



The Grayling Society

Newsletter

Area 8 Spring 2023 (No. 63)

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

**WORK FILLS YOUR POCKETS
FISHING FILLS YOUR SOUL**

News From The Front

**Oliver Edwards
1938—2023**



It is with deep regret that we mark the passing of the incomparable Oliver Edwards, who passed away at the age of 85 after suffering from Parkinson's disease for several years.

Born in Rothwell in May 1938, Oliver was brought up in a keen angling family and started his fishing career as a small boy of five. His father, a greengrocer, was a keen coarse angler, and his uncle Harry was a renowned match angler and a member of the Leeds All England Championship Team for over ten years. Like his father and uncle, the young Oliver competed on the Northern Working Men's Club match fishing circuit and was included in the roster for many of the big "open" matches such as the Leeds, York and Bradford, as well as various Trent and Witham "opens".

Similar to many boys growing up in the late 1940s and 50s, the youth hostel and camping movement took the teenage Oliver Edwards from the urban city region into the heart of the Yorkshire Dales. And years later, he recounted that it was on one of these camping trips that he first came across a Wharfedale fly-fisherman, fishing at Loup Scar on the River Wharfe above Burnsall.

After leaving school at 15, he gained an apprenticeship as an engineering draftsman, and through work became friends with the late Angus Owen Smith. This friendship that Angus Owen Smith would shape the future course of our sport by inspiring the youthful Oliver Edwards to put down the "match" rods and take up the sport of fly-fishing in 1953. A year later, he would also take up fly-tying and, as they say, the rest is history.

During these formative angling years, the two friends would take frequent bus trips into the Dales to fish the area's famous rivers. With places such as Glasshouses on the River Nidd, and Bainbridge on the River Ure being amongst their favourite destinations.



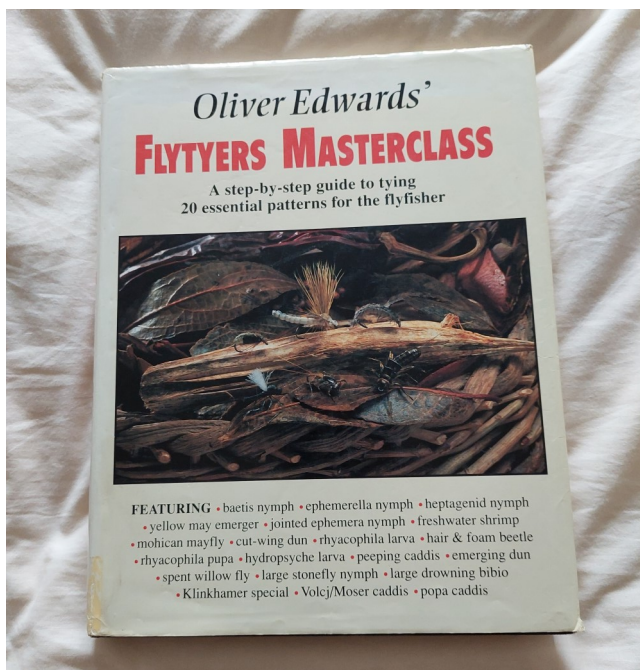
In the mid-1980s, when the tying and fishing of traditional North Country wet flies largely forgotten by a generation of modern northern anglers. Oliver Edwards would start to re-popularise the northern wet fly tradition through a series of authoritative and unrivalled magazine articles which detailed the tying and fishing of these age-old patterns. And as if to cement his reputation as a master fly-tyer, he won the Flytyer of the Year Competition in 1980 and 1981. And in 1982 was made a competition judge.

Cont;

In 1987 he was approached by the London publishers Andre Deutch to write a book about imitative fly tying which he refused because of an unworkable lead time. However, a year later he was approached again by a different publisher, Merlin Unwin, to do a similar imitative fly-tying book, but this time without a time limit. It proved to be one of the pivotal moments in the history of fly-tying. As Oliver embarked on a five-year period of writing, tying and revising.

Recounting the writing of Masterclass years after its publication. Oliver recounted of how, after a couple of years, he realised his illustrative technique had changed through the course of writing the book. So much so, that he felt the need to redraft all the combined illustrations, which added a further two years to the books composition!

Employed in the engineering sector since leaving school at fifteen. He was made redundant as a senior design draughtsman in 1991. Given his age and with little prospects of re-employment in a recession hit industry. With encouragement from his wife Hazel, the late Alan Bramley (MD of Partridge hooks.) and his old sparring partner Dr Malcolm Greenhalgh, he bravely decided to see if it was possible to earn a living from fly-fishing. It was, in his words "A kind of re-birth," and would reshape the course of modern river fly-fishing and fly-tying worldwide.



Picture by Brian Clarke

Finally, in 1994, the critically acclaimed Oliver Edwards' Fly Tyers Masterclass was published simultaneously in the U.K. and U.S. by Merlin Unwin Books and Stoeger Publishing Inc.

The Masterclass illustrated and encompassed his philosophy and technique of tying imitative flies, which he himself described as "super impressionistic". The patterns encompassed a series of trigger points found within the bodies of the natural insects which he had over time observed. Based on size, shape, proportion and silhouette, each of the twenty patterns contained within the Masterclass is the perfect distillation of years of painstaking thought and technique. And its publication marks a defining moment in the history of fly-tying and cements Oliver Edwards' legacy as one of the finest contributors to the sport of fly-fishing.

Aside from producing one of the greatest books on fly-tying, he was also a leading contributor to numerous worldwide fly-fishing and fly-tying magazines. His articles informing a generation of modern fly-fishers and fly-tyers, and in the process leading to an upsurge in the interest of aquatic entomology, and its replication through sympathetic and suggestive fly patterns.

Besides his sublime skills as a fly-tyer, Oliver Edwards was also a master of fly-fisher representing England on three Home Internationals, and four World Fly-fishing Championships. This mastery of rod and line, coupled with his effortless ability as a teacher. Led him to being approached by Orvis in 1995, to co-run their Yorkshire fly-fishing schools with his old school friend Peter Moore.

Firmly established as one of the most influential fly-tyers of his generation, and a fly fisher of international regard. He was approached in 2000 by the London based production company DGP to present a series of pioneering fly-fishing and fly-tying films. These films are rightfully considered to be some of the finest fishing films ever produced. And superbly capture Oliver Edwards in his natural environment: on the riverbank and behind the vice.

Rightfully regarded as one of the true innovators of fly-tying. Oliver Edwards was nevertheless firmly rooted in the centuries-old north country wet fly tradition. And rightfully stands beside his two heroes, Harfield Edmonds and Norman Lee, as amongst Yorkshire's most valuable and influential fly-fishers. Like them, his knowledge of the natural world, and the insects he sought to replicate, coupled with a complete understanding of fly-tying materials, led him to become one of our sports most inspirational figures.

His contribution to fly-fishing and fly tying on rivers will undoubtedly go down as a milestone in the sport. And rightfully compared to the works of Pritt, Edmonds & Lee, Halford and Skues.

Robert L Smith
1/05/23

Oliver on his 80th birthday visiting Cressbrook and Litton Fly fishing Club



Oliver with his Birthday Pork Pie



Oliver giving advice on how to do it



Oliver sorting out kick samples

This was the last time Oliver visited us and was a day to Remember.

A Gentleman, Naturalist, Entomologist, Teacher, Fly dresser, Author, Angler, Story teller, a consummate Yorkshireman.

Oliver you will be missed by us all, but your legacy will live on. RIP old friend.

Brian

Olivers funeral will be held on the 16th of May at Cottingley Crematorium, Leeds

Note

Pictures used are from various Facebook entries except Olivers Masterclass book

What is Conservation

Some months ago Ron Taylor (The Grayling Society Conservation Officer) sent an e-mail to the membership what we as individuals can do to conserve what remaining rivers and the wildlife we have left. It got me thinking about what people think conservation is and how we as individuals may do to help with this problem

Ever since I was a lad, I had 3 major fears,
1) that water becomes scarce and dirty
2) that song birds don't sing
3) the swifts will stop coming to this pleasant land

It seems as if my fears are starting to become a reality. The summers are getting hotter and longer, the population has risen tremendously and everyone has a plethora of white goods. Agriculture, water companies, local councils, angling clubs and individuals yes including some of us, get rid of things other than poo or pee down the toilet or leave articles by the river. Whether it be the fly stuck in the tree, empty can of sweetcorn or the kilo and half of ground bait we have just chucked into our local carp lake. All these actions do have an adverse effect on the rivers and consequently on the environment.

A lot of song birds are dying due to the long hot summers, its reported that Avian flu is rife and birds are falling from the sky, I do know, that I'm not woken up any more by the sweet song of a song thrush or blackbird. The swift is in steep decline maybe due to a number of issues, modern ways of building where the birds cannot find a nook or cranny in amongst the bricks of the old terraced houses or is it the decline of the insect life. I don't see as many birds on my local walks by the river. Gone are the days when motorists had to stop to clean the windscreen of insects. Why its happening? I don't know. Lets think about it for a few moments what effects does all this have on our angling, what if anything can we do about it and do we even care about what type of world our children and grandchildren will inherit?

Plastics, try and restrict their use. I'm trying to stop using plastics, by using natural materials, my catch rate has not altered, I still don't catch anything. I have just about got rid of my carbon rod and plastic lines, and have gone over to cane and silk with the exception of leader material. The use of horse hair as a leaders is an ongoing exercise which I'm experimenting with. Even tungston does not seem to be without its problems, but it seems better than lead. I do not travel independently in a car any more than 60 miles round trip to fish. Any more than that, it is car sharing, with at least one other person. So to minimise the problem, take a mate fishing and don't go as far. Of course plastic is not only found on hooks and clothing it from run off from roads, tyres and all kinds of things.

Whilst Monofilament or fluorocarbon? I cant find out much about these, only to say that fluorocarbon line has a shelf life of about twice as much as monofilament so by that reckoning it will stay in its natural form in the river longer than monofilament. Please recycle your line responsibly as I'm sure most of us do!

The recording of grayling catches up and down the country are very important, especially if collated alongside the Water Quality Monitoring Network and the Anglers River-fly Monitoring Initiative or some other scheme. Appointments of bio-diversity officer/conservation need to be mandatory for clubs and a condition of membership to the Angling Trust. I wrote in an earlier piece that if you do nowt, nowt gets done and that I think that is some of the problem. Rivers and the environment are too important to ignore and until we actually put our money where our mouths are, the degeneration of our planet will carry on. We can all do our bit. Starting at grass roots. Don't be afraid to speak your mind if you think your club (or any other establishment) is abusing the river in any way, you have to speak out and take action. I've started to put local pollution scares on the community

Facebook, it gets the community sitting up and talking about the problem. One angling club barred me from their Facebook because I spoke up about their lack of fish welfare and lack of biosecurity. If your fellow anglers have any guts about them they will also speak out. Although I've found that a lot of anglers are like kippers. I get quite annoyed when I ask anglers to support their local river, mine as a lot of you are probably aware is the South Yorkshire Don. Only to be told that they go on working parties or do the monitoring on their river (some do monitor on other rivers). Rivers are living moving things they ebb and flow into other rivers, so a dirty stream that goes into say the Derbyshire Derwent will have an effect on the river Trent. So in my mind every river is of equal important, but there are what I term glamorous rivers and others. It seems to depend on how much you pay or not.

Dogs and the environment, this one will upset a lot, but if we are looking at causes and maybe remedies then no point looking at only the ones that make nice reading. Make sure you pick up your dog poo, when I started fishing my father made me make sure there was no litter in my peg at the completion of fishing. Not only did he make me pick up mine, but any other that happened to be there. Its a long list and I not mentioned about the rubbish that big business and other companies that contribute to pollution. As a northern guy Friends of Bradford Beck are my look too organisation, (we in Sheffield are in the process of organising one, no anglers have volunteered yet) as mucky rivers also need to be pollution free, not just the glamorous ones.

John Blewitt



Needle fly Adult

Please Help

The Grayling Society now have a “Catch Return” page on their website

www.graylingsociety.net

The Society has an ongoing project to monitor the health and distribution of grayling populations in Britain.

If you could spare a minute each time you catch a grayling please go to the website and register your catch.

Thank You

HELP NEEDED

Adult caddisflies in our British waters are very much misunderstood by fly-anglers and back in 2006 I had a crazy plan to help improve our knowledge and awareness of these fascinating insects. But, I needed data of where and when our different adult caddisflies are on the wing all over Great Britain. This was the birth of the Adult Caddisfly Occurrence Scheme whereby I ask anglers to collect, and then send me, adult caddis whilst they are fishing. Since then I have had samples from every corner of the UK and analysed over 17,000 adult stage caddisflies, each and every one identified and recorded on an ever increasing database. Many of the volunteers who collect these samples have become somewhat addicted – and a good few are from the Grayling Society, yes you know who you are! However, after around 15 years, I thought it was time to mention this all again and see if there are any other potential collectors out there

This is not a difficult task and if you would like to help then please just drop me an email with your name and address. I can then send you half a dozen sample tubes along with some simple instructions. Then, during 2022, if you see what you think is any type of adult caddisfly (and we have over 200 different species here in the UK) on or near the water while you are fishing any stream, river, pond, reservoir or lake here in the UK then I want you to catch a sample and send it to me. At the end of the year, when I have checked all the samples, I will send you all the results and you can see for yourself the species names of caddis that you sent me. Then, if you want to complete the loop, you could try and find these species names in your fishing books and learn more on the best fly patterns to imitate them.

Thank you

Stuart Crofts

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Friends of Area 8 Shops



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Friends of Area 8 Clubs

River Wye

Cressbrook and Litton Flyfishers Club

Secretary; David Marriott
Email: djmarriott1@icloud.com
Website: www.clff.co.uk

Peacock Fly Fishing Club

River Keeper; Jan Hobot
Email: wyriverkeeper@sky.com
Website: www.haddonhall.co.uk

River Derwent

Waltonian Angling Club

Secretary; Tony Randell
Email: secretary@thewaltonian.co.uk
Website: www.thewaltonians.co.uk

Cromford Flyfishers Club

Secretary; Vic Beresford
Email: vicberesford@hotmail.co.uk
Website: cromfordflyfishers.co.uk

RECYCLE YOUR FISHING LINE

What has this got to do with line recycling?

The amount of line UK anglers send to landfill or incineration every year would reach to the moon.

384,400 km

How do I recycle my fishing line?

Step 1

To find out where your local recycling point is you have two options;

Visit the Anglers National Line Recycling Scheme Facebook page where you will find a list of all participating shops/venues.

Visit our website www.anglers-nlrs.co.uk

Step 2

Keep your old monofilament and braid separate and take it along to your chosen recycling point. The shop may have separate bins for braid and mono but if they have a single bin please keep the braid bagged and place this in the bin.

Step 3

No recycling points near by? You can post it to us via ANLRS, c/o Tools n Tackle, 11 Bridge St, Newhaven BN9 9PH.

How is it recycled?

The waste line is sent to a recycling processor that returns it to a useable material. Recycled nylon is currently used to make traffic cones, wetsuits and sports clothing.



"Something the whole of angling can agree on"



For more information visit: www.anglers-nlrs.co.uk

Founded by LISA in association with GGGI. Flyer sponsored by Lee Valley Regional Park Authority

