

Cressbrook & Litton Flyfishers

Fishing Report

18 April 2018

It's been a long cold Winter and Spring has been even worse. I couldn't summon up any enthusiasm for grayling this winter and judging by the returns it seems that I was not alone. But as I write Spring has arrived, the primroses are out and the leaves are starting to appear on the hawthorns.

Opening Day came with several inches of snow, with only a few hardy souls braving the elements. Fish were caught however, first blood going to Assistant Keeper Chris Thirtle. As is often the case with snow at this time of year, it soon cleared and we were able to reconvene our postponed Opening Day celebrations on the following Saturday. Perhaps there weren't the usual numbers queuing for bacon sandwiches this year but this enabled our Executive Head Chef to spend more time exchanging pleasantries with members and upbraiding his Mushroom Fettler (Don Stazicker) and Bacon Wrangler (me) for not following his instructions to the letter.

Once the barbecue had been cleaned and the rubbish bagged up we were given leave to go fishing and at the prime time of 1 o'clock I was able to start operations at the head of President's. My intention was to fish the run in, then round the back of the Island finishing up in Harry's. The river was still high but reasonably clear. Almost immediately I spotted a Large Dark Olive fluttering across the river. I needed no second bidding and on went a Parachute Adams - quite a big one on a size 14 - the clue is in the name. A good fish usually lies close to a piece of large woody debris on the true right bank and after a few minutes of intense observation I thought I saw a fish turn in the tongue of current formed by the structure. I flicked the Adams a yard or so above it and before it had time to drag a big head came out and took the fly in one lovely fluid movement, making it easy for me to set the hook. It was a good fish but, unusually for my first fish of the season, it stayed on despite getting below me for most of the fight. A lovely wild brown on a dry, with my first cast. It doesn't get much better than this!



The push of the river was too much for the back of the Island, producing only one splashy rise with which I failed to connect so I carried on up into Harry's. Again, the river felt too pacy to favour the usual lies, so I concentrated on the quieter water near the true left bank. I must have been distracted for I missed a good rise. I didn't feel anything so I rested the fish for a few minutes before I covered the spot again. Up he came, with a similar outcome. One last try and amazingly I had him on. It is very rare, I find, for a trout to come to the same fly three times in succession, but then it is early season and I doubt he'll make the same mistake again. This fish was a rainbow, a one-spotter from the 2016 stocking, showing that he had survived two winters since he went in.

Later that week I was invited to brunch at the Locked Bridge by the EHK and Stuart Crofts. The weather was cold and drizzly but I had great hopes of a good hatch of Olives later on. I left them at 12 o'clock and made my way down to the Roadside Pool, taking a wide detour into the field to avoid disturbing the fish from the path. Getting into the river just above the cow drink I was pleased to see Large Dark Olives already on the wing. The P Adams remained on my cast from the previous visit. Within moments a fish rose mid-river and then another showed a little way downstream of the first. Covering the lower fish first he took straight away but I'd made a mess of the hook-up and he came off after a few moments. Turning my attention to the midstream fish I waited until he rose again to fix his position. A couple of casts later he was on, a nice brownie of around 12 inches. More fish began to show leaving me spoilt for choice. I was feeling confident that a good bag would follow but of course I then proceeded to fluff the next three offers. I felt that a change of fly might be appropriate and thought I might try Crofty's LDO Emerger, the one with the cranked shank and CDC stub wing. This fly is always good in a hatch when the fish often prefer the more vulnerable emerger. I had been neglecting the quiet water under my bank so I tried a cast close in. A little wild rainbow came from nowhere and snaffled the fly straight away. Another slightly bigger fish came from the quiet water adjacent to the island with the goose nest but annoyingly it came adrift. Despite a patient wait I saw nothing else rise and concluded that the rise must be over. Accompanied by a lot of hissing from the gander I made it back to the bank and decided to call it a day.

Following the success of the Adams I tied up a batch in sizes 13 and 15, among them some with purple dubbed bodies. This variant is known as the Purple Haze, a name that surely Peter Hayes would have loved to come up with - but then he never did! I'm not sure why it works but it does and it can be deadly during a hatch of Olives.

The following Saturday I was out again and once more I was favoured with the damp and overcast conditions beloved of Olives. This time I was at New Bridge and my first choice was that P Haze. The river was too high to fish the bottom of the beat effectively so I got in above the weir. I didn't have to wait long before a fish showed itself, a deep silver flank indicating a good rainbow. A few scoping casts and then he was on, a very fit fish around a pound and a half. Casting speculatively, another fish came to the fly just as I was lifting off. Before I could set the hook properly he'd let go. Looking upstream I saw another fish rise in between two faster currents, which necessitated a high rod to avoid drag. After several casts I had him, a beautiful wild brown, maybe 12 ounces. As I worked my way up to the head of the pool I found myself in silver paper water, making the white post difficult to see. I found a black post Klinkhamer in my fly patch and thought I might give this a try. This stood out wonderfully well and it didn't take long, quartering the water, to take another two fish, one following the fly down for an age before it took. Exciting stuff!

We can expect more Olive activity during the next few weeks, mostly early to mid-afternoon. Don't be a fair-weather fisher otherwise you will miss the best of the rises. Also bear in mind that these Olives have spinners that crawl down structure to lay their eggs before letting go and drifting in the water column. Traditional North Country Spiders such as the Partridge & Orange will take fish in these circumstances, as will Crofty's Organza Sunk Spinner. Keep an eye out for the Hawthorn Fly towards the end of the month - although it occurs to me that it might be a little later this year because of the late Spring.

Tight lines!

David Marriott