



# West Wilts Fly Fishers Guild

Meeting Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2023 7.30pm at Leigh Park Hotel, B on A

## Part One - guest speaker – Sue Everett – The Somerset Frome adviser

Sue is an ecologist and land management adviser. She writes regularly for 'British Wildlife' magazine and contributed 'Notes From a Small Lowland River' in the Spring edition of Salmo Trutta. She is involved in land management projects in the Southwest and for a national organic farming charity.

Her talk was about the environmental pressures on small rivers and the Somerset Frome in particular.

## Part Two

### Present:

Malcolm Bond, Roger Henderson, Gerry Barnes, Colin Burbidge, Robert Eadie. Tim Pullen, Neil Soni, Nick Ridout, Richard Cripps, Ron Jones, Simon Steel, Robin Sewell, Peter Marshal-Bailey, David Edwards, Simon Steele. Guest – Jake Aitken

### 1) Apologies:

Jon Jonik, Andy Greatwood, John DeCesare, Bryan Hussey, Paul Marchant, Mick Marchant, Tom Marchant, Russell Bond.

### 2) Minutes of Oct Guild meeting and matters arising.

Accepted without amendment.

No matters arising.

### 3) Christmas Hamper competition Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> Nov - brief update

Members pay £32.50 for a 4 fish ticket (Guild pays additional subsidy of £10 per ticket).

Fishing 9.00am until 2pm weigh-in of all fish caught. Lunch and presentation of bottle of wine at 2pm.

When you catch, you must move to a different spot to give other members a chance of covering a good spot.

### 4) Guild Dinner Friday 24<sup>th</sup> November – brief update.

30 attending. Dress code – smart.

7pm for 7.30pm.

Robert and Mary thanked for compiling The Table Quiz.

Jon & Sarah thanked for offering to arrange additional table decorations.

### 5) 2024 Programme update

The Committee is in contact with the speakers suggested by members, to confirm dates.

January and February meetings will be fly-tying (as well as AGM at Feb meeting).

## AOB

- i) Reminder to send in Photos for Photo Competition - email to Roger.

## Part three - River Meeting.

Roger's full report for the 2023 season will be sent to members with the Minutes of the meeting.

Few members had fly-fished our stretch this year and only one of the rainbows we stocked in June reported as caught on fly. This year it was hard to find a fishing opportunity due to the extreme weather conditions - heavy rain in March resulted in the river

being high, fast & coloured. This was followed by a very cold easterly wind in April, at the start of our season. The river was still high in May and by mid-June we were in a heat wave with temperatures 26C + (similar pattern to 2022). June was dry but followed by a very, very wet July (which meant cancellation of our Coarse fishing intro session on 26<sup>th</sup> July) The Frome was high again until early August.

Roger thanked members who had helped with bank work and stocking. With more help we could clear beats 12 down to 14 which were impassable this year due to the nettles.

Mayfly started appearing around 16<sup>th</sup> May and were in full 'carnival' from 22<sup>nd</sup> May until mid-June. Same as 2022. This is worth noting for 2024.

Roger thanked our fly-monitoring teams and those who organised the coarse fishing week which due to rain and subsequent high & coloured river was cancelled and is now rescheduled for 2024.

Roger announced that he is standing down as River Keeper after 11+ years and but delighted to inform members that Nick Ridout has stepped forward to take on the role. Malcolm congratulated & thanked Nick and the meeting endorsed Nick's appointment.

The meeting then discussed the issue of stocking - whether we should continue to stock or whether we should end stocking if it might give wild fish the maximum opportunity to thrive. A wide range of views and opinions were expressed. No conclusion was arrived at, but it was agreed the discussion should continue in 2024 as any stocking is not carried out until late May/early June. Members asked about progress with grayling stocking. Roger said this is now with the EA and is dependent on the trial they are conducting which was set-back by Covid.

The EA has hinted that part funding will be necessary.

The 'Grayling Conservation Guide 2018' (100pages) is the go-to reference recommended by the EA. Roger said he had compared the water quality required by grayling with the EAs water quality testing data for the Somerset Frome – taken at Tellisford packhorse bridge and sent to the EAs Exeter Lab for analysis. The water quality is suitable for grayling as is the variety of habitat grayling require for the different stages of their development. However, there must be a reason why grayling were caught in good numbers in 2003/4 but are only very occasionally caught now. Earlier in the evening we had been told that the, now closed, Cuprinol factory near Frome had been responsible for spillages into the river and as one member pointed out – that would do it! If any member would like a copy of The Grayling Conservation Guide (fascinating & beautifully illustrated) please email Roger.

Post meeting note:- The meeting did not discuss fishing pressure this year and whether river membership could be increased but clearly our stretch of The Somerset Frome was only very lightly fished this year.

Meeting closed at 10.30pm

**Next Mtg Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2024 – Fly-tying Part 1**

