

# WEST WILTS FLYFISHERS GUILD



Members of the Wild Trout Trust

Website: [westwiltsflyfishersguild.com](http://westwiltsflyfishersguild.com)

## APRIL 2017 NEWSLETTER

### **Guild Meeting Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> April 'Open-Forum' session**

Colin and Robert very generously accepted the challenge of leading the discussion for us again this year. They are the perfect choice because whereas most of us have barely wetted a fly-line by April, Colin and Roberts haven't had a chance to dry out since 2016! We'd have been happy if they'd filled an hour or so with their experiences alone but with everyone at the meeting having so much to contribute, Colin and Robert only had to suggest a topic for the tips, experiences and anecdotes to come rolling in from members.

Among the topics:

- The perennials - which leader material and the disastrous effect of leader shine on fish.
- Salmon fishing on The Wye - who, what, where, how ?
- Issues with salmon farming - our health and the salmon gene pool
- Fishing for brown trout in The Lake District
- Maintenance of fly-lines
- Our Holbury Fishery 'away-day' in May

The evening was a timely reminder of how much expertise exists within the Guild; an expertise which is willingly, generously, enthusiastically shared simply to help others enjoy their fishing and enable them to catch more fish. You can't ask for better than that. Everyone on Wednesday shared something and learned something. Mission accomplished, thanks to

Colin and Robert who clearly had put a lot of preparation into the session. Keep your heads down chaps we'll be asking you back!

And Colin's 'Desert Island Book' choice -

'The Longest Silence' by Thomas McGuanne, Pub: Yellow Jersey Press 2000, ISBN 0-224-06101-1

(As good as it gets if you can't actually go fishing).

*There isn't space here to include all the 'nuggets' given out; please ask if the topics have raised your curiosity.*

*Roger*

**NB: -Next Guild Meeting is Wednesday May 10th at Holbury Lakes - 9:00am start. Please note that there will be NO Guild Meeting at the Shaw Hotel in May.**

Our Speaker last Month was Mike Heaton. As Members thoroughly enjoyed his talk on Historic Watermeadows we asked Mike if he had any more notes on this subject.....

## **HISTORIC WATERMEADOWS RECEIVE LOTTERY FUNDING**

CHS member and trustee Mike Heaton has received grants from the UK's Heritage Lottery Fund and Wiltshire Council in support of a research and public awareness project about the watermeadows of the Wylve Valley in Wiltshire (UK). These extensive works of civil engineering were created between the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and the 19<sup>th</sup> century, eventually covering the river floodplains of most of southern England, but the manner in which they were created remains unknown.

The Watermeadows of the River Wylve, which cover the whole of the flood plain between Kingston Deverill and Wilton, were created in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as the first of an extensive system of precisely engineered water channels and meadows that eventually extended throughout the river valleys of southern England. They increased agricultural yields by a factor of five and provided the food and hard cash that underpinned the Industrial Revolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They are unique to England and form one of the largest works of civil engineering of the pre-Modern world.

The type of watermeadows that cover the valley floors of southern England - known as 'bedwork' systems' - harness the natural characteristics of the spring water of the chalk aquifers that underlie them. The spring water flows to the surface in the winter at a

temperature of c. 5°C above the normal air temperature - and especially so during the 'Little Ice Age' that affected northern Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries - warming the ground, promoting early growth of the grass and protecting it from frost, as well as fertilizing the soil.

The project will collate existing historical research into the watermeadows of the River Wylye, including transcription of interviews with the last generation of 'floaters'; engage the public in the identification of watermeadow systems and their distinctive features; and identify the best sites for future archaeological investigation of how the watermeadows were created and operated. It is hoped that a programme of archaeological investigation involving aerial photography, LiDAR survey, geophysics and excavation will form a second stage of the project in the future. A 'Facebook' page has been set-up, from which the public can download a 'spotters guide' and to which members of the public are invited to upload their own photographs of watermeadow features.

Anyone who would like to know more about the project please contact Mike on [watermeadows@hotmail.com](mailto:watermeadows@hotmail.com)

### **What is a watermeadow ?**

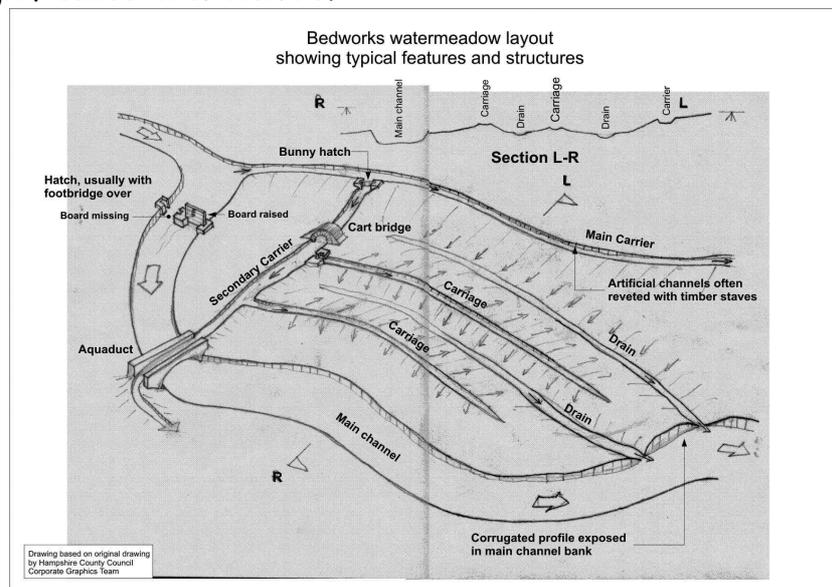
A watermeadow is an artificially re-engineered river flood plain, designed to use the natural characteristics of flowing water to increase grass yields. They were developed in England during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, possibly from medieval monastic experiments, and eventually spread across the entire river systems of southern England. They often involved the wholesale diversion of rivers and incorporated several distinct and unique features, such as 'carrier' channels, 'drain' and 'carriage' earthworks, and complex systems of 'hatches' and even aqueducts through which the flow of water was controlled. Many of these features survive today along riversides in southern England, with some of the best examples being around Salisbury in Wiltshire.

There are two broad categories of watermeadows: 'catchworks' and 'bedworks'. The latter are the more common and extensive and it is these that form the focus of our study. During operation of valley-bottoms, 'bedwork' systems (called 'drowning' or 'floating') water was diverted from a river via a 'carrier' channel and onto earthwork ridges known as 'panes' from which it flowed downwards into 'drains' and thence flowed back into the river. The earthworks are known as the 'bedworks' the ideal flow was

25mm deep within the grass sward. Typical areas for individual watermeadows in Wiltshire vary between 1ha and 6ha. In Wiltshire, the men who constructed, repaired and operated the watermeadows became known as 'Drowners;' or 'Floaters' and operation of the systems required considerable co-operation amongst landowners and tenants.

The systems were operated mainly in the winter and early spring, when the spring water of the chalk streams that flow through southern England warmed the grass and brought nutrients to the soil. Typically this caused grass to start growing about one month earlier so that animals could benefit from the 'early bite' of grass. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, these animals were often ewes and lambs that were led away from the meadow in the afternoon to fields of wheat or barley so their dung could fertilise the arable land on the valley sides. This was called the 'sheep-corn' system. Later in the season, during the summer when the soil was drying out watermeadows were re-watered so that (typically) two cuts of hay were taken and used to feed other animals including horses. This operation increased grass yields by c. five times and advanced the growing season, leading to a rapid increase of agricultural wealth in southern England during the Agricultural Revolution.

Catchwork watermeadows (sometimes called 'catchmeadows') were of relatively simple design and comprised near-horizontal gutters on a hillside that were fed from a high level 'carrier' (irrigation canal) with off-takes running downslope to feed the gutters, from natural springs or from ponds at a high level. Catchworks were important in the midland counties, in Somerset and in Devon. They were not likely to have been of great significance in Wiltshire.



## Access improvements on our stretch of the River Frome at Tellisford

Jon and I have been down to put in the first of the access improvements planned for Beats 1 to 9 (Pomeroy Wood).

### *Beat 2 Stoney Bottom -*

The handrail takes you down to the middle of a long gravel ledge, shown in the first photo. Although the water is relatively high in this photo it is an easy step into the river from the ledge, if you pick your spot. So in the summer it should be even easier. This stretch has lovely ranunculus beds to fish through as well as the crease between the leat and the main river which always holds fish.



### *Beat 4 Kingfisher -*

This handrail will either help you down to fish the main pool upstream (a favourite spot for chub as well as trout) without scaring the fish or help you up after entering the river downstream.



### *Beat 7 Oak Pool (Wilf's Oak) -*

The new handrail takes a less steep, two stage route to fish one of the best pools on the river



*Beat 9 Pomeroy -*

A new entry point into the river is now recommended along a solid ledge. The first 4' post marks the starting point and the second marks the entry point for wading from where it's an easy step into the river and onto clean gravel rather than deep silt as at the old entry point.

NB: The short black post in the photo is a marker to keep you away from the edge which is soft at this point.



*Jon & Roger*

## **Chew Boats - Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

**Our Annual Outing to Chew** is slightly different this year in that The Guild will subsidise each ticket by £10. To reserve your place you will need to pay £30 (£28 concession) by BACS 20-05-12 a/c 50964581, post cheque (WWFFG) to Jon Jonik, 16 Pound Lane, Semington BA14 6LP. If you are a boat beginner, you will be paired with an experienced member. It's always a good social day out.

*Jon Jonik*

**MEMBERS FISHING MEETING WEDNESDAY MAY10<sup>th</sup>**  
**HOLBURY FISHERY**

We have secured the whole fishery to ourselves and we have filled the minimum 10 rods available. The fishery can sustain an extra 6 rods if required.

This is strictly a first come first served, your name will go on the list when your money has been received by Jon Jonik and you will be notified that you have been successful.

**Please email Jon and Alan your intention to go - but your place will only be confirmed when payment is received.**

In the event of over subscription we will keep a reserve list in case someone has to drop out.

There are a few places left so all payments must be received **ASAP**.

This Great Value Day of £42 for 4 fish includes having the Lakes to ourselves

**A Guild subsidised amount of £10 has been subtracted from the fee.**

The plan for the day is to meet at 08:30 for a 09:00 start.

We will break for Lunch at 13:00 to chat about how we caught the big one and resume at 14:00

Lunch will not be supplied so please bring your own but coffee and tea will be supplied if required.

Fishing will finish at 17:00 for the weigh in.

We would like to adopt a "Catch and Move on" approach to the day to give everyone a chance to catch.

If you think you would like to be one of the sixteen please send your £42.00 now to Jon Jonik or use BACS. Please read Holbury Fishery Rules

See more details on this venue below.....



The Renegade can be used on both rivers and lakes. Originally designed in the late 1920's by Taylor 'Beartracks' Williams. Since then this fly has been used throughout the Pacific Northwest into Alaska and Europe.

# HOLBURY LAKES

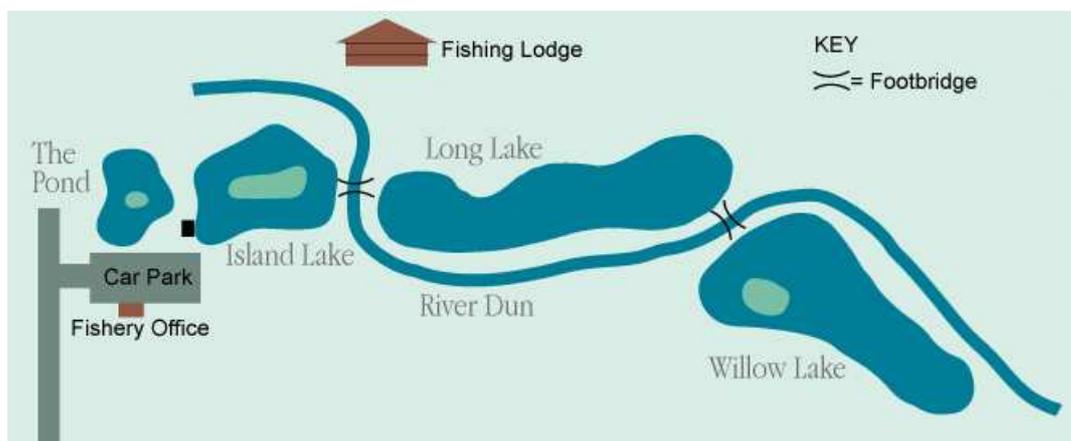
— Trout Fishery —



**THE LAKES ADDRESS:** Holbury Lakes Trout Fishery, Holbury Lane, Lockerley, ROMSEY, Hants. SO51 0JR

**Holbury Lakes fishery** is in a secluded, tranquil setting where the River Dun winds between the four lakes. Each lake has its own character, and the fishery can provide exciting fishing whether you're a novice or an old hand. Throughout the summer months water clarity in the lakes is usually very good, though they can be coloured in winter when rainfall is persistent.

Adequate car parking is available alongside the log cabin-styled fishing office. The fishing office also provides a comfortable area where tea, coffee and a microwave are available free of charge to all Holbury visitors. The main fishing lodge, overlooking the lakes, and just a 5-minute walk from the car park, provides a comfortable lounge with tea/coffee facilities, and also a picnic area with tables. A charcoal barbecue is available on request. Situated above the lodge with splendid views across the lake, is a large function room, capable of providing dining facilities for over two dozen people, this is available by arrangement. The lodge also houses the lavatory and washing facilities.



## May 2016-Holbury fly of the month



As always the fly that took the most fish this month was the Blue flash damsel, a fair few fish were taken on a PTN (Pheasant tail nymph), which are intended to replicate the nymph stage of the Baetis genus of invertebrates, lots of which can be found thriving in the lakes here. With increasingly good clarity my advice is to start natural (GRHE, PTN) and if that isn't working put a blue flash damsel on and pull it in as fast as you can.

*Roger with Blue Trout*



*There are big fish here!*



Just to tempt you a little further, Roger and Alan visited this Fishery recently and Roger caught a great 'Blue' Trout. [Did you know that the blue trout has a larger heart than the Rainbow and Brown and therefore has the capability of fighting even harder!]

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### LOOKING FORWARD.....

Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> May ..... Guild outdoor Meeting at Holbury Lakes  
Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> May.....Guild Chew Boat Cup..Book with Jon. See page 6.  
Wednesday 14th June ....Guild Meeting and Speaker Doug Tilley -  
'Flood Relief'.  
Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> June to Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> July ..'all methods' week on the Frome.  
Please check details with Roger.



### *April is Grannom Time on the Frome*

With sedge hatches throughout the year being rather abundant in many streams and rivers, the one to watch out for is the **Grannom**. It is most effective right now before the larvae enclose themselves. It is actually one of the easiest of the sedges to recognise being one of the first to hatch. The hatch occurs from morning into evening and should really be more noticeable than a lot of us realise.

Amazingly, they build cylindrical cases of debris/sand which is fixed to the bottom which allows the grannom to filter food from the water. Equally, they stretch out of the case and use the long hairs on their hind legs to also filter food. Once their legs are full of food they bend one leg at a time to feed themselves.

### *Fishing The Grannom Fly*

Bear in mind the natural Grannom are fixed to the bottom of the water - so fish it accordingly. This can mean that being fixed so low, they are protected from being trout fodder a lot of the time but they are so abundant in some waters that they end up drifting, so they can be considered an important trout meal.

*A River Frome Grannom. Photo Roger H.*



HAPPY FISHING.....BOB