

Cressbrook & Litton Flyfishers

Fishing Report

16 April 2016

Grandfatherly duties having prevented my attendance on Opening Day, I had fully intended to wet a line the following day. However, events once again conspired to frustrate me and I ended up spending most of the afternoon dealing with three poachers who had been spotted blatantly fishing at Rock Face. Despite all the good work done with the Rural Crime Unit by Assistant Keeper Chris Thirtle, we had the misfortune to come up against an Inspector who refused to accept that poaching is a crime and would not send out a patrol car. The Environment Agency were unable to send anyone either, so we had to deal with the issue ourselves. "We" being the Head Keeper, the EHK and John Whittle, with the Immediate Past President and me in attendance. I have to say I was mightily impressed with the way Chris Dore dealt with the men, in a firm but non-aggressive manner. We had to listen to the usual pathetic excuses, such as they didn't know it was private (despite standing next to a sign saying private fishing), they hadn't caught anything (OK, what's in this bag then? Oh, a fish!). I suspect they would have been more difficult had the Head Keeper not been recording matters on his chest-mounted GoPro camera.

Later that week, the weather improved and the river was at perfect height and shiny as a new £1 coin. It was a little too bright to expect any Large Dark Olive activity but there were a few stoneflies about by the time I started at New Bridge. The surface was unbroken by rising fish but it seemed sacrilege to be hurling ironmongery around on such a wonderful morning. I began with a size 16 Plume Tip which bobbed jauntily down the riffle, only to be engulfed before it had gone a couple of yards. This was a lovely wild brown, just under a pound and as bright as the river. Buzzards wheeled above me, joined by a raven, taking advantage of the updraft from the ridge. Chiffchaffs called out repeatedly and somewhere in the wood a woodpecker was

laughing. The day was already perfect, and it was only mid-day.

Resuming business a few yards further upstream, I spotted my first rise in my peripheral vision. I stood and watched the spot intently while I dried the fly with a dusting of Dry Shake. The current was being deflected by a kink in the bank and the fish was lying about a foot down in the quieter water between me and the main current. I thought it might be a rainbow and the next rise confirmed it as I caught a glimpse of its side. I sent the fly out with a bit of a wiggle in the line and it dropped perfectly on the seam. Despite having that feeling of absolute certainty that the fish would take, I still managed to pull the fly out of its mouth before it could turn down with it. I hadn't felt it so I gave it a second chance. Up it came again and this time I gave it plenty of time before setting the hook. A rainbow of around 18 inches, two blue dots revealing it as a 2017 stockie.

Mark Ritson joined me later and we decided to have a look at Beat 8. We waded under the bridge and found a couple of fish rising at Mayfly Corner. One was moving about confidently in the back eddy and another was rising in the main stream. Mark chose the tricky one in the back eddy, while I moved round to the stump to try the other with a Parachute Adams. This turned out to be a rainbow, a wild fish this time, a pound or so. There were plenty of fish in evidence as we walked downstream and, pausing to fish up the Magpie Sough stream, I brought up a very good fish lying under the bank but we parted company before I needed to unship the net. Mark, meanwhile had found himself distracted by the Magnificent Seven, which were all rising to something tiny under the bushes. He'd pretty much exhausted his fly box on them. One brownie in particular was blatantly rising in the middle of the river despite our obvious presence on the seat. This fish was no more than 6 inches below the surface and consequently its window of vision was probably too small to reveal us. However, this meant the fly had to be bang on target to be seen and, delivered without drag. Most casts were on target but this fish had seen it all before and just dropped down with the fly on its nose until drag set in. Whereupon it reverted to its original station and continued rising. Mark passed me his rod with a look of "Let's see if you

can do any better then!" I can't say that I hooked it first cast but it wasn't long before I was steering it over the net! I wanted to pump this fish out to see what was causing all the fuss but the long winter break meant that I had forgotten which pocket contained the little pump-thingy. It was taking too long so we put him back. The mystery was solved for us later with the arrival of Don "Sherpa" Stazicker, staggering up the bank with his usual mountain of kit which would have made a Royal Marine blanche. Earlier he'd been filming a rising trout in similar circumstances and when he'd got enough in the can he proceeded to catch it and pump it out. Large numbers of microscopic black beetles! Of course, obvious!

Looking at the catch return stats I could see that a lot of fish had been taken on Beats 1 & 2 and so I was not surprised to hear from Hilary



Langan that she'd been up there. She told me that she had hooked a small rainbow and was just bringing it to hand when it was taken by a huge brownie. The fish refused to let go and eventually she was able to net both. The rainbow was none the worse for the experience and both fish were returned safely. The big one was about 20 inches and you can see from the size of its mouth that it could easily have swallowed the rainbow.

On Good Friday I was sitting on a stile, contemplating the river whilst trying to thaw out, when an email pinged on my phone. It was from Mike Hallam, who'd been on the river the previous day. He had fished up into the Dale and had only two fish for his efforts by the time he'd reached the Stones. Thinking that he might as well call it a day, he had one last look

at the Island Pool. A few olives drifted by and within minutes the head of the pool was alive with rising fish. He tied on a Sparkle Dun and after 30 minutes had landed 5 fish, the best a brown about 16 inches. The rise lasted about 45 minutes in total. Spurred on by this, I decided to carry on fishing even though it had started to rain and, if anything, it was even colder. I rang the changes, alternating between a Plume Tip, a Parachute Adams and a Klinkhammer. All took fish but the Klink was the best, bringing up some really good fish, including a wild rainbow in its spawning colours, about 15 inches.

The forecast for the week ahead is for more of the same, so I shall be out on the river come what may. These conditions are ideal for Large Darks and Iron Blues and if the latter are on the menu you can fill your boots!

Tight lines!
David Marriott