

John Poote – November 2024 meeting

John Poote, from the Chiltern Group of the Fly Tyers Guild, was our November guest. With 40 years fly tying experience behind him we were sure to pick up some useful tips and so it proved.



John soon set up with his gear and a projection system. The vice looked a bit strange to me but what do I know? It was a custom-made device made by Chris Skillen which combined rotary and spinning actions. The demonstrations using the spinning action to generate a dubbed body impressed the audience. He had a recent preference for hooks made by Fario, shared by some Invicta members. I noted that his hook box featured many different brands.



Threads included the traditional Uni-Thread 8/0, various Semperfil products and nano silk. The latter is manufactured by a gel-spun route which produces an extremely strong but fine thread which John considered beginners would find useful as it was difficult to break! 30 Denier was considered the preferred diameter but even this is fine and could cut through materials. It is very smooth and possesses limited stretch which may make securing materials more difficult than usual. A base layer of thread was secured to the hook shank with super glue but flies were finished with UV resin. The resin used by John was marketed by Wifreo but a source in the UK was not identified: the dispenser was impressive in delivering tiny droplets. The Wifreo web site makes interesting reading notably re prices! Club order anyone? It was vital to use a UV curing light with the appropriate intensity and wavelength in order to avoid a sticky coating. Other tools included scissors by Kindale and, even after 40 years' experience, he was still using a whip finishing tool! Materials were procured from Steve Cooper amongst others. We had the feeling that visiting the BFFI annual show was vital in topping up supplies at very reasonable prices.



OK, here is the bad news - my notes on the fly tying were totally inadequate. Even the photos left something to be desired. My apologies to readers and especially John Pote. I really was paying attention but I was overcome by watching the technique and photographing the flies at the same time!



I am not sure what the first fly was called but it was used as a demonstrator of the twirling facility on the vice for producing a dubbed body, in this case Hares Ear. I have seen this feature on many upmarket vices but had no idea, until the night, just how effective it was.

Fly number 2 was a black Muskins. We were warned that the black dyed pheasant tail fibres could be brittle but there was no evidence for this with Johns careful manipulation. The fly was finished with white Antron breathers.

Fly number 3 was a Nemo. I am fairly sure (!) that a body of pheasant tail was laid before overwinding with open turns using red holographic tinsel. The thorax was constructed with micro synthetic peacock herl obtained from the Celtic Blob Company. The collar hackle was purposely sized to be just short of the hook gape. I think this was the pattern where John used a piece of cycle valve rubber to shield the hackles when the finishing resin was applied.



I have little recollection of fly number 4. It may have been a pattern which used a dubbing brush, illegal in some competitions because it contains a metal core.

Finally, we were running out of time. I think the use of traditional dubbing loops was curtailed in favour of fly number 5. I am not sure what it was called but it was hot orange and resembled a Cats Whisker with a marabou tail, an orange glister spun onto a tying thread for the body, and a front “hackle” constructed from a wound zonker strip. The fly was finished with a brass bead at the head.



Alas, time was up!

I found the demo quite informative. I especially liked the concentration on “real” flies rather than crude imitations of worms suspended under a float! I remind members that the club started from a fly-tying evening class under the guidance of local tackle dealer at the time, Les Beecroft. There was a real battle between traditionalists and the lure bashers. Les, to his credit, focussed almost entirely on traditional flies such as Greenwells, Butchers, Mallard and Clarets, and, not forgetting the Invicta. At the time, there was an evening rise at Grafham and there were “seasons”: anglers typically started with black buzzers and progressed as the hatches changed through the sedges and often back to buzzers at the end of the year. Something is amiss at the reservoirs and I look forward to the next meeting when John Wadham will be addressing some of these issues on Rutland Water.

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