FLY DRESSER
THE JOURNAL OF THE FLY DRESSERS’ GUILD

SPRING 2012
CONTENTS

Editorial  *Chris Knowles*  .................. 3

Life Membership  ..................... 4

Annual Raffle  ..................... 5

The John Watts Trophy  ..................... 6

Terry Griffiths - *A Personal Appreciation by Paul Little*  ..................... 7

Larvae & Pupae of the Sedges  *John Goddard*  .. 9

Reservoir Reflections  *Ian Ruff*  ..................... 16

The 4-Bead Corixa  *Phil Bilbrough*  ..................... 22

The Fly Dressers’ Guild Questionnaire  ..................... 26

Derek Bradbury - *A Personal Appreciation by Charles Jardine*  ..................... 29

Derek Bradbury - Fly-Angler, Fly-Dresser, Artist, & Angling Writer  *Chris Watson*  ..................... 35

Cover: A big brown trout that succumbed to a Ghost Pupa, being played on the little Dever. Photo: John Goddard.
E D I T O R I A L

As you know from the Winter Flydresser, there is now an Editorial Team overseeing the publication of your magazine - Chris Knowles (Acting Editor), Pat Camber (Advertising and Marketing), Charles Jardine (FDG Chairman), Chris Reeves (FDG Secretary).

We have been delighted by the response from FDG members, who have come forward with articles and photographs or offers of helping with photography. We have also received a number of observations on previous issues which have been very helpful. Please keep them coming!

We do ask you to bear in mind that the Editorial Team has started from scratch and may not get everything right first time! We appreciate your critical comments, but also value your support.

Chris Reeves has also been delighted with the response to the questionnaire. Over 300 were received.

We have tried to make Stillwater Patterns the focus of this edition, although not all articles reflect that theme. We are particularly honoured and delighted to have a contribution from distinguished Vice-President John Goddard. And it is right and proper that this edition includes an appreciation of former editor Terry Griffiths. Future editions in 2012 will be themed as follows: Summer - Competition fly-tying; Autumn - Grayling.

In future we hope to have two step-by-step patterns per issue - one advanced and one less so! If you have particular requests - a pattern or a technique - please let me know.

Whether you are a potential new contributor or an experienced one, the Editor would like to send you some guidelines for format and spelling - in order to establish our own FDG house style and ensure consistency. This should make the whole publishing process a lot easier.

As we go to press, it is my sad duty to report the deaths of two long-standing FDG members, Tony Shuffrey and Mike Martin. Our thoughts go out to their families.

Chris Knowles
Branch Line & Mono Rail

Life Membership Offer

In order to provide the Guild with sufficient funds to promote future events and actively recruit new members, the Executive Committee have decided to offer 30 life memberships in a “one time” offer.

In the interests of fairness we are advertising this offer in this issue of the magazine, so that all members have an equal chance of taking advantage of the opportunity.

If there are more than 30 members wishing to subscribe, a draw will be made and the first 30 names drawn will become life members.

The cost of life membership will be £320 which equates to 16 years’ subscriptions at the September 2012 rate.

Payment may be made in one lump sum or in 4 equal monthly instalments of £80 (please date cheques 1st April 2012, 1st May 2012, 1st June 2012, 1st July 2012.)

In order to take part in this offer, please send your cheques together with your name and membership number to the Membership Secretary Malcolm Price, 23 Smithson Close, Poole, Dorset BH12 5EY.

The envelope should be clearly marked “FDG life membership”. The closing date for entry to this offer is 1st May 2012. The following day the Treasurer will draw 30 envelopes and open them.

The 30 lucky members will be notified that they have received Life Membership and people who did not receive life membership will be sent their cheques back as soon as practicable.

Any queries regarding this offer may be directed to the General Secretary, Chris Reeves, at secretary@flydressersguild.org
Annual Raffle

In with your copy of the *Flydresser* you should have some raffle tickets for our annual draw. These are a key source of funds for the Guild, so please buy lots! We have loads of great prizes - vices, rods, a day’s fishing day and lots of flies. To purchase the tickets please complete the stubs together with a cheque payable to The Fly Dressers’ Guild and return them to me at:

*Richard Ellis, The Belfry, Monks Walk, Ascot SL5 9AZ*

If you need more tickets, just send a cheque to the above address and I will send you the required number.

*Richard Ellis*
Member2@flydressersguild.org

*Please note tickets are not for sale to or by persons under sixteen years old.*
John Watts Trophy 2012

The John Watts is the annual FDG inter-branch fishing competition and additionally
is open to teams of any four members of the FDG. Each branch may enter up to 2
teams of 4 members.

Non-branch teams can be composed of branch or non-branch members. All com-
petitors must be current paid up members of the Guild.

This will be the 37th year of the Competition and will end with a buffet and prize-
giving in the lodge.

The competition is fished from boats to fishery rules, the winners being the team
landing the most fish on the day. In the event of a tie in the number of fish landed,
the team with the heaviest weight of fish will be the winners. The first and second
teamsplus the anglers with the heaviest bag and the heaviest fish on the day will
be presented with annual trophies to be held for one year.

The concept of this competition is for Guild members to have an opportunity to
get together for a day out and meet members from other branches and parts of the
country and renew acquaintances made in previous years.

2012 COMPETITION DATE, COST AND ENTRY DETAILS

* The 2012 John Watts Trophy will be fished at GRAFHAM WATER on Saturday
25th August 2012.
* The cost of entry is £160.00 per team of four Guild members (£40 per team
member). Cheques should be made payable to The Fly Dressers’ Guild.
* The number of entries is restricted to 20 teams.
* Entry forms are available from the website or directly from the secretary.
* Entries will be accepted on a first-come first-served basis. Please send entries
and cheques to the Secretary before the closing date of 1st August 2012.
* A full list of rules is available from Chris Reeves, General Secretary, The Fly
Dressers’ Guild, 2 Briar Close, West Byfleet, Surrey, KT14 6QF

Please make cheques payable to The Fly Dressers’ Guild.

Trophy holders:
Will holders of the annual trophies from last year please contact the
General Secretary to arrange collection before 1st August 2012 or confirm
that they will bring them to Grafham Water on the day?
Terry Griffiths
A PERSONAL APPRECIATION

Paul Little
The biggest question from a personal point of view in writing this appreciation is, as the saying goes, "Where do I begin?"

Without question it is my friendship with Terry that transcends everything else: the skills in photography, fishing and fly-dressing pale into insignificance to the friendship. I always remember the day when we were carp fishing (I think it was Gold Valley) with Terry, when he was asked for his fishing permit and, after producing it, the warden asked, "Has your son got a permit?"! From that moment onwards I have, with great affection, called him "Pop" and he has called me "Son".

However, it is for his contribution to fly-dressing and especially *Flydresser* that Terry will be appreciated in the world of fly-fishing and fly-tying. His knowledge is unbounded in this field and is only superseded by his infectious enthusiasm to disseminate many of his own skills for the benefit of others, especially through *Flydresser*. Terry’s introduction of high-quality sequence photographs showing each stage of a fly was a revelation for the magazine, leaving few stones unturned for the tier. Procuring articles for the magazine is a thankless task which he always found hard to accept. I am only too pleased to have made a small contribution - it has taught me a great deal.

Without exception Terry has always looked at fly-dressing (he prefers the word tying) from a fishing point of view and not as a craft on its own. We have had many a discussion on this one, I can tell you. To be forthright in his opinions, each supported by logical reasoning, is one of his qualities, a great battleground to be involved in. With Terry’s many friends worldwide in the craft of fly-dressing, he has been able to obtain articles from some of the greats; Marvin Nolte, Preben Thorp Jacobsen and René Harrop to name but a few. Terry’s last work *The Essential Kelson* in conjunction with Marvin Nolte and Paul Morgan was one of his finest projects. It unravelled some of the mysteries of George Mortimer Kelson and, as a salmon fly-dresser, this has been a godsend. Always on hand to give advice on any aspect of fly-dressing, Terry has made many friends in the fly-tying world and his talents as an editor will be sorely missed in the future. He will no doubt be ever present at the major events which are a boost for all fly-dressers.

So, Pop, you will be sorely missed from the pages of *Flydresser*, knowing that it is not your hand that crafted the pages will be difficult to accept, but I am ever hopeful that *Flydresser* will continue for the benefit of the Guild members.

*Editor’s note: We wish Terry a speedy and full recovery from the stroke he suffered back in the Autumn which contributed to him standing down as editor . . . and I will try to live up to the high standard he has set!*
Larvae & Pupae of the Sedges

Words and pictures by John Goddard
In recent years we have seen a dramatic decline in the fly life in many of our rivers, particularly on most of our chalk streams in the South of England. For centuries the mainstay of all our fly-fishing has been presented by the many different species of Ephemeroptera, the upwinged flies which have provided us with excellent dry-fly fishing on most of our streams or wet-fly on others. Unfortunately, it is this Order of flies that have been affected more so than any others by some form or even forms of pollution that to date, despite all the research that is being carried out, still remains unsolved. Apart from dry- or wet-fly fishing we have also relied upon this Order to provide the bulk of the food beneath the surface on which the trout feed - in the form of the nymphs of the many different Families and Species in this group, which, of course, means that nymph fishing as we have known it in the past is now less effective later in the season.

Now, what alternatives do we have? The answer is: not a lot! Alder larvae are found in some rivers, but only early in the season, dragonfly and damsel nymphs are of little interest to river fishers, freshwater shrimps are found in many rivers and shrimp patterns can often be very effective, as are stonefly nymphs which are found in many stony rivers in the North. Also of course various small species of Chironomidae are also common on many of our rivers. The only other Order of insects that provide a lot of the food for trout feeding below the surface are the larvae and pupae of
the sedge or caddis flies as they are also known. As this is a very large group containing nearly 200 different species in the UK, many are very common and widespread and are found in most rivers throughout the season, so must provide a good alternative. These have also been affected by pollution and, although we now seldom see the huge hatches that occurred in the past, they do seem less affected than the nymphs of the upwinged flies. So, maybe we should now consider more on fishing patterns to represent caddis pupae and larvae than on nymph patterns of the upwinged flies.

While there are many different patterns of these now available, they have never been as popular with the average fly fisher as most of the standard nymph patterns, although in recent years the Czech method of nymph fishing which uses a heavily weighted caddis pupa pattern has proved very effective and has become very popular.

During last season and the latter part of this, I have been experimenting with two little-known caddis patterns which seem to be very effective, as both have now produced some big brown trout and also some large grayling. I have also found that one of my standard patterns seems to be increasingly effective and over the past season has accounted for a lot of trout and even more grayling. This is the Tungsten Glister Green. Now while there are some free-swimming non-case-making caddis larva, most species form cases from all sorts of material to be found on the river bed, but the most favoured materials are either gravel, vegetable debris or cut sections of weed, so this pattern was originally developed to represent many of the caddis that form their cases from the latter two materials. I dress this on long-shank hooks size 16 with the two of the smaller sizes of Black or Silver Tungsten beads for shallow water or for deeper water on size 14 long-shank hooks with corresponding heavier beads depending on the depth.

The other larva pattern I am now using which seems to be very effective where I find trout or grayling in deeper water is a pattern that I have modified and call a Gravel Pupa which is based on only two other similar patterns I have been able to trace. The first is a pattern developed by Richard Walker called a Sand Caddis which he developed for use in stillwater in the early seventies which was closely followed with a pattern called a Gravel Caddis which was developed by my old friend Taff Price in the mid seventies for river fishing, which had a body formed from large pieces of gravel. I dress my pattern which I call a
Gravel Larva with very small pieces of gravel and also mount a Tungsten bead behind the eye to give it extra weight. The size of the bead depends upon the depth of water I am fishing as I find this pattern is most effective when trundled along the river bed.

In addition to the above two patterns I have also been using a pattern to represent the pupae that has also proved to be very effective. This is a pattern that I developed during the first year of the new millennium which I called The Ghost Pupa and is a modified version of a very popular American pattern that was developed back in the early eighties by that doyen of American fly-fishers Gary LaFontaine which he called the Sparkle Pupa, full details of which are given in his book Caddis Flies published in 1981.

He dresses this in a variety of body colours in both weighted and unweighted versions. This caused quite a sensation when it was first launched, as it was the first pattern ever produced to imitate caddis pupae swimming to the surface enveloped in its semi-transparent pupal case filled with air or gas through which the body colour often showed. He achieved this by wrapping Du Pont’s Antron yarn (which is translucent) around the body through which the body colour showed when wet. This proved to be a very killing pattern and is still one of the only successful pupa patterns still widely used in the USA to represent this stage in the life of the natural pupa. At the time I endeavoured to dress some of these, but, as I was unsuccessful in obtaining any of the Antron yarn that he specified or any similar material, I eventually gave up. However, during 2001, I was dressing a bonefish pattern.
called a Gotcha which uses a blond coloured material for the wing made from some form of rug wool called Fly Fur. This is wonderfully translucent and it was then that I realised that this would at long last provide a substitute for the Antron yarn for LaFontaine’s Sparkle Pupa. His dressing of ten different stages proved a little complicated and time-consuming, so, after much experimentation, I modified this rather drastically. I now dress this with a cylindrical body of Antron Body Yarn in either Orange Green or Grey. I then secure a bunch of the Fly Fur at the right side of the eye of the hook and wrap this around the body over the bend of the hook and secure the other end at the left side of the eye. This I feel gives a better silhouette to the pattern than the way LaFontaine suggests, where he secures his material at the bend and takes it up each side and secures at the eye.

I then tie in three or four pheasant tail fibres at the eye sloping back over the top to represent the antennae of the natural, and then finally tie in a small beard of speckled partridge underneath the eye. This Ghost Pupa pattern is simple and quick to dress and has proved to be very effective. I dress this both weighted and unweighted, and for the weighted pattern I wrap some lead wire around the shank of the hook before tying in the body. I fish the unweighted pattern on the dead drift just below the surface, but the weighted pattern I fish in a similar manner to most weighted nymph patterns including the two larva patterns mentioned above by presenting them to individual fish I can see either on the dead drift or, when this fails, I will try to attract the fish with
an induced take. When I cannot see the fish clearly, I grease the cast and watch this for any indication of a take. Unfortunately, the company making the Fly Fur in the States has now gone out of business, so it is no longer available. Fortunately, I have now found a good substitute which is a new material obtainable through Veniards called Polar Fibre. This they are marketing in a range of colours and the blond colour you will need is listed as Shrimp.

**Dressings**

**Gravel Larva**

**Hook:** Wide Gape L/S D/E #12-16.

**Silk:** Brown.

**Body:** Dubbed hare’s ear.

**Overbody:** Very fine pieces of gravel glued over body.

**Hackle:** Two or three turns of grizzle hackle behind bead.

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**Tungsten Glister Green**

**Hook:** Wide gape L/S D/E #12 - 16.

**Silk:** Brown.

**Head:** Black or silver tungsten bead.

**Rib:** Fine gold tinsel

Veniards No.14.

**Body:** Dubbed hare’s ear.

**Overbody:** Veniards Glister Gold Olive.
LARVAE & PUPAE OF THE SEDGES

Ghost Pupa

**Hook:** Medium L/S D/E #10 - 14.
**Silk:** As body colour.
**Body:** Olive, orange or grey Antron.
**Body:** Wool.

**Pupal Case:** Veniards polar fur-Shrimp (Blond).
**Antennae:** Two or three pheasant tail fibres.
**Beard:** A bunch of speckled partridge.
Reservoir Reflections

Ian Ruff

The Raider series as devised and tied by Ian Ruff. Photo by Richard Ellis.

My first experiences of stillwater trout fishing were in the mid 70s at picturesque Pitsford Reservoir, nestling in the rolling ironstone hills of Northamptonshire. The gin-clear water was well stocked with rainbows of around 1lb and a small number of similar browns. Occasionally a 3lb or larger grown-on trout would be caught. Being such a valued prize it would
be the envy of any nearby bank angler. There were no pike there then, the
tROUT shared the luxurious weedbeds and crystal-clear water with shoals of
the most beautiful golden rudd. I used to keep detailed records of my suc-
cesses and failures in a diary, especially details of techniques employed by
more successful anglers than myself, in an effort to improve my own abilities.
FLY DRESSER

I recall an evening bank-fishing in the Walgrave Arm (no longer available to anglers, as it is now a dedicated Nature Reserve). Not only was I lucky enough to have caught 4 rainbows including one of 3lb, but I also caught and released two fabulous golden rudd, both over 3lb. Both fish took a greased up Tasler fly, an early emerger pattern first used by Hector Woolnough at that time. A floating weedcutter was employed at that time to keep some areas of bank open to the bank angler, as weed growth was so prolific - a truly magical era with phenomenal hatches of sedge, buzzer, olives, damsels and literally snowstorms of caenis.

When I started to fish Grafham Water, having begun my apprenticeship at Pitsford, I found the fish a little more difficult to locate at first. Unlike Pitsford’s bottom of gravel and ironstone shale, Grafham’s bottom is predominantly clay, and mud slicks can occur with quite moderate winds, affecting the feeding areas of shallow feeding trout. Grafham is a much wider and therefore more vulnerable expanse of water, where large waves can build up quite rapidly. Owing to the topography of the reservoir, many points were created when the valley was originally flooded, which allowed the bank angler to fish in deeper water in bright conditions. Most of these points were tipped with a few large tree stumps felled prior to flooding. Once those natural defences disappeared because of ferocious wave action, banks receded many yards each winter, particularly on the north bank. Anglian Water have made exhaustive efforts to face vulnerable banks with rocks, many in cages, to stem the alarming rate of bank erosion.

I was lucky enough to meet and be helped by many superb bank anglers when I first started fishing there, some of whom have become legends in reservoir angling. John Wadham, the late Arthur Cove and Peter Whittamore and many others were so willing to share their expertise.

The fishing season in that era did not start until the third weekend in April and finished on the third weekend in October. Huge smoke-like clouds of chironomids would hang around hedgerows, continually buzzing from May onwards. From around the third week in June, with favourable weather, vast swarms of sedge would dance in mating circles in the late afternoons and evenings resulting in trout feeding activity, in proximity to the banks.

One evening whilst afloat in the mid 80s, my regular fishing pal Rex Ward and I heard a distant cry for help somewhere in the direction of the nature reserve, and of course we responded. On approaching a lone boat-angler
we could see his rod was bent double into a good fish. He pleaded with us to move in slowly and take the rod from him. We tried to dissuade him, but he was adamant, saying he could not continue the fight. We went alongside and I took his rod, a very soft action carbon. After a few more minutes a superb specimen brown trout slid into the net (it would probably have been stocked at about 1lb). So disappointing for the lone angler not to have netted such a magnificent fish of a lifetime! How wrong we were. He opened his bulging bass bag which contained his three previous fish, all rainbows. It was agreed that under the circumstances the huge brown trout which appeared tired but otherwise unharmed, should be returned, so it was immediately weighed in the net at 9lb 4oz and rested before it swam back to the depths. We then weighed the three rainbow trout separately - 5lb 8oz, 6lb 4oz and 6lb 12oz without the net, according to my fishing diary. They too would also have been stocked at about 1lb. Apparently, the angler, a relative novice, was out on an evening ticket, his first attempt at reservoir trout fishing. He explained that he had just motored across to the mouth of the Nature Reserve, had made only four casts and spent over two and a half hours playing the three rainbows and one brown trout. The magic fly was an orange Dognobbler - an unbelievable story, but absolutely true. So sad to think that, having just begun his reservoir fly fishing career, it would appear to that angler to be so easy. I have enjoyed catching many wonderful rainbows and browns from reservoirs and appreciate each and everyone, but they have never come as cheaply as they did for him that day.

During the 70s and up until around 1984, prolific weedbeds of Elodia canadensis flourished at Grafham, as is still the case to this day at Pitsford. A variety of water snails graze the weed at depth, the trout consume them in vast quantities at various times of the season, especially during a snail migration when the snails float to the surface drifting to find fresh weedbeds. It can be quite difficult to assimilate exactly what trout are taking at such times. They appear to be feeding on the surface but with no form of food visible, in a mopping-up type rise, similar to when feeding on caenis, but barely breaking the meniscus film. The use of a buoyant snail representation usually results in catching trout with stomachs that feel like bags of marbles. When chironomid are coming off the water in large numbers, opportunities to fish the buzzer nymph can be very productive.

When fish are taking the emerging adults in the surface film, there can
be few better patterns of fly to use than the original Raider. One early summer’s afternoon in 1980, I noticed some trout feeding amongst vast amounts of floating detritus that was ascending to the surface owing to the increase in water temperature. It was impossible to fish conventionally in the mass of floating sludge, so I decided to try Mucilin floatant on a previously successful wet nymph, I also greased the top part of my leader to keep it afloat, degreased the tippet and hoped the trout would take an interest in a static offering amongst the detritus. After two missed chances I managed to land the third offer to the greased nymph. I had chanced on an excellent new technique and an emerging fly that was to prove very successful. During the following week I tied up more of the now dry pattern in various colours with an increased length of shuck, as I believe that is what the wing represented, in readiness for the next weekend. This proved to be irresistible to the trout, as I caught my limit quite close in to the bank in Savages Creek the following Saturday. This remains my favourite emerging whenever chironomid nymphs are breaking through the meniscus film. I believe it represents the exact moment the emerging adult pulls itself from the shuck. I shared my excitement and success with one of my regular bank fishing friends, John Moore, who incidentally had recently shared his latest creation with me - the fantastic Hopper fly. John named my emerging the Raider, but since that time the Raiders I see offered for sale today bear little resemblance to the original tying. In fact they are almost identical to Hector’s Tasler. Very little is totally original in fly-tying.

Bob Worts, another good friend and regular at Grafham at that time, usually wore a well-used green woollen jumper to fish in, which was covered in woollen bobbles. One evening in the pub Denis Cooper, another Grafham regular, happened to mention that the shade of green bits on the jumper looked a very similar colour to that of the Grafham green buzzer. Bob, an inventive tier, went away and used his woollen bits to dub the body of his extraordinary successful Bobs’ Bits emerging. The Hopper, Bits and Raider soon became well known owing to the regular successes of the then GWFFA team in the Benson and Hedges Competitions, most notably when we achieved an emphatic victory, fishing in almost flat calm conditions to win the English National Final at Rutland in 1986.
**Dressing for the original Raider**

**Hook:** Partridge Capt Hamilton L2A #10-16.  
**Abdomen:** Suitable coloured (dyed or natural) herl.  
**Rib:** Contrasting tying silk.  
**Shuck (wing):** Slip of white goose shoulder.  
**Thorax:** Seal’s fur dubbed loosely.  
**Hackle:** Wound through thorax to increase emerger durability.

*Photo: Richard Ellis*
THE 4-BEAD

Corixa

PHIL BILBROUGH
This is a fly I invented for a particular local fishery which is very deep. Chatton Lakes in North Northumberland have been very popular since they opened a few years ago. Originally only one lake was constructed, but right now there are three. In spite of the great depth, to 20 feet in many places, floating, intermediate and sink-tip lines will catch plenty of fish.

The fly-life has improved as the lakes have matured and there is even a mayfly hatch now. In 2009 the corixa populations exploded. A pattern to imitate this small beetle proved deadly especially if tripped along the marginal slope using a small bite indicator. The harsh weather in 2010 must have reduced the population considerably when the lakes were frozen over completely for several weeks. For an insect which travels to the surface every few minutes for its air supply, ice is a major hazard! However, the beetles are good fliers and soon repopulate new waters. In the summer, usually on a warm calm day, you can sometimes see them flying about and landing on the water. Usually they dive straight through the surface film and disappear into the depths, but the ones which get stuck in the film are an easy target for the trout. If you don’t have a floating corixa pattern handy at the time, try a size 14 G & H Sedge with a yellow under-body, it works for me!

Anyway, back to the fast-sinking 4-Bead Corixa, the body is constructed of 4 silver beads, size 2mm with a ‘shell back’ of cock pheasant tail and split ‘Flexifloss’ paddles. Thread the beads onto a size 14 hook, making sure to pass the hook point through the smallest hole in the beads first. This will ensure the beads nest firmly together. Tie in a bunch of cock pheasant tail fibres by the tips at the bend of the hook and cast off the thread. Retie the thread just behind the eye and pull the pheasant herl over the beads, tie down and whip finish. Hold the fly in tweezers and soak with CA glue (the very runny type), allow to set overnight. Prepare the paddles by splitting a length of ‘Flexifloss’ with a dubbing needle and retie the thread just behind the hook eye. Loop the floss under the hook eye and hold upwards whilst securing and positioning with a few wraps of thread. Tease the paddles into place and cast off the thread with a whip finish. Cut the paddles to the required length. Be careful when using varnish and CA glue with ‘Flexifloss’ as it can wick up the fibre and cause it to distort or make it brittle. You may find that

Photo: Richard Ellis
even soaked with CA glue, the pheasant fibres will eventually break. Although I haven’t tried it yet, I’m sure a modern material such as ‘Scudback’ or similar will be stronger. It’s just that the colour and texture of pheasant tail is perfect for the job. If you do decide to use pheasant tail fibres, a thin layer of ‘Bug Bond’ will add a bit of a shine to the back and also protect it from the trout’s teeth. This UV sensitive resin can have a slightly tacky feel to it after it has been cured, but adding a layer of ‘Hard as Nails’ over it will help.

**Hook:** #14 wet fly (I like Mustad R70’s, good if you can get them).
**Thread:** Brown.
**Body:** 4 x 2mm silver beads (I get mine from Pat Stevens at ‘Flytek’).
**Shellback:** Cock pheasant tail fibres.
**Paddles:** Split ‘Flexifloss’ (some other brands of this type of material cannot be split).
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The Fly Dressers’ Guild Questionnaire

Results and observations regarding Flydresser

Q1 Would you be happy to receive Flydresser electronically instead of by post?

- Yes: 19%
- No: 76%
- No preference: 4%
- [No vote]: 1%

Q3 How many issues a year should we produce?

- 4: 77%
- 3: 12%
- 2: 10%
- 1: 0%
- [no pref/ no vote]: 1%
• **309** members out of **1,550** answered the questionnaire included in the Spring edition of Flydresser – almost 20% of our membership

• The answers to the first three questions clearly indicate an overwhelming preference for the magazine to continue broadly as is

• Though we have taken note of the qualitative feedback and suggestions on how to improve the magazine

• We also note that almost ¼ of our members would be happy to receive the magazine electronically (in some cases as well as in hard copy)
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Derek Bradbury
A PERSONAL APPRECIATION

Charles Jardine

There are times in one’s fly-fishing career that are cathartic - moments that define and point to exciting paths that seem to beckon you into another world. Behind most of these “light-bulb” moments are people. I could, I suppose, have equally cited my dear friends John Goddard or Peter Cockwill: I could have thrown in Bernard Vennables or Dick Walker, Arthur Cove, Frank Sawyer or Gordon Fraser or Steve Parton (strangely!!) into this inspirational pot. All of these great anglers have influenced elements of me. But really, no more so than Derek Bradbury. It’s good to have heroes.

I can’t begin to tell you what made me ask my mother (a Cheshire lass) to drop me off (I was in my late teens and only wrestling with driving…) some might say…) at Derek Bradbury’s shop in Altrincham, all those years - so long ago it seems like another age, and in some ways it was - an age of hungry experimentation and barrier-pushing. Our piscatorial canvas was very free of marks back then.

That shop - Bradbury’s - and the carded fly selections that Derek had put together - complete with fishing notes and so on - was the siren’s call. I purchased some, together with a cluster of individual designs and just marvelled at the differences that were imbued in the designs. The whole aura of difference was palpable. I was, by coincidence…happenstance?… fishing, the next day at the then Prince Albert Angling Association reservoir, Lamaload perched high up above Manchester, edging into the Peak District.
FLY DRESSER

I wish I could report epic catches. I wish I could regale you with stories of infallibility - leaders and lines snaking and hissing across the water as ferocious trout sped to the horizon ... Bradbury patterns in their collective maw. I can’t. To be honest, I only remember being captivated by the pupal designs and the colour schemes, but not the results. That aspect, actually, is immaterial. The essence and sheer “fishability” was and is the key.

I do remember using (and still do) the deadly Lake and Pond Olive Nymph dressings to stunning effect on waters like Tenterden, but the wonderful thing about the Bradbury designs is how they have endured. None of this is retrogressive.

So what makes the designs so good? Observation. The same magic ingredients that are embodied in all truly fine fly designs: an acute understanding of the end result, based on hardcore water and piscatorial knowledge. If you stop and think what this encompasses, it is not tricky: all it requires is a moment or two spent understanding natural creation and reaction. The difficulty - the skill - comes with then interpreting those findings into tangible fly design - and to do so with a deft understanding of how they will fish. Tall orders. “Tall orders”, achieved by Derek.

One might argue that the dressings are not sparkling new. Agreed. My dear friend, John Goddard, was designing some very lovely PVC wrapped midge designs, that pre-date the Bradbury versions, Walker was at his most creative fly-tying heights during this time, too, as was Cyril Inwood and Arthur Cove. You might also argue that the concepts of the wing aspects are attributable to Tom Saville and have been “borrowed”. But it was the way in which Bradbury brought elements together in a joyous fusion of practical angling, natural observation and sheer downright fish-catching excellence that for me simply raised the imitative fly-tying bar to another level. The colours alone just shout sub-surface study and thought.

But of course a pattern is just that, a pattern. Derek Bradbury was a committed fly-fisher - a nymph fisher par excellence: perhaps not as established
as yet another guru of mine, Gordon Fraser - again, a stillwater innovator and leading light, that is occasionally overlooked when citing the Colossi of our sport. But to give you an inkling of the commitment shown by Bradbury, most weekends through the trout season (Oh yes, we had those back then!) Derek would make the hideously long journey from Cheshire to Hampshire most weeks, just to fish Two Lakes – Alex Berhendt’s famous small water complex just outside of Romsey on a season-rod basis. Why? Because the nymph and general imitative fishing was of the sort he wanted to engage in. Now that, my friends, is commitment.

I am so glad I went into Bradbury’s in my teens. Here are just two examples:

1. The Bradbury Midge Pupa

A midge pupa after Derek Bradbury. Photo by Charles Jardine.
FLY DRESSER

Hook: #14–10 Sproat (B175 and its fellows are good modern substitutes).
Thread: To match colour scheme – I have chosen olive.
Head filaments: White baby wool.
Body Covering: stretched PVC.
Rib: Fine silver or gold wire.
Body 1st Segment: Fluo Red floss (Glo Brite no. 4/5).
Body: 2nd Segment: Fluo Green floss (Glo Brite no. 12).
Wing buds: Orange swan herl (or goose).
Thorax Pad: Olive or grey feather fibre.
Thorax: Olive thread.

2. Lake Olive Nymph:

Hook: #12 Sprout (Std wet: B175 etc.).
Thread: Olive 8/0.
Tail: Medium olive hackle fibres (about 5 or 6) the length of the shank.
Rib: Fine gold.
Body: Olive thread.
Wing pad: Grey feather fibre.
Thorax: Medium olive mohair (or seal’s fur).
Hackle: Light olive cock hackle tied false/beard hackle style.

Olive nymph after Derek Bradbury. Photo by Charles Jardine.
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Derek Bradbury

*Fly-angler, fly-dresser, artist & angling writer*

Chris Watson

Back at the end of November I was saddened to hear from Geoff Hill that Derek Bradbury had passed away in Wythenshawe Hospital, aged 74. He had suffered from ill health over the previous 3 years and had been in and out of hospital on several occasions. He was one of the unsung heroes of fly-fishing and fly-tying, whose talents never fully received the accolades that they truly deserved.
FLY DRESSER

Over the last couple have months I have embarked on a long and fascinating journey down memory lane, taking me back to when I first started fly-fishing and fly-tying and used to visit Derek’s shop (usually spending far too much money in this veritable Aladdin’s cave). I have many fond memories of my frequent visits to his shop in Hale Barns, which is where I first met my very good friend Geoff Hill (who used to help Derek in the shop and is now 90 years young). The initial thing that always struck you on entering the shop was the fibreglass mould of an enormous brown trout, caught at Two Lakes in Romsey, which Derek had hand-coloured with acrylic paint. This was often mistaken by customers for a stuffed fish and was the fish of most fly-fishermen’s dreams.

Derek was born in 1937, living all his life in Wilmslow, Cheshire and showed an early talent for painting and drawing, winning a number of young artist competitions. He studied art at Stockport College of Art and the Regional College of Art in Manchester, where he gained a diploma in art and design. Before embarking on his career as a designer of publicity literature and catalogues for a furniture company, he completed two years National Service in the RAF as a senior aircraft man.

After leaving this job he opened a fly-fishing shop in Altrincham, later moving to Hale Barns when he needed larger premises. He very soon developed a huge reputation for the excellent quality of his stillwater patterns, many of which were of his own design including his infamous Phantom Pupa which was tied on a nickel-plated hook. Originally, all the flies were tied by Derek himself, but, when demand became too great, they were then tied professionally by Sid Knight. His flies were mounted on cards and included full instructions on how to fish them. All the cards and his catalogues were produced on a printing machine at the back of the shop. During my research I uncovered an old 1977 advert and price list for the shop. He had his own range of rods including a carbon fibre nymph rod, 9ft. 5/6 for £69.50. His famous fly selections included sets of 20 stillwater nymphs for £3.45, 20 specialist midge pupa for £3.59 and 12 reservoir lures for £2.80, all prices being inclusive of postage and packing. I know I bought sets of these flies, but frustratingly they are long gone and I have been unable to use them for reference.

In 1975 he did all the illustrations for David J. Collyer’s Fly-Dressing
and was contacted by an enthusiast in New Zealand, who flew over especially to buy all the original drawings from him. I have also been reliably informed that he designed the front cover for the *Flydresser*, when it was first published in A5 format. He sold the shop in 1990 in order to concentrate on his other interests including his painting (which was widely exhibited in galleries) and bird-watching.

Derek was one of the founder members of the Northwest Branch of The Fly Dressers’ Guild and for a number of years ran fly-dressing classes at the Wilmslow Guild (a local adult education centre which first opened in 1926). He had a number of articles published in *International Fly Fisher*. These articles were beautifully written, are an absolute joy to read and are relevant to this day. They beautifully demonstrate his intimate knowledge of freshwater entomology, how fish both see and feed, and how to catch them. His flies were featured in a number of books including *The New Illustrated Dictionary of Trout Flies* by John Roberts, *Robson’s Guide to Stillwater Trout Flies - an Alphabetic Survey in Colour* by Kenneth Robson and in the Modern Fly Section in the fifth edition of A. Courtney Williams’ *Dictionary of Trout Flies*.

At different times he had been a member of various clubs including Macclesfield Fly Fishing Club, the Monsal Dale Fishery on the Derbyshire Wye and the Syndicate on Two Lakes in Romsey. During the trout fishing season he would drive down to Hampshire early every Wednesday morning, fish Twin Lakes for the day, driving back to Wilmslow in the late evening. He also fished on the Anton in Hampshire as a guest of Barry Welham and he occasionally took a salmon rod on the Spey in Scotland.

Whilst fishing on stillwater he usually used a 9ft carbon rod, a 5 weight floating line and an Italian automatic reel. His method of choice was, whenever possible, to fish his nymph and pupa patterns on a tapered leader which was greased up with Mucilin, allowing his flies to fish just below the surface. When the end of the leader slipped away, he would activate the automatic reel and the fish was hooked. He also advocated the use of a sinking shooting head when fishing weighted patterns such as cased caddis to allow them to be effectively fished at the slow/natural speed required. The use of sinking double taper line was in Derek’s words ‘quite useless’, because the belly of line sags from the rod tip and the weight forward or
shooting head line facilitates greater sensitivity to gentle takes, as there is more direct contact between the fly and the rod tip.

When I first embarked on my research for this piece, my obvious first port of call was Geoff Hill, who very quickly provided me with substantial amount of information, some of his original art work and a number of buzzers and the Phantom Pupa tied by Derek himself for me to photograph. That was the easy bit! The rest involved buying a number of second-hand books (much to the consternation of my good lady - apparently I already have too many!) and speaking to innumerable people who knew him and had the pleasure of fishing with him.

The one thing that shines out from all of his fishing and tying is that he was one of those rare individuals that took our sport and hobby to that higher level which most of us can only dream of. He wasn’t just a fly-fisherman and fly-tier, he was a flyangler and fly-dresser. You have only to look at the flies that he designed to realise the sheer beauty of them, their simplicity and why they work. This was a thinking man who really knew what he wanted to achieve with his designs and utilised all his many talents, including his artistic ones, to attain the end result that he wanted. To this day you only have to look at his flies and those of the other great flydressers of that era to see the lasting influence they have had on modern fly-tying. I will be the first to admit that Derek had a very big influence, if not the biggest influence, on my buzzer patterns and the way I tie them.

I have included below a small selection of Derek’s flies and I am sure that members will agree that they just ooze ‘fishability’. There is one thing for certain: I will be tying and fishing some of these largely forgotten flies in the future. One can only speculate as to what Derek and other great flydressers of the past would be able to produce with the plethora of materials we now have available to us – the mind boggles.

Finally, a plea to anyone who has any of Derek’s patterns that have not been included in this edition of our magazine: can they please forward them on to me? I would like to put them on the website for the Northwest Branch, as a lasting tribute to one of our founder members.

Chrisw.fly@btinternet.com

The Phantom Pupa - a Derek Bradbury signature pattern

[38]
FLY DRESSER

Some Derek Bradbury Patterns

Sepia Nymph

Hook: 12.
Thread: Black.
Tail: Dark brown cock hackle fibres.
Abdomen: Sepia-brown ostrich herl, over-wound with stripped peacock quill from the eye feather, allowing enough of the ostrich herl to protrude so as to suggest the gill filaments.
Thorax cover: Crow wing fibres.
Thorax: Sepia-brown ostrich herl.

Amber Nymph

Hook: 10, D/E wide gape.
Thread: Black.
Rib: Orange Lurex.
Back: Dark brown speckled turkey feather fibres, tied in from bend to eye of the hook.
Abdomen: Amber seal’s fur.
Thorax: Dark brown ostrich herl.
Hackle: One turn of brown partridge.
Swimming legs: 2 fibres of golden pheasant centre tail, tied in either side of the head, twice the length of the body, pointing rearwards.

This sedge larva was originally designed for fishing Grafham Reservoir.

Cased Caddis

Hook: 10, D/E long shank, or similar sized keel hook.
Thread: Not listed, but I would suggest black or dark brown would be appropriate.
Rib: Gold twist, size 15.
Body: Several fibres of golden pheasant centre tail, with a short section of dubbed hare’s ear in front.
Legs: Single turn of brown partridge.
Head: Peacock herl.
The combination of the golden pheasant centre tail and gold twist gives a very good suggestion of a caddis case made of sand and fine gravel. There is no mention in the dressing of this pattern being leaded, but I am sure it must have been.

**Green Aphis**

**Hook:** Dry fly, 14 – 16.

**Thread:** Olive.

**Body:** Signal-green DRF floss.

**Wings:** White DRF floss, 2 strands per wing, 2 to 3 pairs tied down the hook shank.

**Hackles:** Light olive cock, 1 per set of wings, fibres cut away from the underside of the hook.

*Designed in June 1970, following a day’s fishing on Tittesworth Reservoir, when the trout were completely preoccupied with the natural and sipping in clumps of them.*
Mayfly
Hook: 10, Partridge U/E, wide gape.
Thread: Olive.
Tails: 3 or 4 cock pheasant centre tail fibres, approximately the same length as the body.
Rib: Oval gold tinsel, size 15.
Wings: 2 bunches of small brown squirrel tail, with light and dark markings. Tied advanced and divided with figure of 8 turns of thread
Body: 60% yellow, 39% olive, 1% hot orange seal’s fur.
Hackles: 2 yellow-olive cock, 2 turns behind the wing and the rest in front.

Originated in 1968 for use on Ridgegate Reservoir near Macclesfield in Cheshire, which was reputed to have one of the best mayfly hatches in the UK.

Mayfly Nymph
Hook: 10, D/E long shank.
Thread: Olive.
Tails: Cock pheasant centre tail fibres.
Back: Tail fibres folded over.
Rib: Oval gold tinsel, size 15.
Body: Yellow-olive seal’s fur.
Wing cases: Thick bunch of cock pheasant centre tail fibres.
Hackle: Single turn of brown partridge.

This pattern (shown opposite) is not listed as being weighted, but I am convinced there must have been an underbody of lead.

Plastazote Corixa
Hook: 10-12.
Thread: Brown.
Back and legs: Olive or brown feather fibre.
Body: White Plastazote, glued into position and trimmed to shape ensuring that more than half the depth of the body is above the hook shank.
Oars: 2 cock pheasant centre tail fibres tied down either side of the
dressing and slightly longer than the body.

According to Kenneth Robson’s Guide, Derek invented this pattern with
David Collyer, but in actual fact they both came up with the same idea at
virtually the same time. This corixa dressing was at the time was quite rev-
olutionary in the way it used what was then a relatively new material.
FLY DRESSER

Buzzer patterns tied by Derek Bradbury himself
BOOK REVIEW

100 Best Flies for Atlantic Salmon
TOpher Browne

Photographs by Ted Fauceglia
Published by Wild River Press
£25.00 (£19.99 for FDG members)

My first impression of this book is that it is a strange size, not quite A5 and horizontal in format. I perceive difficulty in placing it on my bookshelf. That said, the format fits the photography perfectly and that is what this book is all about.

The book is set out in sections for dry, hitched, wet and sunk flies and each section is listed alphabetically. The lack of an index means finding a particular pattern requires flicking through to the appropriate place, a frustrating exercise when the fly you wanted to see is not there.

Each fly is illustrated with a “side on” shot filling the whole right side page. The dressing is shown opposite. There are no tying instructions. As I mentioned before the photography is of the highest quality, clear crisp images with true colours. It gives the tier a good idea of what the finished article should look like. To be of more use on the tying bench, a spiral binding and more instruction would help as would an explanation of the different types of tubes used in making these flies.

On the coffee table casual dippers in will enjoy the vibrant colours and exquisite tying. Of particular interest and relevance to the European tiers are the series of flies by Thorsten Struben who I consider to be one of the greatest tiers in Europe.
There is a little repetition; for example, why are there seven different colours of Templedog? But overall this is a pretty little book that does what it says on the tin.

The price is very reasonable given the quality of the paper and printing and members of the FDG have the opportunity to purchase it at a discount for £19.99 rather than the usual £25.

Go to the online shop: www.iselltackle.co.uk/100-Best-Flies-for-Atlantic-Salmon-by-Topher-Brown.html. Add the book to the cart, check out and enter the code FDG100 in the coupon box. You will get a £5.01 discount (£19.99 instead of £25 for the book) on the order total.

Chris Reeves
FLY DRESSER

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