

The Flydressers Guild

Sussex Branch



Newsletter

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or on Youtube

Remember the new 2021/22 session starts on September 9th at Clayton Village Hall, Underhill Lane, Clayton BN6 9PJ at 1930.

Chairman's Chat



Collapsed Weir during Fish Pass Construction

In the past I have asked graduates how a structure is to be built, given my projects are usually in the middle of rivers and sometimes in the sea; the reply has often been "it is down to the contractor" – see above. Unfortunately degree courses for civil engineers are often taught by academics who have no construction experience themselves and hence design and site supervision is frequently unsatisfactory as far as construction goes. You may remember one of my previous Chats where a Client's Engineer removed the concrete shown on the drawings supporting large rocks with devastating results (the Whale Pass) There is nothing like being deeply involved in site construction to gain experience to improve design.

As you may be able to see from the photograph the weir was built of clay with a timber sheet pile core, the whole structure was then clad in stone. It did not help that the weir was over 100 years old. Hopefully lesson learned and the contractor and designer had adequate insurance !

Tony

An interesting article from our man in France - Terry Tullett

Some of you will be familiar with my clubs winter fishing arrangements from an earlier article I wrote, but for those that aren't it's as follows. My fly fishing club here in Normandie, "Le Truite Cauchois", is a small club with just 30 members. From the 1/10 to 31/03 each year we rent a large, horse shoe shaped, crystal clear lake which is stocked in October and January with mainly rainbow trout up to 5lb. Rules are fly fishing only, single fly, Oct/Nov/Jan/Feb catch and release, Dec/Mar one fish per visit. Last weekend in March any method is allowed and 5 fish per visit. There is no limit on the number of visits and the total cost for the 6 months, this is were you need to be seated, is 30 euros, around £26. So the last weekend in March was close and I had a call from Manu, a friend, who said did I want to meet him at the lake on Saturday morning around 08h00 to try a different method of fishing, he would supply all the gear. So I arrived on the Saturday and Manu had set up to light spinning rods as follows; main line, swivel, 2 ft of leader with a small weight threaded on via an eye so that it could slide along the leader ,another swivel as a stop, 2ft of leader and a small ,barbed hook baited with a small piece of mackerel. At this point several fish could be seen rising. So I cast out and within minutes a fish was on and landed. I repeated this 4 times, exactly the same method. 20 mins and my 5 fish in the bag, would have been quicker if the fish hadn't hammered the bait making it difficult to remove the hook. No real skill required and not a style of fishing I would use regularly, but as an experience quite amazing. If I

hadn't been there and seen it myself I wouldn't have believed the success rate. Probably not something to be tried at Chalk Springs!!!

The Club Auction

Alan Wells has been talking with Tony Harrison to see what the situation was with the Lots held over from the last auction that had to be cancelled due the Corvid isolation rules.

With the isolation rules now relaxed, the club is looking to restarting the auction. Basically, the Auction is ready to go with a few issues.

1. It is very unlikely that we will do it in this autumn.
2. We need to get a **venue** sorted for the Spring.
3. We need to check that all vendors items are still for sale. So if you are vendor with items for the Auction please let Alan know as soon as possible.

For those members who have volunteered to help with the auction, thank you, no doubt Alan will be in contact with you in due course.

Book Report No 2 and Observations by David Constable

Thankfully 2020 is behind us and a vaccine has been found so hopefully the future will be brighter. Am still waiting for heart surgery due to COVID but have had some stents to keep me going so onwards and upwards.

The book reading continues and so thought I would put pen to paper again regarding a few titles that have particularly struck a chord with me.

The date range of these books are from 1915 to 2020, interestingly there are a lot of similarities and a lot for us to consider and learn. So often we read one of the monthly fishing magazines and in there pages we are drawn to a new killer fly only to find that it was tied many years ago and forgotten about.

Please note where parts are written in *italics* they are the words of the various authors.

Fly-Fishing Some New Arts and Mysteries

J. C. Mottram.

Originally published 1915

The Flyfisher's Classic Library Edition 1994

You would be forgiven if you looked at the publication date of the Flyfishers edition thinking this was a modern book rather than a hundred years old. There are twenty-four chapters covering many topics about fly-fishing and each one is asking you to consider your actions and use of perhaps your rod as to the best way to secure a fish, often backed up by simple diagrams and notes to why there is another way to consider your fishing.

Mottram who was a research scientist was a great exponent of tying flies by the water side, partly because he might not have the pattern and to give the fish a rest, he devotes a chapter to waterside tying and the small amount of kit required to give you many options.

He would take into account the trout's window of vision, as to his approach to the river side and where to cast to a stalked fish to present the fly in the best method. He would quietly approach his prey and regularly considered what a trout could see and modified his cast accordingly, like Skues he regularly cast sideways so the fish did not see the rod and recommended rods were oiled not varnished so they did not flash as they were cast.

Mottram studied the eyes of humans and fish and came to the conclusion there were a number of similarities and fish can see colour. However, he reminds the reader that if you are looking from water into a bright sky the fish sees a black silhouette and certain parts of a fly is translucent and therefore either a much lighter material should be tied in these areas or nothing at all!!

Mottram never left detailed tying dressings often only stating for instance the following for one of his reed smuts: -

Abdomen.....1. Back ostrich herl.

Thorax.....2. Black wool.

Hackle.....3. White.

As you can see no mention of hooks or thread or indeed what bird the white hackle came from, the reason was simply he wanted the fisherman to experiment and not be tied to a rigid dressing. Only twice did he specify a hook type and size. Interestingly he rarely advocated the use wings on his patterns as they were difficult to tie and in his opinion they were best left off, not advice often followed.

He was extremely pleased to experiment with alternative materials and experimented with them as to how they would float or sink and behave in water. For his Fry Fly he refers to *small pieces of brown down from a turkey* which we know as marabou and follows on to add *the white down from a seagull*. Mottram considered this fly to emulate a small fish quivering and swimming against the current.

Mottram devotes a whole chapter to Gut Casts as he considers they are most critical to successful catching and landing trout and discusses colour, he preferred clear as he felt coloured showed a greater shadow on the riverbed. He goes into great detail as to lengths of casts according to wind, river and bank position. The detail is also extended to diameter of casts to size of fish and water conditions that will affect diameter used as to the success of landing a fish.

Chapter XXII is headed Nymphs and Bulgers, a most interesting chapter as Mottram liked fishing and experimenting subsurface, however, in the *The Nymph*

Debate on 10 February 1938 at the FlyFishers Club, he rather turned tail and backed down much to the annoyance of Skues, from then on, he became a dry fly man to stay in favour. At the end of this chapter, he writes: -

In conclusion, the following policy may be suggested:

1. *For a rising fish, that is, one taking floating duns, use a dry fly.*

2. *For a dimpling fish, that is, one taking nymph resting just below the surface of the water, use the resting-nymph lure (Fig. 1).*

3. *For a bulging fish, that is, one taking nymphs whilst they are swimming to the surface, use the swimming-nymph lure (Fig. 2).*

It is most interesting Mottram refers to nymphs as lures!!

Flies of the Future

The Trout Fly Patterns of Dr J. C. Mottram

Timothy Benn

October 2020, Creel Press

The title describes exactly what the book does you have chapter XIII of Mottram's book brought to life in text and photographs with 17 dry flies, nymphs and wet flies tied by John Smith.

The book is a dedication to Mottram and pulling together information from a number of sources about the man and his passion for scientific detail. The flies were first published by Mottram in *The Field* between 1912 and 1914 and in his book, detailed above. On page 97 John Smith tier of the fly's created a chart of the modern hooks and sizes that most likely matched the hooks Mottram would have used. They are a mixture of Tiemco and Kamasan sizes 10 for the Alevin fly and Fry fly down to size 20, mainly 16's to 20's.

The flies are exquisitely tied and gives you a real feel of what the man was about, and as will seen from other notes in this article they are much more suggestive and smaller than perhaps we have become used to tying.

For further details please see the winter edition 2020 of *Flydresser* there are only 15 copies of each printed, so it is very much first come first served basis.



Sunshine and the Dry Fly

J. W. Dunne

Originally published 1924

2nd Edition 1950

This is one of those books you might chance across in a bookshop and put back on the shelf, I was very lucky and got mine for £10.00 however, I have seen them for sale as high as £75.00. This is quite a small book with just twelve chapters and two appendices however, each word counts and makes a very interesting read. What comes across as in the book above and comments from Skues is the negative press given to Halford and the number of flies he did not entertain.

Like Mottram he was a thinking fisher and tier of flies. He again realised that flies need to have a translucency to be more like the real thing, to this end the majority of his patterns had white hooks!! He writes: - *I dipped the shank of the hook into a tin of quick-drying white enamel and stuck the hook upright in a cake of soap to dry. Then I covered it with the proper thickness of artificial silk and touched the result with oil.*

The results was described by Dunne as: - *to all appearance a shining mass of delicate, translucent colour.....this hook had apparently dissolved into the mist, and the light seemed to be coming through, without any unnatural, in-organic hindrance, right from the far side.*

You may ask why the oil? Something else Dunne realised was the newly tied fly on the bench changed colour in the water and therefore he strove to tie his flies that simulated the colour of the fly when it was in the water, in other words he knew they would darken and allowed for it in his choice of materials.

Dunne would regularly go to the river to net and bottle flies to take home and experiment with various tieings until he was satisfied with the results. Again, studying the tied result with the original and looking at the respective translucency, from these experiments he realised that less fly's need to be carried as colour was less of a factor, but shape must be correct.

Unlike Mottram his dressings were more detailed however, he had his own system for labelling tying silk so you will see M. 2. From his colour card, (not in the book) Hackles were again tricky as he wrote: - *Maximum width across shank, 1 ¼ inches. Six turns of Q, behind six turns of G 1.* Now I am extremely lucky because the original owner of my copy got feathers of each type and sellotaped them into the front and back of the book and correspondingly labelled all the feathers with the requisite letters.

Here again we have a fisherman and fly tier who enjoyed understanding the fly life and river life just as much as catching the fish.

A Modern Dry-Fly Code
Vincent Marinaro
Originally published 1950
The Flyfisher's Classic Library Edition 1996

This is a book that is more difficult to get into as in my opinion it is rather worded. That said there are some very interesting parts, it mainly focuses on the dry fly and in particular eight in particular three of which are the Dun and Spinner variants including the time and weather conditions that are best. Although there are not any meaningful pictures there are many line drawings in the margins to back up what is written, a lot of which are most interesting and re-enforce the written word.

This is very much an American writer writing about his waters; however, the second chapter discusses the English chalk streams and mentions a number of the dry fly great's. Often throughout the book a comparison is made to re-enforce the readers understanding. The sobering upshot is that Marinaro talks as much about his failure to catch trout as to landing them, something many of us can empathise with and perhaps motivate us to try harder.

There are a number of points that do come out throughout the book such as having a knowledge of the water temperature as this can affect what may be hatching at a particular time of year or day.

Another few points that start coming up in particular in the last two chapters is more successes on rivers are by going smaller with the fly's 18 – 22 which also goes with using lighter tippetts and therefore playing the fish more carefully.

When tying fly's having viced the hook Marinaro always sharpens the hook and rotates the vice to ensure he sharpens all around. This may of course be before chemically sharpened hooks.

Marinaro sets great store by ensuring his dry flies have tails as he considers that they can help the fly to float correctly but also can save a bad cast / presentation as the fly will float correctly.



What Trout Want
The Educated Trout and Other Myths
Bob Wyatt
2013 published by Stackpole Books

This is a very common-sense book covering a wide range of fishing and fly-tying points. Like Mottram and Dunne Wyatt advocates tying flies that cover a range of insects so you can carry less and have more chances of fooling fish. Wyatt's ethos is quite simple, *to concentrate on what I consider the really critical and enjoyable part of fly fishing: understanding trout behaviour, hunting, and presentation.*

The book consists of two parts, part one: A Beautiful Fiction, in which there are seven chapters. Basically, dispelling myths and explain the reasons and experiences behind fly design and fishing. Part two: Presentation in which there are three chapters. This is very much about presentation.

Less is more! Wyatt points out there are two strategies open to anglers: *you can carry several boxes stuffed with dozens of different patterns and hope you choose the right one when you need it, or you can carry one or two boxes stuffed with just a few patterns in different sizes-and you know they will cover nearly any situation you're likely to encounter.*

The final note is entitled "To a Young Presentationist" which is full of tips for the young angler however, I might suggest some of us less frequent anglers can benefit from the tips, for instance so many anglers consider distance to be the goal. Well, that's not Wyatt is advocating, and I quote, *this means that a lot a good deal of that lawn castings should consist of practicing sidearm cast, water (grass) hauls, roll casts and roll pickups. It would make more sense to practice on rough, scrubby ground with plenty of bushes, in the wind, as well as on running water.*

A book packed with quality guidance and many anecdotes, Wyatt is an Englishman and has lived and fished all over the world, and currently lives in New Zealand.

Simple Flies
52 Easy-to-Tie Patterns that Catch Fish
Morgan Lyle
2015 published by Stackpole Books

This paperback is an extremely good little book in that it gets straight to the point, covering six chapters. The opening chapter starts with a quote "*Mixtures of science and art have produced ten thousand pretty flies we don't need.*" Datus C. Proper, *What the Trout Said*

The second chapter describes the Tools, Materials and Techniques required for tying the flies in the book. The following four chapters cover Wet Flies, Nymphs, Dry Flies and Steamers, all simple. Each fly has an historical note, together with tying tips, followed by the dressing and well photographed tying instructions. Each chapter also includes fishing techniques by

knowledgeable fisherman. In a couple of the chapters Tenkara is also discussed.

The dry fly chapter was written by Bob Wyatt and shows a number of his patterns that are not in his book

**Single-Handed Spey Casting
Solutions to Casts, Obstructions, Tight Spots and
Other Casting Challenges of Real-Life Fishing
Simon Gawesworth
2010 published by Stackpole Books**

This book is a recommendation from Bob Wyatt, in truth I consider the title to be misleading to those of us that wish to cast a fly line to trout. Again, it is written by an Englishman, who has been capped for England and fished all over the world and now resides in America. There are just six sections, **The Basics of Fly Casting, Problems Behind, Problems in Front, Combined Problems, Adding Distance, Tackle.**

There are many line drawings to visually show what the text is explaining and many progressive photographs with captions as part of the explanation. This book not only shows you how to undertake the many techniques, but also explains why things can go wrong and what to watch out for.

Notes

In another book on fishing, I read a fisherman would regularly look over the fence at his neighbours Koi pond to see what depth the fish were swimming to gauge the depth he should fish. This set me thinking as I also have a Koi pond at its deepest six foot. In the depths of winter and in the hottest part of the day in the summer they are near the bottom, in spring, autumn and warmer days they are higher even very close to the surface. Many authors refer to the fisherman scaring the fish walking up to the bank, I can tell you whether I am wearing heavy or light shoes the fish congregate where they are going to be fed, so believe me when I say fish can hear or feel you walking up to twenty feet away. Another interesting observation is when they feed as I give a mixture of floating and sinking feed, the same ones come up and the same ones stay near the bottom. I have one that I call the submarine as he lives in the six-foot-deep section, at feeding time all off a sudden he darts up to the three-foot section to eat sinking food and disappears again.

Some of the Stackpole Books are available from Quiller Publishing. Some you will have to hunt for.

Questions

I have included a couple of questions so I might learn, and I am sure so will a few of our less experienced members would also welcome the information.

Am happy for you to email me your answers to dc@constablespublishing.com or telephone 07740 407998 and create a short article for the newsletter.

Do many of you use a thermometer when on the water and if so, what make have you found to be the most reliable?

Do many of you sharpen hooks and if so what stones or sharpening devices do you use?

When reading older books 1900 – to say 1950, one comes across hook sizes 0 – 00 – 000 and No. 1 – No. 7, does any body know what these would equate to in today's sizes? This could be very interesting when trying to replicate some of the old patterns.

Tight lines

David

