

Winter Evening Report

Steve Johnson – 17/11/16

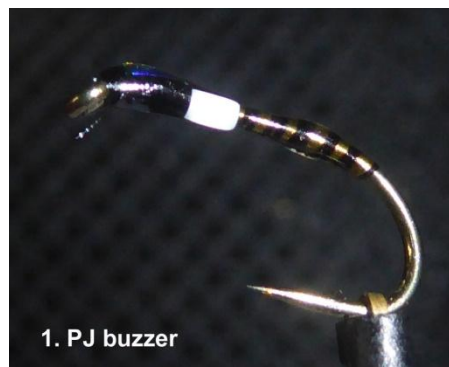
Fly tying with Steve Johnson November 2016

I am not sure that I know too much about Steve Johnson other than he has been a professional fly-tier for almost 20 years and his local water is Elinor. He can be found on Facebook but I could not find any contact details or photos of his products.



Steve ties almost all of his flies on Kamasan hooks with the 175 being the most common. To give you some idea of the scale of his enterprise he buys them by the thousand, not that they would last long a rate of 100 a day! The 160 model provides a longer shank and the 130 is a reproduction of the fabled Drennan wet fly hook. Now I cannot claim to report an exact tying of the various flies from the evenings demos but I can state that the photos are of the actual flies tied on the night and the descriptions of the sources of various materials is accurate.

We started off with a simple buzzer pattern which bears his name. One was immediately struck by the slimness of the body which was made of two separate strands of black and olive 70# UTC thread - called thread but actually ties flat. A couple of cheeks were tied in - I think from a crisp bag. The thorax was filled-in with UTC Mirage opal, which in his opinion was better than lurex as it maintained its colour. A couple of strips, one on top of the other, were used as wing cases. The shininess of the thorax was lost in the photo. The buzzer was finished with Funking Hard Varnish (<http://www.funkyflytying.co.uk>) which sounds to me very similar to Sally Hansen Hard-as-Nails' nail varnish.



Having warmed up his fingers, he then demonstrated tying a Cut Throat Buzzer. The first stage was to coat the hook shank red using a Sharpie permanent marker - never heard of them but apparently available at all good stationers. A black rib of 70# UTC thread was then tied two turns close followed by a gap. A cunning feature, proven to be effective when fishing, was the use of a cheek material composed of a red base covered in yellow dots.

I think he said the stuff came from Roast Chicken Walkers crisps packets. You will have to do a Sherlock Holmes in the local supermarkets!



Although SJ is a whip finish man he also likes to finish off with laser cured resin. I have heard some remain tacky but he claimed that Lightning UV cured resin from Jim Tuck (www.Fritz_N_Flies) did not suffer from this drawback. In fact he made sure that hook eyes were thoroughly cleaned by pulling a hackle stalk through them prior to zapping or they will be near on impossible to penetrate. The laser may have been the key item in achieving a rapid cure. It was in the form of a pen and used as a pointer during presentations. He claimed it was a 5mW blue (473nm) jobbie which if applied for too long to the fly, caused the resin to smoke! Out of interest Class II lasers with a power output above 1mW are not allowed to be sold in the UK. Another important trick was to chop the bristles on the brush down to half-length in order to avoid applying too much resin. Furthermore, turn the fly upside down so that surplus resin runs to the top of the thorax and forms a nice hump prior to zapping.

The next fly was a FAB. I knew this was probably an acronym and for the uninitiated it is – a Foam *rs*d Blob. A length of 5mm dia. booby cord was tied along the hook shank with a significant over hang at the rear. The body was overwound initially with lime green Gel Core Fritz from Fly Box (<http://www.flybox.co.uk/x>). Each turn was preceded with a lick of saliva presumably intended to improve the elasticity of the stuff? FAB's are usually 2-tone according to the desire of the angler - in this case it was bright red. I had not appreciated that the length of the tail should deliberately be left long to allow the angler to trim it according to the depth the fly was required to fish on the day.

The fuzziness of the fly can be improved by careful brushing with a toothbrush



We then had a momentary drift into the world of lures with a Firecap Booby which looked remarkably like a Cats Whisker to my untutored eye. The tail consisted of a bunch of white marabou fibres overwound with a lime green hackle (4mm) procured from Flybox. A white marabou wing was applied incorporating 4 ribbons of red Mirror Flash using the "pinch-the-loop" technique previously described. The head was finished with a fine red brush-like straggle. The booby eyes were prepared for cut lengths of rope impaled on a darning needle and throttled about their mid length with a few turns of Glowbrite No.4. I think he said that he

rounded the ends of the eyes prior to tying them in but instead of using scissors with curved blades he employed a Dremel tool fitted with a hollow cup-like grinding tool. This method was not only quick but was highly reproducible. I have looked for this cutting tool in the past with little success. Does anyone know the part number?



4. Firecap booby

The Matchstick was appropriately named although I was expecting a white body instead of which it consisted of natural pheasant tail fibres reinforced with a rib of 0.09 mm copper Microwire, again from Flybox. I was beginning to think PJ must be one of their sales agents! I recall that in the early days of reservoir trout fishing that if a personality was to recommend a particular pattern then Veniards (about the only supplier then) would register a peak in their sales for the required feathers/hair. The match head was wound with Glowbrite No4. However, it should not be varnished as it destroys the fluorescent properties.



5. Matchstick

Steve likes Hoppers. He used to cast them out and allowed to float until he found that they attracted the attention of trout when they sank and were retrieved figure of eight style. So why not tie them to sink in the first place and indeed, patterns abound with variously coloured bead heads. Instead, SJ abandoned seals fur for the body and used 3D micro straggle from Funky Fly Tying. He buys-in ready tied legs. Did you know that Hoppers have one "knee" whereas Daddies have two?



6. Hopper

Dabblers are a great favourite of Mick O'Farrell I always thought that the trick to tying decent patterns was to strip the fibres from one side of the hackle in order to avoid bulkiness in the body. SJ employed a body of Funky straddle and ties in bunches of claret mallard spaced around the head. I looked up MOF's book and indeed Mick uses a feather for the palmered body on top of a fine straggle base, he uses strips of mallard for the collar hackle just as SJ described. Look at p.202 in his book for detailed tying instructions. Although jungle cock eyes are specified for the cheeks, sunburst goose biots are a much cheaper and effective alternative. So, I didn't know much about Dabblers.



7. Claret dabbler

It was going to get worse! Steve went on to tie a Hares Ear much beloved by those seeking shrimp feeders at Grafham. I expected SJ to show us how to dub fur from a hares ear. No chance. The tail for starters was made up of a big blob of hare body fur with the underbody fluff pinched out. Similarly, the body was also made from hare fur and secured in place with a red holographic ribbing. The thorax was a thick rope of body fur, and finished with a thorax of pearl lurex and a large shiny head of tying thread. It bore no resemblance to any Hare's Ear that I have ever seen but according to Steve it looks just like a shrimp when wet! Trade Descriptions Act anyone!



That was a very interesting evening. I think we all marvelled at Steve's ability to tie such slim bodied flies considering the size of his fingers. In addition we also appreciated that he was indeed human in that he occasionally broke the tying thread! I liked the web sites he mentioned and also that as a result of his demo it made me dust off MOF's book and realise what an excellent read it is.

DG Jones November 2016