

## Stuart Illsley

Stuart Illsley runs Rutland Fishing (nothing to do with AW) based in Stamford, with a welcome philosophy - "if it ain't good enough for me then it ain't good enough for you". Spellcheck didn't like that! Personally, having been out of the fly fishing scene for the past decade, I have been surprised by the growth in synthetic materials applied to fly dressing and this meeting was to prove an ideal opportunity to get acquainted with some of them.

Stuart has fished Rutland for the past 25 years. His view was that the fishing was fantastic and steadily improved over the first 15 years but has suffered a decline in recent times. He attributed this to the loss of Roger Thom and the relocation of the lodge to Normanton. Someone had better let me know where it is! The stocking rate has decreased from 120,000 fish per year to 90,000. There is too much emphasis on catching stock fish. There is not the quantity of over-wintered fish. I am not in a position to comment.

What flies are popular? He should be in a good position to tell us as both an angler and a retailer. I recall John Veniard relating the monumental effect on sales of certain materials when Walker recommended a particular fly.

Apparently the Blobby is the fly to use (last year anyway!). This is simply tied with hot orange Fritz and tail. As someone in the audience remarked, it looked more like a Christmas decoration than a fly/fry imitation. I noted that one of the colours in the Rutland catalogue referred to "F1 orange" which presumably reflects the speed at which it is supposed to be retrieved! There are rumours of competitors collapsing through elbow fatigue. Stuart wondered if there was a Health and Safety issue?

Another fly which did well was the Humungus - spelling probably wrong - but this was another orange creation although at Rutland last year a brown version was better. This was a simple fly consisting of a brown tail copper wire body and a white hackle at the head. A B175 hook was preferred - a size 8 - which like the Drennan 8, presumably fits the International gauge.

Minkie type flies were good. These used natural mink strips - at least I assumed that accounted for the blue dun appearance? The strip of fur was about twice the overall length of the hook. One fly had a lime green body and a fluo-red head coated with Hard-as-Nails varnish. Another version had a gold Fritz body. This was said to be good for pike.

An alternative to natural fur was a synthetic polar bear hair sold as Polar Aire and available in half a dozen colours but not, apparently, black. Various lures with different Fritz bodies were shown. A well known salt-water fly - the clouser - uses this hair and by fixing a dumbbell weight about half way down (and above) the shank, it swims upside down, bumping the bottom. Remember to tie the wing in as a bib as well!

A strange but reputedly successful fly looked as though it was a nymph imitation unwinding itself - in fact I believe that was the origin. Basically it consisted of a standard nymph with two feelers probably five times the length of the hook, tied in

front and rear. The material used was Spanflex. Interesting with all the arguments as to whether the trout can see the line or not. What can it make of this creation?

Rutland Fishing does a comprehensive line in beads, cones and eyes. Chain beads are stainless steel and are unlikely to deteriorate in normal use. They also do a gauge to ensure that where necessary, flies conform with International rules.

Hooks are a specialty. We learnt that Japan hosts three major hook manufacturers, Hayabusa, Gamakatsu, and Daiichi (?). Kamasan is apparently a marketing name and any decline in their hooks ability to resist bending was attributed to the claim that they were now procured from Korea. As a metallurgist I have to add that it is nothing to do with the country of origin but the standard of production, notably the heat treatment. Given that a number of cars from Korea have an excellent reputation I can only assume that it is a problem specific to one particular outfit. I have to thank the crap hooks of UK origin in the 1960's which lead me to start fly tying in the first place!

Regarding the Hayabusa range, the 376 (2x wire 2x long shank) should be of interest to lure fishers whilst the 552 is the lightweight equivalent suited to nymphs, mayflies and daddies. The 373 is the standard fly hook whilst the 761 is a heavyweight version useful when the fly is required to fish deep. Another extra heavy grub hook is the Tiemco 2487 also available as the G version, which has a gilt finish.

We finished with a brief discussion on the present competition scene. There was a dislike of the system that rewards the rapid catching of fish in the minimum time, regardless of the quality of the overall catch. Fish are, it was alleged, being ripped to pieces. There was a secret society atmosphere amongst competitors. Competitions have become a professional circuit. The winners are almost a foregone conclusions. Why pay the entry fees? Apparently there has been a general decline in entries to competitions. On the other hand it must be remembered that the competitions are the lifeblood of many waters.

I found this an interesting evening. I should point out that although I have reported on modern materials, many other natural materials and kit (rods, reels, lines, clothes etc) is also available. The Rutland Fishing catalogue can be found on [www.rutlandfishing.com](http://www.rutlandfishing.com) and phone/fax orders are accepted on 01780 482901. The firm can also be found at Eyebrook on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays throughout the season.