

Charles Jardine – An inadvertent fly tying demo.

It was a bit of a rough night and I was expecting not only Charles to cry off but also the very minimal attendance. Not so. Thank you to Charles for enduring a horrendous journey from Birmingham and would you believe an all time record attendance of 30 members. Some pulling power Charles! He had less luck with the projector and despite advice to reboot, press F7 and even follow the screen instructions, he had to settle for his back-up routine, namely a fly-tying demo.

Pretty soon he was up and running. I noted that he was an advocate of Really Useful Boxes for storing materials. Staples are a good source in Cambridge. He had an interesting vice which incorporated an underslung head. I had previously thought this was a bit of a gimmick but it soon became apparent that it facilitated rotation of the fly about the same axis so the symmetry could be regularly inspected. I didn't know that Abel made vices but I expect they have the same price tag as their reels. However, I did see a similar *style* of vice on offer in the January Trout Fisherman, p.37, for £14.99! Charles used Tiemco bobbin holders which have smooth ceramic tubes to minimise the chance of thread breakage – a good idea because he advocated the use of Gossamer silk to assist the tyer to gain a feel for developing the necessary tension. He was also a fan of whip finishing tools.

Charles bemoaned the demise of natural materials in favour of synthetics – fritz and its derivatives for example. So what was his first example? A beadhead! In all fairness weighted flies were essential in this case originating from his experiences on the Little Red River in Arkansas where the water level was subject to rapid change as the result of hydroelectric power installations upstream. Here we have the Slim Controller tied on a short shank 12/14 to maintain depth in rapid riffles. The body was dubbed mink fur. He used a sticky wax on the thread, apparently a mixture of paraffin and beeswax, but bore no trade name. The fly featured a gold wire rib, which he fractured rather than cut in order to leave a none cutting edge. I think this method also generates a slight hook which renders unwinding from under the silk just that more difficult. A couple of turns of partridge hackle completed the fly.

We touched on GEM Skues who is generally acknowledged as the father of nymph fishing on chalk streams. He abandoned the northern minimalist style of fly tying and inserted a tail and a thorax – a move that spawned a whole new family of flies and inspired the likes of Sawyer. He tied a Greenwell's nymph adopting the standard ratio of 1/3 thorax 2/3 body. I don't seem to have made any notes on the tying technique but he did apply varnish to a few mm of thread *prior* to whip finishing. In that way the varnish had already seeped into the thread rather than sitting on the top as it would be if applied as the last step. A nice touch.

We started talking about the Countryside Alliance who has joined forces with the English Ladies Fly Fishing Association in order to launch Casting for Recovery. This is an outdoor-based programme specifically designed for women who have or have had breast cancer. Apparently the casting action provides just the gentle exercise to restore mobility in joints and soft tissues. It

is based on experience in the United States where the organisation was formed in 1996 and has helped with the rehabilitation of over 2000 women.

What next he wondered? How about a size 22 Muddler daddy long legs, cried Peter Reeves, clearly thinking it would be beyond even Charles Jardine. Well he was proved wrong. We learnt that Roe Deer was the best fur for the ruff. The fluff at the base was first removed using a comb which reminded me of the nit nurse. The wing was made with a few fibres of Elk hair. This is hollow and greatly assists floatability. The head was neatly trimmed to expose the hook point. It was an extremely impressive creation.

Members will have noticed the Boatfield brothers attending the meetings this year. They were introduced to the club through the Fenland Show at Stow-cum-Quy. Make an effort to speak with them as they do a lot of fly-fishing for coarse fish in the Cambridge area. In fact it is about time they gave a talk! It turned out that Oscar, younger brother of Alan, was about to be gifted a birthday trip to the Larkwood fishery near Bury St Edmunds. Could Charles create a deadly fly? A size 10 hook was selected. Danville's thread was used as the base because spinning the bobbin could open up the individual strands and the resulting flat section produced a much thinner body. A narrow pearl rib was used which had a pleasant green sheen. A couple of turns of red dubbing separated the body from the black thorax. The fly was finished with a couple of fluo green cheeks. Did it work?

A couple of other demos included a PTN and a Minkie. Charles tied the nymph with a single bunch of fibres and Hares body fur for the thorax. A dab of super glue over an even bed of silk on the hook shank provided an essential basis for a strong fly. The trick in achieving a thin regular body was to wind the fibres as a flat tape rather than a twisted rope. The Minkie was tied with a silver grey strip of fur over a lure hook wound with a flat lead ribbon. The colour of the fur was much less garish than plain white but then who knows what trout will prefer on the day? Remember to tease out the fur upwards when applying the ribbing in order to prevent excessive fur from being trapped onto the shank.

It was almost 11 pm when we had to come to a halt. There were so many areas we could have explored. His early days as a keeper and his artistic talents for example. A few Grayling flies maybe? Do we really need all the casts he describes in FF&FT? His praise for the 7-piece Orvis Frequent Flyer rod. The image I had gained from photographs in various magazines (take the current January edition of Today's Fly Fisherman for example) was that Charles was on his last legs. Far from it. Here was a sprightly lad, full of energy and extremely entertaining. I was secretly glad that his projector had failed to work, but don't tell anyone!

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