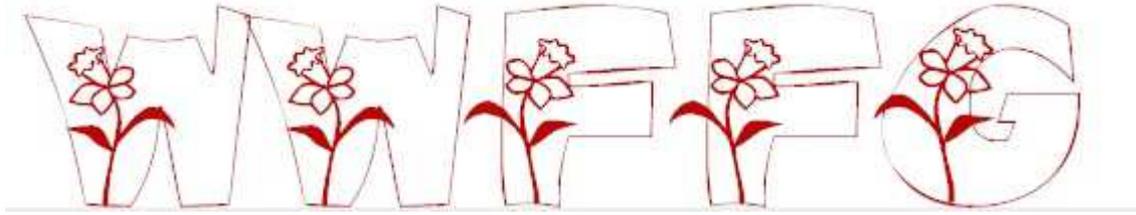


WEST WILTS FLYFISHERS GUILD



Members of the Wild Trout Trust

Website: westwiltsflyfishersguild.com

MARCH 2017 NEWSLETTER

Next Guild Meeting - Wednesday 12th April. An Open Forum will be held giving Members an opportunity to air their thoughts and ideas on our Fishing and Social Club. Chairman Blagdon Bill, with Robert as his assistant.

March Guild Meeting Guest speaker - Michael Heaton

Water Meadow Restoration

Michael is a heritage consultant living in Warminster and is a past WWFFG member. He is a recognised authority on water meadows and is championing their recognition as what he described as "the world's largest civil engineering project in the pre-modern world", first appearing around the 1600's.

All of his audience had heard of water-meadows of course and most of us had silently cursed the water logged ditches running across fields, weary after a day's chalk stream fishing. But Michaels talk was an eye-opener and no one listening to it will view water meadows in the same way again. A few facts:

- Water meadows increased grass production by a factor of 5.
- This is possible because Wiltshire spring water is warmer than the Winter ambient temperature and contains calcium - the catalyst for grass growth.
- Sheep were grazed on the grass then taken on top of the downs so their manure would increase corn production by a factor of 5.

- The wealth created was used to build factories in the North of England and thus financed the start of the Industrial Revolution.
- The men who worked the water-meadows were called 'drowners'
- By 1800 there were 20,000 acres of water-meadows in Wiltshire alone.
- Water meadows cleanse water of silt, nitrates and phosphates, before it runs off the field and runs into the river, so the EA is now looking at Water Meadows to improve the condition of our rivers.

It was a fascinating talk by an expert and enthusiast. Michael went on to describe the water-meadow restoration work planned - such as that at Lower Woodford, near Salisbury. The nearest working example is in the shadow of Salisbury Cathedral.

Members who'd like to find out more should visit www.watermeadows.org

Very generously - Michael would not even accept travelling expenses for coming to talk. Our very grateful thanks to him for a fascinating evening. R.H.

This subject is very interesting and so relevant to us that we will print Michael's notes in full in the next Newsletter.

THE MARCH BROWN



March Brown Wet Flies work on still waters or rivers and being 'buggy looking' the trout love it. Its name suggests this should be used in March, However, it is a very effective wet fly in general, in fact you do not see many of the brown mayflies around any more, but that does not seem to make any difference. The name March Brown comes because it was originally tied as a species of mayfly. Do not be afraid to try the March Brown Fly in summer months.

The pull of the tide drives the elvermen onwards



The elvermen of the River Parrett are, by their own admission, a salty bunch, standing welly-deep in the muddy banks at Bridgewater, Somerset. They know their craft, and their river intimately. The rivermen are only allowed to fish for the tiny baby eels that arrive in their millions from the Atlantic and are washed up with the Spring tides each year using traditional nets attached to long poles. It is a deliberately imperfect method to allow the elvers a chance to escape and continue upstream. Despite the numbers that arrive, the European eel is still critically endangered and in Britain fishing is tightly regulated.

This means that to make a profit during the fishing season, which runs from February to May, the elvermen have had to become masters in the way of the tides.

On the Parrett they fish on the flood as it provides a steadier stream than the ebb tide, when the water is pulled back out. On the nearby Severn Estuary which has the second highest tidal range in the world, it is more of a lottery. At this time of year water surges downstream so fast that the Severn Bore is formed - a roaring wall of water.

The elvermen describe all these movements in reverent tones, explaining the difference between Spring tides which occur when the Sun, Moon and Earth are in alignment - and neap tides - which occur between the Spring tides and when the Sun and Moon face the Earth at right angles.

Elvers are caught around 0.7lb per session which equates to fewer than a 1,000. Not much - but the elvermen say they don't do this for the money!

Every year, they say, will be their last. Yet the pull of the tides is not just something that works on eels.

Taken from The Daily Telegraph



LOOKING FORWARD.....

GUILD MEETING.....Wednesday 12th April...OPEN FORUM

SKITTLES and BUFFET EVENING.....Friday 21st April

Holbury Fishing Day.....Wednesday 10th May

The CHEW BOAT CUP (Tam Pearce Trophy) Sunday 28th May

'ALL FISHING METHODS WEEK' for all Members on the River Frome
Friday 23rd June to Sunday 2nd July.



It's the Environment Agency Rod Licence renewal time again on 1st April for the next 12months.
£30 for trout & coarse (concessionary £20).
£82 for salmon & sea trout (concessionary £54)
As you know you can pay online at
www.environment-agency.gov.uk/rodlicence Or call
0844 800 5386.

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We came across these remains of a double-figure pike near the shallows at High Bank - otter ?



River Frome Bank Work Sunday 19th February

Thankfully we had dry weather so we were able to make good progress - removing over-arching branches, clearing the footpath & access points of brambles etc., coppicing saplings and picking-up plastic bottles and other detritus. We concentrated our efforts on beats 1 to 9 (Pomeroy Wood) because this is the stretch we plan access improvements over the next month or two. The coppicing is to allow sunlight into the river to encourage weed growth. Some of the coppicing was of the live willow stakes we'd put in four years ago to prevent bank erosion but which have now taken so successfully that they needed reducing. On behalf of everyone - thanks to Jon Jonik, Stan Jonik and Maurice Dyer for coming down. The work done will make fishing the Frome easier and safer in the coming season. More help will be needed over the next few weeks installing the planned access improvements - putting in stakes, handrails and steps and in a few months' time clearing paths of nettles etc. Please look out for emails with the dates. All help is greatly appreciated.

Now is a very good time for anyone not familiar with the bank contours to get down there, before the nettles grow, to see the access points and casting positions.

Roger

River Frome Keeper

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THE GLORIOUS 9th !

Thursday the 9th March just couldn't come soon enough - it was the opening day of trout fishing on Chew Valley Reservoir for 2017.

Colin and I were lucky enough to have reserved a boat on opening day. Boat 41, slightly larger than the standard, was to be our lucky base for the day.

Since this was an important fishing day we decided to 'do it in style' and breakfasted at The Carpenters Arms - highly recommended and a good start to the day.

We made our way at 10am to the jetty and wondered if we might catch one or two fish. I must confess that some years have been disappointing.

Colin was skipper for the day and after struggling to find a decent Bristol Waters landing net, albeit one with a hole in the mesh, we agreed to make our way across the reservoir to the East Shore behind Denny Island. We tied a few buzzers and Diall bachs to our leaders but little happened.

We noticed very few flies hatching with just a few midgies dancing on the water, the fish were not interested in them, in fact we saw no surface activity.

After an hour or so into the afternoon the wind died down to a gentle breeze, the sun came out and all was well with the world...except that Colin started to catch fish and I didn't!

There was no sign of these expected big black buzzers that Chew was so famous for at this time of year. So small nymphs did not work but as soon as I tied on a Montana - type -fly we were in business. With no word of a lie, at one stage we were catching 3 pounders every other cast.(Quite embarrassing really!?) Those fish kept up to their reputation as really great fighters. We were obviously in the middle of a huge shoal. Looking at the surface carefully we noted a 'shimmering', this was not a breeze erupting on the surface, but a shoal of fish. Shimmering is not a word used that often but is very apt in these circumstances.



A view of Chew looking out to Denny Island

We each brought home 6 fish for the wives to gut. Since we had such a fantastic day, high hopes of a lovely hot dinner came to mind and much wifely admiration and approval!

However we each found a note saying 'we've gone to the theatre'.

Well, the cat was impressed and the budgie said 'who's a clever boy then'?

I must add to my notes that Woodford Lodge Restaurant/Café is nearly ready for reopening. It has been closed for 12 months. The renovations look very smart.

Update:- A few days after opening, a very nice Brownie of 13½ pounds was caught from a boat near Woodford Bank on a fry pattern. Now the big black Buzzers are hatching and can be seen clinging to windows at the lodge!

As a footnote I do think Bristol Water could provide good landing nets for every boat - one can bring one's own net but there is always a chance of cross-infection. However, seriously, a great time had by all.

Robert

On (a fishing) line

AMAZING PROGRESS IN TECHNOLOGY!

This is a holographic projection of a whale. It is a photographic process that produces images, thanks to the differences between 2 laser beams.

These images are projected into a school gym using a special camera. There is not a drop of water in this room, let alone a whale!

Control & Click:-

<https://youtu.be/BgXOUHuHCtM>

THERE BE GHOSTS OUT THERE!

I am drawn to tell you about a pretty special day that happened to me, (specifically, on Thursday 26 November 2015), two days after my birthday (no cards please...). So we're going back a bit; but a day that remains very memorable still. But, pointedly, I am anxious to say this account is not about me. It is far, far more basic and important - it is a celebration of the act of fishing. And how fulfilling and magical the sport of fly-fishing can prove for us all, often against prevailing odds. How it has the ability to lift us out of the doldrums, when close to virtual despair. So I make no apologies for this admittedly lengthy spiel, (but thank you in advance for your patience).

It was a nice mild day, close to 14 Centigrade, when I arrived at the Lake. A rare trip to Blagdon Reservoir, and a welcome afternoon bank-ticket's fishing in this rather famous and special place. I had chosen to fish North Shore and although there was a wind it was not over-strong. For those who know Blagdon well, it blew into the face, coming from the left hand side of the drab, concrete dam-wall [Language Timothy!!]. Not particularly good for a right-hand caster like myself. Though the sky remained cloudy most of the time, I was lucky and escaped the rain that threatened - registering just a few chill spots at sporadic intervals.

So cloud-cover was reasonable, but the water in the margins was low, gin-clear and very shallow. Wading further out was an option, but to do so would scare off any self-respecting fish in the vicinity. And to avoid predators, I'm sure our wise finned-friends had chosen position, cover and security in the deeper water, a lot further out (than I could wade and cast). Needless to say, I could at that point have reported my progress to any passing stranger, asking how many I had caught, by reciting the vexed Irishman's reply ie, 'Well, when I've caught the next one, and then four more, I'll have had foive!' [So be? off with you and stop annoying me.]

In truth, I waved the stick at a lot of departing fish for an inordinate amount of time before despairing and heading back to the parked car for some respite and grub. The truth is I had felt straight away the day was going badly, and was convinced it would surely turn out to be very disappointing. But to return to the 'passing strangers' thing, I found myself completely alone. I had the whole of Blagdon to myself. Remarkable! Was the lake trying to tell me something perhaps? I had no-one on my side of the lake - had seen this when driving the dirt road the Northern length of the lake. I lied about the whole lake; since, looking again across the width of the lake to the Lodge, I could just make out three, maybe four, stationary bank anglers off Green Lawn, looking all the world like J.S.Lowrie's Matchstick Men; albeit half-submerged [saves paint]. Essentially lifeless, but occasionally 'waving' back at me. Noticeably, they slowly reduced ranks, and within less than an hour I suppose, they had all motored off into the sunset. So nothing doing over there then!

Then, Winter timing of course, it started to get progressively darker. And as it did so, weird background noises started slowly to occur - floating somewhat eerily across on the wind. Some more discernible, some not. But of significance, came 'Fox-hunting' noises from the countryside beyond the direction and barrier of the dam. From nowhere, an absolute clamour of what I supposed to be foxhounds barking. In fact several sharp outbursts - then the unmistakable, rather plaintive and evocative sound of a huntsman's horn calling - feeding time perhaps, at a distant kennels for the same? A wild place this; with sunset nearly done and the night steadily descending. A colder edge on the evening wind accompanied, and did little to comfort. A wild place, here alone, particularly a deserted Butcombe side of the water and into the dark of the evening. Uncomfortably wild, atmospheric, and a tad eerie (Ooh Er Missus!). Easy then to imagine the souls and gaze of tormented 'fishermen past', legions deep, watching from the dark bushes behind you, where you currently swim your fly, in hope; as they did. I do not believe in ghosts - preferring spirits - but I could, in the set of circumstances experienced, be more easily persuaded in remote areas like these.

Back to the fishing, I watched as the light diminished and the wind dropped slightly. I hoped the fish that I merely suspected to be out there, might now be encouraged to venture closer-in to feed on the shallows. Should I stay, or leave? This was my only chance of 'rescuing' the day. Out there in the water, enacting my own imitation of 'Stick Man On a Dark Night' [thrifty use of black paint only], I concentrated afresh. And then, suddenly, no great distance out, appeared a slight tell-tale movement in the Ancient Mariner landscape of water. The light ripple parted, then dispersed, but still there came no response to my hastily offered fly.

Light was fading all too quickly as I sensed the slightest 'touch' or arrest in the retrieve of my fly and without the full take (hoped for) developing. Was it even a fish?, possibly a clingy weed frond? Again it happened - (nothing), and then almost immediately again. Nothing materialised but I sensed there were fish there, closely shadowing, following the fly. **And it was indescribably exciting.** A few more casts later, just lifting off - remembering at the very last moment to hang the fly for a few seconds - and, without a tangible responding pull, a fish was **suddenly on** as I finalised the lift! **Elation personified, after so much 'nothingness'**. A powerful, insistent life-force at the end of the line. Tearing leader and line off uncontrollably. And after several minutes of mayhem, at last, beached in the margins, a lovely rainbow of 3lb.4oz which was duly returned [as suitable thanks to the Lake Gods]. Almost in consecutive casts, more rushed and urgent now, I connected again with an equally powerful creature; huge runs, and thankfully beached a superb rainbow of 3lb 14oz. weighed later at home. And within that short 50 minute spell came a third fish; this time a very solid pull, to complete my luck.

It took me absolutely ages to get that last fish in - a tremendously strong fish by any measure. I just recall, in the heat of the situation, my floating fly-line [WF4F] ripping through the surface almost like a wire hawser, displacing water as if the line was a speedboat cutting through the waves. Some of the displaced water was thrown into the air and, catching the breeze momentarily, borne aloft in its trail. A spectacular excitement. The fish turned this way, then veered another, repeatedly, and all the time I was aware that I had partly de-barbed the hook on an earlier fishing outing and odds were it was likely to 'ping' at any moment. For me to even suggest I had any control over the fish at all would be lying. It went where it wanted, at lightning, break-neck speed, and I hung on for all my worth (praying to the Blagdon water-Gods for merciful closure). Equally aware, as with the two earlier fish, that I had no net with me, and would again have to try beaching the fish, carefully and slowly stepping backwards towards the shore. Even if contact were to remain that long! the situation was truly dire. No certainty of capture whatsoever. What a palaver and collection of basic errors!

Anyway, numerous runs followed, many way into my backing; several powerful, heart-stopping jumps (risky for the reasons given), and at certain times the fish running further and further into the backing because of the shallow water (ie. because it could not dive into appreciably deeper water, it legged it further and further away from shore). I owe a huge debt of gratitude to them thar watery Gods because with a huge measure of luck and said prayer, the beauty was drawn to the beach. A hen fish, a rainbow, weighed later at home, of exactly 5lb. My

last fish of the season. It had a big broad tail - perhaps, fittingly, acting as a suitable driver and inspiration to this one?

On my way out of a darkened Blagdon, indeed nervous that the entrance gate had not been closed already, I was as startled as the deer in my headlights looked when it froze, then bolted, across my oncoming path. At much the same time an owl screeched loudly, in anger and indignation, at his lunch-hour being rudely disturbed. Then a further, repeated strident cry, resounded menacingly in the night - more than a little spooky in the cold, soul-less air. As I neared the exit gate (still open I'm pleased to say), a cold gust of wind gathered and drove me forcefully on my way.

This is an unembellished account. Like it or not, **'There truly be ghosts out there'**! Honest.

But don't take my word for it

Blagdon Bill

HAPPY FISHINGBOB

PS.

Drunken Ice Fishing?

One day a rather inebriated ice fisherman drilled a hole in the ice and peered into the hole and a loud, echoing voice said, "There are no fish down there." He walked several yards away and drilled another hole and peered into the hole and again the voice said, "There's no fish down there." He then walked about 50 yards away and drilled another hole and again the voice said, "There's no fish down there." He took a swig then looked up into the sky and asked, "God, is that you?" "No, you idiot," the voice said, "it's the skating-rink manager."

