croatia and perhaps Montenegro in the near future. In these countries I have had the opportunity to catch Grayling, as well as Brown Trout, Rainbow Trout, Marble Trout and Whitefish and to fish with some wonderful anglers, hosts and guides.

Three years ago a few like minded friends decided to visit Norway. We had a fabulous time but my companions were disappointed they didn't catch more Brown Trout. On the Trysil the Grayling fishing was wonderful with lots of Grayling in the 8" to 14" class caught but the Brownies were thin on the ground, at least for us. So when it was suggested we visit Norway in 2016 I was tasked with finding a river with a better Brown Trout population. Posts by Markus Hoffman on Facebook prompted me to look up Rena Fiskecamp on the internet. What I found sounded right up my fishing buddies street. On the excellent website there were lots of pictures of people holding large Brown Trout, with the accompanying grin, as well as the opportunity to catch larger Grayling. In fact I discovered that the Rena holds the Norwegian record for the largest Grayling. We would all be happy. Rena Fiskecamp provides accommodation, guiding and driftboat trips and there is a café and fly shop onsite. Everything you could need. So I booked accommodation for the three of us and we arranged flights and hire car. Everything was in place.

Gatwick was busy the morning of our departure and we struggled to find somewhere to have breakfast before our flight boarded. Eventually we found a restaurant with a free table and we chatted excitedly about the week ahead as we wolfed down some bacon and eggs.



Charles and Paul enjoying breakfast

The weather was not auspicious when we arrived at Oslo Gardemoen Airport. Heavy, low cloud with lots of standing water on the runway. Paul managed to get the hire car to aquaplane as he charged along the motorway heading north and east towards Østerdalen. It took us about two hours, with a brief stop at the town of Rena to stock up on food and beer for the week, to reach the small hamlet of Deset and Rena Fiskecamp. Deset is a small community of farmsteads and houses strung out along the Fv607. There is a church, school and old people's home but not much else. What was the Grocery store was converted into Rena Fiskecamp by Lars B. Johansen and his wife Anita. They have worked very hard creating comfortable accommodation for visiting anglers with the new Café and fly shop, the final phase of the redevelopment, opening whilst we were there. They can accommodate individuals, small groups, right up to parties of eight in the six apartments.

We arrived to find Lars standing on the decking smiling broadly. The rain had eased off and the sun was trying to break through. He invited us into the Café where we settled up for the accommodation and bought our fishing passes for the week. A weekly ticket issued by the Åmot municipality costs 580 NOK, about £50. The fishing license is valid for the Glomma,

GRAYLING



Our first view of the Rena from the bridge

Rena, Søre Osa, Julussa and Åsta rivers. Lars is the local river keeper as well as guide so sorts everything out for you. Whilst we waited we browsed through the selection of fishing tackle and fly tying materials in the shop and admired the beautifully tied local flies available for sale.

The Glomma is Norway's largest river catchment, a river more famous for its Salmon fishing. 386 miles long it drains 13% of Norway's area. The Rena river joins the Glomma at Rena



Rena Fiskecamp

town. The catchment has been heavily developed for hydroelectricity production with several large dams on the Rena and its tributaries. But these have had a beneficial effect on the fishing on the Rena. The upper dam above Rena Fiskecamp, Storsjødammen, regulates flows and ameliorates water temperatures creating the perfect habitat for fly life, Grayling and Trout. The Rena now has the reputation for offering the best river fishing in Norway.

Lars showed us to our apartments and pointed out access to the river. We would meet him the following morning for a guided tour of the beats. We quickly unpacked and rushed downstairs to pull on waders and put up rods. After hours sitting in planes and cars we were keen to stretch our legs and cast a fly. Just opposite the camp a bridge crosses the Rena providing access to the opposite bank.

So within five minutes we were in the river casting a line. To be honest we didn't really have a clue what we were doing we were just happy



A great selection of local flies from the shop

to be fishing. In most places the forest comes straight down to the river's edge and whilst wading is allowed the fast deep water can mean that you can only edge a short way out, a good back cast is a rare luxury on the Rena. The ability to roll or Spey cast is a real benefit. We managed to find a shallow bay where we could wade out to cover rising fish. Whilst we could put a fly over these fish they seemed reticent to take our offerings. Our casts didn't put the fish

down and they would continue to rise to the naturals whilst completely ignoring our artificial. As the light started to fade and the exertions of our day started to take their toll we retreated to our apartments for a beer and an early night.

The following morning we met Lars by the cars and proceeded to follow him up and down the river stopping off at various access points where Lars would give us a few hints and tips and point out the best spots. Paul enjoyed the rally style driving on the dirt back roads.

Norway is very organised for anglers. Most access points have car parks which are named and clearly marked on the maps with information boards provided. English translations can be accessed on the internet. All very user friendly. Both banks of the Rena can be accessed, the east bank via the Fv607 and the west bank via a forest track. here are various road and foot bridges that also make crossing the Rena straightforward. We could see that a lot of anglers were using kayaks to fish from, a very mobile way of covering a lot of water and avoiding the limited back cast. The top section of the Rena, from Storsjødammen to Lindstad, is a 'Fly Only' zone where boats aren't allowed.

Lars stopped on the west bank by the start of lower limit of the Fly Only zone. This was where Lars would leave us having given us a few pointers on technique. We walked down a steep forest track and along a faint footpath until we emerged onto the river, just opposite what has to one the perfect fishing huts, perched high above the river on a rocky knoll.



The perfect fishing hut

Lars pointed out that the fish would be rising tight in along the bank and to not rush into wading too soon. Sure enough we found fish rising close in. Lars recommended fishing small upwing patterns to start. So we tied on various small olive emerger/dun patterns and set about our task. The fish were very selective. I covered a fish rising quite close in and whilst my fly passed straight over the fish it ignored my fly utterly whilst taking naturals enthusiastically. I asked

Lars if I should try another fly but he suggested that the issue was more presentation to pattern. So I stuck with the fly and tried various different presentations, varying angle and cast, until finally the fish took. A small Grayling came stubbornly to the net, we were off.

The blustery upstream wind didn't make presentation easy but we persisted with each of us rewarded with a few Grayling including a personal best for Paul. Not a bad way to start

the week. We came off the river feeling pleased that we had caught a few fish but not really feeling as if we had cracked the code yet. That night much theorising was done as we cooked dinner and enjoyed a beer.

The following day we rose enthused, keen to put our theories into practice. We chose the east bank opposite where we fished the previous day. Below the car park there was a shallow bay and we could see there were a few fish rising further



Following Lars



Grayling - Spring 2017



Charles and Paul fishing the fly only zone

Grayling - Spring 2017



Charles starting the morning session

out. A faint path led us through the pine forest until we were far enough from the car park to not be disturbed by other anglers. Despite it being a Monday there were still quite a few anglers about, mostly Swedes drawn by the prospect of catching large Grayling. We discovered that this section was relatively shallow and that we could wade well out to cover the fish rising mid river. There wasn't much happening on the surface so Charles opted to fish Klink & Dink whilst I targeted what rising fish there were with a dry.

Once in the water you could see that the surface was peppered with various upwing duns. Small, medium and larger Olives plus a few Yellow May Duns were popping off. There were also Stonefly and Sedge in amongst the Olives. A veritable Smörgåsbord. We were surprised there weren't more fish rising. Lars later told us that the fish don't start rising in earnest until there is a critical mass of fly on the water.

As I searched the water with an Olive Emerger I was occasionally distracted by the sound of

Charles catching fish, mostly to the nymph. Your buddies catching really puts the pressure on. Charles shouted over that he was having trouble getting the Grayling in his net. I thought that he was bragging but when I looked over I could see one almost bent double as it was being unhooked, and it wasn't as if Charles has that small a landing net. I needed to get my act together.

I spotted what looked like a better fish pushing some water, rising fairly regularly. I edged forward and extended line. The first cast landed just behind it, the second a little to its right. With so much food there was no need to move off station to intercept a fly, and this fish wasn't moving. With a small haul I managed an extra few feet and the fly landed just in front of the fish. I saw the head come up and the fly disappear but I managed to pause, whilst the fish turned down on the fly, before striking. It didn't run, it didn't head for cover, it just turned into the current and stubbornly resisted my

efforts to bring it in. My Sage MOD 9' 2 weight was arched over as I put on as much pressure as a dare, big fish in heavy water not a good combination. Now the fish tried to move upstream, head down with a pumping action. That didn't work so it turned and tried to get below me. I arched the rod over and applied side strain to get it back upstream. After five minutes the fish started to give ground and I managed to retrieve some line. I tugged my net from its magnetic tether and slid it below the surface as I drew the fish toward me. I must have looked awkward rod hand held high, net hand in the water. One last twist from the fish was countered by a lunge with the net and the fish was in the bag. It wasn't the biggest Grayling I'd ever caught but it punched well above its weight.

As I released the fish another rose behind me in the water I had just waded through. I quickly turned and shot enough line to cover it. This one turned out to be a Trout. It was good to see and I hoped it would mean we would see a few more of them on this trip

Slipping the Trout back into the oily Rena I scanned the water before me. The hatch was building and more and more fish were rising, some almost imperceptibly small sips, some fish poking their noses out, some surging through the surface fin held high coming down on the duns from above. They were above me, below me, in front and behind. It was tricky knowing where to start. I picked a fish and focused on it until I either caught it or put it down. I rotated 360° covering all the fish within casting distance and then I would push further out.



Charles and a good grayling

In a seam between slower and faster currents I saw a fish turn on a large dun and I covered it first cast. The fly disappeared from sight and when I tightened up the fish erupted from the water. It looked big. This fish did run. It charged upstream taking line off me. As I applied some



First grayling of the day...



...and a nice Rena brownie



Best grayling of the trip!

pressure I could feel the fish through the line, it was a powerful determined fish and it took some time to get it close enough to net. I struggled to unhook it juggling fish, net and rod. It was a fish worthy of a photo and I offered it up to my rod so I could measure it later. It was the best Grayling of the trip and possibly my best Grayling ever. Back on the bank for a coffee I checked its length and it came in at around 21", a smidge over 3lbs. I was a very happy man.

Best Grayling of the trip (Photo 13)

The hatch persisted for several hours and we made hay whilst the sun shone. By the time it eventually petered out and the fish slipped away below the surface I had had over 30 Grayling, all over 1lb with many over 2lbs plus a new personal best and all on dry fly.

We never saw hatches or rising fish on that scale during the rest of the week although we

caught plenty more Grayling both during the day and also at night whilst trying to track down the big Trout. The Rena certainly lived up to her reputation and our expectations and on our journey home at the end of the trip we all said that we hoped to visit her again, even if we hadn't caught many Trout.

You can get more information on the Rena and book accommodation at Rena Fiskecamp through Lars and Anita's excellent website:

<http://www.renafiskecamp.no/home>

Biography:

Kris Kent has been fly fishing and trotting for Brown Trout and Grayling for over 20 years in the UK, Europe and Scandinavia. He is PR Officer for the Grayling Society and helps out The Wild Trout Trust with their online communications and events.

Poet's Corner

Thanks to Chairman Rob Hartley for discovering a rare reference to grayling in this poem:

The Vagabond

I know the pools where the grayling rise,
I know the trees where the filberts fall,
I know the woods where the red fox lies,
The twisted elms where the brown owls call.
And I've seldom a shilling to call my own,
And there's never a girl I'd marry,
I thank the Lord I'm a rolling stone
With never a care to carry.
I talk to the stars as they come and go
On every night from July to June,
I'm free of the speech of the winds that blow,
And I know what weather will sing what tune.
I sow no seed and I pay no rent,
And I thank no man for his bounties,
But I've a treasure that's never spent,
I'm lord of a dozen counties.

John Drinkwater (1882-1937)

Daring Dipper Drops

February 2017

When on the small stream riverbank,
Whatever could fly low down along the river quicker?
That fleet fast little bird, the river dipper.
But let us be frank about this caddis ripper,
We never give a dipper superior rank.

The dipper flits from showing stone to river boulder.
From side to side to find its favourite spot,
Looking for where a dive may strike the river bolder,
There an interesting aquatic insect may be got.
He comes up from the bed to shake its head side to side.

The dipper on a river stone bobs its tail up and down.
A dancing flitting zig-zag along, in quick flight its own,
Always, search fast the water for any nook or cranny.
There in the fast flow for a caddis nymph, or any.
Insect food a plenty provide for their little mite.

The desperate aquatic hunter and insect gatherer
He may make you quite dither - life's own quiver.
The graylings greatest larder may just ale
For us our own great fly sport giver.
The dainty little dipper, flip-flop goes its tail.

Ginger Quill

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Area 4 Fishing Days

Saturday 19 November 2016 on the Rivers Lugg and Arrow

Thirteen Grayling Society members assembled at the café of the Morrison's Store in Leominster at 9.00am, where in between sips of coffee or tea, seven beats on the two rivers were allocated to the participants. After signing the Risk Assessment acceptance and Biosecurity notice off we all went to our respective beat. With the furthest beats only about eight miles away everyone was fishing by 10.00am.



A typical fish from the River Lugg. Photo: Tony Harvey

The weather was perfect with cloud free sunny morning after a frosty night and both rivers were running a little higher than the previous three days owing to some recent rain. It was noticed that the River Arrow was running gin clear on all of the four beats while the three beats on the River Lugg was carrying a little bit of colour.

From the catch returns it was noticed that all three beats on the River Lugg and two of the four River Arrow beats produced fish and overall 43 Grayling were caught and 6 out of season Wild Brown Trout.



Dave Collins releasing one of his fourteen grayling! Photo: Glyn Williams

Saturday 18 February 2017 on the Rivers Irfon & Wye

Eleven Grayling Society members assembled at 9.00am at the Little Chef in Built Wells where between cups of tea and all-day breakfasts we sorted out beat allocation and signed the usual Risk Assessment.



Geoff Bevan, Stephen Kavanagh, Glyn Williams, Dyfan Morris



Tony Protheroe, Simon Clarke



Steve Moore, Mike Morris, John Symonds, Andrew Ayres

The weather conditions were favourable, dry and overcast with temperatures in the lower teens and the river level was perfect for both those trotting and fly-fishing.

We dispersed to the beats full of optimism and on this occasion we had some trotting rods on the River Irfon at Cefnllysgwynne and some fly-fishing rods on Craig Llyn and Doldowlod beats on the River Wye.

Despite the near perfect conditions the fish



River Wye at Doldowlod

seemed to have an alternative agenda as very few - nine grayling and four trout - were caught.

There was speculation after the day's fishing back at the Little Chef that the reason for the paucity of fish caught was associated with the recent high and fluctuating water levels as well as the cold and frosty recent conditions.

The next Area 4 Fishing day will be on Sunday 20 August 2017. The venue will be the Upper Severn based at Caersws. If you are interested in taking part please contact Roger Smith by email for details (roger.sd.smith@gmail.com)

Roger Smith



Two of the few fish caught...



Fly Line Design

By Tom Bell

A fly line is a wired projectile.

It's thrown by a rod, but it remains tethered to the reel or rod in the case of Tenkara. It's similar to a harpoon in this respect, or even a taser. In fact, remind me to call a line that, Taser!

There are 2 types of energy involved in throwing a fly line. Stored/Lever energy in the rod and kinetic energy that travels through the line as it flies. I'm less interested in the debate about the exact type of energy a rod uses to propel a line, and more interested in what happens when it's cast.

Loop

What is a loop? It's a confusing term because it conjures images of all sorts of shapes and knots or circles or nooses or whatever the hell it is. But in the case of fly lines, we generally know it means that aeroplane nose shape the line makes when it flies. Some loops remind me of WW1 tank tracks, the shape they make.

The fly line loop

There are 2 elements to the loop. The top and bottom leg. The bottom leg remains tethered to the caster somehow, this is the wired bit. That doesn't move, unless we shoot line. Even then it should move slower than the top leg which is pulled around the nose end of the loop as it travels, thus creating 'turnover.' Sounds complicated but you all know what I mean, you see it. It 'aint rocket science.

The bit that is complex, when we come to design a fly line though is how fast we make that top leg come round. Or, how fast both legs travel through the air. Or, how much friction we apply to the running line. All these factors affect what I call, the speed of the line. When I design a line I choose a core and a coating, then taper. The choices I make determine the speed those materials travel. The speed kinetic energy is allowed to travel through and around the shapes they make.



Core and coating speed

As I say, it's not rocket science, the thinner and more dense the core the faster it transmits energy. Hi fi speakers are measured by their impedance. Low impedance speakers require very little energy to create the desired level of sound, and the desired level of quality of that sound. Cores and coatings are exactly the same. The lines I make are like digital signals. Fast, efficient and clean. Some lines remind me of analogue signals, old MW signals. Crackly and full of noise, in our case manifesting themselves as slack in the cast and a general lack of presence / speed as they fly. As a general rule any high visibility fly line will be slower and less 'clean' because the pigments used to get the colour are usually less dense. They have a lower specific gravity. Great for super floaty. Poor for super casty.

So, with current materials available, in my opinion the fastest, cleanest signal you can get is a solid monofilament core. The most direct, dense route for energy to travel. No braids, no hollow cores, just a dense solid cable through which to travel.

That doesn't mean you should always use monofilament cores. They present multiple issues. They sink, attract water and are very hard to bond to. In thicker diameters they exhibit memory too. It's always a trade off between what you are trying to achieve / application and your market to be honest. Certain countries prefer more floaty and more visible. In the States, go ahead, use a braided core and break out the high-vis orange. It aint gonna fly in New Zealand or on the Test though, at least not usually, and that is changing. The market is gravitating back to stealth.

Heat, durability, specific gravity, colour and tensile strength all have to be considered when choosing core.

Coating

People attribute memory issues to the core. They attribute sensitivity to the core. They attribute strength to the core. Core affects all these parameters, but not exclusively and in some cases, very little compared to coating.

You have to trust me when I say that I can make thin, fast coatings that float and I can

make slow, thick coatings that float. I can make either sink.

So let's take some mono off the top shelf (all mono is top shelf tackle) and pull out the 'fast and thin floaty coating' bucket, ready for production. This is shaping up to be a micro thin fly line, 20-30% thinner than regular PVC lines. It's going to fly fast, very, very straight, very true and very far. It's the Ferrari of wired projectiles. If it's 25% thinner then we have far less of it to move. So, that requires much less effort for me to cast it and for a fish to move it. Enter stage left, super sensitive fly lines. No one has even discussed core stretch, the figure that everyone seems to hang all sensitive arguments on. Diameter, now there's a subject worth discussing when it comes to sensitivity.



Staring at the Mac!

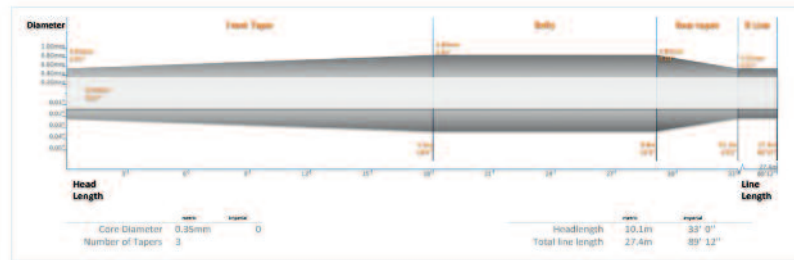
We've made the line sensitive. What about making it cast further for less effort? Enter stage right friction, or the lack of it due to reduced diameter, and improved aerodynamics. So the line has less air resistance and it's not held back by the rod rings. Do we still need the stored / lever energy in the rod? Nope. We don't need as much. We have 2 choices here, either go out and buy non carbon gear and maintain our casting effort or reduce our casting effort using our super duper carbon laser wands. Simply put, thinner lines don't need stiff rods and strong arms, or at least they don't need the weight to bend the rods as deeply. So, we can make the lines truer to AFTM ratings for an equivalent effect, right?

We've reduced the drag through air, water and the rod rings. We've maintained the buoyancy

and casting weight required. Now we can get to the bit that everyone focuses on first! The taper.

Taper

Isn't it ironic (as Alanis said) that now we've addressed the actual physics and chemistry of the wired projectile we look at the shape of it last? I mean, isn't taper the thing that we all used to look at first? 99.9% of casting instructors on the planet will discuss fly lines in terms of one concept, taper. For me, it's a tiny detail that affects the practical nature of how far it flies, what it casts, what it's cast on and where in the world it's cast. Believe it or not, that's the easy bit. We've gone to lengths of polymer chemistry and pigment selection, core and primer science, we've made the proverbial ball of play dough. All we have to do is roll it out into the shape we want. It's the ball of play dough that's the hard bit, not the shape. There are computers and testing for that. Easy Peasy.



Actual factory taper specs of a micro thin fly line

What's the best bit about double taper lines? They are more delicate because they have better front tapers? Nope. They can be turned around? Sure, but your rod cost £650 so what's the issue? They are better for roll casting? Gibberish.

THEY ARE THINNER!

Generally, the reason why DT lines are considered better is that they are rolled out sausages. Thinner. They have no concentrated weight at 30 feet to load the rod. Therefore, they have less diameter and land a little more delicately. That's counteracted though because they are constantly one diameter. So, hauling them is harder. The running line is the same diameter as the head. Re introduce ladies and gentlemen, friction. The thing we worked so hard to eliminate.

The loops when you haul are less stable and

contain more 'noise.' They are generally only better with pick up and lay down casts. Simple. That is unless you make a micro thin shooting head which is thinner than a double taper anyway, shoots like a Rio Outbound and lands like a line 3 times lighter than it's AFTM. Now that's a line I'd buy. In fact that's a line I'd make. In fact, they are the lines I make....

So taper is relevant to core and coating also. The thinner the line the more you have to adapt the taper. The Jeremy Lucas Dry Fly has a 14-18' front taper. You couldn't make a front taper that long, tapering to 0.55mm and still get it to cast up to 4 weight flies, if you used regular 'MW' cores and coatings. The energy wouldn't get to the end of the leader. it would fail. Too slow, too much slack.

Speed of coatings affects speed of tapers. It's a complex relationship between air resistance and mass. That's what testing is for. You don't have

to be an aerospace engineer to calculate it right first time. You try, you test, you tweak. Done.

There's a lot I haven't been able to talk about in this article but there's more than

you'll read elsewhere for sure. I'll end on this, whatever lines you buy, look at colour first, shape and diameter second and slickness third. Lubricity is worthy of a 10,000 word dissertation on it's own and has a profound effect on loop stability and shape. My honest thoughts, only 10% of anglers would benefit from 60% improvements in lubricity, long term.

A good fly line is a work of art. It's a fine instrument. I see a lot of people wanting to play like Eric Clapton, buying Fenders, but they've never had a lesson. Same gig. Fly casting is very hard actually, requiring lots of good tuition and practice to do really well. I make fly lines for all abilities but all my lines can perform to a very high level in the right hands. I call it the 'ceiling.' They have very high ceilings and you'll never really out perform them.



A Day Won at the Auction

By Steven Kavanagh

It was a mid-December day in South Wales and Kris Kent the Grayling Society Public Relations Officer had come for a two-day fishing trip taking in both the Rivers Ewenny and the Rhymney. The trip was the result of his winning bid at the Marwell Symposium post dinner auction.

Geoff Bevan, the Area 14 secretary, guided the first day on the Ewenny. Both Geoff and Kris caught grayling and a good day was enjoyed, in spite of the persistent precipitation. The rain had stopped by the evening get together at the Bush Inn in St Hilary. The hostelry acts as the Area 14 office. Chris Pedersen joined us for a few pints and a meal and we spent a pleasant couple of hours before Geoff's wife Veronica arrived and provided an excellent taxi service home.

I was hosting day two fishing on the Rhymney and the weather forecast was more favourable with rain not forecast to arrive before 3.00 pm. Tuesday morning arrived and the rain was back again. Despite my surprise at the inaccurate weather forecast there was no consideration to amend our plans and I set off for Geoff's house to pick up Kris. Arriving later than I should have,

I considered myself fortunate indeed to have a lovely bacon sandwich provided by Veronica. We were not in a great rush and I was hoping the rain would relent before we started fishing. It did not, and so after a drive of three quarters of an hour and a stop at the Co-op to get some provisions we tackled up at Llanbradach in the drizzle. After 20 minutes or so I finished tackling tying on an orange ceramic shrimp, looks like a maggot or grub, and fished single nymph under a white 'thingamabobber' indicator. In the gloomy conditions white was probably the best colour to use. In truth, I have only the white one left and I felt confident that with the water surface a bit disturbed I would get some takes. Kris was using a Greys Streamflex 10' 2 weight and a long French leader with a bi-coloured indicator section above the tippet. He started with a CDC red tag jig on the point and a pink and sparkly shrimp-like fly on the dropper.

We started on a stretch where I have caught a few Grayling in the past. I kept a couple of known hot-spots up my sleeve for later. The river was pushing through faster than normal, not a



Steven, Geoff and Christian in the Bush Inn

surprise given the rain, and did not produce any takes. Kris worked his way downstream and was covering the water surprisingly quickly. I lingered and let my flies cover the same bit of water for longer. Kris is a more experienced angler than me so I have taken this on board. I followed Kris fishing through the water he had previously covered but with a time lag that I felt did not impair my chances. I may have missed a take due to looking elsewhere. Kris was the next



CDC Red Tag Jig and Pink Shrimp

to get a take, probably a Trout, unfortunately it threw the hook. Soon after Kris was into his first Rhymney Grayling of the day and after a good scrap brought the fish to hand. I would say it was in the ¾ - 1lb bracket and was soon followed by another fish of similar size. At this same spot, just upstream of a road bridge, Kris had several other takes, hooked fish, lost fish and brought another three Grayling to hand. About an hour had passed and it had been a good first hour.

I spent some time observing Kris and could not see any reason why Kris lost the next fish. He played it the same way as the others. There was tension on the line and a good bend in the 2-wt rod all the way up until the line went slack and the realisation the fish was no longer there. I've heard that only 50% of hooked Grayling are landed, this is consistent with my own experience.



The bridge and the hot spot

Some days they all stick whilst on other days they nearly all escape. Some theorise that it is to do with their mouth structure. The Grayling's top lip is hard and bony and the hook and the hook doesn't penetrate sufficiently. I find that most landed fish tend to be hooked in the side of the mouth and I do sometimes have trouble releasing the hook in these cases. It is also common for the hook to fall out in the net and I suspect that such fish were hooked lightly in the top lip.

As Kris was doing so well I decided to head to my first pre-planned hot spot just downstream of the same road bridge. Within a few minutes, I'd hooked a nice grayling, which I would estimate to be over the 1lb mark and a very typical Rhymney Grayling. Kris had not had a take in while, so as guide I invited him to try the hot spot and stepped aside to watch. Sure enough, once he put his nymphs in the area I recommended, takes started to come. After taking a few more fish I suggested we move

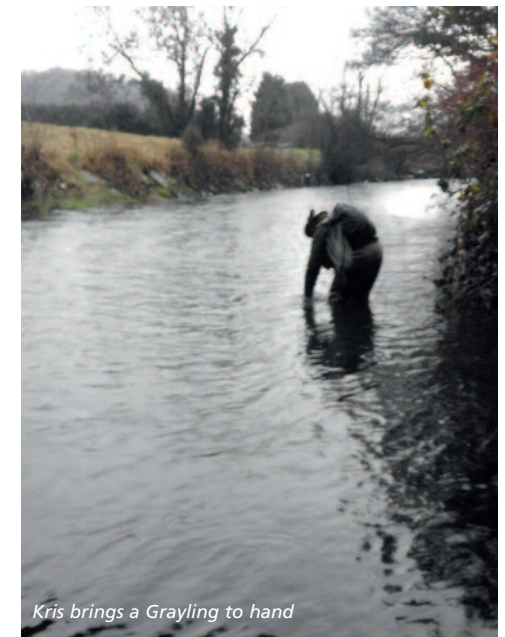


further downstream to another spot where I was sure a decent sized Grayling could be caught.

Kris went first and worked his way quickly through the second hot spot and into a lukewarm spot, bases on my previous experience. Sooner than I had anticipated I was fishing through the hot spot. Alas, on this particular day, it was as cold as marble so I suggested we adjourn to the cars for coffee, sandwiches and pork pies. Over lunch we lamented the weather, still light rain, and Kris admitted to the 'Kent Curse'. Steve Rhodes coined this phrase after a number of occasions when poor weather dogged Kris's



Steven Kavanagh on the Rhymney below the bridge



Kris brings a Grayling to hand



Steven Kavanagh in the trees

every step. Before returning to the river we agreed the afternoons plan of attack. Kris had to drive back to Lambourn before heading off the Cornwall for Christmas so we agreed to fish for two more hours.

We went further downstream where the river is tree lined with a bit more cover. The river narrows here and we found the water pushing through, it was colouring up and a bit too fast. After walking and fishing for half an hour we decided to return to the bridge section which is broader and slower. Back at the bridge Kris had a couple of small fish and another decent Grayling. Sport was slower than during the

morning. The rain continued and light levels were dropping.

At 2.45 pm we decided to call it a day. We were both happy with the outcome of the day. I felt I had done my best as guide putting Kris onto some decent Rhymney Grayling and Kris had caught Grayling on another new river, his 106th river.

Biography

Steven Kavanagh is an Accountant and Treasurer of the Grayling Society. Living in Cowbridge in South Wales he is an enthusiastic Area 14 member. He is quite new to Grayling fishing but keen to learn and improve.

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A Short Stretch on the Itchen

By Chris Thomas

In the general way of these things, it's all rather idyllic. Bells call faithful ones to Evensong, the strike notes reaching across the water-meadows from the city, rolling in and out on the breeze. At my back, there are lively voices on the path set well-back, of course, from the private, coiffed edge of the river. The sky is that perfect October powder blue, softened by thin high-pressure cloud and the lowering light of an autumn well on – the colour Wedgwood must have fastened to. In front of me, the thick current of the Itchen eases past without a sound: a quintessential chalk-stream in the heart of *england-shire*, a riverine landscape that has assumed sacred status, if not sacred treatment; monkish, cowed, other-worldly. Towering ridges of green weed wave above the pale flint gravel on the river bed in clear water that's deeper than it looks. The river's topography here is channel deep and four dimensional. Runnels and tubes through the aquatic vegetation mediate flow and cover. And, of course, here be fish. I've seen the occasional sleek shape oscillating in sympathy with the weed, the slow ghostly resonance of a soft, lazy turbulence.

Not like home

It's not at all like my home river far-away, north of the border. Free-stoning its way over the episodically shifting boulders and bars, pools and riffles, it gives away all and nothing in incessant white air-and-water noise; its a constant discourse to tune to and, generally, you hear it before you see it. But there's no such familiar frequency by this opalescent chalk stream. Still, it is all rather wonderful, and there should be some kind of good karma here. But ah, no. Crossly, I'm fiddling with yet *another* unfathomable mess of leader and tippet, casting skills having deserted this once clearly over-confident wreck hours ago; how can a simple mistimed cast make for such topological complexity, knots on knots? Here's tortuosity enough to keep a topologist in gainful employment for years, at least in the towers of academe.

I'm starting to feel like I needn't, indeed simply shouldn't have bothered. Its all so *wrong*, it wasn't going to be like this – not *meant* to be like this – but it is. Upstream, Alan *san* is now practicing *tenkara*, the wand curved perfectly into another fish, foiled close in. I look away. Failure shines back from the river's unrevealing mirror, there's nothing but a prayer of wispy clouds and blue sky. I want to shout at it – “for the love of...”, or worse. But this is hallowed ground – this cloistered water is too

sacred for such heathen histrionics. In silent, tight-lipped exasperation, I cut off the tangled six inches or so of furled green leader, scrap the tippet, tie in a rough small loop and attach some 5X hawser as a tippet, to which I knot a Griffiths Gnat – a fly of salvation if there ever was. Its a leader jury-rigged, and no mistake, but I don't care any more. Flicking the cast randomly into the river, I'm just going through the motions, about ready to pack in.

First of the day

The gnat lands in the middle of the limpid stream. Somehow, the drift doesn't drag, and suddenly, from nowhere, there's a looping shot-silk bulge in the water. What?! Instinctively, I lift and, *at last*, I'm tight to my first grayling of the day – only a good four hours after we started. Sometimes, *when we look away*... Suddenly, I want this fish landed very badly. I bully it ashore quickly despite vigorous protestations, net it and then subject it to the coarse indignity of a photograph. *Hah!* At last, I've *bloody* caught one, *at bloody last*. Then I'm instantly ashamed at my avarice, my lack of skill in fooling this the prettiest of fish – and there's nagging ambiguity of revelling in the beauty of this little fish and the means by which I've brought it to my hand. Why should this fish's capture matter *that* much? I don't know, but somehow, it does: there's that echo of an ancient tug. Equally instantly, though, I relax...No blank...

The form asked if I would be fishing with anyone. I knew Alan would be at the Symposium, so I emailed him: “how about fishing together on the Sunday?”. His reply came back pretty much instantaneously: “yes, I was just going to ask you the same thing”. That settled it. Alan emailed the honourable Chairman – “could we fish the Test or the Itchen, as I've fished the Wylve.” (So had I – at least a couple of times, in other words, hardly at all.) The Chairman obliged, and so we rolled up to fish about 250 m of precious chalk-stream on this beautiful soft, bright Sunday morning. Only a puffy oblique downstream wind seemed at odds with things. Michael showed us to the water and explained what we had before us: pretty much rectangular in section bank to bank, this was a river of very unfamiliar character.

Rising

There were fish rising, presumably to the small pale olives lifting off the water like thistle down. Alan's rod was already set up, so I gestured, “go on...

I'm no where near ready yet". So I'm backed away from the river, carefully hidden behind some tall reeds, threading line through rings, minding my manners as if in venerable company, mindful of the possibility of a mindless *faux pas*. Alan is crouched down at the opening on the bank, confidently steering a tight loop out over the rising fish. I'm just threading the tip ring, when Alan's rod adopts that graceful curve that means only one thing. He brings in the smart autumn grayling and quickly holds it up, grinning with satisfaction; I oblige with a couple of pictures. Just his second cast...somehow inside me, alarm bells are already ringing. He misses another sharp rise a couple of casts later.

Long campaign

I leave Alan to his fleet of rising fish and Michael kindly shows me some of the river upstream, which he likes. "There's usually fish hereabouts." Michael has some domestic business to attend to, but says he'll be back later on. As he leaves, so begins the long campaign of trying everything under the sun and the destruction of tippets and hope...the more I try, the worse I get. Relaxation sublimates like snow off a dyke, muscles tense; I'm over-thinking this. In truth, I'm not fishing what's before me, bewildered by the topography of four dimensions in a push and pull of unfamiliar flow. Right now, some noisy riffles, pools, glides and seams wouldn't go amiss. I simply don't know how best to fish this water. Alan's into another fish downstream. He's looking everything I'm not today – relaxed and successful.

Non-angling friends would not get all this, not unless they're river geomorphologists, anyway. And even then, they likely wouldn't get the distinctions between rivers and their fish from an angling perspective. The chalk-streams are of a very different cast to the freestone rivers I know and love up north. Except for scale, the brawling salmon-weighted waters of the Tay, Tweed and Annan have much more in common with the tiny East Lothian Tyne, wherein I fish for trout alone, than does this chalk-stream.

There's a mantra in my professional field: *the best geologists have seen the most rocks*. Its a platitude, but true as a general rule. What this really alludes to, of course, is *experience*. Actually, its only true if its more: *learning* from experience. So, assuming we are suitably receptive to their lessons, the more rivers we fish, and the more often we fish, the better we get – *as a general rule* – at least as far as the compass of our capabilities allow. Every river has something to teach us, even those we fish every week of the season. We start to tune to the complexity of currents, the insect life, the tell-tale signs of fish activity, beginning to understand the likely holding places, the subtle patches of aquatic

terrain in which fish can find sufficient shelter from the current, but yet be close to food and well-oxygenated water. Away from the breeding season, piscatorial needs are a simple function of energy budget and security: where can fish find the most food, most easily and with the least risk of predation. Simple needs, but complex solutions, because rivers are complex habitats; so, to paraphrase John Roberts from his classic "To Rise a Trout", fish can crop up almost anywhere. A couple of seasons ago, I was in such a groove on my local river, that I only had to look at a stretch of water to know where the fish were – and to catch them. But that was in another space-time altogether. Here, today, 250 metres of prime Itchen flowing past ancient, holy Winchester have me well and truly foxed. And with the foxing come the tangles, and so it goes on.

Alan comes by. "How's it going?" "Oh, four or five, I think. You?" "Nothing, not a sniff." "Really?" "fraid so..." There's nothing he can say, but he's sympathetic. "I need some lunch" "Good idea" So we stop angling, go back to the bottom of the beat, sit down on some convenient staging and eat. Hot, strong black tea – a cure-all libation on the river bank, I've found – softens frayed ends. We float an optimistically corporate view that things might improve for me after some lunch. They don't – well, not immediately, anyway: because it just is, the river has more humility to extract.

Frustrations

Despite the frustrations, I'm still loving being by this unfamiliar river. I only have myself to blame for my failure – the river owes me nothing – how can it? - but it does *give* plenty. And this is the point: rivers are special – very special. They always give, despite the efforts we make to screw them up. They are – or should be – quite literally the arteries of landscapes. Their connectedness to surrounding land is so intimate that they cannot be separated from it and still function properly (witness as extremes the former London rivers that Charles Rangelley-Wilson has so eloquently written about and you'll know what I mean; some are now mere sewers, sadly confined in concrete and forced to run underground before debouching into the Thames through sluices.) And neither can landscape function without rivers. And we now know thoroughly the consequences of not letting rivers and landscapes function together – recent flooding in numerous parts of England, Wales and Scotland have shown what happens when we mess up river channels, their riparian margins or upper catchments, or stupidly build in the wrong places for mere economic convenience. But there's more than this tight geomorphic coupling, this purely physical



Alan "in the zone"

inter-connectedness that is so sensitive to anthropogenic interventions: rivers are profoundly *spiritual* places too, physical phenomena through which humans can still be in the natural world. Any reading of, say Leeson, McGuane, or Lopez, to name but three, will manifest the veracity of this. Wading is not permitted on the stretch of the Itchen we're fishing. In truth, it might be difficult. There are some deep runs, and the weed would make wading heavy going, resulting in way too much destructive disturbance of sensitive habitat. But I do like being *in* a river where its safe and easy to wade. It increases the sense of connectedness. Fishing my own little river at home, wading through summer twilight above inky water, with various species of bats all around and fish, often the bigger ones, relaxing with the oncoming dark, there's a heightened sense of what's going on around you. Your faculties work harder as the light fades, especially your ears and your peripheral vision. You begin to resonate to a hum you can only intuit, you become part of the soul of the river. Some if not most of my most memorable fishing trips have had the end of their day in deep twilight. You can become so relaxed, you just stop fishing, lay your rod

in your arms and breath that cool earthy air, satiated for a few moments by the river's grace. Small wonder that the wild man of the locust-encrusted desert, John the Baptist, did so for Jesus in a river.

Two more sleek and subtle grayling oblige me by taking the Griffiths Gnat, both the same as the first, and I miss and lose a couple of others. These are not big fish, but they are very beautiful. Late in the session, may be, but, in the end, its enough. What would more fish have given me anyway? Humbled, but I hope I have learned yet more lessons from a river which has, in the end, endowed something akin to a blessing in three silver fishes...to which, amen.

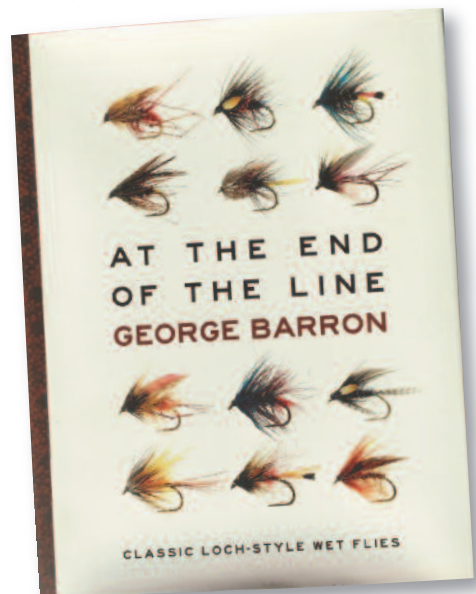
With the light fading, Alan and I call it a day and thank Michael for his company and guidance. Alan's had about ten. I've had three perfect grayling and am recovered to the world of angling; I paid some dues of sorts. So we're both happy. Alan drives all the way back to the Lakes in a one-er, and I drive just a few miles east to see two best friends from university days that started forty years ago. The Itchen's water slips on through the water-meadows into the autumn dusk, grayling nosing upstream into an always new river.

BOOKSHELF



At the End of the Line Classic Loch Style Wet Flies

George Barron



Having known George Barron for a number of years and watched him tying innumerable flies and hearing him talk enthusiastically of his love for the big lakes/ loughs/ llyns I looked forward to the day he would write this book and I have not been disappointed.

The 161 pages are packed with a range of fly dressings, supported by helpful text and plenty of large close up photographs. Many of the patterns are traditional dressings but many others are George's versions of these patterns

which have been tweaked and perfected as a result of many hours afloat.

Following a brief description of his early fishing years George gets straight into his observations on tying styles which have emanated from England, Ireland, Scotland and of course Wales.

He then discusses the naming of various patterns with explanations of how names such as, 'The Blootch', 'Mrs. Malone', 'Bo Diddly' and 'SNOT' originated.

He goes on to describe groups of flies such as Olives, Bumbles, Wee flashers, Dabblers, Hobblers and so on. As one comes to expect from him the flies depicted are neat, well tied and in excellent proportion using almost exclusively natural materials. What is really useful is how he gives tips on the uses for each pattern.

I personally call all these patterns 'proper flies' but I guess that might be because that was all I used, with great success, for many seasons and still do, because they are still excellent fish catchers in this world of Blobs and Boobies.

George writes in a pleasant, un-pretentious, straight forward style and the format of the book is refreshing in style.

George's love of being afloat in a rolling wave on a lough somewhere, trying to tempt wild brown trout, is evident throughout the book. Friendships made and experiences gained whilst fishing Internationally which have greatly influenced his fly patterns. He has been proud to represent his adopted country on many occasions and has long been involved with the Welsh Salmon and Trout Association to promote the sport in Wales.

I enjoyed this book. It has filled me with ideas to fulfil at the tying bench. If you love traditional flies as I do then you will not be disappointed with this book.

The book was published by Reprbrand a company owned by George's son and is available from George direct if you email him at george_barron@btinternet.com. Your copy can be signed and personalised if you wish and will cost £25.

Glyn Williams

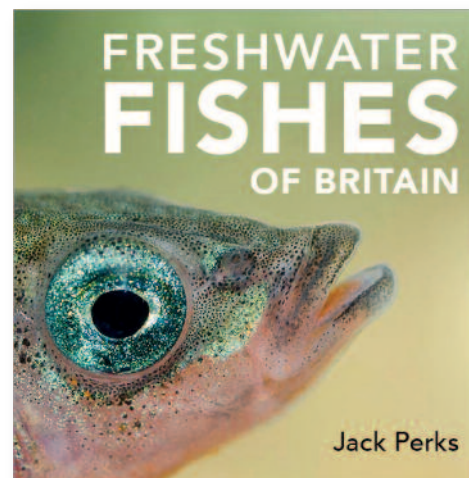
Grayling – Spring 2017

Freshwater Fishes of Britain

Jack Perks

Published by Reed New Holland

Hardback £16.99



The thing that first struck me about this book was the quality of the photography, almost all of which is shot underwater. But I guess I should have expected this given Jack Perk's reputation. Jack has a passion for wildlife and in particular freshwater fish. A few years back he challenged himself to photograph and film all the British freshwater species. An impressive challenge given Jack's other work writing and photographically illustrating articles, contributing to a number of television series,

running photographic workshops and short courses, organising the recent vote for Britain's National Fish (Jack was hoping the Grayling would win) and lecturing at the University of Nottingham. Busy guy.

The book is more of a reference book rather than a field guide. It covers 56 species with each superb photograph supplemented with a general description, maximum length and weight, distinguishing features, breeding and habitat information. It is also peppered with interesting facts, such as why the Tench is sometimes called the 'doctor fish'. You'll have the read it to find out. In the introduction Jack sets out that there maybe some contention over the species included, some not being British and some being sea fish. You can argue these things till the cows come home but drawing a line can often be a difficult task. I think Jack has made an appropriate choice of species and that the book is a useful reference for both naturalists and anglers alike.

This isn't the sort of book you're likely to sit down and read cover to cover, more a coffee table work for dipping into as and when. Jack's writing style is informal and informative and alongside the species guides there are a number of useful pages on such things as 'Fish Twitching', fish terminology, and collective terms for fish plus insight into the background to the book. You'll be pleased to know the Grayling features large in the book, reflecting Jack's love for the ladies.

Kris Kent

The Righyni-Roose Trophy 2017

The theme of this year's Trophy competition is

Fly-Tying

Members are invited to tie three of each of the following three flies, and submit their entries to Rob Hartley, the Society's Chairman, for his adjudication. Entries must reach Rob by **September 1st 2017**.

1. The Ginger Tom
2. The Peek-a-boo Caddis
3. Supa pupa (original or Christian Mohr variant)



All tyings are to be found in "Grayling Flies" by Steve Skuce, and on YouTube, where the American tyer, John Zimmerman, has recorded videos of all Steve's patterns. Other sources may, of course, be used.

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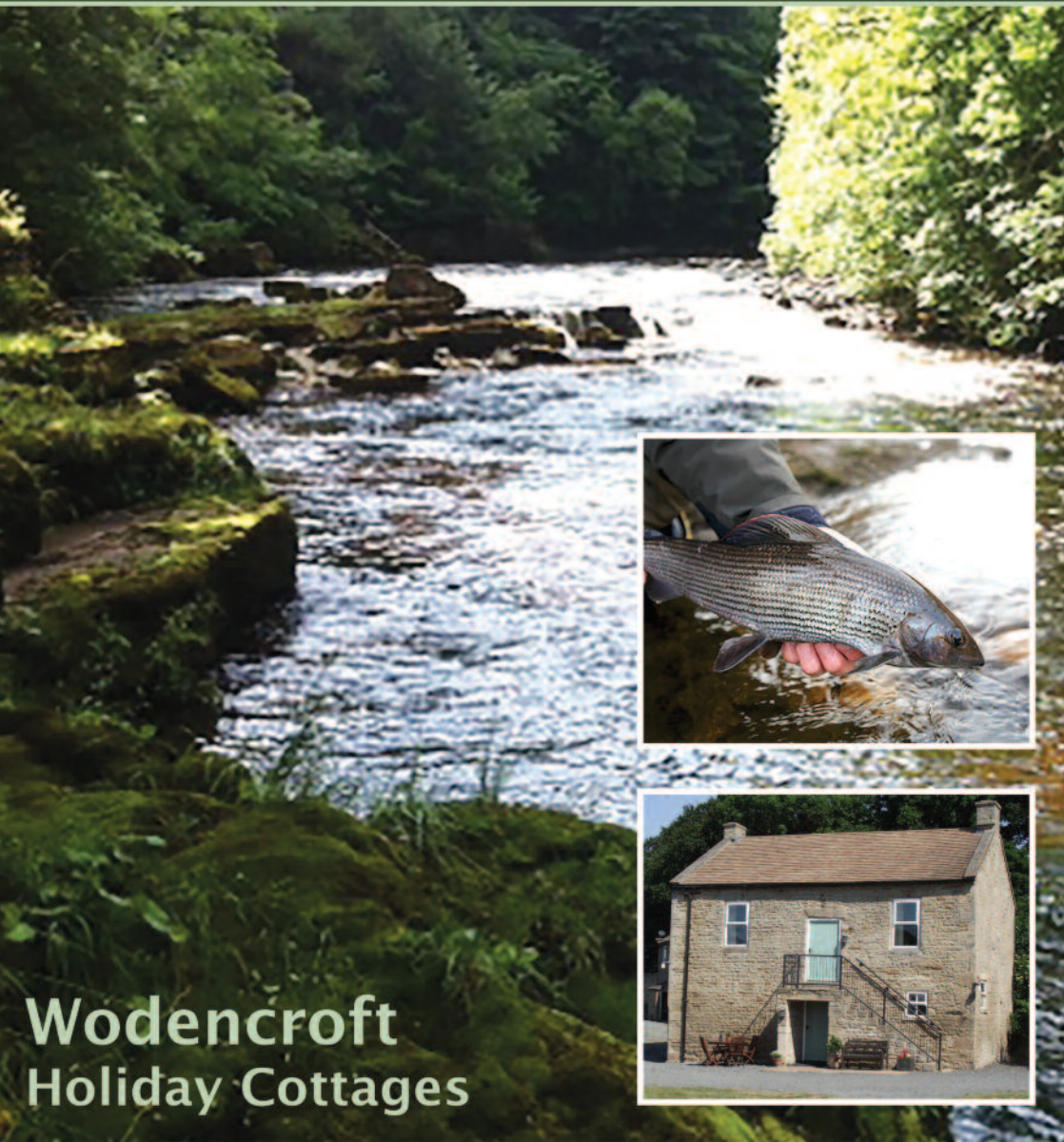
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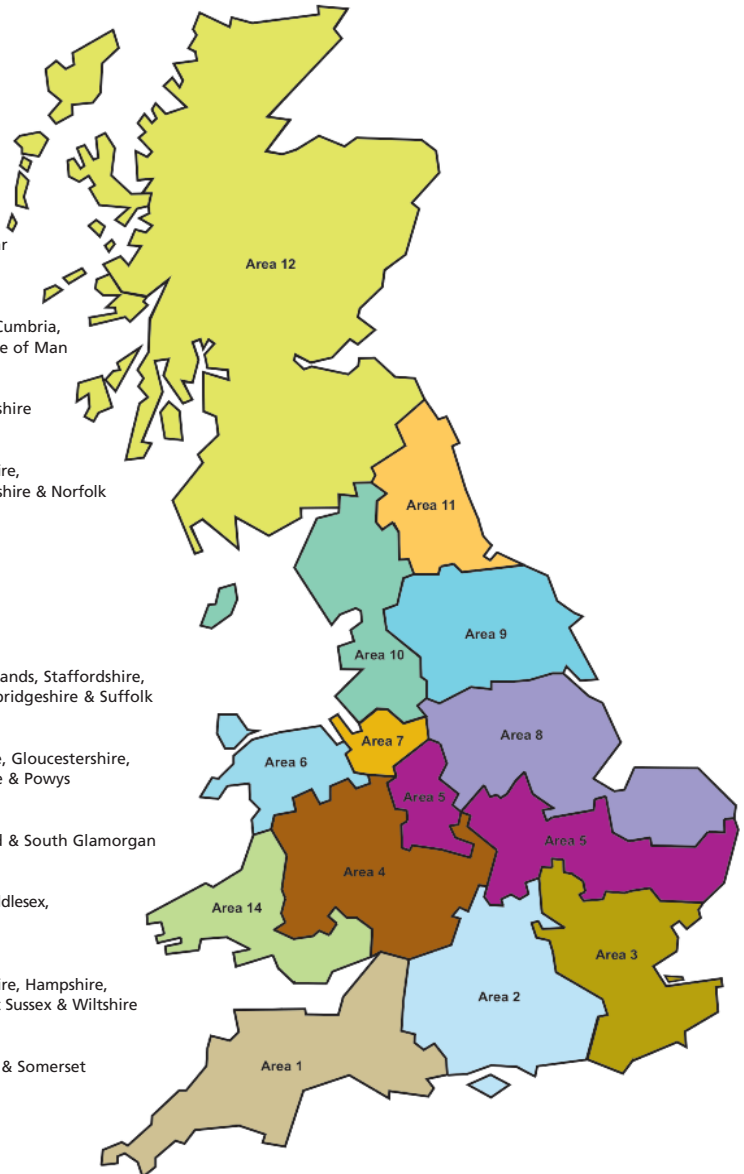
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ARTICLES WANTED

There is always a need for material for the Society's publications, both the Newsletter and the Journal. The editor will welcome anything that relates to your experiences of grayling and their habitats. Words or pictures are welcome, concerning places fished, new or familiar flies tied and used, tales of anglers from the past, or your own observations on grayling and grayling fishing in general.

Contact the Editor, Bob Male, by any means you wish. All contributions are gratefully received.



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