

# News

WILD TROUT TRUST  
SUMMER 2017

## Annual Raffle

To be drawn at 7pm, Tuesday 12 December 2017 at The Thomas Lord, West Meon, Hants. Tickets are available via the enclosed order form or by visiting [www.wildtrout.org](http://www.wildtrout.org).

### FIRST PRIZE

Kindly donated by Sage. A Sage Single Handed Fly Rod of your choice.

### SECOND PRIZE

Kindly donated by The Peacock at Rowsley & Haddon Fisheries, worth £470. One night's accommodation for two people and 2 low-season tickets to fish the Derbyshire Wye.

### THIRD PRIZE

Kindly donated by William Daniel & Famous Fishing, worth £460. A day's fishing for 3 rods on 1½ miles of the Lambourn at Weston.

### FOURTH PRIZE

Kindly donated by The Wild Trout Trust, worth £250. A day of fly fishing for wild trout with your chosen WTT Conservation Officer.

### FIFTH PRIZE

Kindly donated by The Wild Trout Trust, worth £150. A case of wine of your choice from Waitrose Cellar.



## Auction – photos please!

If you won a fishing lot in the auction (or donated one) please take some photos of your trip. We are always looking for more and better quality photos to illustrate auction lots on eBay and the website. Please send your photos to Denise at [dashton@wildtrout.org](mailto:dashton@wildtrout.org).

There is some good advice on our website on how to take photos of trout: go to the 'Catch and Release' video on the 'Wild Trout Fishing' page under 'About Trout'.

[http://www.wildtrout.org/content/wild-trout-fishing#Catch and release](http://www.wildtrout.org/content/wild-trout-fishing#Catch%20and%20release)  
Can you match, or even better, the

beautiful photos below of a stunning wild brown and the River Tyne?

In case you missed it ... The Wild Trout Trust auction, held in March this year, raised £95,000 – another new record. Our thanks go to the many donors, buyers and volunteers who make the auction such a successful event. We promise to spend the funds wisely on practical advice and projects to improve habitat for wild trout.



## WTT Conservation Awards 2017!

**W**TT's Conservation Awards, supported by Thames Water and the River Restoration

Centre, seek to recognise and encourage excellence in wild trout habitat management and conservation and celebrate the efforts, ingenuity and imagination of all those involved.

We want to hear about projects big and small and from every corner of Britain & Ireland. There's a trophy for every category winner, the recognition of your peers and a £1000 prize for each of the winners of the small and medium-scale projects. Awards will be presented at a splendid ceremony in London on 17 October 2017.

The closing date for applications

this year is 28 July 2017, with a simple application form and further details at <http://www.wildtrout.org/content/conservation-awards>.



Award winners and distinguished guests at the WTT Conservation Awards ceremony 2016.

## Diary dates

**11 to 13 July 2017 – Great Yorkshire Show**, Harrogate. WTT will have a stand with S&TCUK.

**15 July 2017 – Fishing for Forces Cast & Blast fundraiser**, Meon Springs. Another great fun event for an outstanding charity, organised by Neil Mundy ([ncmundy@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ncmundy@hotmail.co.uk)).

**28 July 2017 – Closing Date for WTT Conservation Awards applications.**

**12 & 13 August 2017 – Lowther Show**, near Penrith. WTT will have a stand in the fishing village.

**10 to 12 October 2017 – IFM Conference**, Belfast. WTT will be presenting two papers.

**17 October 2017 – WTT Conservation Awards ceremony**, London.

**12 December 2017 – WTT Raffle draw**, 7pm, Thomas Lord pub, West Meon.

**10 & 11 February 2018 – British Fly Fair**, Stafford. WTT will have a stand.

**9 to 18 March 2018 – World-famous WTT Auction.**

# How much? The 3 Fly Fundraiser 2017

**Y**ou can sometimes wonder if an event in its eighth year, with a similar format year-on-year, might have run its course. Wonder not with WTT's annual 3 Fly Fundraiser at Meon Springs Trout Fishery, organised by stalwart volunteer, Neil Mundy. In fact, I am delighted and humbled to report that this year's event was the best ever: a record number of participants at 37 and an outstanding record sum raised: £6850.

The venue for this fundraiser is Meon Springs Trout Fishery in Hampshire, who host the day with exceptional professionalism: lots of fish (even on a roasting, sunny day) and an absolutely perfect venue for stillwater fishing and for lots of socialising. We were blessed with a bunch of regular rods returning to support the day, many coming from the John Lewis Partnership Fly Fishing Club, helping to create a day where old friends regathered and made new friends. Breakfast and a briefing started proceedings, with some big fish being landed early in the day before the sun made fishing a tricky prospect. Lunch was held in Meon Springs' stunning new events venue, The Long Barn, before a raffle and auction where some great prizes, including exclusive fishing, were won at superb value.

For the second year running, the organiser was the same as the overall competition winner: Neil Mundy. Hurrah. Neil's brother, Tim, nabbed the biggest fish prize with a rainbow trout over ten pounds in weight. Neil's winnings included a splendid trophy and a shiny new rod, very kindly donated by Sage.

This is a terrifically fun day – I recommend it to you without reservation and it brings WTT some proper cash. Keep an eye out on the WTT website for details of the 2018 3 Fly event that will happen on Saturday 16 June 2018.

Huge thanks must go not only to Neil but a posse of others: all at Meon Springs (great job, lads), both Mrs Mundy's for running the raffle and auction, Keith Poulton for tying 300 flies for the participants, Phil Marr (a



Meon Springs' stunning new events venue, The Long Barn.

top-notch silversmith) for the trophies and everyone who joined in the day and donated raffle and auction prizes.

## What of the 3 Fly Dosh?

**T**he 3 Fly fundraiser is dedicated to the memory of Pasco James, an avid fisher and mad-keen river man who especially loved his local river, the Meon. Pasco died tragically young, in 2010, at twenty-two years of age, in his first year of study for a degree in fishery management at Sparsholt. Over its eight years, and thanks to the extraordinary work of Neil Mundy and all those noted above, the 3 Fly has brought WTT nigh-on £40,000. Hitherto, we've used these funds exclusively for project work on the Meon, most recently in the village of East Meon, reported elsewhere in this newsletter. In consultation with Neil and Pasco's mum, Harriet Poland, we're now going to re-direct Pasco's cash to fund a graduate post of Assistant Conservation Officer with WTT, a young person who can learn from our expert team and, who knows, maybe one day become a leading light in river conservation. I imagine this would be Pasco's dream job.



Neil and Harriet.



Meon Springs Trout Fishery.

# Wild Trout Trust Annual Get Together 2017

**W**e were delighted to gather this year close to the banks of the Derbyshire

Derwent and Wye – hallowed ground for the wild trout buff – for our annual Get Together. Rowsley Village Hall near Matlock proved a handy venue for a Saturday morning of talks, followed by a river walk, guided by Warren Slaney and Jan Hobot, keepers on the Haddon Estate.

May is a good time to be in the beautiful landscape of Derbyshire's famous limestone rivers. Our stage was set for a great 2017 WTT Get Together and so it proved to be. Rowsley village hall was good for our humble needs and our 70 guests. David Fraser, WTT's chairman, acted as master of ceremonies for the morning, introducing a diverse line-up of speakers.

WTT Director, Shaun Leonard, led the field, reflecting on a truly exceptional year of activity for WTT's staff and volunteers – those headlines are outlined elsewhere in this newsletter.

Nick Measham, of Salmon & Trout Conservation UK, stood in for Nick Everall to describe recent work on the Churnet looking at the impacts of an

apparently new invader to this river, the demon shrimp, *Dikerogammarus haemobaphes*. Surveys suggest that this aggressive predator is impacting a number of other species in the invertebrate community, though the extent of that impact is not yet apparent. Nick warned that biosecurity is absolutely vital for all water users (e.g. anglers, canoeists) to limit the spread of this and other invaders like the American signal crayfish.

Jack Perks, wildlife photographer and author, perhaps best known for his underwater fish images, gave an absolutely brilliant, beautifully illustrated talk on his work, including some top tips of the trade. Jack is doing a great job at raising freshwater fish in the public consciousness, with his many appearances on national TV. An outstanding sequence in Jack's talk was his footage of spawning grayling – some of those sequences were aired on Springwatch in 2016, producing a massive response. (Ed – try this with care: put 'orgasmic grayling' into google).

Tim Jacklin and Paul Gaskell gave more-or-less locally themed presentations on their work as WTT Conservation Officers, Paul describing an extraordinary stream restoration project on the Porter brook in Sheffield and Tim several projects in Derbys, Staffs and Lincs.

Phil Straton of the Moors for the Future Partnership described his work to restore peat moors, huge areas of which have become denuded by pollution and wild fires. Once stripped of any vegetation, the friable soils

effectively fall to dust and are blown or washed away. Restoration of the moors starts with soil stabilisation before replanting/seeding and then species diversification. Hundreds of hectares are being restored, returning diversity of wildlife, capturing carbon and, hopefully, dampening flood flows in the rivers below the moors.

Acting as a super-sub for a speaker who withdrew, Tim Jacklin returned to the stage to give a fascinating story based on the diaries of two father-and-son fishers, Charles Hanson senior and junior, on the Dove catchment, spanning 1869 to 1931. The diaries reveal a time of extraordinary fishing on the Dove, with plentiful coarse and game fish and salmon trying to get over serious obstructions in the river. Sadly, the diaries chart a decline to the point that fishing entries in the son's diaries stop, with references to pollution from sewage works and industry. Tim came to work in the Trent catchment in the early 90s and recounted a story of his then boss meeting a biologist, Frank Woodiwiss (developer of a famous water quality assessment tool using invertebrates, the Trent Biotic Index), who one day in the 1960s came into the office overjoyed to have found sewage fungus in the Trent downstream of Stoke – some sign of life in a river utterly barren for perhaps decades previously.

Alex Lumsdon, fisheries officer with the Environment Agency, rounded off the morning with a description of the Agency's work in removing or fitting fish passes on weirs in the river Derwent. It was clear that some



Jack Perks in full flow with a beautifully illustrated talk on the hidden lives of freshwater fish.

projects have been incredibly complex and as a consequence, very expensive, in one case topping £800K!

After lunch, the party decamped to the river to look at habitat, habitat work and a weir removal job, led by Haddon keepers, Warren Slaney and Jan Hobot. The Trent catchment rivers, such as the Dove, Derwent and Wye, still bear the scars of centuries of industrial weir installation, with a fair smattering of obstructions put in by angling interests; work is on to make the rivers as free-flowing and passable as possible.



Warren Slaney describes management of the Haddon fishery to a WTT gathering.

## The Year That Was

**A**t the WTT Annual Get Togethers, we report on what we've been doing in the year since we last met. This report is based on our submission to the Charity Commission, describing how we have fulfilled our charitable objectives. These are the headlines of WTT's 16/17 year; the figures are provisional.

- 194 Advisory Visits & proposals with clubs and landowners, a 58% increase in the number delivered in the previous year; 80% of these visits turn into practical work for the river. Much of this advisory work is our bread-and-butter visits and recommendations to fishing clubs, but there was some interesting variety, demonstrating WTT's breadth. For example, we worked with a number of fishing clubs and the Environment Agency in Yorkshire to moderate tree removal aimed at flood risk mitigation; one positive spin-off from this work was the coalescence of eight fishing clubs to form an angling association, working for common good.
- 77 practical habitat events, one day to two weeks in length. The shortest events were one-day demonstrations of techniques, working with groups of volunteers, but we also carried out some large-scale river restoration projects, with a range of partners (especially the Environment Agency) and volunteers. To pick one from many, the project on 2km of the River Dever



Tim Jacklin in a Lincolnshire beck, with Matt Parr of EA and some eager volunteers.

in Hampshire involved some large machinery and lots of wood and gravel to make life better for the wild trout, grayling and other wildlife in and by the river. This project was funded by the EA, the landowner and WTT, with a donation from a company called Springwise, through the 1% for the Planet initiative.

- Worked directly on c.365km of river.
- Involved over 1400 volunteers in more than 1500 days of work in and by the river.
- Carried out many hundreds of 'softer' things – more than 50 talks to clubs, input to lots of meetings, information spread through our active website, two blogs, twitter, facebook and lots of ad hoc advice by phone and email.
- All this needs money and we are deeply indebted to our many partners

and supporters in our fundraising efforts. One highlight in 2016/17 was a record year for our world-famous auction, raising over £95,000.

- The WTT staff 'family' grew: we were delighted to welcome Rob Mungovan to the team, as our seventh Conservation Officer – look for Rob's story elsewhere in this newsletter.

WTT's success is based on a group of focused, dedicated staff, with a spine of outstanding volunteers, working towards a defined, common goal: our trustees, President and V-Ps, Executive Committee members, technical advisors. Our supporters, corporate and individual, are an essential part of the ongoing story. Thank you all.

## Our new boy



Some of you will have seen that WTT has a new Conservation Officer. Some of you will even have been lucky enough to know or have met him: Rob Mungovan.

Rob, previously an ecologist at South Cambs District Council, is a passionate river man, local campaigner for river conservation, trout fisherman and early-days WTT member. With 20 years of experience and many river improvement projects delivered, his professional and voluntary contribution to river conservation won him WTT's Wild Trout Hero award in 2016. And now, all of that has won him a role as WTT's Conservation Officer in Central and Eastern England, offering advice and practical help to improve rivers for wild trout and the habitats that they

need.

Rob said, "I'm thrilled to be taken on by the Trust. For many years I have been impressed by the way they have been able to make a real difference at ground level. They have improved great lengths of rivers, made weirs passable for many different fish and have been able to champion the cause to conserve the diverse and wonderful wild trout stocks of the UK."

Rob is based on the Cambs/Herts border but a fair bit of his time will be spent working further east and north in England, especially in Lincolnshire. You can reach him on [rmungovan@wildtrout.org](mailto:rmungovan@wildtrout.org) or 07876 257058.

## Update from East Anglia and Central England

Rob Mungovan, reports on his early days as a WTT Conservation Officer.

On a cool day in May, I was introduced to the Upper Witham by Caroline Tero and Matthew Parr (EA Lincs). Even though we were experiencing a long period of low flow, the Witham was holding up ok, with flows described as about normal for early spring. A short stroll downstream and I could see some brushwood berms partially exposed and starting to become vegetated – great juvenile trout habitat, I thought.

The Upper Witham has been the focus of some significant work in recent years which culminated in the excavation of a new channel to settle the river in a more natural form within its floodplain. What was fascinating about this site visit was to see how a new river designed by a geomorphologist can stand up to flood flows without any significant adjustments to its channel. Re-modelling of rivers and seeing it work is great. The EA team are now observing any minor channel

adjustments and considering what next steps might be needed (if any).

Trout were present in some of the new pools but due to the lack of cover and undercut margins the fish raced about as we approached them. It became apparent that the placement of some large woody debris would give these fish some bolt holes and create hang-up points for water plants to become rooted if they were drifting through the reach.

I've also had a visit into Norfolk to see the River Glaven with Jonah Tosney (Norfolk Rivers Trust) and Henry Crawley (River Glaven Conservation Group) and some of the work with which WTT (through Tim Jacklin) has been involved. Again, I've been shown a

superb example of a perfectly re-aligned channel where the Glaven was released from a brick culvert to become a beautiful chalkstream again. This project was completed over 3 years ago and the plant growth is really bringing it together nicely, and makes me realise how nice the newly aligned Glaven will become in time.

We also had time to visit Glandford Mill which has had a fish pass fitted beneath it. I'd read a lot about this extensively re-engineered mill pond so it was great to see it. An interesting remark that Jonah made whilst explaining the workings was that a sea lamprey had been found at the site (personally I find the mysterious world of lampreys fascinating).



Brushwood berms becoming vegetated, Upper Witham.



Spotting last winter's trout redds, River Glaven at Bayfield with Matt Parr of EA.

As the new Conservation Officer for East Anglia and part of the Central area (sharing with Tim), my main work is going to be on the River Welland and its tributaries including the Gwash, Glen and Eye Brook, to name a few. I look forward to meeting up with landowners and angling clubs to see what challenges to wild trout habitat we can overcome. Please feel free to make contact with me if you've any river issues you'd like to chat through, email: [rmungovan@wildtrout.org](mailto:rmungovan@wildtrout.org) or telephone: 07876 257058.

## News from the Midlands and East Anglia

Tim Jacklin, WTT Conservation Officer

**T**he Lincolnshire Limestone Becks Project is a partnership between Wild Trout Trust, Lincolnshire Rivers Trust and the Environment Agency focussing on streams running off the limestone ridge which runs north to south roughly between Lincoln and Grantham. These groundwater-fed, calcium-rich streams are ultimately tributaries of the River Witham and the project focuses on six of them: Branston, Nettleham, Greetwell, Dunston, Ruskington and Scopwick. The becks are associated with eponymous villages and are a focal point for the local community. Despite this, the streams face numerous pressures including historic channel straightening and bed lowering, ongoing unsympathetic channel maintenance and low flows.

The project is working with local communities to raise awareness of these challenges and to take practical action to tackle them. WTT has carried out walkover surveys of all the

becks and produced reports (all on the WTT website) which identify potential improvements and provide a basis for consultation and fund-raising. Parish councils, landowners and local volunteers including schools and scout groups have been variously involved in habitat improvement work parties, bug sampling, river walks and engagement and consultation events. Feasibility studies and design work has been carried out in two locations where a major river restoration project could be carried out, involving re-meandering over 2km of the watercourse and re-connecting the floodplain, with many benefits for ecology and reduced downstream flood risk. The project partnership is currently pursuing various funding streams including Heritage Lottery Funding and the Natural Flood Management budget.

Work has been completed this spring on the upper River Welland on water fished by Welland Mayfly Fishers. This follows on from works in previous years carried out by WTT and the Environment Agency which have made substantial improvements to instream habitat. The latest works involved the introduction of 300 tonnes of gravel and river-narrowing with brushwood to create glides and riffles suitable for trout spawning and juvenile habitat. The works were project managed by WTT and carried

out by Dominic Cawley (Woodland & Water Management) and the Environment Agency Operations Delivery team. Many thanks are due to local Fisheries Officer, Hugh Bunker, and to Geoff Black, Maurice Head and the rest of the Ops team.

Elsewhere in the Welland catchment, work has been carried out with Guash Fishing Club on two sections of the River Gwash in Rutland. Despite some very challenging conditions afforded by the deep accumulations of silt, channel-narrowing with brushwood (and surplus Christmas trees from the local garden centre!) has helped to locally increase flow speeds and bed scour. Trevor Walker of GFC has ably marshalled club volunteers for the well-attended work parties and has been instrumental in liaising with landowners and being the local 'man on the ground'. River keeper John Smith has also kept his eyes peeled and nobody in the local area has had to look far to get rid of any brushwood! Seventy tonnes of gravel were introduced to extend areas of previously introduced cobbles and provide a suitable trout spawning medium. The club has recently increased their membership as a result of the works creating more fishable reaches, which in turn has allowed an additional riverkeeper to be employed.

In Derbyshire and Staffordshire, WTT are involved in a number of projects on the River Dove and tributaries. We are working with Trent Rivers Trust, Natural England, the Environment Agency and Leek & District Fly Fishing Association on the Letting the Dove Flow Project which aims to reduce the large numbers of weirs on the upper river. Further downstream, we are working with Birdsgrove Fly Fishing Club and had a day introducing woody material as part of the club's initiative to cease stocking and 'go wild' on their upper waters; plans are also being developed here to remove weirs that were built by the club in the 1980s.

On the River Tean, a tributary of the middle Dove, work is planned for June to replace some of the stone bank revetment with tree root plates. The aim is to retain bank stability, but in a way that provides depth and cover for fish. Work at this site will also include extensive planting of native trees, both along the banks to provide long-term stability and in a newly created block of woodland. Plans for the latter have been developed with very helpful advice and part-funding from the Woodland Trust.



Before (above) and after on the Scopwick Beck, Lincolnshire. Channel-narrowing, bank re-profiling and planting of aquatic flora, all carried out by local volunteers and the landowner, led by WTT and Lincolnshire Rivers Trust.



Trevor Walker of Guash Fishing Club rakes some newly introduced spawning gravels into place.



*WTT habitat demonstration day on the River Witham at Belton House and Park.*

## A Day in the River Witham

Alan Lloyd, a National Trust Volunteer, describes his experiences on a WTT habitat demonstration day on the River Witham at Belton House and Park, a National Trust property near Grantham, Lincolnshire.

**Y**ou read it right – not on the river nor beside the river, but in the river. It was actually quite warm, better than the forecasted weather.

At the riverside, the material we were to install had already been dropped off at the riverbank. On t'other side of the river! Waders were provided.

I have never used nor needed waders before, never been in a river before either. Well, not intentionally – only as a result of my brother's swing!

There were about ten of us, including our Belton team, with Carl Hawke (East Midlands Wildlife and Countryside Adviser), Matt Parr (Environment Agency) and Tim Jacklin (Wild Trout Trust) who led the task.

The task: fixing faggots (bundles of long twigs, in case you're American) into the toe of the riverbank, to help

protect the bank from erosion. These bundles also provide a habitat for a number of species, reducing the risk of new-hatched fish from being swept away, and help to trap sediments in the marginal area enabling the bank to naturally re-build itself.

The method: pin the faggots into the riverbed, between stout poles (pins) driven into the river bed.

Sounds easy, doesn't it? The mud is soft near the bank, not deep. Deep enough to get well and truly stuck a couple of times, but I was not alone in needing extraction, and we all did our share of pulling others out of the mire! All good fun, quite lighthearted but only because we kept safe, stayed in pairs, and in sight of each other.

In spite of that, under the mud, it's rock and solid ground. Driving the poles into the river bed to pin the faggots was anything but easy.

It was a day's hard graft which I enjoyed. It was informative – the Environment Agency and Wild Trout Trust guys explained how the river sorts itself out if left without human interference (over many decades) e.g. weirs built for the watermills. The watermills are no longer there, but the weirs may be.

Other useful information came as I was about to sit on a grassed-over molehill. Carl advised me that the 'molehills' are actually ants' nests and very little is known about them, except that they are small, brown, and bite. We chose to sit elsewhere!



*Pinned faggots to narrow the channel and protect the bank from erosion.*

## Bird Pollution

**O**n a recent Advisory Visit to the River Meon in Hampshire, Andy Thomas came across a horrific sight – a river bank trampled and poached by cattle and ducks and an industrial-scale bird feeder for the ducks just inches from the river. The picture says it all – mud, bird waste and waste food pouring into this gem of a chalkstream. We referred this matter to the Environment Agency.

Andy passed his draft Advisory Visit report around the team for comment, then other Conservation Officers reported that they too had seen similar horrors – on the River Haddeo in Devon, on the Cam in Cambridgeshire and the Bentley Brook in Derbyshire.

If you shoot as well as fish, check that your shoot is not doing this kind of thing and if it is, challenge it. It is very likely against the law, as well as just plain wrong.



A duck feeder and cattle damage on the River Meon.

## Excellent donations

**W**e are blessed at WTT to receive generous donations of kit or cash that we can use to buy kit.

WTT member, Tim Springham, recently kindly donated an excellent Trelgo tipping trailer that Andy Thomas is finding invaluable to ferry around his gear – many thanks, Tim.

In similar vein, Bradford & City AA (BCAA) donated some cash that we'll use to tool up our new conservation officer, Rob Mungovan. The donation from BCAA gets Rob a good way towards an essential chainsaw. Many thanks Jim Munden and all at BCAA.

Pete Tyjas, at the excellent, not-for-profit fly-fishing e-zine, *Eat, Sleep, Fish*, regularly donates from sales of his superb quality T-shirts, badged with the ESF and WTT logos: [eat-sleep-fish.co.uk](http://eat-sleep-fish.co.uk). Surely a great buy for a warm summer?

## Fly tying supplies for sale

**W**TT member, Neville Walker, is offering up for sale a job lot of fly tying gear.

I have a lifetime's collection of materials and equipment for sale. Includes two vices (one custom-made full rotary), numerous tools, feather, furs, silks etc etc. Far too much to list here, but can supply photographs and further details if you have an interest. Would set a beginner up for life almost.... I know, I know too well, there is always some extra little glistening new fibre to add which will tempt every trout in the county to leap on the fly. You would need to collect. Call me on 07599 105161 or [nhwdeer2@gmail.com](mailto:nhwdeer2@gmail.com).



# News from the North

Gareth Pedley, WTT Conservation Officer

2017 saw a continued increase in demand for WTT support in the north, with several more northern English fisheries encouragingly beginning the transition towards becoming wild trout fisheries – several ceasing stocking completely.

We're often contacted by clubs looking for general habitat and fishery management advice, through which the WTT can then help them move towards creating more sustainable, wild fisheries; however, increasingly, many fisheries are now contacting us for assistance with the specific process of stopping stocking, often having seen WTT presentations or having viewed the wealth of supportive information available on the WTT website. WTT strive to offer whatever help and support is required through this process, be it Advisory Visits, practical habitat workshops or simply advice (please contact your local WTT conservation officer for more information).

A good number of Advisory and Practical Visits were undertaken right across the north, from East Yorkshire to the Scottish border, assisting a range of fisheries in optimising habitat for trout and other wildlife, along with the provision of talks and presentations, and practical workshops. These events involved a range of attendees, not just those directly involved with fisheries. This work included several brash bank protection demonstrations, where the habitat improvements and benefits of creating diffuse, natural bank protection over that of hard rock revetment (as failed in the first place) are clear to see.

In addition to the above, larger programmes of river walkovers were undertaken at various locations across the north. The first set, on the Coniston Crake catchment, with South Cumbria Rivers Trust (SCRT), and others for the Tyne Riparian Owners & Occupiers Association on the River Tyne, funded through the EA's Fishery Improvement Fund (rod licence money). The SCRT walkovers were primarily to assist their Conserving

Coniston and Crake Heritage Lottery-funded Project by providing support to the Trust in assessing the habitat quality of the catchment, and to guide future improvement work within the catchment. Initial walkovers were undertaken as assessments but a further walkover was run as a workshop to train local volunteers so that they could assist SCRT in future (similar workshops were also provided on the upper River Eden catchment for local angling clubs and other interested parties). In January/February 2017, ten individual river Tyne tributaries, already highlighted as greatly underperforming for salmonids by Tyne Rivers Trust, were investigated in detail for impacts including adjacent land use, pollution and fish passage.

WTT work has also been increasing in Scotland, providing support to some of the Scottish rivers and fisheries

trusts with habitat and land management advice, along with practical workshops to demonstrate techniques for improving juvenile salmonid survival and reducing the impacts of piscivorous bird predation.

As a slight change to the usual day job, independent advice was also provided on two separate hydropower schemes, supporting local anglers and fishery groups in an attempt to limit the impacts of those schemes. The first, requiring recommendations on proposed changes to the site and operating regime and the second regarding a new, proposed development. While renewable energy is something that WTT fully supports, we feel it is vital that so-called 'green energy' does not create unreasonable impact on the environment.



An eroded bank (top) is protected using brash (bottom) rather than stone: with fencing to exclude livestock, the brash will encourage plant colonisation to stabilise the erosion and provide great habitat.

# The Other Northern Bit

Jon Grey, WTT Research & Conservation Officer

**C**halk and cheese. If I compare the 2015/16 winter to 2016/17, I couldn't see the top of the River Aire banks for about 3 months during the former and could safely wade the majority of the same reaches in wellies during the latter. While this is worrying for water levels later in the year, and I note that hosepipe bans are already mooted in the south, it has meant that many of my plans for practical work have been feasible and mostly achieved over the winter, bird flu restrictions aside!

To complement ongoing weir notching works on Eastburn Beck, I have installed my first series of offset baffles across a road bridge culvert at Lumb Mill. This was funded by GreenPort Hull, administered by the Rivers Trust, and improves access to approximately 10km of becks containing potential spawning and fry habitat. This was a site that I have initiated some PIT-tagging and telemetry work in conjunction with Ribble Rivers Trust to assess the passability of the site by brown trout, pre and post works. Data from prior to the works were collected at the end of last summer, and the details can be seen on the WTT blog pages (<http://www.wildtrout.org/wttblog/easements-eastburn>); I'm looking forward



Releasing impoundment behind an old tree trunk weir.



Tom Myerscough (Wyre RT) installing green oak baffles on a Woodplumpton Brook road bridge culvert.



The finished baffle set, creating increased water depth, sinuous flow and flow refuges through the culvert.

to returning later in the year and seeing what the fish can achieve now there is a better depth of water passing across it, and slack pools in which to rest, as opposed to the former thin film of fluming water.

Buoyed by that experience, I installed a similar baffle arrangement on a culvert on Woodplumpton Brook, this time funded by Fishery Improvement Programme money from the Environment Agency, and in collaboration with Tom Myerscough at Wyre Rivers Trust. The distance of brook opened up to the next obstacle is more modest at only 1km, but every little helps, as they say! Wyre RT have been very active in engaging landowners and getting kilometres of

livestock fencing erected to improve the riparian zone, and in specific areas to combat runoff from the dreaded maize fields. Instream, Tom and I have been tackling old tree trunk weirs, installing woody deflectors to redirect flow, pinch and scour, and accumulate sediment in appropriate places above that culvert; the gravels are already looking in better condition. We have further plans to extend that work both above and below the current location. According to the electrofishing data I collected as part of a training exercise for Queen Mary University of London,

Freshwater & Marine Ecology MSc students, the culvert did appear to be impeding fish passage, affecting the community composition and size distribution of fishes. Repeats of that exercise will provide (hopefully) a longer term evaluation of the work. Trout were historically present in the brook, and are present at the confluence with another similar brook approximately 1km downstream of the culvert, so we are hopeful that the improvements will encourage them to recolonise soon.



Tom inspecting our woody deflectors – development of a deposition bar downstream is directly associated with the deflector (bottom right) which has bedded-in nicely and is accumulating debris.

If I look to my last newsletter offering, plans were in place but practicalities not yet undertaken for the first of the Yorkshire Water sponsored River Habitat Demonstration Days. I was overwhelmed by the interest shown for the small tributary work I conducted over two Saturdays at the National Trust property, East Riddlesden Hall. They say ‘a picture paints a thousand words’, so here is an infographic I created to summarise the events.

What I am keen to stress, though, is the spreading of the ripples from that event. Two WTT Advisory Visits have arisen from contacts made on those days, two evening talks to angling clubs have been requested, and I have been invited to ComputerShare, the company that sent corporate volunteers along as a staff team-building exercise, to advise how they can ‘manage’ their bit of beck better. What is even more encouraging is how I am still receiving emails from various folk to tell me how they are applying ideas they learned on the day to their particular waters. Hurrah! Knowledge exchange and empowering grass roots is what these days are all about. Two projects are ear-marked for later this year, and then I have the possibility of funding two further projects via the Yorkshire Water funding next year, so please do let me know if you have any sites located near to YW holdings that are in need of TLC.

One last thing I’d like to draw your attention to. With my research cap on, I have been drawing up a database of ongoing research within the UK and contacting many of the young aspiring scientists that are working on salmonid ecology or river habitat-related

projects. The plan is to open up the WTT blog to these folk, to outline their plans if they are at the start of their PhDs or MScs, and/or to provide a conduit for regular updates on their findings. Hopefully, the WTT membership will find this interesting,

and it will be useful training for the scientists to hone their skills in communicating to a non-specialist audience. Opportunities abound to help out with research too – check out the blog and maybe get involved: <http://www.wildtrout.org/wttblog>



One of the teams working to improve spawning tributaries at East Riddlesden Hall.

## Complete and otter rubbish

I was privileged to share a pool on my local stream with an otter the other day. I'd spotted a rising fish and stealthily crept into a decent casting position. As I checked my leader, I heard a soft whistle followed by a snort, and a female otter slid into the pool and submerged. The trout stopped rising. The otter surfaced, snorted again, and slipped downstream leaving me to savour the moment. Within a few minutes, my trout rose again.

I'm happy to share my haunts with otter, the natural apex predator for these systems, yet controversy reigns and conflict still exists amongst anglers, fishermen and conservation agencies. I have met my fair share of vociferous anti-otter folk who claim that there are no big fish in their river 'since the otters moved in *en masse*'.

A quick scan of the recent literature revealed two studies published in 2017 detailing otter diet, and they both effectively embellish the long-established picture that otters don't tend to take big fish in natural systems. Rob Britton, a renowned fish biologist, with colleagues at Bournemouth University and Pete Reading from The Barbel Society, collected 140 spraints over an 18 month period from the Hampshire Avon. Of the 535 bits and bobs identified, bullhead and stone loach were the most common, and the only species (rarely) taken of greater than 350mm was pike. They noted the importance of the invasive signal crayfish contributing significantly to diet during the summer. The second study is perhaps even more interesting because it was carried out on a stream stocked with brown and rainbow trout in the Czech Republic. Spraint analysis was again used to determine diet. While stocked trout were consumed, they only contributed up to 13% of the diet, and the authors Lych & Cech noted that trout outside the stocked size range, i.e. likely to be wild fish, were rarely detected. The humble gudgeon made the greatest contribution to diet (38% of biomass), and the average fish weight consumed was estimated at 10g – small fry indeed!

Of course, there is evidence from observations, in the angling press and



Otters take the occasional large wild fish.

in science journals of otters taking large fish but this stems predominantly (not exclusively) from stocked still-waters. When otters only consume a part of large prey, they are unlikely to swallow diagnostic bones and some critics of the science use this as an escape clause to further their arguments, but it is difficult for otters not to ingest scales which would give away the prey size. Otters do take the occasional large wild fish – see my image above from a local river last summer. Whether this was a fit and healthy individual trout or whether it was getting a bit long in the tooth and therefore easier prey, I'll never know. But let's consider memory bias from a cognitive science perspective. Are you more likely to remember seeing an otter munching on a large trout, or an otter surreptitiously slurping down a few gudgeon or bullhead?

References:

Britton *et al.* (2017) Importance of small fishes and invasive crayfish in otter *Lutra lutra* diet in an English chalk stream. Knowledge & Management of Aquatic Ecosystems, DOI: 10.1051/kmae/2017004

Lych & Cech (2017) Do otters target the same fish species and sizes as anglers? A case study from a lowland trout stream (Czech Republic). Aquatic Living Resources, DOI: 10.1051/alr/2017011

## Help!

**W**e need some new storage facilities for our trailers and practical equipment,

somewhere in west Hampshire or central/eastern Wiltshire. A corner of a secure, dry agricultural barn would be ideal or somewhere we can place a hired container. If you can help, please call Shaun Leonard on 07974 861908 or drop a line to [director@wildtrout.org](mailto:director@wildtrout.org). Thank you.



WTT's practical gear needs a new home – can you help? N.B. Andy & Tim are optional extras.

# News from Trout in the Town

Paul Gaskell updates on a couple of his recent adventures.

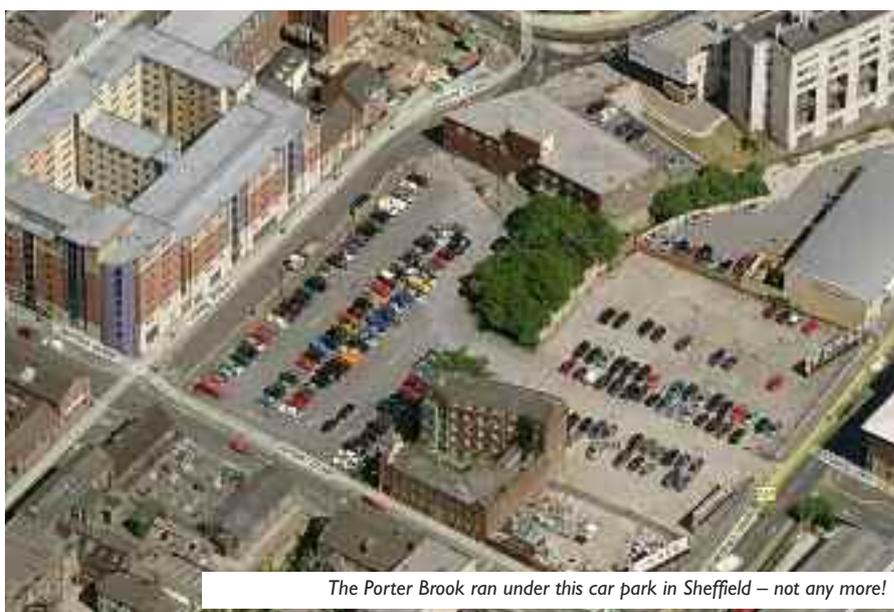
**A**s well as a successful experiment with taking a written Advisory Visit report and turning it into a live event with an audience of local stakeholders, by spring 2017 a couple of significant habitat projects had also come to fruition. I was particularly pleased to be able to capture those projects in short videos that can now be used to reach a much wider audience than would otherwise be possible. That theme of communication seems to be especially important when working in communities (where so much of Trout in the Town work is based). When it comes to those purely volunteer groups (who seldom own any rights to the sections of river that they protect), there is a slightly different slant compared to a private club with paid-up members or a motivated landowner.

Taking habitat projects to completion in urbanised or extensively-developed areas can also be extremely complicated. Whether it is fragmented land-ownership or extreme risk-aversion associated with potential flood risk, permissions can be hard to come by. The constraints and expense of working in and around channels that have infrastructure all around (and often directly over the top of them!) are easy to see. So that makes it all the more important to celebrate successes when they arrive.

One of the great projects that I got on video (as well as participating in) was the first phase of the 'Living Went' initiative (a partnership that includes WTT, Environment Agency and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and more). This first part of the project involved designing in-channel habitat features and providing training, demonstrations and assistance in completing their installation over approximately 1km of channel. The river was previously very uniform in character – with little cross-sectional or longitudinal variation in flow depth and velocity. It also suffers from fine sediment inputs



*River Went: trees dropped into the river and cabled to their stump can provide great in-stream habitat (top) and gravel introduced to help trout spawning (bottom).*



*The Porter Brook ran under this car park in Sheffield – not any more!*

that the wider project aims to tackle in future. You can watch the video on the Wild Trout Trust YouTube channel (direct link here: <https://youtu.be/v8IGyvVfNC4>).

The other project that I videoed (again available on the Wild Trout Trust YouTube channel here: <https://youtu.be/O4hKxDe0r-E>) was one that had previously had major works completed on the Porter Brook by a large partnership between Sheffield City Council, Environment Agency and the Wild Trout Trust. This was a major effort resulting in the de-culverting of an 80m stretch of city-centre river – and the creation of an associated ‘pocket park’ to reconnect the river to the local community. However, the most excellent development following the completion of initial works is that I’ve been able to introduce the partnership to the local Trout in the Town group (SPRITE). The SPRITE volunteers have now taken on appropriate maintenance activities on the site that include invasive plant and litter control. Even more impressive is that those maintenance activities, with the help of a WTT Practical Visit and the donation of pre-established, planted Coir products from Salix River & Wetland Ltd, also included augmenting and repairing vegetated berms in the spate-river channel! To cap it all off, SPRITE have also now incorporated that site into their repertoire of invertebrate monitoring sites. Do I need to tell you that they are recording impressive results even after such an amazingly short time since the brick and concrete lid was taken off this stream?

Moving on to that ‘live’ Advisory Visit report performance...the River Holme Connections group (formerly ‘River2015’) were fantastic hosts and we met a good-sized contingent of local residents and interested parties on a bridge over the river in the centre of town. Following a short introduction and pointing out of relevant details for context, we trooped across the road and upstairs in the parish church so that I could take everyone through the major findings of my original report. This format allowed a full explanation of the rationale behind each recommendation or comment – and was very well received by the audience.

The question and answer aspect of



*A trout from the Porter Brook – been a good few years since these beauties were seen here.*

the presentation was also extremely useful for both me and the attendees. For me, it allowed me to tailor particular details for individual audience members (not only the audience as a whole). That also will help me when writing similar reports for comparable audience members in future. Overall this was a very enjoyable experience – and one that certainly extended the number of people who now have a good handle on the content of that written report (which, for good reasons, often have a more limited audience).

Of course, there have also been the regular meetings (usually with site visits) and plotting of new opportunities with groups that include the River Douglas Catchment Partnership, Staffordshire Trent Valley Catchment Based Approach Partnership, the water quality contingent of the EA’s Salmon 5 Point Approach, Sheffield Waterways Strategy Group, Don Catchment Rivers Trust, Calder and Colne Rivers Trust – oh, and presenting at this year’s River Restoration Centre Conference.



*The River Holme: beautiful urban stream.*

# The South West, where the Avon is best!

Mike Blackmore rounds up his winter and early spring.

**A**fter packing away my heavy-duty waders following last year's autumn delivery season (finishing with a restoration project on the River Dever), I had a brief period to catch up before diving into spring projects.

For the last few years, spring has been a mad rush to get money spent and projects finished before the end of the financial year. Spring 2017 has been no exception in the South West but unfortunately for my Twitter feed, this spring's rush has had me glued to my laptop rather than my chainsaw. As important as options appraisals for fish passage and weir removals are, they don't always make for the most exciting social media posts.

River restoration comes in phases of planning and delivery and after a few big delivery years, I'm suddenly swamped with project planning. I've been working with FWAG South West designing trout habitat into natural flood management schemes, working with the Environment Agency using funding from the Somerset Rivers



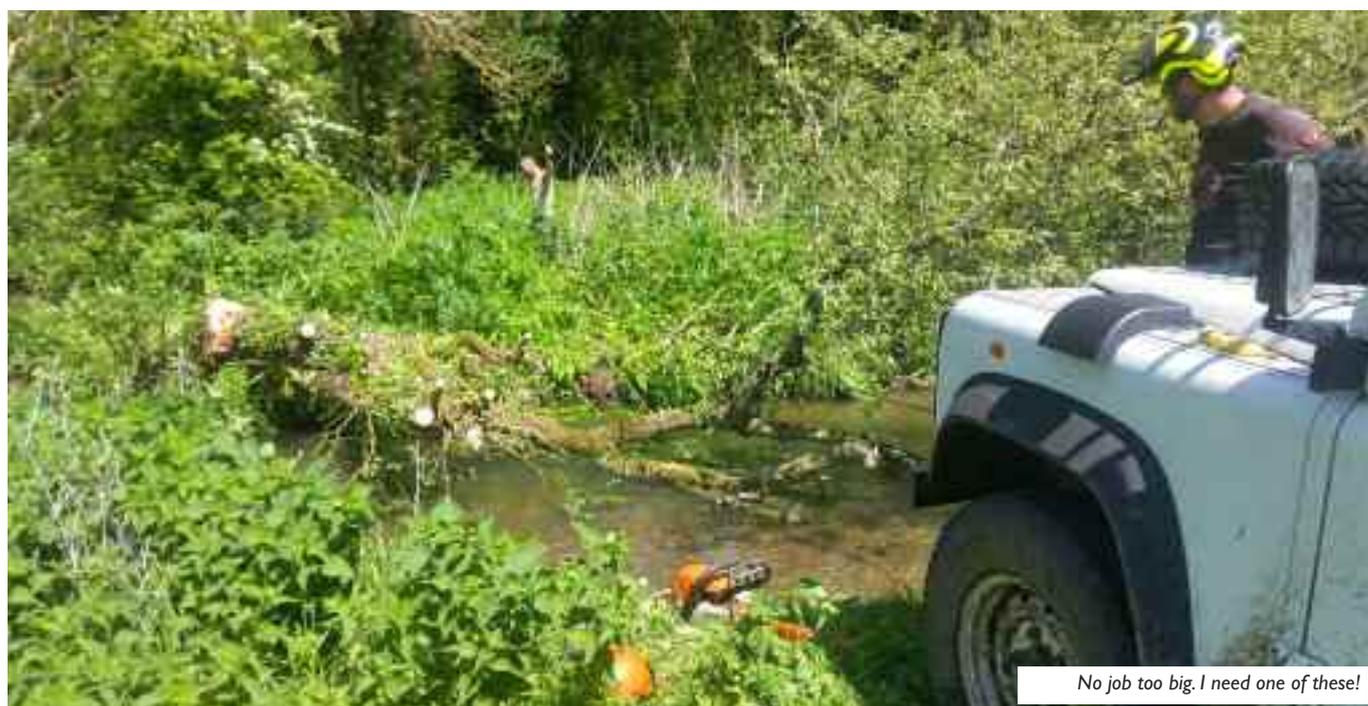
*Weir not here! Cam Brook is flowing free and gravel is on the move.*

Authority to appraise options for two weirs on the Somerset Frome and have other project proposals in the pipeline from South Gloucestershire to Devon.

The winter and spring have been worryingly dry and as much as I strive to be an optimist, we may have to brace ourselves for heart-breaking low-flows this summer. Then again, I'm reminded of prophesising this exact same dark forecast at my Wild Trout Trust interview back in 2012 (after a March heatwave). The following month, on the very day I was offered the job, it started raining and didn't really stop for 18 months! In the Wessex region, we witnessed the supposed impossibility of summertime aquifer recharge during the wettest

summer in 100 years, setting the scene for the following year which culminated in the floods of Winter 2013/14 (and all the dredging fallout that followed). This year, however, I don't think we'll be quite so dramatically let off.

During the dry weather this spring, I had the misfortune of scheduling a project in what seemed to be the only wet fortnight of the season. On a Hampshire chalkstream, this might just mean working in raincoats but in the steep valleys and incised channels on the southern outskirts of Bath, unsafe conditions postponed part of a project on the Cam Brook. Fortunately, we managed to get most of the heavy duty work done and pulled out six small weirs and opened up a long section of



*No job too big. I need one of these!*

previously over-shaded channel. More work will follow this summer.

The highlight of the spring was the Hampshire Avon winning the UK River Prize at the River Restoration Centre annual conference. The last few years grafting with the EA, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and the Wessex Chalkstreams and Rivers Trust has been a blast and I can't imagine a better end to the River Avon Restoration Programme (RARP). I was humbled to be asked on stage with the delivery partners (and hobbled by the celebrations afterwards!). We all have our fingers crossed that the excellent Wessex EA team can secure funding for RARP 2, allowing the work to continue on what is arguably the finest chalk stream in the world (sorry River Itchen!).

As spring draws into summer and the mayfly once again convince this barely competent fluff-chucker that he's a genuine fly angler, my faithful sidekick Otter and I have been out doing some practical work with



Otter the spaniel does her quality control checks on a new brushwood berm. "These is big sticks Daddy!"

Dorset Wildlife Trust and making use of what is fast becoming my go-to heavy-duty team: Luke (Kozak), his partner in crime Alex and most importantly, Alex's formidable Land Rover winch. Why man-handle a hinged

tree or pull out an old weir stanchion by hand when you can press a button and watch it effortlessly move on its own? It's black magic!

## Working in the Meon

**W**TT Conservation Officer Andy Thomas has just completed a project on the River Meon at East Meon. The river runs through the village in an open concrete channel supporting almost no wildlife and certainly no trout. Ironically, the pub at the top of the reach is called the Izaak Walton as he fished the Meon (he wrote *The Compleat Angler*, published in 1653). The objective of the project is to create wildlife habitat and a more attractive, sinuous flow through the concrete channel. And, of course, to encourage some trout to take up residence in the river by the pub! The village has suffered from flooding and the river is surprisingly 'spatey' for the upper reaches of a small chalkstream, so a cautious approach was needed.

A full survey and flood risk model was carried out on the whole stretch of river through the village before the work on the lower third of the concrete channel, completed in June 2014. Since then, we have been keeping an eye on the river, particularly during pe-



East Meon: before work started.

riods of high rainfall and school summer holidays, when the flow deflectors were most likely to shift around (children love to build dams – and why not?). The result was a few tweaks to the method used to deflect the flow for the second phase of work.

Wagtails, bullheads and lots of in-stream vegetation have established on the first phase (see photo at top of next page), with no major issues identified other than a need for some re-

sources to provide long term maintenance. Local residents and visitors declared that the enhancements were a success and happy to give their blessing to the next phase.

In March 2017, the second and final phase was carried out on the remaining section of concrete channel. Nine half-round oak trunks (locally sourced) were bolted to the concrete channel to act as flow deflectors and then gravel was barrowed in and planted



East Meon, after phase one of the restoration.

with yellow flag iris. More plants will establish quickly, based on the experience of the first phase, and birds like wagtails are already appreciating the increase in invertebrates. We expect trout to be spotted any day now.

The South Downs National Park volunteers provided the muscle power and have undertaken to maintain the work on behalf of the Parish Council and local residents.

The work was funded by the South Downs National Park via the East Meon Parish Council and by the Pasco James Fund from the Wild Trout Trust. This fund is topped up annually by the proceeds of the 'Three Fly' competition which is held at Meon Springs Trout Fishery, organised by Neil Mundy in June each year.



Phase two, East Meon – South Downs National Park volunteers at work shifting gravel into position.



Immediately after work completed with oak flow deflector in place, backfilled with gravel and native flag iris planted.

## Orvis discount

Orvis will give a 10% discount to WTT members purchasing fishing tackle in Orvis stores. Just mention at the checkout that you are a WTT member. If you are passing the Orvis store in Stockbridge pop in and say hello to WTT volunteer Kris Kent.



## Lessons from the past

Andy Thomas reflects on fishing clubs' efforts to hold up their water.

Without wishing to be a harbinger of doom, or utter the 'D' word prematurely, as I write this piece in mid-May 2017, we are highly likely to be facing a very difficult year for our groundwater-fed rivers. Of course, the last time doom merchants like me were sucking on our teeth was just five short years ago, during the winter/early spring of 2011/12. We were all bracing ourselves for the inevitable damage to our rivers when it started to rain in April and pretty well didn't stop until September. A lucky escape, or just another example of how unpredictable our weather patterns have become?

Unfortunately, I am old enough to remember the summer of 1976 when we suffered the drought that most other UK droughts are measured by. During that fateful summer, there were times when there was no water flowing over Teddington weir, the lowest impoundment on the freshwater Thames and the escape route to the sea for every drop of water that falls on the entire Thames catchment. Indeed, the weir was raised to store water to allow for some strictly controlled lock movements.

In that same year, literally hundreds of 'temporary' weirs were constructed by land owners and river keepers out of all manner of materials on many of our famous and cherished trout fisheries right across the south and probably elsewhere. These actions were taken with all the right intentions, with the aim of providing more upstream water depth in an attempt to preserve fish stocks that were obviously under huge stress at the time. On the southern chalkstreams, these weirs were referred to as 'summer' weirs and those that were constructed out of ramshackle timber and wobbly tin have long since gone, but many were robustly constructed from concrete bag work, or large block stones and I've lost count of how many of these structures I have seen during my walk-over surveys with the WTT. I have no



*A beautifully constructed weir on a North Hampshire chalk River. Any temporary increase in water depth has long since been lost, but you have to admire the engineering.*

information on how many of these weirs were in fact removed once flow had returned to normal but I do know that 41 years later, there are still dozens of these impounding structures that remain in place, even though they now only act to impound bed sediments, rather than creating any significant increase in upstream water depth.

For any of you who dip into the WTT website and read some of the articles and view video clips about the latest thinking behind river habitat management will be well aware, we at WTT tend to view the value of any impounding structures with a good deal of scepticism. We recognise that preserving and even creating deeper pool habitat is critically important in helping rivers to be more resilient to the impacts of low flow but raising the bed to form a step in the river is definitely not the way forward. It is undoubtedly true that undertaking emergency measures to protect fish stocks during a crushing drought is incredibly difficult, which is why it is vital to think about how to build in the resilience required long before any drought hits home.

So a few thoughts to mull over before rushing out to build yet another summer weir:

- Any significant step in the bed is going to impact on fish migration, both for adults and juveniles and in both directions.
- Just because a large, powerful sea trout can negotiate a significant differential in head levels, it doesn't

mean that juveniles, or indeed other species, have any chance at all.

- Deeper, impounded water can heat up at a faster rate than comparatively shallow glide or riffle and will therefore have less capacity to retain high concentrations of dissolved oxygen.

- A full-width bed impoundment will immediately settle out sediments and any temporary gain in water depth is rapidly lost, sometimes after a single flood. In the photograph above, see how the once-deep water above the weir has completely filled up with gravel and silt from upstream, so that upstream water depth is now no more than a couple of inches at this river level.

- To create more comfortable lies for adult fish concentrate on driving the river bed down, rather than holding up water levels.

- Introduce more over-head cover. This could be overhanging trees, or partially submerged in-channel cover.

- Retain as much tree-shading as possible over potential lying-up spots.

- Refrain from excessive weedcutting. Submerged weed beds provide both a refuge and shading, helping to regulate water temperatures and boosting dissolved oxygen levels during hot sunny days.

Have a look at a couple of short videos on our website to get a better understanding of some of the issues:

<http://www.wildtrout.org/news/weirs-and-their-impact-life-river>

## Another trout stream for Cambridgeshire

**B**eing the first is not always important, but it can be nice to share the experience. And that's what happened when auction lot winner Richard Patterson went fishing with WTT Conservation Officer, Rob Mungovan, and caught the first trout from the Hoffer Brook in a generation.

Restoration work was completed by Rob and the Wildlife Trust back in 2015, and since the addition of spawning gravels, the wandering trout have been able to establish a population for the first time in 30+ years; Rob knows this since he's been



The Hoffer Brook – now with habitat for trout.

playing in and by the stream from boyhood.

Whilst the trout were only small, and much of the brook's habitat is still degraded, it echoes the saying 'build it and they will come'.



## The Disappearing River

Paul Jennings is chairman of the River Chess Association and a hugely devoted campaigner for the river. Here, he describes the plight of the Chess.

**T**he River Chess is one of a number of Chilterns chalkstreams, flowing from above Chesham in Buckinghamshire, eventually, via the Colne, joining the Thames near Runnymede.

The Chess has been significantly altered over the centuries, mainly to produce watercress and to power mills. There are at least 12 mill sites over the length of this short river and at one time these mills provided most of the newsprint for Fleet Street. There is one remaining, functioning watercress bed.

The river has been affected by extreme weather events and increasing abstraction over recent years; in Chesham, the river has been dry for 36 of the last 72 months. In that time, the river has dried up four times; it's been dry since October 2016 and is unlikely to start flowing again until 2018.

This creates stress for the river and



Chesham, Town Bridge April 2017.

with these events coming in quick succession, there is little chance for the habitat to recover. When the river dried in September 2015, we rescued thousands of small fish, mainly sticklebacks and bullheads; many more

did not survive.

The river dried again one year later in October 2016; at this time there was no trace of fish, suggesting that the river is not robust and takes years to recover from these drying events.

Also during this period, we have had two exceptionally wet winters, in 2013 and 2014. The winter of 2014 saw very high groundwater levels leading to flooding. The Sewage Treatment Works at Chesham was inundated by groundwater, leading to sewage surcharging into the Chess for four months.

Our water industry does not have the tolerance or capacity to cope with these extremes. We should be investing in alternative sources of water, storage and upgrading wastewater infrastructure or our rivers will be sacrificed.



Chesham, Water Lane fish kill, September 2015.



Chesham, Queens Head, Feb 2014.



Chesham, Queens Head, April 2017.

## Water, water... not everywhere...

Shaun Leonard comments on the dry weather

**O**n 17 May 2017, around an inch of rain fell in my part of the world. Phew. That's the drought over. Well...trouble is, I live in chalk territory and rain at this time of year does little to add water to the aquifer, that giant underground reservoir that charges our chalkstreams; it's not 'effective', as a hydrologist might say. Growing vegetation and evaporation sucks up this rain before it can percolate down to the aquifer. Across my water company's patch, 70% of potable supply comes from groundwater, so we consumers will keep using it, even if that groundwater supply is not currently being recharged. Many of our groundwater-fed streams seem already to be suffering hugely from the stress of little rain and the ravages of abstraction for potable supply – see Paul Jennings's piece on the River Chess on page 21.

We are facing (maybe already in?) an almighty, head-on crash of two opposing forces: climate change and human population increase. According to most experts, we need to get used to climate change, with the magnitude and rate of future effects large and rapid. By 2050, mean temperatures in the UK may be 2-3°C higher than now,

with potentially larger floods and longer rain-free periods (e.g. see Ormerod and Durance, 2013, <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/research/partnerships/ride/lwec/report-cards/water-source07/>).

These more 'spiky' rainfall patterns are coinciding with an ever-increasing human population, especially in southern England. The Environment Agency's Water Resources Strategy (amongst other sources) predicts that by 2030, areas of central and southern England will see mean late summer river flows 20-30% lower than now, with the human population increasing by around the same figures. Our average daily per capita consumption of water in the UK is around 150 litres, in some affluent areas around 170 litres. By weight, that means the average person in (say) Hertfordshire uses 170kg of water, one and half times more than the weight of British boxer Anthony Joshua, a very large, 6ft 6in, 18st human. In two weeks, that Herts resident will use water greater in weight than a white rhino, at 2.3 tonnes.

What to do? Water metering can help – in my metered house, for example, I now know that we are using around 90 litres each per day (despite my nagging over the length of time my kids spend in the shower). My household (four of us) therefore uses a rhino's weight in water in a little over 6 days. Very scary. That water comes from the Itchen catchment, a Special Area for (nature) Conservation. Education can help, though I am far from convinced that most people know of our water poverty in quite

large areas of the UK. Reservoir storage and water transference has to have a role, though new reservoir plans have met with fierce local opposition. Pricing water at a rate that makes us think might help; I'm incredulous at my own maths here, but I think a pint of beer in my local is 2000 times more expensive than a pint of water from my tap at home. But perhaps most critical is Government policy to force housing development to include water economy measures as standard. From what I have seen in my locality, such measures are non-existent.

## Winston Churchill Fellowships

**T**he Winston Churchill Memorial Trust offers fellowships to fund UK citizens to visit other countries, learn new things and bring that knowledge back to the UK. In 2018, there is a category for Environment, Conservation & Sustainable Living which could encompass river conservation and habitat improvement work. The fellowship grants cover all travel, daily costs and insurance for overseas travel of 4-8 weeks. Applicants need to be 18+ which probably works for most WTT members. More details at [www.wcmt.org.uk](http://www.wcmt.org.uk).



The River Avon Project: River Champions 2017.

## River Restoration Centre Conference 2017

The River Restoration Centre's spring conference is one of the highlights of the calendar year for us river mender-

types. The 2017 event saw WTT staff and friends strongly represented. Paul Gaskell presented a paper on WTT's work with many partners (including Sheffield City Council and the Environment Agency) to restore a section of the Porter Brook, in the heart of the city, an award-winning project. Then, to continue the award-winning theme, Mike Blackmore was part of big tribe that contributed to lifting the prestigious Nigel Holmes River Prize 2017,

for an excellent, multi-faceted project on the Hampshire Avon. And yet more: WTT friends, Nick Fyshe, Vaughan Lewis, Martin Moore and Sam St Pierre were among the River Champions, recognised for their outstanding voluntary contributions to river conservation. There's more on all these worthy winners in the news section of the WTT website. Well played all.

## Words to Live By

Trout Unlimited have recently reported the erection of a memorial stone to one of their founders, Art Neumann, who passed away last year ([www.tu.org/blog-posts/a-memorial-for-a-giant](http://www.tu.org/blog-posts/a-memorial-for-a-giant)).

Trout Unlimited was founded in 1959 and was the inspiration for the formation of the then Wild Trout Society in 1997. Mr Neumann, the author of the *Philosophy of Trout Unlimited*, wrote:

'Trout fishing isn't just fishing for trout... it's subscribing to the proposition that what's good for trout is good for trout fishermen and that managing trout for the trout rather than for the trout fishermen is fundamental to the solution of our trout problems. It's appreciating our trout, respecting fellow anglers and giving serious thought to tomorrow.'

## Lost members

We have lost touch with the following members as they have moved and we do not have a current address. If anyone can help, please contact Christina via: [office@wildtrout.org](mailto:office@wildtrout.org). Thank you.

- Mr Paul Phelps, Leigh On Sea
- Mr Thomas Goddard, was Dorchester but believed South Africa now
- Mr Richard Hunter, Perth Australia
- Mr J Walton, Newcastle upon Tyne
- Mr M R D Yates, Wallingford
- Mr Andy Birkett, Bath
- Mr J Vater, Oxford
- Mr Conrad W H Norris, Bad Nauheim Germany
- Mr D SW Lee, Sheffield
- Mr Mark Loebell, Harrogate
- Mr Mark Hancox, London
- Mr R J Smith, Camberley
- Mr John Griffiths, Chepstow
- Mr Thomas de la Mare, London
- Mr Ian Morris, Oswestry
- Mr Douglas MacAdam, Glasgow
- Mr Jon Pratt, Melbourne Australia
- Mr Roger Pierce, Chinnor
- Mr James Gout, Madrid Spain
- Mr Graeme Meikle, Lindal in Furness
- Mr Neil Marfell, Gloucester
- Mr Nicholas M Ferguson, Cirencester
- Mr Graeme Thirde, Beckenham
- Mr Philip Wilkinson, London
- Mr Robert J Shakespeare, London
- Mr Alan Brook, Bratton

# Merchandise

**W**TT memberships and merchandise can be ordered via the Shop on our website at

<http://www.wildtrout.org/>; by sending your order and cheque to the WTT Office; or by debit/credit card over the phone – call the WTT Office on 023 9257 0985. All postage prices are for the UK, please enquire for overseas.



**T-shirts from Eat, Sleep, Fish**  
Direct from <http://eat-sleep-fish.co.uk/content/2014/09/eat-sleep-fish-t-shirts> £19.99 plus £3.45 p&p

**ORVIS cap**  
£15 + £3.45 p&p  
one size



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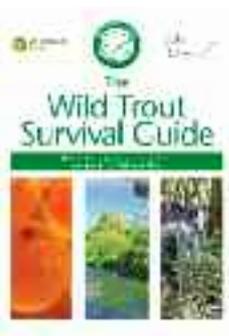
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- The Uplands River Habitat Manual £10 + £1.50 p&p
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- The Wild Trout Survival Guide –£10 + £2 p&p



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[office@wildtrout.org](mailto:office@wildtrout.org)

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## Director

Shaun Leonard  
[director@wildtrout.org](mailto:director@wildtrout.org)  
07974 861908

## Conservation Officers

**Tim Jacklin**  
Northern England, Midlands, Anglian, North Wales  
[tjacklin@wildtrout.org](mailto:tjacklin@wildtrout.org)  
**Andy Thomas**  
Southern, Thames, South West, South & Mid-Wales  
[athomas@wildtrout.org](mailto:athomas@wildtrout.org)  
**Paul Gaskell**  
Trout in the Town  
[pgaskell@wildtrout.org](mailto:pgaskell@wildtrout.org)  
**Rob Mungovan**  
Eastern & central England  
[rmungovan@wildtrout.org](mailto:rmungovan@wildtrout.org)  
**Gareth Pedley**  
The North  
[gpedley@wildtrout.org](mailto:gpedley@wildtrout.org)  
**Mike Blackmore**  
Southern, Thames, South West, South & Mid-Wales  
[mblackmore@wildtrout.org](mailto:mblackmore@wildtrout.org)

## Research & Conservation Officer

Jon Grey  
The North  
[jgrey@wildtrout.org](mailto:jgrey@wildtrout.org)

## Newsletter

Shaun Leonard, Christina Bryant and Richard Handley

## Sponsorship & Communications

Denise Ashton  
[dashton@wildtrout.org](mailto:dashton@wildtrout.org)  
07802 454157

## Wild Trout Trust Office

Christina Bryant  
Trust Administrator  
[office@wildtrout.org](mailto:office@wildtrout.org)  
023 9257 0985  
The Wild Trout Trust, PO Box 120,  
Waterlooville PO8 0WZ  
Christina normally works 09:00–16:00,  
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday. When this is not possible and at all other times, please leave a message on the answerphone.