

# Don Stazicker

This presentation must have been one of the most unique Invicta events I can recall. Don is a retired dentist who is a highly experienced instructor and fly tyer based in the Derbyshire Peaks – a man who really knows his rivers. He has guided extensively in both the UK and USA, apart from his contributions to Trout and Salmon magazine. Peter, on the other hand, was originally an archaeologist, a historian, an ancient language expert and philosopher: I am uncertain how he transferred his skills to management at Unilever! Peter has spent 30 years of retirement honing his skills, particularly on the Wiltshire Wylde, and has contributed to Fly Fishing and Fly Tying.



Don and Peter combined to produce a book with the idea of helping fly fishers catch more fish by enabling them to see, with greater clarity, what really happens between the trout and flies both natural and artificial. They do this by some amazing photography above and below the water line over a period of four years using top of the range kit.

Rob Edmunds philosophy, according to his recent talk, is that fishing is not difficult This latest D&P offering goes to the opposite extreme. It lists 42 questions that may enter the thought process of an angler before he/she wets a line! They believe that anglers are frequently blinded by perceived “known truths” handed down by experts from a previous era who, in fairness, lacked modern kit to record what was actually going on. As a taster, Section 2 deals with the following topics:

What do trout eat?

How do they locate it?

How do they see it?

How do they target it

How do they get it into their mouths?

If they do not like it (the food) how do they eject it?

Are there new things we can imitate successfully in the trout’s larder?

Peter Thomas has provided a concise summary of the presentation as follows:

The most important thing to come out of the document is to reinforce the old standard of, 'Take time to sit and watch the river for activity', this is equally valid for any waters you fish.

Trout vision; most trout have lost their UV vision by the age of two, their resolution is about 15x worse than ours but they are better at resolving movements, the trout's 'window' is 2.2 X its depth with most people seriously underestimating fish depth due to refraction. Trout do seem to show binocular vision all but right up to their noses, they can see things just behind their gills and are most able to see things in the air above them and to take them.

Trout rises; do not read too much into them unless you are analysing at single frame resolution, not all rises leave a bubble behind, a figure of eight rise does not indicate a blue wing olive has been taken, a clean rise to take a greenfly may only be two inches across which is easily missed in rain and lastly the flies wing does not flag the arrival of the fly in the trout's window.

You must identify what fly is being taken by what fish as they may not be feeding on the same thing, an example given revealed in a hatch of four species that even mayflies were being ignored in favour of Iron blue Duns. When food is plentiful on rich alkaline waters fish may be very picky feeding on one specific species or stage, on food scarce acidic water or less rich alkaline waters fish are likely to be more catholic but it's not written in stone. Splashy risers may well not be coming from deeper depths, it may well be a second trout has come on the feed in the area and competition is a foot; use it to advantage cast between them. Trout when taking a surface fly do not suck it in as they do a nymph subsurface, they open their mouths around it and water floods into the lower jaw like a plug hole and washes the fly in which may be unintentionally be ejected by water squirting out as the fish closes its mouth.

Seeing the fly, a trout only sees a surface fly when quite close, it will see an emerger which appears twice the size from double or so the distance but a nymph in the body of the water is readily seen further afield and a fish may move 5-6 x as far or more to intercept it.

Matching the hatch, well more a case of matching what? The perfect dun may quite often be ignored as fish may be taking shuck's which are very visible or imperfect flies of one form or other for example emergers which appear a bigger mouthful, cripples struggling to hatch, dead flies in various states of partial submersion or spent flies of one shape or other and lastly 'bouncing' flies that are warming up flight muscles. How long to hatch, the example used was a may fly, it was a classic emerger for 0.2-4 seconds and all was over in 2.4 seconds leaving a fish short on thinking time. Looking up through the water at an emerger it shows a distinct halo as does the residual shuck possibly a trigger point to capitalise on, an ethereal pale grey small Shipman's buzzer in the surface is a good shuck imitation. So called 'thick water' is often slow water with a very scummy dirty surface which sticks to flies perhaps degrading their water proofing making dead and crippled flies look tatty even pulling them into curled up shapes. So perhaps the best match is an imperfect tatty fly of the correct size and colour in the surface looking to be easy pickings as if its going nowhere in a hurry.

Missed the take, really, perhaps the fish missed the fly or rejected it at the last moment, oh so wrong fly then; no think **DRAG** and were not cross dressing here, its un natural movement of the fly it looks wrong try again and get it right.

This is the story so far, expect it to change with the new technology to come...

If all else fails buy the book, "Trout and Flies – Getting Closer" which is available through Amazon as a Kindle edition for a mere £9.99. It is not just text (350 pages) but is interspersed with still shots and videos. The photos of the various flies, natural and artificial, are superb and further enhanced by their display on a large PC screen. Definitely a top buy even if some of the opinions may be contentious.

There is quite a lot of information on the photographic kit and techniques employed. If you are interested in a bomb-proof versatile camera capable of a multiple of uses including underwater shots, they recommended a Olympus Tough G-5, which has now been replaced with a new model, the G-6, which is currently £335 on Amazon.

Regarding Don's guiding skills, he has access to a stretch of the Derbyshire Wye which could be open to a group of 4 members at a time. You never know, you could become film stars!

*DG Jones & Peter Thomas Feb 2020*