

INVICTA TRIP TO THE RIVER DEE



The Plan

Following an undeniably dry summer with river levels remaining low during the autumn we felt fairly safe from any risk of flooding when organising a grayling trip to the Dee at Llangollen. The response from members for the outing was poor this year (maybe they knew something that I didn't) and as it turned out they missed very little in terms of fishing, however what it lacked in fishing was made up for by being in good company.

Three members, Alan Briggs, Mac McDonald and myself (Paul Heavens) made the drive across to Llangollen where we met our Northern member Peter Oldham for breakfast at the Limekilns Café. Peter is a member of

the Corwen AC so is well experienced on the Dee so we had taken his advice and pre-booked our tickets on the Llangollen Maelor stretch.

The unpredictability of river levels



Peter led us to the unpronounceable Ddol-Isal beat which was a beautiful stretch with good access to the water with very little tree obstruction. However it was clear even before we reached the river that rain the previous couple of days had had an impact on levels with the river running fast, but clear. Wading was going to be for the brave (foolhardy). We spent most of the morning fishing various spots trying to find slightly quieter water which was fishable from the bank. Although it was possible to get into the water in many areas, the current was very strong and all

but Peter decided that a dunking in such conditions would soon see you a mile downstream! **(Photo- Mac battling the conditions)**. In fairness, Peter spends most of his angling these days on the Dee and is far more experience and fast current wading than most – maybe I'm just a wimp!

Any hopes of the river going down were thrown into doubt when heavy rain once again hit us during the morning. Close in Czech nymphing failed to work for any of us and Peter had a period of letting Northern spiders swing around but conditions were hard even for him; an upstream cast became a downstream drag within three or four seconds.

Fortune favours the brave



We met up for lunch and Peter and Alan decided that after eating they would try a more wooded area downstream. Peter being brave managed to find a spot where he could get into the water and fishing very heavy tungsten beaded nymphs took four grayling in a short period. He certainly deserved them, I could hardly move one leg in front of the other in the even in the margins. No one else was brave enough to attempt to battle the current.

One of Peter's four fish:



A days fishing however unproductive is never wasted and we did get a lot of experience in dealing with spate conditions even if all it proved was that I'm not good enough to deal with it!

Hoping for falling river levels

We headed to our hotel in Llangollen, The Hand Hotel is regularly used by anglers and is the headquarters for the annual Hankak grayling match. After a couple of pints in our hotel we had a short walk to a pub/restaurant beside the river to eat. It was clear that the next days fishing would depend very much upon the river level and a very slight fall (according to the internet) had been encouraging.



Sadly the next morning as we sat eating our breakfast overlooking the river it was clear that the level had risen further. Not only was the water up, but it had also coloured. However not to be defeated we headed for a different stretch which ran through the golf course.

Invicta Rambling Club

Conditions at the golf course were worse than we could have hoped for and very few swims were accessible due to the river level. We all tried several casts in those areas that were accessible but in reality it was going to be a lost cause with brown coloured spate water. So four (slightly less) enthusiastic anglers spent the morning walking the length of the golf course beat, fishing occasionally, having a good chat about fishing before deciding to call it a day and retreat to a local café for coffee and tea cakes.

From a fishing perspective it was not our most successful outing, but as usual the company and conversation made it an enjoyable trip. Next season we will think about going earlier when the river is more predictable and the brownies are still in season.