

Invicta Grayling trip – October 2019

Roger Featherstone organised the two day trip to the river Test, in Hampshire. The first day was to be spent on the Wherwell Estate, and the second day to be spent on the Timsbury Fishery. In addition to Roger, there were three of us in the expedition Noel Garner, Rob Mallendine, and Mac McDonald.

Wherwell

Roger has quite a laid back style of organisation, but we all managed to arrive at the same place at the Wherwell Estate fishery, early on a slightly chilly Tuesday morning. After a brief chat with the river keeper, we tackled up and off we went in our various directions, agreeing to meet back for lunch and review progress.

The day was fine and overcast, and warmed up as the day wore on. From downstream of the car park the large carrier splits into two carrier streams to explore. I turned right following the left hand carrier, making my way down to the bottom of the beats to fish my way back upstream toward the car park. I then followed the same procedure on the right hand carrier. The water level was a little low, due to a lack of rainfall, but nothing significant. There was a tricky, swirly, intermittent downstream breeze to contend with, which was a bit inconvenient, but mostly manageable. Bank side vegetation was a minor problem in places, but the only real impediment to casting was me.

Wading would have made life much easier; unfortunately this was banned due to a group of anglers deliberately wading through a taped off out of bounds area, which was a spawning bed. It is not clear whether this is a temporary, or a permanent ban.



There were plenty of visible trout, but Grayling were few and far between and very finicky. The fish were not rising or obviously feeding, just holding station, usually in small groups.

Due to the lack of depth and the overcast conditions I opted to fish with a single fly, starting with small dark floating flies, and after initial failure I went the other way and tried a few brighter floating flies, none of which tempted any fish, most of which I just spooked.

After that I switched to a size 14 copper headed PTN bouncing along the bottom and that seemed to be the correct offering, as I then proceeded to catch three Grayling. The first was closer to a giant gudgeon, but the second and third were more respectable, being approx 25.5cm and 30.5cm respectively. Flushed with my good fortune I retired for an early lunch.

After a leisurely lunch and a chat, we all went our separate ways again. This time I went left at the car park, following the larger carrier, fishing my way upstream. I initially fished with

the same copper head hares ear, but subsequently worked my way through a succession of nymphs with no success.

Although I must have walked a few miles during the course of the day, I never actually found the main river.



A Wherwell Grayling for Noel Garner

We all returned to the car park as dusk was approaching having had a pleasurable, but far from easy days fishing although we all caught. Noel had some success, taking a nice grayling photographed above.

We then retired to the White Lion Inn at Wherwell and enjoyed a relaxing meal, in good company.

Despite blanking in the afternoon, I was very content with my three Grayling in the forenoon.

Day 2,

Timsbury

Wednesday morning we all met up at the fishery in good time. This fishery is the main river Test, with a carrier stream running parallel on the far side of the field. The river is wide and has a good variety of deeps and shallows. There is no wading permitted on this fishery, but it is not necessary, and the banks are fairly high with the need for a reasonable length landing net handle. The bank side is well kept and there are no impediments to casting.

The weather was very mild, and overcast with the slight breeze in a favourable direction for casting. This was a bit of a blessing for me, as I have fished Timsbury unsuccessfully twice before in driving wind and rain, so at least I felt I had a reasonable chance this time; third time lucky.

Everyone moved off upstream, but I went in the other direction toward the road bridge and the deeper section at the downstream limit of the fishery, with the intention of fishing up the whole length of available river.



One of my four Timsbury Browns

There was a coarse angler sat by the road bridge, trotting for grayling. He hadn't been fishing long, and although he had no bites he had observed fish rising under the bridge. With this information I elected to fish a small black hawthorn type floating fly, with a flash of white. Every several casts I tried another variety of floating fly, but I observed no rising fish, so I switched to a Pheasant tail nymph. First cast resulted in a Brown Trout. I then proceeded to Nymph my way upstream to the end of the beats, catching three more Brown trout along the way, but no sign of Grayling.

We all met up again for lunch and our mornings fortunes had been mixed. After a leisurely lunch we all went our separate ways. I followed the carrier stream up and back and as no fish were sighted in the carrier stream I fished speculatively in likely looking spots, but without success. I returned to the road bridge end and spent the rest of the afternoon progressing back to the upstream end of the fishery. I continued to fish a single fly, working through a selection of buoyant and weighted nymphs until the light began to fail, but to no avail.

As we packed up we chatted to a couple of coarse anglers who had been trotting all day, static and roving, and although they had caught a number of trout, none had found the Grayling.

Overall I had four brown trout in the forenoon and no success at all in the afternoon, but I was very content.

We had an excellent two days fishing, and happily we all caught fish.