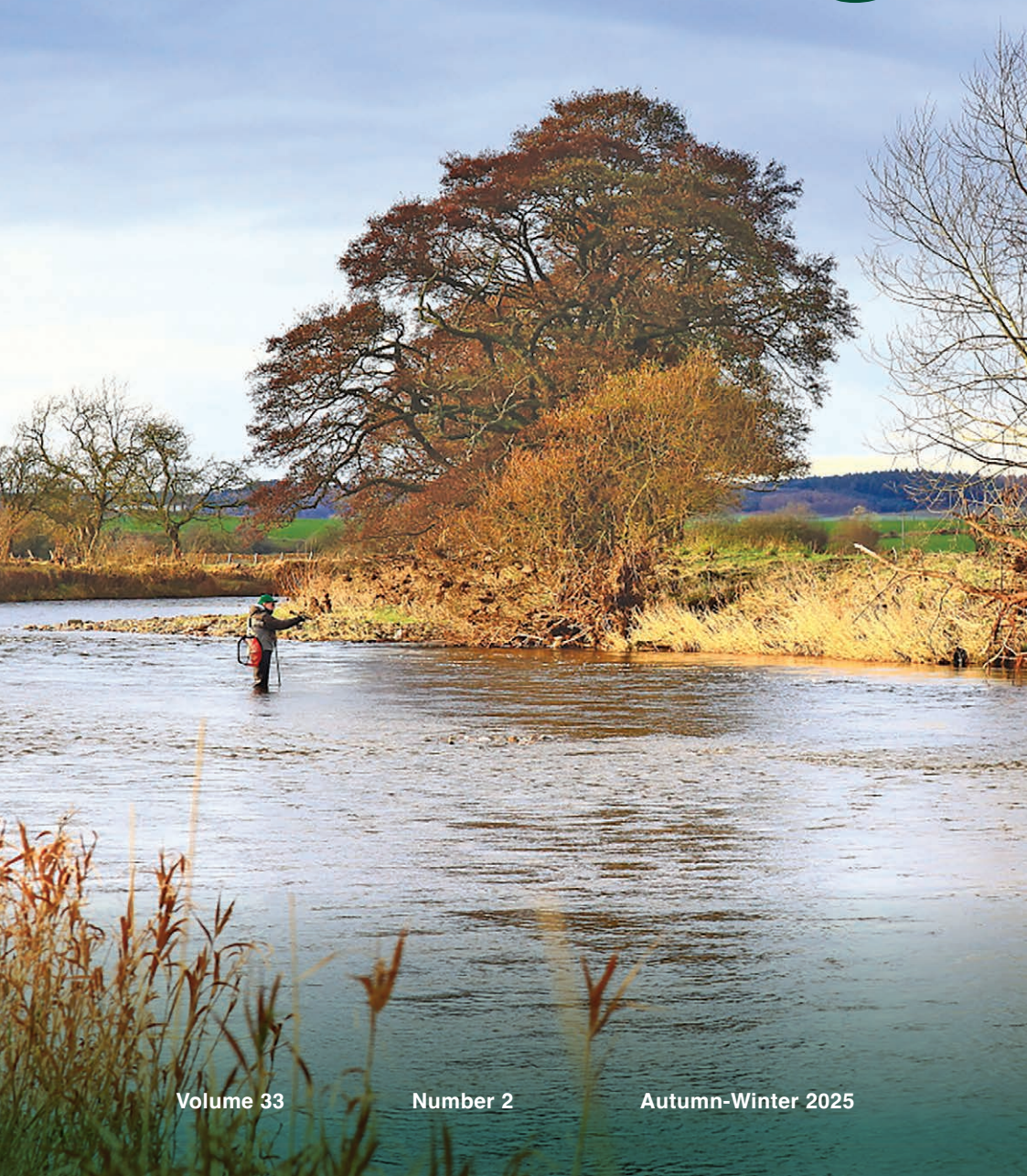


Grayling

The Journal of The Grayling Society



Volume 33

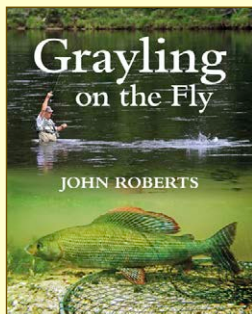
Number 2

Autumn-Winter 2025

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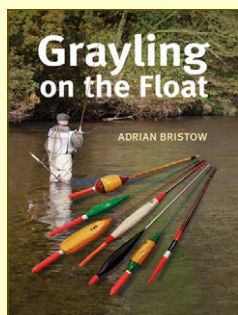
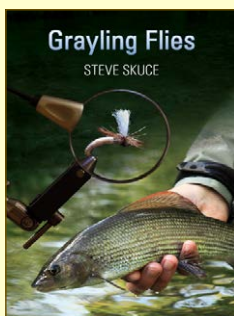
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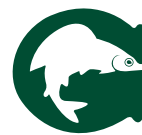
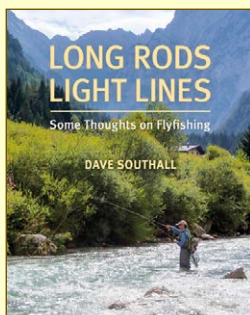
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The Official Journal of The Grayling Society

ISSN 1476-0061

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River Eden in Winter
- copyright Rod Calbrade

Contents

The Editor's Lines – Neil Auchterlonie	5
From the Chairman - Rob Hartley	5-7
Special Notice	8

Around the Areas:

Area 1: Devon, Cornwall, Dorset & Somerset - Paul Daysh	8-9
Area 2: Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Surrey, West Sussex & Wiltshire, and Area 3: London, Kent, Essex, Middlesex, Hertfordshire, East Sussex - Carl Statham	9
Area 8: Derbyshire, South Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire & Norfolk - Brian Clarke	10
Area 10: Lancashire, Merseyside, Cumbria, Greater Manchester & Isle of Man - Paul Shorrock	11-13

Minutes of the 48th Annual General Meeting	14-15
Accounts for the year ended 30th June 2025	16

Conservation Section:

Conservation Officer's Column - Ron Taylor	17-18
An Introduction to Conservation Officer	18-19
Designate - Ian Dandy	
Supporting the grayling population in Lake Vättern, Sweden; an update - Harry Salmgrén	20-21
Irwell Catchment Grayling Stocking Update	22
Bradshaw Brook and Derbyshire Wye 2023 & 2024	23-27
Catchment INNS Control Projects Update - John Frazer	

Angling Section:

Trotting for Grayling - Rob Hartley	28-29
When the Fly Isn't Enough: The Challenges and Insights of Fly Fishing - Ari Savikko	32-33
Trout, the Wild Trout Trust and Grayling Overlaps - Andy Thomas, Conservation Officer with the Wild Trout Trust	34-36

Tackle and Fly-tying Section:

Pêche a Soie 1-weight Level Silk Line Review - Dave Southall	37-39
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Science Section:

Catch Returns, Grayling Numbers and the state of our Rivers - Dr Frank King (Science Officer)	40-44
European Grayling (<i>Thymallus thymallus</i>) Research update 2023-2025 - Prof John Dart	44-49

Special Notice	49
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The editorial team receives many prospective articles from across the membership and wider. The articles published in "Grayling" are presented here in the interests of knowledge and information sharing across the membership. This includes opinions which may not necessarily reflect those of the Grayling Society.

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THE BROUGHTON TROPHY

The Trophy is presented to an individual, or group, whether members of the G.S. or not, from any worldwide location, who have carried out outstanding works for the Society or for the benefit of grayling. The idea is to recognise the efforts of the “unsung heroes” - members, conservationists, students etc. It is also a great opportunity to promote the Society and its aims. Any member can nominate, as long as he /she is not the sole participant or beneficiary. Once again, this can be a member, or not.

Nominations should be in writing with supporting evidence in order that the President can make a credible decision. The submission should be made to Feargal Sharkey, the President, and, if he considers that he needs to discuss the merits with anyone, or with the Committee, that remains his sole decision. The Trophy will be held for one year only.

The Trophy certificate will be presented at the AGM.

Submissions should be made, by 30th September 2026, to the President via: secretary@graylingsociety.net



Guidelines for submission of articles to “Grayling” and “Grayling News”.

This is a brief resumé of the Society’s guidelines for submission and should be sufficient to help you to submit articles. A full set of requirements is on the Grayling Society Website.

The article must be relevant to grayling and / or grayling habitats, river or science. Check with the Editor if you are unsure.

Each article should be 800-1200 words long, unless specifically agreed with the Editor.

Supply text using Microsoft Word or Apple Pages

format. If you do not have access to those, contact the Editor.

Do not put any Bullet points or other forms of formatting in the text.

Keep all images separate from the text, again keeping captions separate but identifiable with the image.

Please ensure all images contain good fish handling techniques, preferably with fish still in the water.

If in doubt, contact editor@graylingsociety.net

The Editor’s Lines

Neil Auchterlonie

Welcome to the latest edition of “Grayling” which goes to press immediately after the 2025 Conference. This was a terrific event by all accounts and I know many of you will have met up at the weekend and enjoyed the gathering, the presentations, and the fishing. If you haven’t been to one of these events, you really should put it in your diary for 2026. Key amongst the discussions was an overview of impending regulatory changes, at least in England, and I would like to draw your attention to the Chair’s words in his regular column. Members can assist and support the aims of the Society through the lobbying of their MPs, and Rob presents a framework clarifying how some of those changes will take place, and also some draft questions to use to ask your MP about what will happen in the interim period. The more people that can assist with this approach, the more influence it

is likely to have, so please do get involved if you are able.

I’ve come towards the end of my journey as Editor of the Society and decided to step down and give someone else a go. I welcome Carl Statham to the position, and you will find some introductory text from Carl later in the journal. I know he will do well in the post, but as always the plea shall be to keep providing draft articles for publication, please. I would like to thank everyone who provided articles over these last 4 years – this really is “your journal” so the more items we get the more the journal is a reflection of the Membership’s activities. We are working on getting this edition out before Christmas, so I wish you all the best for the festive season and tight lines for 2026!

From the Chairman

Rob Hartley

At the recent Grayling weekend in the autumn, that were two sessions that particularly highlighted the plight of both the grayling and the rivers we encounter.

The first session was by Lawrence Talks, a Grayling Research Trust trustee, and senior advisor for salmonid management for England. He showed predictions for the increasing temperatures of the chalk streams. As some of you may know, grayling are much more susceptible to increasing river temperatures than most other fish. The plight for the grayling is very

bleak unless we are able to find a way to reduce the temperatures.

Our President’s impassioned session highlighted the problems both of over abstraction and failure of the water treatment companies to do their job. His call to arms was not just for the people at the event but to the membership in general, to lobby your MP to ensure that the water treatment companies live up to their responsibility, and the regulatory bodies apply the sanctions if they do not.

It is bizarre that 50 years ago, our society was formed to persuade anglers not to treat the grayling as vermin but to respect them as a game fish. Whilst we have fully achieved that, the threat they face now is genuinely existential. By the very nature of your membership, you obviously care about the future of both the grayling and the habitat that she inhabits. Can I please urge you to lobby your MP to use their votes in both of these absolutely critical issues?

By the time this goes to press I will have met Dr Allison Gardner MP, I will do my utmost to persuade her to care for our rivers as much as we do, I hope you will do the same with your MP,

I also wanted to highlight that there are several recent (and forthcoming) regulatory changes in the UK aimed at addressing the water pollution crisis. This is a rapidly evolving area, so if you can meet your MP these are the changes to mention.

Holding an understanding of these developments will make you much more effective in those discussions, and you can ask your MP to support, strengthen, or expedite these specific measures.

Here are the key regulations and government initiatives you should be aware of:

1. The Water Restoration Fund (A New Announcement)

- **What it is:** Announced in May 2024, this is a new fund specifically designed to redirect money from water company fines and penalties back into the health of the local water environment.
- **How it works:** When a water company is fined for pollution (e.g., the recent £114m fine for Southern Water), the money will no longer go directly to the Treasury. Instead, it will be ring-fenced into this fund to support local projects like wetland creation, river restoration, and tackling invasive species.

- **Why it's relevant:** This directly addresses the public demand that fines should be reinvested in nature. You can argue that for this fund to be meaningful, we first need robust prosecutions to generate the fines.

2. Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan (SODRP) - Strengthened Targets

- **What it is:** This is the government's flagship plan, legally mandated by the Environment Act 2021, to tackle sewage overflows.
- **Forthcoming Changes:** The government has consulted on significantly strengthening the targets in this plan. The final version is expected soon. The proposed new targets include:
 - By 2035: Water companies must improve all storm overflows discharging into or near every designated bathing water and high-priority ecological site.
 - By 2050: No storm overflows will be permitted to operate outside of unusually heavy rainfall.
- **Why it's relevant:** This is the long-term plan. Your question to the MP should be about enforcement and pace. "How will we ensure water companies meet these legally binding targets, and what happens if they don't? Shouldn't we be prosecuting for failures now to ensure they take the 2035 and 2050 deadlines seriously?"

3. Increased Monitoring & Transparency

- **What it is:** As of 2023, 100% of storm overflows in England are now monitored. This data is available publicly.
- **Forthcoming Element:** The government is now pushing for real-time data for the public on when spills are happening.

- **Why it's relevant:** This provides the evidence base for prosecution. You can argue: "Now that we have the data proving the scale of illegal spills, what is the Environment Agency's plan to use this data systematically to build legal cases?"

4. Ofwat's New Powers (The Economic Regulator)

- **What it is:** The water regulator, Ofwat, has been given new powers to stop water companies paying dividends to shareholders if their environmental performance is poor, and to impose much stricter conditions on bonuses for company executives.
- **Forthcoming Element:** The government has directed Ofwat to implement these measures and to ensure water company business plans for 2025-2030 (known as PR24) are far more ambitious on environmental investment.
- **Why it's relevant:** This is a financial stick. You can frame it as complementary to prosecution: "While Ofwat's financial penalties are welcome, they are not a substitute for criminal prosecution for breaking the law. We need both."

5. The "Wholetime" Shift at the Environment Agency

- **What it is:** This is a crucial, behind-the-scenes change. The EA is moving its staff who respond to pollution incidents from an "on-call" system to a "wholetime" shift pattern.
- **Why it's relevant:** This is a direct attempt to increase the capacity of the EA to gather evidence out-of-hours, which is when many pollution events occur. Better evidence leads to stronger cases for prosecution.

How to Use This Information in Your Meeting: You can weave these points into your questions to show you are informed and to push for more robust action.

Example Questions to Use Regarding Incorporating Forthcoming Regulations:

1. *"The new Water Restoration Fund is a great idea, but it relies on money from fines. Given that fact, doesn't it make it an even higher priority for the government to ensure the Environment Agency is actively prosecuting water companies to actually generate those funds?"*
2. *"The Storm Overflows Plan sets targets for 2035 and 2050, but my constituents are suffering now. What is your plan to ensure the Environment Agency uses its existing powers under the Water Industry Act 1991 to prosecute for illegal discharges this year, to provide an immediate deterrent?"*
3. *"We now have 100% monitoring of overflows, which gives us the evidence. The EA is moving to a 'wholetime' incident response model to better gather that evidence. With these two pieces in place, what specific, measurable increase in prosecutions can we expect to see in the next 12 months?"*
4. *"While I welcome Ofwat's new powers to block dividends and bonuses, that is a financial regulation. Dumping raw sewage is a criminal offence. Will you advocate for a 'twin-track' approach where financial penalties from Ofwat are matched by vigorous criminal prosecution by the Environment Agency?"*

By linking your demand for prosecution to these specific, forthcoming policies, you make a much more powerful and sophisticated case. You are not just complaining; you are showing how prosecution is the essential, missing piece that makes the government's entire strategy work.

Your preparation will make a real difference. Good Luck!

Special Notice

It is with sadness that I wish to inform our members that Kay Milne, wife of long standing and stalwart member Robert (Bob) Milne passed away peacefully at home on 30th September 2025, after sadly losing her battle with cancer.

Bob and Kay had been together for over 50 years. She would regularly join him at our Conference. The Members of the Society would all like to offer Bob and his family our sincere condolences.

Roger Walker

Around the Areas

Area 1: Devon, Cornwall, Dorset & Somerset

Paul Daysh

We welcome Paul Daysh as the new Area 1 Secretary. Paul describes his background as follows: My obsession for angling began at the age of sixteen, when I discovered angling's unique blend of skill, patience, and connection to nature. Whilst studying, I took on a part-time role at my local tackle centre, where I worked for three years and developed a strong foundation in angling practice, fishery management, and environmental awareness. This early experience inspired a lifelong commitment to promoting sustainable angling and protecting our aquatic environments.

In 2018, I joined Taunton Angling Association as a Club Bailiff, working closely with the Angling Trust, Environment Agency, and Avon and Somerset Police. These collaborations gave me valuable experience in stakeholder engagement, enforcement, and the practical aspects of fishery management. The following year, I was appointed Club Secretary, a role that allowed me to strengthen relationships with members and partner organisations, secure funding for venue improvements, junior initiatives, and assist other clubs in developing their own projects. My involvement with the Angling Trust's Voluntary Bailiff Service began in 2020, where

I have supported local meetings and stakeholder events, as well as providing wider support to the Trust when required. As an Angling Trust Level 2 Coach, I also work alongside colleagues at Canal & River Trust, supporting the Let's Fish programme, organising and running regional celebration events. Helping young people discover angling and seeing them continue their journeys into club membership has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my work.

Beyond these roles, I remain deeply involved in projects focused on habitat enhancement, fishery sustainability, and accessibility. I take great pride in promoting collaboration between anglers, clubs, and regulatory bodies to ensure the long-term health of our waters and fish stocks.

More recently, my personal angling journey has expanded into the world of fly fishing, which has deepened my appreciation for angling and has introduced me to the thrill of pursuing grayling and trout in some truly beautiful settings. Professionally, I bring strong organisational, communication, and partnership skills developed through both my career and voluntary experience. I'm proactive, motivated, and solutions-focused, with a firm belief in teamwork

and the collective responsibility we all share as custodians of our environment.

My commitment to sustainable angling, environmental conservation, and education continues to guide everything I do. I'm passionate about supporting initiatives that protect our rivers and inspire future generations of anglers. It's an absolute privilege to serve as Area 1 Secretary and to contribute to the Grayling Society's important work in safeguarding our shared angling heritage and promoting responsible stewardship for years to come.



Area 2: Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Surrey, West Sussex & Wiltshire, and Area 3: London, Kent, Essex, Middlesex, Hertfordshire, East Sussex

Carl Statham

We welcome Carl Statham as the new Area Secretary for Areas 2 and 3.

Here is a bit of background about Carl:

Hello to everyone. I am the new secretary for area 2/3 and will lead the Editing of the Society Journal and since I paid £80 for the entire back list of copies at the Grayling Conference I have no excuses! I have been fishing since I was about 11 when I was allowed to go solo down to the River Stort in Sawbridgeworth with pike in my plans. It was actually a canal navigation but still had River sections left that were 'out-of-bounds', but that only increased the hunger for hidden monsters. I didn't properly turn my hand to fly fishing until I was in my twenties and then started fishing for grayling, mainly at Wherwell Estate where some of you attending the conference fished on the Conference Weekend.

These days as a member of the Piscatorial's and the Red Spinners I have many options, the Anton, Test,



Avon and especially the Wylye have great numbers of grayling despite the current gloomy projections of declining numbers. It was great to see some of you at the Conference, it was a fantastic event, and I hope to see some of you on the bank and more of you at next years conference.

Area 8: Derbyshire, South Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire & Norfolk

Brian Clarke

Each year Area 8 donates to a charity, this year thanks to the generosity of Dr Jim Danials, a Cressbrook and Litton Flyfishers Club who donated 4 cane fly rods for us to sell and donate the money raised to a charity. At this year's Chatsworth Country Fair, we managed to sell two of the rods, rods made by a local rod builder from Derby, the late Reg Brandreth. The money Raised was £210.00 which we decided to donate to the Macmillan Coffee Morning organised each year by Chris Thurtle in cooperation with Cressbrook and Litton Flyfishers Club. This year through Chris's efforts almost £2000 was raised



This was not the only money we will be donating this year as through monies raised via Area 8 Activities such as raffles, donations, fishing days, evening events and fly-tying masterclasses, we will be donating £500.00 to a local Children's Hospice.

Our evening events started last month at our new venue, The Cavendish Club at Chatsworth with a North Country Fly Tying Demo by John Glynn



The remainder of our events are;

19th November Steve Cheetham talking about the history north country Spiders

10th December Dr Tim Jaklin talking about river management and an update on the work on the River Ecclesbourne

14th January John Frazer talking about the work carried out eradicating invasive plant species

11th February Chris Osker talking about long trotting techniques and how to keep bait

11th March David Southall with his latest book.

We also have a fishing day 23/11/25 on the Rivers Derwent and Wye

Our January Cane and Pin Day shall hopefully be on 18th of January on the River Derwent, depending on river and weather conditions.

Fly Tying Masterclasses have yet to be arranged.

Area 10: Lancashire, Merseyside, Cumbria, Greater Manchester & Isle of Man

Paul Shorrock

The Grayling Day at Warwick Hall on the Eden (26/10/25) was fully attended (12 rods) but only half of us caught any Grayling. The levels were fine but the fish were playing hard to get. A good time was had, and Warwick Hall do put up a very good breakfast, which was the highlight for some! The glitch in the Myclubhouse meant that we had attendees from Areas 3, 4 and 11 as well as some more familiar Area 10 faces.

- A Grayling Day double-header weekend is arranged for 29/30 November with Bowland Game Fishing Association our hosts on the Saturday and a combined effort

from Clitheroe Angling Association and Ribblesdale Anglers Association on Sunday.

- Area 10 Facebook page updated regularly shows pictures from the Grayling Days along with relevant environmental issues. Followers number up to 357 now, overwhelming majority from within area, male and over 45 years old. I will hope to convert some of these followers into members this year.

Paul Shorrock
Area 10 Secretary

Grayling Fishing on the River-Eden, 26th October 2025

By Andrew Ayres

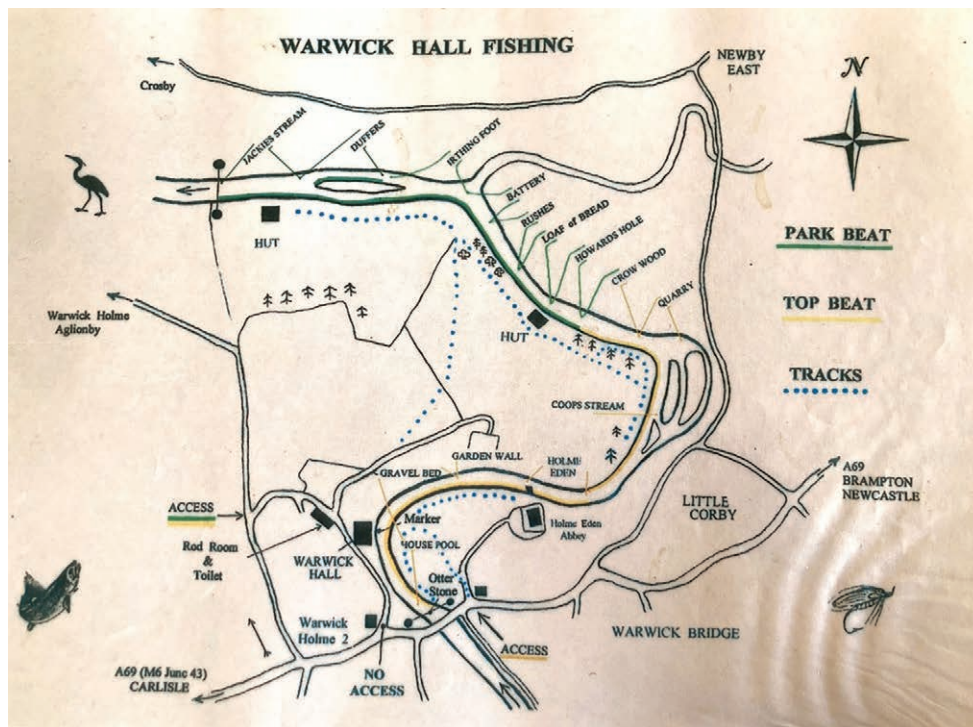
(Grayling Society, Ludlow Fly dressers, Worcester FD, Gloucester & Cheltenham FD member)

My first 2025/2026 Grayling Fishing outing was from an invitation to a day out with Area 10 by Paul Shorrock. Fishing the Warwick Hall Estate (260 acres) with the River Eden flowing through it near Carlisle.

Warwick Hall is an up market B&B built in 1774. It was a Catholic house and was attended to by Benedictine Priests who served and lived in the Hall. In 1936 the Hall was rebuilt having been destroyed by fire, using red sand stone blocks with many Neo-Georgian features. The current owners purchased it in 1998 from the previous owner who had lived in it all her life for 102 years, so the history and furniture date well back and in some areas time has stood still. As you arrive and enter you are greeted by a white Labrador who barks and then somebody arrives. Marble pillars are everywhere with a



sweeping curved staircase to the landing with a huge glass domed ceiling, walls are covered with every sporting book from the year dot, a truly wonderful house and only 9 guest rooms, all public rooms are very elegant and beautifully decorated.



It's a new fishing venue for me as I have never fished the Eden before. The Hall has 2 miles of river banks for salmon, trout, and grayling through the seasons. The River Eden starts in the Cumbrian hills at Black Moss Fell and flows north, finally reaching its end at the Solway Firth covering 90 miles.

Mentioning the Solway reminds me of a story, from my friend Geoff Mortimer who fishes around the Lakes and around Penrith during the seasons and while fishing on an isolated beck he caught a unidentified small 6-8-inch fish. He was in fact fishing the Upper Lowther having obtained the local permission and he wandered off up a small beck not far from Wet-Sleddale reservoir. If you trace the river it's a tributary of the Earmont river which ends up in the Eden on route to the Solent. After many discussions

in our monthly fly-tying group morning, we all came to the conclusion it was a small sea trout, which makes you wonder how it got there, as from its size it would be between 2/3 years old.

Sunday morning we woke to a very heavy frost, ideal for grayling fishing on the river, with a strong westerly wind.



A full English breakfast had been arranged for us all on a long dining table for 09.00h. What a way to start the day!

The main beat is called Top Park Beat (East) and it has a selection of about 9 separate beats and fishing locations. In the middle is Corby Island which has other fishing positions, channels, and inlets around it, almost like a very small delta. Access is good all round and plenty of walkways and ladders to the water including huts to shelter or rest. You can fish both sides of the river, except in certain areas in the middle. I was drawn to fish the west side of the river, which is a short car trip of half a mile as this is on the opposite side of the river to the hall, park in the field on hard core, a short walk and you are fishing. There is good access on all these banks and wading is ok but the slab rocks can catch you so always take a stick. Although I took my 4w 10ft rod and light gear, I chose to fish my 10ft 7w. It's a matter of what you are most comfortable with - especially on a new stretch of water. I fished size 14 Jig hook Grayling flies, my own creation based on a Copper Tom, and Hotspot Nymph with a short red tail, and then changed to team of 3 spiders Black magic, Waterhen Bloa, & Partridge and

Orange and fished them down the river. I know, it's a very unorthodox style which resulted in an out of season trout being caught and 2 grayling. The day consisted of 12 fisherman split between the beats, 7 brown trout and 15 grayling were caught, 9 of which were trotting. The map shows the beats and routes.

The rain had now increased, and it was time to go back to the log fire, coffee and discuss the rights and wrong of the day. One thing for sure, it was a great day and a big thanks to Paul for organising it. With such a splendid location, anybody staying with partners, there are plenty of walks with a walled garden, bee hives and wonderful trees all around the grounds and outside seating areas or a good book on the patio, where you can watch fishers on the river while sipping a G&T.

Wild life included Wild Duck, Green Woodpecker, Heron and a range of garden birds and Pheasants.

For those of you that are traveling North to Scotland I recommend this B&B as a great break, and 246miles from Cheltenham and 2 miles off the M6, J43.



Minutes of the 48th Annual General Meeting of The Grayling Society

Held at the Marwell Hotel, Winchester on Saturday 8 November 2025

1. **Apologies**
Apologies for absence were received from Neil Auchterlonie
2. **Minutes of the 47th Annual General Meeting**
The Minutes of the 47th Annual General Meeting held at Cardrona Hotel, Peebles, were approved as a true and accurate record. Proposed by John Gibson, Seconded by Geoff Bevan.
3. **Matters Arising**
There were no matters arising.
4. **The Chairman's Report**
A copy of the Chairman's report will appear in the Winter 2025 Journal
5. **Treasurer's Report and Audited Accounts**
The Treasurer provided the audited accounts of the Society for the financial year ending 2025. The accounts were approved by the meeting. Proposed by Nick Gough, Seconded by Jon Pepper
6. **Election of Honorary Auditor**
David Aspinall kindly offered to act as auditor and review the annual accounts, and was appointed after being Proposed by Rob Hartley and Seconded by Stuart Wardle.
7. **Membership Secretary's Report**
The membership Secretary's delivered his report
8. **Election of Chairman**
Rob Hartley indicated that he was prepared to stand as Chairman for a further year. As there were no other candidates Rob Hartley was duly elected. Proposed by Nick Moate, Seconded by John Gibson.
9. **Election of Officers**
All Officers indicated their willingness to serve for another year, and as no applications were received for any of the roles, it was agreed to elect them en bloc, Proposed by Peter Oldham, Seconded by Geoff Bevan.
10. **Motion for consideration**
The AGM accepted the proposed changes to the Constitution and Rules as set out in the draft document. Proposed by John Walker, Seconded by Gary Butcher

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business raised.

12. Date and Venue of Next Meeting

To Be Confirmed

13. Presentations:

Righyni-Roose Trophy: As there were no entries this year, the trophy was not awarded.

The Broughton Trophy: As there were no nominations this year, the trophy was not awarded

The meeting closed at 16:25

Chairman's Report

This year has been something of a sea change for the Grayling Society. Although some of our members in Scotland say there is still some antagonism towards grayling, for the rest of the UK the need to persuade anglers that the grayling is a worthy quarry has long been achieved. To some extent, this is driving the change in our attitude towards conservation in that now we are directed more towards trying to help clubs and individuals protect their rivers to improve grayling habitat.

To this end, this year the society made its biggest ever award of £10,000 towards helping North Yorkshire anglers bring legal action to protect their river. This would appear to be much more how the Society is moving and from all the feedback I have had over the year, it is how the membership wants it.

Of course, on the Committee, we would welcome any comments you may have regarding this. Tight lines.

WANTED • ARTICLES •

We are always looking for material to publish in "Grayling"!

Please send articles (500 – 1500 words) or items of news relating to grayling to the Editor through the link: editor@graylingsociety.net

Accounts for the Year Ended 30th June 2025

Income and expenditure account

	2025	2024
Income		
Subscriptions	19,513	20,590
Surplus/deficit on AGM	1,285	1,028
Surplus on sales	54	31
Conservation donations received	561	418
Interest received	1,510	947
	<u>22,923</u>	<u>23,014</u>
Expenditure		
The Grayling	6,397	10,292
Administration	1,515	1,566
Committee meetings	1,929	2,166
Website costs	338	478
Depreciation of fixed assets	389	390
Conservation spend	12,350	1,222
Total expenses for the year	<u>22,918</u>	<u>16,114</u>
Retained surplus for the year to General Fund	<u>5</u>	<u>6,900</u>

Balance Sheet

		2024
Fixed assets	482	871
Stock	491	548
Bank accounts	73,029	75,105
Debtors and deferred costs	4,912	3,233
Deferred income and accruals	(1,000)	(1,848)
Net assets	<u>77,914</u>	<u>77,909</u>
General Fund b/f	57,909	57,909
add surplus/ deficit forthe year	<u>5</u>	
	57,914	
Conservation Fund	<u>20,000</u>	<u>20,000</u>
	<u>77,914</u>	<u>77,909</u>

Conservation Section

Conservation Officer's Column

Ron Taylor

As the end of my term of office approaches and by the time this is read, will have arrived, I make no apology for reflecting on whether our efforts as a Society to champion grayling conservation over the last three years has been successful. We can be proud that we have done all that could have been expected of us and possibly a little bit more. The Society is recognised and respected in the conservation arena and continues to be involved in campaigns and projects both locally and nationally making a difference wherever it can. However, I am afraid that my thoughts are drawn to the areas where very slow progress is being made to clean up our rivers for the benefit, not only of grayling, but for all living things that call them home. The Government has failed to treat the issues as a priority and continues with the cosmetic rhetoric and little significant change (apart from appointing the fourth Secretary of State in as many years, good luck Emma Reynolds, I wonder how long she will be in office?).

Let's be frank about this, as the Water Commission has acknowledged, the Regulators - and therefore the Government - have failed us all and continue to do so. The real progress has to be that the general Public are far more aware of the continued failures through the work of the Society and of course our President Feargal Sharkey, together with all the other Campaign organisations too numerous to mention. Long may it continue. The various organisations that continue to pollute our rivers have in fact increased the pollution during my time as conservation officer, the Water Companies by sixty percent often using the ridiculous excuse "It's raining".

Thames Water for example have been fined £123M. for pollution and illegal payments to shareholders, a sum that they have no means to pay, and the Government keep on dithering. The wholesale food producers carry on dumping waste, agricultural impacts often unprosecuted as the Environment Agency seem toothless when it comes to enforcement. The livestock continue to have access to the rivers to defecate and urinate without restriction. The Local Authorities, throughout the Country fail to control road run off effectively which allows all sorts of pollution, including plastic from tyre wear, to enter our rivers. They also have the responsibility for all of the capped off waste disposal sites which are now seeping forever chemicals into our water ways. The general public, though now better educated, still have an overall view that pollution of our rivers is someone else's responsibility. They continue to treat the toilet flush as a convenient way of disposing of anything that fits from wet wipes to unused prescription drugs and from sanitary accessories to surplus noxious substances. I depressingly observed when I took over my role that the rivers holding grayling were unlikely to run clean during my life time - I think I was right. I also observed that collaboration was the way forward to achieve progress more expeditiously - I was wrong. The polluters all continue to ignore the regulations and the campaigns, motivated by self-interest. Strong regulation has to be the way forward.

Some information which may have escaped the publicity it deserves is the Society involvement in supporting Every River campaign launched by Fish Legal to successfully oppose the Government appeal to overturn the High Court

decision that all River Basin Management Plans through out England are unlawful. Following that decision the amended plan prepared by the Environment Agency covering the Humber basin was also unlawful, staggering as that may seem, and has been withdrawn after a second judicial review brought by Fish Legal. The sooner the Cunliffe Report, Water Commission, recommendations are implemented the better for grayling and the better for all of us.

During my time as Conservation Officer the Angling Trust promoted the Water Quality Monitoring Network with a small contribution from the Society and a huge contribution from late committee member Kris Kent. The network has proven a huge success and been the source of considerable data. The future must not however get obsessed with data production as it is obvious that the majority of our rivers are polluted and

we need as much energy as possible devoted to cleaning them up not telling us how bad they are.

I could go on, but my time to hand over to my successor, Ian Dandy, approaches and he will be responsible for the Society's conservation efforts going forward. The conservation grant scheme which as I hand over is underused by our Area Secretaries and their members is an important contributor to conservation locally and will be administered by Ian. The catch return information posted to our web site is also an important part of conservation as those records are indicators of the health or otherwise of the Grayling populations and I know Ian will want to promote the use of that facility. I wish him every success with his work and I am sure he will receive the same support I have enjoyed during my tenure.

An Introduction to Conservation Officer Designate

Ian Dandy

Ed. We welcome Ian Dandy to the role of Conservation Officer and have pleasure in presenting his personal introduction below.

First of all, can I say a massive "Thank You" to Ron for all his passion and hard work during his time as Conservation Officer, also for his help and support since I agreed to take over the role.

I first heard Ron speak at the Society weekend in Preston in 2022, and was really impressed by his presentation, which inspired me to get involved with the Angling Trust water quality sampling initiative, and to try to lend more support to the Society. The opportunity to do so came up when it was announced that Ron will be stepping down and that a replacement volunteer was required. Ron will be a hard act to follow, but here goes....!



My name is Ian Dandy, and I was born and raised in Tarleton, a small village by the confluence of the Rivers Douglas and Ribble in West Lancashire, both of which were heavily polluted at the time. My first fishing exploits were limited to the local canal and ponds where

the quarry would be roach, rudd, eels, perch and small pike.

I remember receiving a copy of 'Fishing with Mr. Crabtree' one Christmas and seeing the wonderful water colour paintings of the grayling and background descriptions of 'The Lady of the Stream'. I was captivated by the beauty of the fish, and being able to fly fish in the rivers illustrated and described in the book was beyond my wildest dreams.

As an adult I got keen on long distance running, and became fairly good at it, so the fishing took a back seat for a while. As the running ability started to drop off, my interest in fishing returned, but this time fly fishing. I joined Lancashire Fly Fishing Association gaining access to the upper Ribble and Hodder. I'm also a member of Clitheroe Anglers and Ribblesdale AA, as well as Milnthorpe AA in Cumbria. On a late winter's day in around 2003, I finally caught my first grayling and have been hooked ever since. I love to fish the dry fly, especially with traditional split cane rods, but haven't quite mastered the art of Euro nymphing!

Employment wise, I left school at 16 and served my time as a commercial vehicle bodybuilder, but after a short spell in the Metropolitan Police, in 1990 I began a career in occupational and environmental health and safety. I've worked as a health and safety manager, enforcement officer and consultant, including a significant part of my career in insurance. I gained my MSc in Occupational & Environmental Health and Safety Management, and Fellowship of the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health. After a working life looking after the health and safety of people at work, I now plan to help look after the health, safety and welfare of the Lady of the Stream. I think she deserves and needs all the help we can give her!

My conservation activities up to now have naturally been focussed on my local rivers. I was a Trustee of and provided health and safety support to the Friends of the River Yarrow, a small tributary of the Douglas which thanks in part to the efforts of the group, now supports a thriving population of trout and coarse fish. I am currently fully involved with conservation activities with Lancashire Fly Fishers Association, being an active committee member and undertaking water quality sampling and invertebrate monitoring on the Hodder and Ribble.

Since volunteering to take over the Conservation Officer role, I've been in contact with the Ribble Rivers Trust, to liaise with them and hopefully get involved with some of their projects. I also recently contacted and attended a meeting of the Hodder Consultative to promote the Grayling Society, and especially to encourage the associated fishing clubs to persuade each of their members to complete the society catch returns on a regular basis, as I strongly believe we need hard data and scientific evidence to support our initiatives. As a result, I've now been invited to join the Consultative as a permanent member to represent the Grayling Society and work closely with the Consultative in continuing to protect the Hodder and its fish and wildlife environment.

Although my current activities have been confined to the North West, I obviously want to get involved and assist wherever I can across the whole of the Society. To that end, I'll be contacting the Area Secretaries shortly to introduce myself and hopefully assist them in any local activities or initiatives they have planned.

Meanwhile, if anyone does want to get in touch, please drop me a line at iandandyuk@yahoo.co.uk or give me a call on 07922092683.

A brief update on the efforts to support the grayling population in Lake Vättern, Sweden

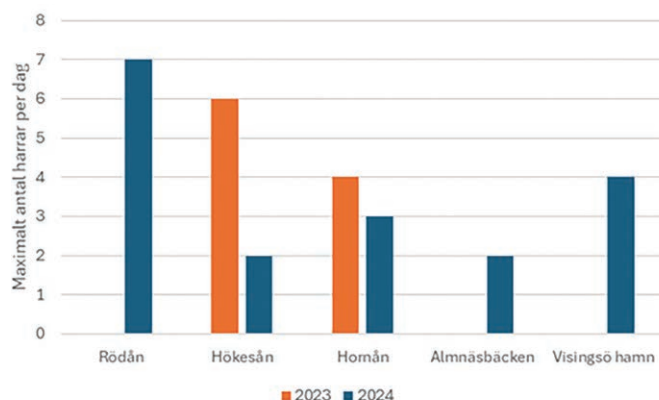
By Harry Salmgrén

Providing information on behalf of the County Administrative Board in Jönköping

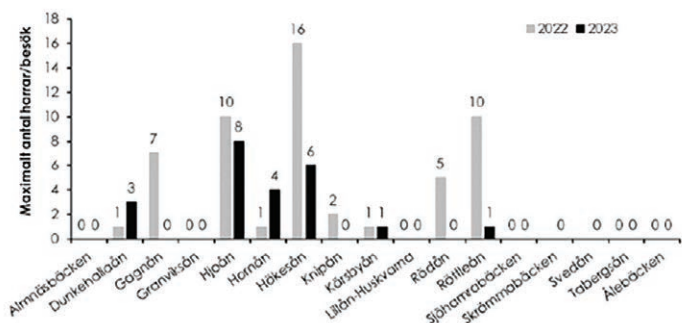
In the 1980s, during my tenure as the Jönköping area secretary of the Swedish Anglers Association, our routine inspections of spawning sites, such as Röttle å and other brooks, indicated a stable situation for grayling populations. The assessments employing a method known as “Flugutter” (a small floating device that drags a long line of attached flies on and beneath the lake surface alongside the boat) yielded positive results in evaluating the health of the grayling stock.

Over the years, further monitoring and increasing amounts of information have indicated a declining stock of grayling. Recently, a complete ban on all grayling catches has been announced. Reviewing the current data on the grayling spawning population, this is no surprise. Results are seen below.

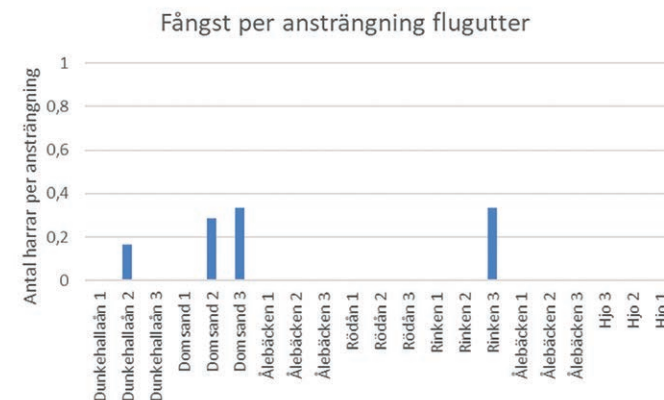
The figure below displays the maximum numbers of Grayling per day during the spawning period in the small tributaries to Lake Vättern in Southern Sweden:



This figure illustrates the situation 2022 and 2023:



The following fishing evaluations using “Flugutter” provide evidence for these tough management decisions that have been made in the interests of the fishery. For a total of 81 individual passes, only 6 grayling were caught in total:



Compared to telemetry and tagging methods, these results suggest that there are still issues, although the cause of the decline remains unknown at this stage.

This small report summarises some of the county administration's recent initiatives to address issues with grayling population health through expanded research methodologies. In this way, the work supports broader efforts to secure long term interests in grayling.



We look forward to more information coming through in the future along with – hopefully – an action plan for fishery improvement.

See you on the water. Harry Salmgrén

With thanks to the County Administration of Jönköping / Sweden for informative illustrations.

Irwell Catchment Grayling Stocking Update

John Frazer

Bradshaw Brook Fly Fishing Club – 11/9/25

It was reported recently in the Journal that the Environment Agency stocked grayling fry in the River Irwell at Burrs Country Park between 2018 and 2020 from the National Fish Farm at Calverton :

3,000 in 2018

6,000 in 2019

3,000 in 2020

See the YouTube video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzhupZFIsSI&ab_channel=FishingFiend

Since this stocking there have been reliable reports on social media of both mature fish being caught on the Irwell, and recent spawning (although I have not seen any for its tributary, the River Croal). I have also caught grayling at Burrs Country Park on the Irwell a few years ago.

On 28/8/25 a fishing club member reported catching what he thought were 4 x 100mm grayling from the River Croal at Moses Gate Park in Bolton, which I expect were from the 2024 spawning, however, the fish could not be positively identified from his photographs. The Croal joins the Irwell in Bolton and is made up with the following Bolton streams: the River Tonge, Bradshaw Brook, Eagley Brook & Astley Brook, all of which have good stocks of brown trout. I returned to the location on the Croal



with the member on 5/9/25, with a small tank, so the fish could be positively identified. In just over an hour we netted nine and missed more, all 100mm grayling. We could not connect with small dries, but swinging wet flies was very effective.

It is good news that it appears a sustainable grayling population is being established and that they are moving through the catchment. However, I expect movement further up the Croal catchment will be prevented by the weir further upstream in Moses Gate Park. There was some debate around the stocking that grayling had never been present in the Irwell catchment, so should not have been stocked. I disagree: Grayling do not risk unbalancing the ecosystem as they have lived in harmony with trout and other species in the rivers of Europe, Montana, Alaska & Russia for thousands of years, and the graylings' presence is especially valuable because they are more sensitive to pollution than trout, acting therefore as an indicator of water quality. Also, I have fished rivers in remote areas of Montana that never had any fish stocked for hundreds or thousands of years, as a result of waterfalls preventing the migration of fish from downstream, until they were stocked and now have successful sustainable fish populations.

Bradshaw Brook and Derbyshire Wye 2023 & 2024 Catchment INNS Control Projects Update

John Frazer

Ed. Where mentioned below, the following are shown by their acronyms: Japanese Knotweed (JKW), Himalayan Balsam (HB) & Giant Hogweed (GHW).

This article is a follow-up from my report in the Summer 2023 Journal of the 2022 JKW treatment projects on the Wye (Derwent Catchment) and Bradshaw Brook (Irwell Catchment). The projects were managed by Bradshaw Brook Fly Fishing Club (BBFFC). This is an update on both rivers. As I stated in my 2023 article, all the rivers I fish have infestations of one or more of the following Invasive Non Native Species (INNS) to a greater or lesser extent: Japanese Knotweed (JKW), Himalayan Balsam (HB) or Giant Hogweed (GHW). These rivers include the Derbyshire Wye, Derwent, Goyt, Yorkshire Calder, Colne & Upper Don and the Lancashire Irwell & its tributaries, including Bradshaw Brook. The Wye has the least JKW while the Irwell catchment has the most, consuming 100% of the riverbank with Giant Hogweed in many places.

Irwell Catchment (Bradshaw Brook) and Derbyshire Wye – General Comments

It very soon became evident that JKW 'Eradication' is not a practical option on a riverbank, as that would require digging out the weed to a depth of 2.5m and transporting the hazardous waste to a specialist site for disposal. This is completely impractical on a riverbank and even if it was possible the cost would be astronomical. However, 'Control' is a very practical and relatively low-cost option: although the plant rhizomes remain viable for more than

10 years after treatment and likely to regrow if the ground is disturbed, ongoing periodic monitoring to identify and treat any stunted regrowth can effectively prevent reinfestation. A clear pattern quickly emerged: The amount of JKW is reduced by 95% to 100% after the first year's treatment with herbicide. After the second year of treatment regrowth was usually nil or less than 1%, so ongoing treatment was much faster and lower-cost - where interventions every 2 or 3 years should be sufficient to control the weeds. Paul Gaskell paid a visit to a Wild Trout Trust Survey at Bradshaw Brook and commented that he had never seen a fishing club so successful in treating JKW.

Roundup Herbicide is the only type of Herbicide approved by the EA for treating INNS weeds on a riverbank. Stem injection is our preferred



Bradshaw Brook - Typical 100m long JKW stand on 3_9_23 before treatment spike.proud.target



Bradshaw Brook - Typical 100m long JKW stand on 25_8_25, after treatment, spike.proud.target

method of control whenever possible, however, if the canes are too thin for injection or the access is too difficult then we spray. On the small percentages of stunted regrowth in the second or third year we are often able to use small hand-held 1.5 litre sprayers, which can very accurately spray a stem up to 3m away and is a lot more user-friendly for volunteers. Prior to commencing herbicide treatment on a riverbank landowner permission must be received along with written approval from the Environment Agency. One trained supervisor can closely supervise up to 4 untrained operatives (volunteers and local gardeners in our case). I was certified as a riverbank supervisor which required 4 days of training and exams, which was paid for as part of the 2022 grant from the Angling Trust's Angling Improvement Fund (AIF). All the JKW treatment is carried out in the prime treatment period from late August, after the weed flowers, until the leaves start to turn yellow in late October. During this period the plant sap is running down into the roots (rhizomes), so the plant assists the spread of the herbicide, pulled down through the stems along with the sap. £10 million Public Liability Insurance and £5 million

employees' liability is required, which represents a significant additional cost. Volunteers are considered 'Unpaid Employees' for insurance purposes and have the same legal protection as paid employees.

Bradshaw Brook (Irwell Catchment) JKW Treatment

Following the successful campaign in 2022, Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) through Natural Course provided £7,000+ funding in 2023 to continue the JKW treatment and commence developing cost-effective Himalayan Balsam (HB) treatment. HB is endemic in the whole of the Irwell Catchment. This was followed up in 2024 by a further £8,000.00 funding for the project from Bolton Council, Bolton Green Umbrella, The Irwell Catchment Partnership, BBFFC and The Friends of Longsight Park, plus £2,000.00 of materials and equipment from United Utilities. As a result, the programme on Bradshaw Brook was expanded to include not only the BBFFC's 2km stretch of the brook but the entire length of the Brook, 7.25 river kilometres, from the Jumbles Dam exit to the confluence with the river Tonge in Leverhulme Park. For the JKW on the 2km BBFFC stretch fishermen volunteers are always used for JKW treatment. Volunteers with the required physical capability are not usually available for the remaining 5.5km of the river,



Bradshaw Brook JKW Area 153 July 2024 before treatment



Bradshaw Brook JKW Area 153 June 2025 after first treatment

so we adopted a model of using local gardeners supervised by myself, which has turned out to be a very cost-effective and value-for-money solution.

We reached the confluence with the River Tonge in October last year, treating the JKW at least 4m back from the water's edge over the whole length of the brook. Treatment will continue in 2025, maintaining the treated areas and pushing the JKW further back from the water's edge. To date over 20,000m2 of JKW has been treated at over



Bradshaw Brook - Typical clump washed downstream and starting to re-root, 15.9.23



Bradshaw Brook - Typical stems knocked flat and released after level rise, 12.10.23

150 sites and last September we started treating the largest single stand on Bradshaw Brook, some 3,000+m2, almost the size of a football field (see drone photos). It is thought that it will take at least 3 years to treat the whole area. We started by splitting the stand into 4 sections by cutting 2m wide paths through, stem flooding the cut stalks with herbicide, and safely storing the cut canes by depositing them within the surrounding JKW so they would not re-contaminate new or previously treated areas. We then stem injected the riverbank canes and spray treat all around the remaining 4 areas.

Bradshaw Brook Himalayan Balsam (HB) Treatment

HB is found on all rivers in Greater Manchester and, during the 2022 Natural Course INNS survey of the 569km of streams in the catchment, HB was reported as being "...too widespread to be feasibly mapped". Part of the £7k grant received from GMCA in 2023 for INNS treatment was used to purchase two



Different varieties of flowering HB on 25-8-25, Left hand sample 3.3m tall

battery powered brush cutters for HB control. However with HB stretching from the river's edge for 100m or more in places, and each plant producing circa 500 seeds that the exploding seed pods can throw 5m away without wind assistance, control is a huge task. Brush cutting/strimming, mowing and hand pulling are 100% effective if carried out at least twice a year before the seed pods form, carrying on for 3 years until the seed bank in the ground is exhausted. We tried using 'Unpaid Workers', formerly known as 'Community Service', but 6 unpaid workers, a supervisor and fishing club member would only clear a few hundred square metres of riverbank in a day. With circa 20,000m² of riverbank (up to 4m back from the water's edge), on the BBFFC stretch containing 20% HB, with huge areas further back, it was clear that pulling/strimming/mowing was not a viable solution and impossible in many locations. We therefore started trials with weak spray mixes of

Roundup, much weaker than the manufacturer's recommendations to kill HB, while minimising the effects on other plant life in the treatment area. We found that a 0.1% mix (10ml of Roundup in 10 Litres of water) was effective on fully grown plants. Therefore in 2025 we used the following methodology:

- i. Spray as late as possible to give minimum time for new growth from the seedbank in the ground. The first spraying is done around mid-June, before flowers form, to prevent harming pollinating insects.
- ii. Spot Spray, hand pull or strim any regrowth 6 to 8 weeks later, before flowers form.

Update August 2025 - The scientists experimenting with the Rust fungus to control HB discovered to their cost that there are several varieties of HB and the Rust Fungus being used was only effective on one variety. We had a similar experience with spray mixes, the 0.1% mix was only effective in around 80% of the areas we treated in 2025. The physical difference between different varieties of HB is not always clear, but generally the taller thicker-stemmed bright green plants whose stems are full of sap are easy to kill. The other variety resistant to our 0.1% mix is less tall, under 2m, has a thinner more woody stem, often yellow or red, and duller green leaves, see photo. Trials with different strength spray mixes are ongoing.

Bradshaw Brook Giant Hogweed (GHW) Treatment

GHW is endemic in almost every stream in the Irwell catchment, however, BBFFC has zero tolerance of the weed anywhere in the Bradshaw valley. When plants occasionally are found we always spray with herbicide before they produce

seeds. Each dinner plate-size flowerhead can produce 50,000 seeds, see attached photo of a GHW plant being sprayed.



Bradshaw Brook GHW treatment, 21-6-25

Derbyshire Wye JKW Treatment (Derwent Catchment)

All known stands of JKW were reduced by between 95% and 100% by fishermen volunteers in 2022 & 2023. As JKW is easy and cheap to control (we achieve a cost of less than £2/m²) and there is very little in the Wye catchment, Wye stakeholders should not tolerate the riverbanks being polluted with the weed. No funding was available to continue the JKW treatment in 2024 or planned for 2025. By 2024 I was in my 74th year and I had fished the Wye continuously for 25 years, but the effort of traveling from my home in Salford was

becoming too much, so my son Robert and I carried out a final survey of the JKW on the Wye Catchment on 1/11/24 and uploaded the 2024 survey results onto the INNS Mapper website for posterity, see: <https://innsmapper.org/map>. [If you search for Buxton and zoom in on the riverbank sites you can click on individual sites to reveal a brief description, before and after photos and the What3Words location.]

The Wye November 2024 JKW survey is available at the following link (cut and paste into browser): https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/16FeXFC7jForNQPuj_iGPeDNa9vYJQRfn?usp=drive_link

**Authors John & Robert Frazer
Bradshaw Brook Fly Fishing Club, 12/9/25**



Wye W8a, C&L keeper cutting access with chainsaw to JKW, 10-10-23

Angling Section

Trotting for Grayling

Rob Hartley

I have noticed an increase in the number of enquiries we have about trotting for grayling when we attend various shows, even at the fly fair! Consequently, I'm going to outline the basic tackle that I use and even though each river will be different, I have been lucky enough to fish enough of our rivers to say that this tackle will suit the vast majority of places you fish. Depending on whether you fish tree-lined rivers or not will determine which is the best rod length for you. I prefer 13-foot rods if I can get away with them as it allows a better control of the line and a faster pick up if you have a bite. However, a tree-lined river might dictate you drop down to 11 foot. I am lucky enough to have a Young's 13 foot, from which the middle section can be removed to make it an 11 foot rod, so I can cope with the vast majority of rivers with this. I am not sure if this rod is still made but if you get the chance to buy one, I would recommend it. John Wilson also did a trotting rod which was really good value for money, however, the main requirements are that the rod has a tippy action to allow you to strike at long distances and the rod ring should be held well away from the rod itself. The reason for this will become very apparent the first time you trot in rain. If the line is not held well away from the rod, it will keep sticking and interfere with the smooth flow of the float through the swim.

I much prefer to use a centrepin reel than a fixed spool. The reason for this is that although the fixed spool is much faster to retrieve and easier to make casts, you will bump many more fish on this as you strike. I can only imagine that almost

like a pulse is sent down the line but nearly everyone I have ever spoken to who trots with any regularity has experienced the same problem. You used to be able to pick up centrepin reels really cheaply at angling shows and the like but their price has increased lately. My only two requirements for a centrepin should be that it is extremely free running, and that it has a line guard. I know some will say that to do very long casts you're better off without a line guard but in trotting we don't need to do this and a line guard will simplify life on windy days for you.

It is now really easy to get hold of floating braid, I think possibly because the carp fishers use it. At one time, you could only really get this line from America. Choice is as bright a colour as you can get and about 10 LB to 20 LB breaking straight. Braid has a number of advantages over monofilament but the main two are it is very easy to see where it is lying on the surface and it has virtually no stretch. Both of these are important qualities if you are trotting any long distance. I only use monofilament for the last metre or so, and with a breaking strain of 4 pounds test. Dependent on whether you use worm or maggot as the bait will decide your hook size. I tend to use size 16 for maggot and 14 for small worms.

It is reasonably easy to buy trotting floats from float makers in the UK. My suggestion would be to pick a Ryghni style and two different weights and three or four different coloured tips. The reason to have the floats in only two sizes is it means that if you need to swap the floats for a more visible float tip colour, it is simplicity itself.

The floats I use are from a float maker in Devon and I have the two sizes in 4BB and 6BB. The tip colours I like are fluorescent green, red, yellow and black. Do not buy floats with a tip eyelet and if you do have some like this, do not use it. The difficulty of changing these floats is that you will have to basically start all over again. Attach your floats to the braid with four float rubbers. Two at the tip of the float and two at the base. The reason to use four is that it's if one splits, you will not have to re-tackle and it also means the float is much more secure in staying where you want it.



As regards other equipment, I prefer a long-handled landing net over the shorter type as it speeds up the landing of grayling and I am always conscious that the grayling are one of our more delicate quarries so the faster they could be landed, the better. It can also double up as a wading staff if needed. I like to use a bait bucket that straps around the waist as this makes feeding



the swim, especially with maggots, much easier. For the smaller items you will need a disgorging and one or two plummets. Whilst you can find the depth of the swim by adding a few shots near the hook, it is much quicker to do this with a plummet and as you'll see from a later article, establishing the depth of the swim is probably the most important part of ensuring your success.

Final tip, you will be moving around a lot less than if you were fly fishing so make sure you have enough layers of clothing, especially on the feet. I have not tried them myself but a few of my fishing pals highly recommend merino wool socks. Don't be fooled into thinking that because you aren't fly fishing you don't need eye protection, if the hook comes away from the grayling as you are landing it, there is still a chance of you getting a hook into your eye. So, as always, wear glasses or sunglasses.



GRAYLING
Thymallus thymallus
"The Lady of the Stream"

DAVID MILLER

When the Fly Isn't Enough: The Challenges and Insights of Fly Fishing

Ari Savikko

When fishing for grayling, anglers often encounter situations where fish are rising actively, seemingly feeding on the surface, but no fly seems to work. In these moments, the angler's skill, attentiveness, and ability to interpret fish behaviour can be crucial. A large grayling can be incredibly selective in its feeding, leading to scenarios where nothing in your fly box appears effective.

Especially in situations where fish are visibly rising and feeding but ignore all the flies offered, it may be necessary to examine their diet more closely. One example is when grayling were clearly picking caddisflies off the surface yet ignored yellow-bodied caddisfly imitations. Only after a friend managed to catch one and checked its stomach contents did it become clear the fish were feeding on green caddisflies. This demonstrated how important it is to understand what the fish are actually eating, and how critical it is to use flies with the correct colour and profile for the situation.

These experiences highlight the finesse of fly fishing: fly selection isn't just random experimentation. It's influenced by many factors, such as water conditions, fish feeding behaviour,



Photo courtesy of Rod Calbrade

and even the season. Grayling can be especially selective and focus on specific food sources, even when plenty of alternatives are available. That's why paying attention to every detail—and keeping a fishing journal to track which flies worked in which conditions—is invaluable. A journal helps the angler gather insights and make better-informed decisions in future situations. Different fishing scenarios also reveal how important it is to be able to adapt your strategy quickly. For example, catching a large grayling weighing over 1,500 grams is not always straightforward, even if the fish is visibly feeding at the surface. The angler must understand that the feeding may be temporary and take the time to consider what the fish is actually eating.



Photo courtesy of Ari Savikko



Photo courtesy of Ari Savikko

In such cases, choosing an unconventional fly may be the key. For instance, a bright green #10 “Nalle Puh” (Winnie the Pooh), not typically considered a calm-water pattern and larger than the available natural prey, might be the one that gets the fish to strike. In that particular case, it was exactly that fly that enticed the big grayling. There are many similar cases where the angler has to question why a fly that doesn't match the fish's usual diet works unexpectedly well. Grayling behaviour can be mysterious, but that doesn't make the fishing experience any less rewarding. Fishing logs and careful observation can be essential tools in understanding fish preferences and predicting which flies might be most effective on the next trip. Especially important is a knowledge of aquatic environments and insect life, which plays a key



Photo courtesy of Ari Savikko

role in understanding fish feeding behaviour. This understanding offers deeper insight into what's happening below the surface and how fish respond to different stimuli. Fly fishing isn't just about choosing the right gear or fly - it's also about the ability to read environmental cues and make decisions accordingly.

Ultimately, one of the most beautiful aspects of fly fishing is that there are no definitive answers—only good questions. Every fishing situation presents new challenges, and a successful catch is often the result of an angler's ability to combine observations of the environment, fish behaviour, and thoughtful fly selection. In such cases, the fish is not just a reward—but also recognition that the angler has managed to solve the puzzle nature presented.



Photo courtesy of Ari Savikko

Trout, the Wild Trout Trust and Grayling Overlaps

Andy Thomas

Conservation Officer with the Wild Trout Trust

Without wishing to incur the wrath of the passionate Graylingista, I have a grave confession to make. I know that what I'm about to say will raise a few eyebrows, and some may view it as being decidedly out of step with modern views about the value of healthy grayling populations. Looking back on my time working on chalk rivers like the Kennet, Lambourne and Pang (and also the limestone Cotswold Streams), the reality – at least in my experience – was that the “Ladies” were considered by some to be nothing more than a pest. So much so, that I must confess to personally catching tens of thousands of them during the 1980s, to relocate them from sections of river that were specially preserved for trout fishing.

On reflection, I have asked myself many times if this was a sound management strategy for the rivers that were being stripped of healthy, naturally produced grayling. After many years of experience, I can confidently say that most of the work was, at best, a complete waste of time and money. At worst, it was a gross act of environmental vandalism. Did removing all of those grayling improve opportunities for brown trout? Well, we know that the two species have different habitat needs, and stockies were favoured on many angling beats at the time, so the answer is a categorical “no”! To underscore the futility of the whole thing, highly productive recruitment and rapid growth rates meant that the pilfered grayling populations simply sprang back, sometimes in the blink of an eye.

The story was a bit different for the relocated fish. In one or two cases, they went on to build thriving, self-recruiting populations in rivers where grayling had been obliterated by pollution.

But in my experience, this is relatively rare – in

the rivers that were totally unsuitable for them, as many were, the fish rarely stayed long enough to even think about spawning. It's probably just as well, as they would have struggled to find good quality spawning habitat, let alone anything remotely appropriate for juveniles. Most of the fishing clubs that received them, which were deemed coarse fisheries, willingly accepted the transfers in hopes of experiencing proper winter grayling fishing for the first time. And most did... but only for a month or two, and then the fish were usually gone. So, did they really provide any sustainable sport for the anglers that craved them?

Today, a lot of our rivers have more in common with those coarse fishing beats, in that burgeoning grayling recruitment is rare. The fish are still present, but usually only in much more modest numbers than the hoards that we regularly captured back in the 1980s. Among the theorised reasons for their demise – as often discussed in the various publications of the Grayling Society – are habitat degradation, increased predation pressures, and the ways in which climate change has impacted both water temperatures and river hydraulics, thereby interfering with key moments in the grayling life cycle.

All these factors will have taken their toll, both separately and collectively, and especially when coupled with the current water quality crisis. One example is the grim situation that can arise when warming river temperatures combine with enrichment caused by both agricultural diffuse pollution and exposure to poor quality effluent – the latter coming courtesy of various water companies. When raw sewage or slurry-rich run-off hit our rivers, you can expect not only a dip in the available dissolved oxygen, but also

deadly spikes of unionised ammonia – a certain death sentence to a tiny fish. If those conditions coincide with the emergence of fry in the spring, then whole year classes can be lost. It is sometimes surprising that we have any grayling left at all, but I still hold out hope for signs of a genuine recovery!

Despite facing similar pressures, our wild brown trout are a little more sheltered from this doom and gloom. They lay their eggs in the depths of winter, usually burying them in well-constructed redds on the riverbed. The eggs take 3-4 times longer to hatch than grayling eggs, and the alevins will typically be well developed before they emerge from the gravels, having subsisted on the remains of their yolk sacs. What's more, when they do emerge, the water is still cool, and therefore able to hold much more dissolved oxygen.

Hatching grayling may not be so lucky, emerging from their shallow scrapes only a few short weeks after springtime spawning. Warmed by the sunshine, the water may be oxygen depleted and compromised by algal blooms that are fuelled, in part, by agricultural and sewage pollution. The

furry film of diatoms that coats many riverbeds in this season can't be doing our delicate grayling eggs any favours. This may well be another reason why grayling recruitment has become less reliable, and why wild brown trout are (secretly; don't tell anyone!) doing comparatively well in many rivers – even ones like the Kennet, where grayling appear to be nowhere near as numerous as they once were.

Another contributor to the dramatic change in the ecology of our rivers is the arrival of the dreaded signal crayfish. Grayling redds are definitely “prefab” compared to their deep and well-constructed brown trout counterparts, making them easier to plunder. But timing is also a factor: springtime spawning coincides with the signals stirring from their winter torpor, ready to consume anything vaguely organic and stationary. Grayling eggs are therefore much more vulnerable to these voracious predators, which are often present in such high densities that the survival of any fish seems truly incredible.

What does all this mean for those who aim to improve the fortunes of our native fish, as we do at the Wild Trout Trust? Well, I think it's fair



The middle River Avon: What looks like a stretch of idyllic chalk river, to our eyes, might not have all the ingredients necessary for building healthy and sustainable grayling populations

to say that we have given much thought to the way in which river habitat either supports, or in some cases thwarts, the success of the species we love. I know the Grayling Society have also explored the options available to clubs and fishery owners who want to improve the conditions for grayling. However, in our experience, there is so much more that could be done to help our fish communities – in some cases through active management, and in others by stopping certain activities that can be popular with the anglers, but problematic for the fish.

A common example might be going through a classic shallow glide after a storm, raking out all of the fallen brash in fear that it might play havoc with a drifting nymph or a trotted gilt tail. But that brash, in that location, just might play a crucial role in fish survival. In comparison to the more solitary and elusive brown trout, grayling are gregarious and naturally gravitate towards open areas. This can make them extremely vulnerable to exploitation by avian predators like herons and egrets. A corridor of low, overhanging tree cover provides terrestrial insect food for hungry fish, but can also discourage predators that need quick and easy access to the river. That cover may provide opportunities for kingfishers, but it is not favourable for gangs of cormorants



The middle River Avon: What looks like a stretch of idyllic chalk river, to our eyes, might not have all the ingredients necessary for building healthy and sustainable grayling populations

that are looking to hunt together in comfort.

Every club and fishery owner should be able to pinpoint the areas where grayling are spawning, and spending time on the riverbank in April can reveal these to you. It may be, however, that you don't have any habitat for grayling to spawn on. If this is the case, then you have a golden opportunity to create some! As a bonus, that same habitat may well be used by wild trout come the autumn. Our Wild Trout Survival Guide and the Grayling Society's Grayling Conservation Guide will give you lots of ideas for creating and maintaining high quality habitat for both species, through all their life stages. While the theory isn't difficult, though, there can be pitfalls to implementing it, and so we are keen to help.

Thanks to our collaboration with the Environment Agency, our Conservation Officers can make free Advisory Visits anywhere in England (and usually at a subsidised rate elsewhere in the UK and Ireland). We "wildies" have years of valuable lessons learned from practical experience, so if you want to understand your options, then please give us a buzz on **023 9257 0985** or pop an email over to projects@wildtrout.org. We'd love to be in the mix!

Tackle and Fly-tying Section

Pêche a Soie 1-weight Level Silk Line Review

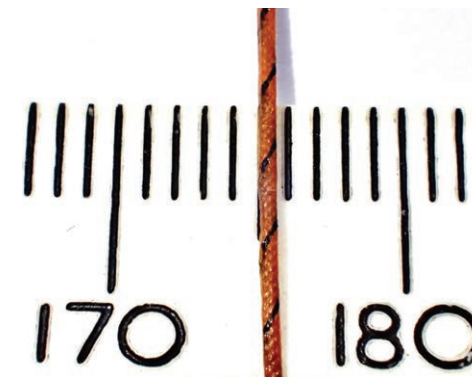
Dave Southall

Knowing that I am an avid light-line fly fisher Jonathan at North Country Fly Fishing <https://www.northcountryflyfishing.co.uk/> sent me this line plus a 4' super-light furred leader to test. The line is 15m long, and the price is a very reasonable £55. It is also available at 30m & in 2 to 6 weight. The diameter of the 1 weight is approximately 0.7mm. It is level, (no taper), & there are no loops built into the ends.

For setup, I whipped a small loop at one end of the line using very thin Nano silk thread, which I coated with Super Glue & then with a thin layer of flexible UV resin. The other end I attached to backing on my reel with an Albright knot. Finally I treated the line by rubbing in a coating of the floatant grease provided with the line.



I was interested to compare this line with my own 1-weight lines (old Orvis, Sunray Short to Medium Range Dry Fly/Stuart Crofts' & Sunray Medium to Long Range Dry Fly/Jeremy Lucas) & my Terenzio 2-weight Double Taper silk line.



My first impression was that this is an incredibly thin line, not much thicker than most Micro-nymph lines.

Secondly, it is incredibly flexible straight out of the pack. Unlike the Terenzio silk line it needed no breaking-in period. It is far more supple than any of the plastic-coated lines.

Thirdly, it is incredibly well made.

So, how did it perform? Over a good number of weeks I've tried it out with a range of rods & leader setups. It performed well with all of the following rods:

- 7' 6" Orvis 1-weight Superfine rod, which needed a smooth casting stroke.
- 8' Orvis 1-weight Trident rod.
- 6' 4" 2-weight Sunray California glass rod.
- 6' 9" 3-weight Garrison taper bamboo rod, using the Italian style of casting.



- 10' 2-weight Sunray JL Volition & 10' 2-weight Greys Streamflex rods, both of which cast the line plus leader comfortably to a measured 45'.

The line is a delight to cast dry flies at short to medium range. Being so thin, yet relatively heavy due to a density greater than plastic coated lines (1.3g/cm³ compared with 0.94 to 0.97g/cm³) it cuts through the air surprisingly well for such a light line, (light/thin lines have a greater surface area per unit mass than heavier/thicker lines, so are exposed to a relatively greater air resistance). I had no problem casting a small dry fly into a moderate breeze as long as I didn't have too long a leader.

I used two leader setups for dry fly fishing:

- a 4' super-light furred leader with 4 to 5' of 6x tippet;
- a 6' tapered monofilament leader, cut from a 12' 6x leader, tapering from 0.43mm to 0.18mm to which I attached 4 to 5' of 6x tippet via a small Perfection loop.

I felt that the flexibility of the furred leader resulted in better drag-free drifts, however, the

monofilament leader was more versatile since it could be easily adapted to suit a range of nymphing styles:

- by attaching a 3' long semi-curly, tri-coloured monofilament indicator plus tippet I could short-line Euronymph with one or more nymphs of a suitable weight, holding the indicator above the water surface. I could also long-line nymph with a light nymph, watching the floating indicator.
- With tippet attached to the tapered section I could nymph with a New Zealand wool indicator or fish the duo/Klink & Dink.

I must confess that for purely short-line Euronymphing I prefer a 0.5mm diameter Micro-nymph line teamed up with the monofilament tapered section & semi-curly tri-coloured indicator, but the 1 weight silk line is more versatile when I want to alternate between techniques.

Floatation was never a problem despite silk having a density greater than water, (which has a density of 1.0g/cm³). I did, however, reapply floatant before each new fishing session.

So what are the disadvantages of silk lines?

- I find that, due to their flexibility, they do sometimes hitch around the rod tip, which can be a nuisance when fishing with a long rod whilst wading.
- they need to be dried thoroughly after each fishing session, otherwise they will rot. However, with care they will far outlast any plastic line. My Terenzio 2-weight silk line has had over 10 years of regular use & is still as good as new.

In conclusion, I can thoroughly recommend this 1-weight line if you want super-delicate fly presentation. A range of tapered Peche a Soie Naturelle half lines & double taper silk lines are also available at reasonable prices. Furthermore, North Country Fly Fishing is a company that supports both the Grayling Society & the Wild Trout Trust.



The Righyni Roose Trophy 2026

**The theme of this year's
Trophy competition is
Photography / Written Word
/ Fly-tying**

**Members are invited to enter prints
or digital files**

Entries must reach the Chairman Rob
Hartley by September 30th 2026



Science Section

Catch Returns, Grayling Numbers and the state of our Rivers

Dr Frank King (Science Officer)

In the 2025 Spring-Summer edition of Grayling I put in a plea for catch returns to be entered into the database and I thank those that have done so. It is still relatively few people, however, who input their data. I know it is a pain to do it, but this data, and club data, is really the only practical way most of us have to monitor grayling populations.

Why do we want to do this? In simple terms, the more grayling there are, the more we catch. The more grayling there are, the healthier the river, at least for grayling. High numbers of grayling imply a good level of food supply and provide food for those animals higher up the food chain, for example otters, a healthy ecological balance.

The 'gold standard' method of monitoring fish populations is electrofishing, as done with the Wylfe study published in the 2025 Spring-Summer edition of Grayling. The fish in a defined area are stunned, collected, counted and released. However, for most of us this method is not readily available for continuous measurements over a long period of time.

What we do have is anglers catching fish. If we monitor the catch returns, it should give us some indication of the number of fish present. This is a common methodology used to estimate the fish population in the sea where electrofishing is impracticable.

However, there are caveats to catch return data. It is very variable, depending upon the capability of the anglers, the conditions and the methods used. Typical of most clubs, we have a small number of super anglers who catch loads of fish, others less so. The total catch returns are therefore highly dependent upon how often those super anglers fish. If they leave the club, the catch returns can drop, or returns for the new club they join, suddenly increase. However, this variability can be minimised by collecting loads and loads of data over a long time. That is why we need to get as much data as possible. Catching nothing is just as important as catching loads.

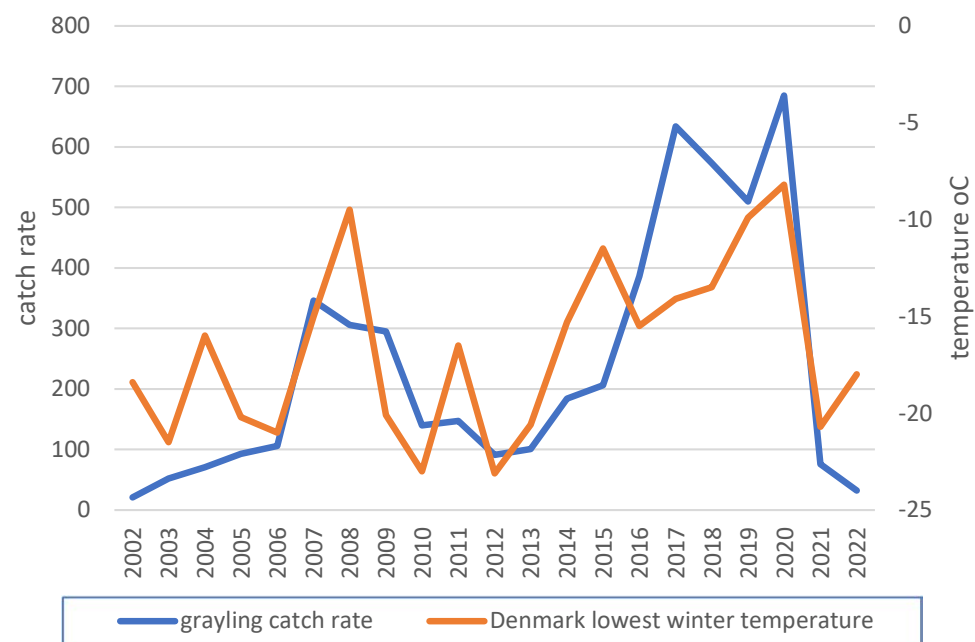
What can we do with the data? Many clubs monitor catch returns to give some indication of how well their waters are fishing, and if they stock, whether more or less stocking is needed. Rarely is the data interrogated more than that. However, if you collect data over a number of years, you can get an idea of how the fishing varies over time, and then look into possible factors that affect fish numbers. For example, the Wylfe study found that fish loss was closely correlated with low water levels, pointing to low rainfall and water abstraction as problems.

The data can be collected in a number of ways, but the more clarity in the data, the better. Simple annual grayling caught can

be of some value, especially if collected over a long period of time. Better is to include the number and duration of visits, as you can monitor the number of grayling caught per visit, and if you also have the date, you can monitor catches per visit per month. Even that can be misleading as, for example, typical day ticket waters have sessions lasting all day whereas club members often just pop down for a couple of hours, so the addition of the length of the session is very valuable. Analysing as fish caught per hour then eliminates a number of variables that can confuse the analysis. The Grayling Society catch return site, open to everyone and not just society members, has all

this plus a fish size so you can further monitor the spawning success and fry survival as well as growth progression over the years. To show what can be done with annual catch returns, I had the good luck to be able to get access to club grayling catch return data on the Derbyshire Dove from 2002 to 2022. Unfortunately, the club stopped monitoring grayling catches so more recent data is not available. The annual grayling catch returns are shown below in blue. In addition is shown in orange the lowest winter temperature in Denmark, but more on that later.

Dove grayling catch rate vs. lowest winter temperature in Denmark



What can clearly be seen is that there was a cyclic nature to the catch returns. Low from 2002-2006, a sudden increase from 2007-2009, dropped back in 2010-2015, a huge jump from 2017 – 2020, then it fell off a cliff in 2021. This variability could not be explained by changing membership or amount of angling time spent, nor was there any clear correlation with water levels, at least from 2012, the earliest date I could find for river levels.

We've heard a lot about cormorant predation and the effects on fish population. The dramatic loss in roach population in the Hampshire Avon has been put down to increased cormorant predation (Avon Valley Cormorants – Biodiversity in Danger), so cormorants are a possible factor to investigate. I could not find accurate annual data for the cormorant population in the UK. However, it is well known that in hard winters in the Baltic, huge numbers of cormorants fly over to the milder weather in the UK where the rivers and lakes are less likely to be frozen over. As an estimate of how hard the Baltic weather was, I looked at the minimum winter temperatures in Denmark. These are shown in the orange line on the graph. The lower down the line on the graph, the colder the winter. Just looking at this, 2007-2009 were relatively mild winters in Denmark, the grayling catch returns increased. 2010-2013 were hard winters, and the grayling catch returns plummeted. Milder winters between 2015-2020 correlated with improved catch returns, then with the hard winter in 2021,

catch returns plummeted. Applying simple statistics to this, the correlation coefficient was found to be 0.72, not far off a perfect correlation considering the assumptions and estimates made. Care should be taken not to overinterpret this, but it does point the finger at cormorant predation being a major factor in the grayling population in this river over this period of time.

Comparing this finding with the data from the Wylfe study, the correlation is nowhere near as good. They did find a similar drop in grayling numbers from 2010 – 2013, a rise between 2014 – 2017, but their drop started earlier in 2018. It therefore looks as though there may have been other factors involved for that river. Low river levels could mean that grayling are more susceptible to predation. It would be nice to be able to get hold of data from other clubs to see whether any correlation is present on other rivers.

The Grayling Society data only goes back as far as 2020, though for many rivers, data was not there until 2022. As we don't have data going that far back, I cannot do an analysis as I did for the Dove. I've had to collate the data for the whole river, as there wasn't sufficient data for an analysis of particular stretches. For many rivers, though, the majority of catch returns are from a single stretch. For example, the Wharfe data is mainly from the Ilkley club stretch. The data is presented in grayling caught per hour and separated into fish sizes. Some representative data are shown opposite:

River	Year	<150cm	250-300cm	>300cm	Total per hour
Driffeld	2020	0.02	0.2	0.3	0.52
	2021	0	1	0.5	1.5
	2022	0.1	0.2	0.8	1.1
	2023	0	0.6	0.2	0.8
Lambourne	2020	0.5	2.1	0.7	3.3
	2021	0.5	2.7	1.2	4.4
	2022	0.7	3.5	3.1	7.3
	2023	0.3	1.6	1.6	3.5
	2024	1.4	1.8	5.4	8.6
Welsh Dee	2020	0	0.88	0.88	1.76
	2021	0.47	1.18	0.5	2.05
	2022	0.23	0.96	0.67	1.86
	2023	0.24	1.36	2.3	3.9
	2024	0.21	0.69	0.07	0.97
Wharfe	2020	0.07	0.6	0.5	1.17
	2021	0.2	0.3	0.02	0.52
	2022	0.6	0.6	0.03	1.23
	2023	0.3	0.5	0.04	0.84
	2024	0.1	0.8	0.1	1
Hodder	2021	0.04	0.28	0	0.32
	2022	0.32	0.79	0.18	1.19
	2023	0.32	0.79	0.1	1.21
	2024	0.33	1.27	0.24	1.84
Itchen	2021	0.04	0.28	0	0.32
	2022	0.32	0.79	0.18	1.29
	2023	0.32	0.79	0.1	1.21
	2024	0.33	1.27	0.24	1.81
Yorks. Don	2020	0.43	0.93	0.31	1.67
	2021	0.67	1.75	0.17	2.59
	2022	0.75	4.7	0.56	6.01
	2023	0.61	1.95	0.77	3.33

To many, this probably comes with few surprises. The Yorkshire Don has an excellent catch return, as does the Lambourne, with most entries from the free stretch at Newbury. The Wharfe seems to have relatively few larger grayling. The Welsh Dee seems to have lost most of its larger fish in 2024. Remarkably, the catch return data for the Lambourne shows a catch rate of 8.6 per hour, with 5 of them being >300cm. It looks as though it may be that only super anglers have inputted data! It is far too soon to make many conclusions but overall the Yorkshire Don doesn't seem to have suffered

the dramatic losses seen with the Dove. That may be down to factors such as the Dove is in open countryside whereas the Don has a much higher local population density, scaring away the cormorants? The data is very variable from year to year for each river and this is almost certainly due to the relative lack of data. As said before, there are factors other than grayling numbers that can affect catch returns, and the more data we have, the less these other factors will affect the variability and the more we can focus on environmental factors.

European Grayling (*Thymallus thymallus*) Research Update 2023-2025

by Prof John Dart

European grayling populations have been declining probably because of a combination of climate change and other local human related activity on its requirement for cool fast flowing and unpolluted water. Below is a summary of eight of the most relevant studies on this topic published in the last 20 months (December 2023 to July 2025)

Population decline in Belgium

A Belgian study analysed data from fishing activity between 2000 and 2022 from the Walloon region (Meuse catchment south-east of Brussels). There was a 42.8% decline in the populations of the first decade compared with the second, associated with more frequent low-flow (an increase of 18.6 days) periods and more days of water temperature

higher than 18°C (an increase of 9.6 days) which correlated with the reduction in the population (Vom Berge, Ovidio et al. 2025).

Effect of temperature on egg hatching success

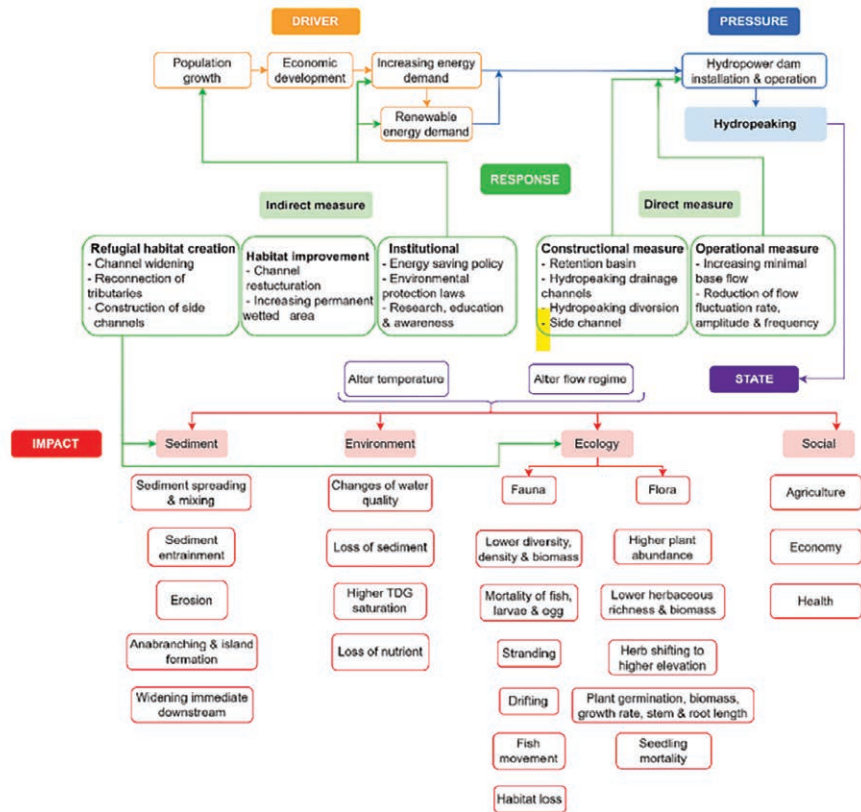
An experimental study in Germany has evaluated the effect of water temperature on the success of egg hatching at 6, 8, 10 and 12°C in grayling taken from the River Llme and artificially fertilised under controlled temperature conditions in an aquaculture facility. The readouts were the survival rate, body weights, yolk-sac weights and length of hatched larvae. The optimal temperature for hatching was 8°C closely followed by 6°C. Increase in water temperature was associated with an increase in fungal infestation

although, after successful hatching, larval mortality was low. The highest larval weight was in 6 & 8°C groups with a significant decrease at higher temperatures. Larval length was highest at 8°C decreasing slightly at 6°C but more so at 10 and 12°C. Water temperature was also monitored in the River Llme 12 Km from the aquaculture facility using a temperature logger throughout the April 2023 reproductive period. Minimum water temperature was 5.3°C and max. 12.7°C with a median of 8.7°C such that during early embryogenesis the temperatures were low but in the later developmental stages exceeded 12°C. It is probable that climate change will affect hatching success of wild grayling unless they can adapt fast enough. In addition (see section on stocking cultured grayling below) aquaculture requirements are likely to vary between catchments such that successful propagation with high hatching rates may be related to the temperatures in the catchment from which brood fish have been derived (Rosenau, Mott et al. 2025).

The effects of sudden changes in river flows and levels below dams used for hydropower generation (known as "hydropeaking")

The damming of rivers for "clean electricity" by hydropower generation, other than in smaller Scottish rivers, is less common in the UK than elsewhere due to the lack of appropriate rivers and terrain. However, the Tyne and Tummel are examples with rivers having a grayling population. On the Tyne, salmon fishers enjoy the releases of cool water from the Kielder reservoir as this encourages salmon activity and movement. But damming comes with substantial environmental costs. Although the barrier effect of dams on migratory fish is well-established another effect known as "hydropeaking", which is the

release of large volumes of water below the dam when electricity is generated, is less well publicised. A systematic review (one meeting the international guidelines for this type of review) identified 155 studies meeting the criteria for inclusion. The primary effects of the rapid release of water include alterations in flow patterns, modification of water temperature up to 2°C, changes in sediment dynamics and fluctuations in dissolved gas levels. These alterations have been found to affect various aspects of aquatic ecosystems generally negatively, including fish growth and behaviour, reproductive success, habitat, and migration patterns, and macroinvertebrate (e.g. riverflies) communities. Furthermore, hydropeaking can also lead to habitat fragmentation, erosion, and loss of riparian vegetation, thereby impacting terrestrial ecosystems that depend on the aquatic environment. There is limited understanding of the long-term ecological consequences of hydropeaking and its cumulative effects on aquatic ecosystems. Additionally, there is lack of consensus regarding the quantification of ecosystem services, economic impact, soil moisture content, and weighted usable area due to flow fluctuation and global evolution of energy production from renewable energy sources. Addressing the identified research gaps is crucial for achieving a balance between energy production and the conservation of freshwater ecosystems in the context of a rapidly changing global climate. The publication includes a well-constructed diagram summarising the Driving forces leading to environmental Pressures which alter the State of the environment leading to both environmental Impacts and the resulting Responses known as the DPSIR framework. (Bipa, Stradiotti et al. 2024)



One study focused on the effects of hydropeaking on grayling in the Austrian Upper Drava showed that large numbers of juvenile grayling (50-500 fish per shoreline, median 90 fish) were stranded on gravel bars when the water level dropped rapidly – an effect which was increased at times of low river flows. (Hayes, Hauer et al. 2024)

Microplastics in Arctic grayling populations

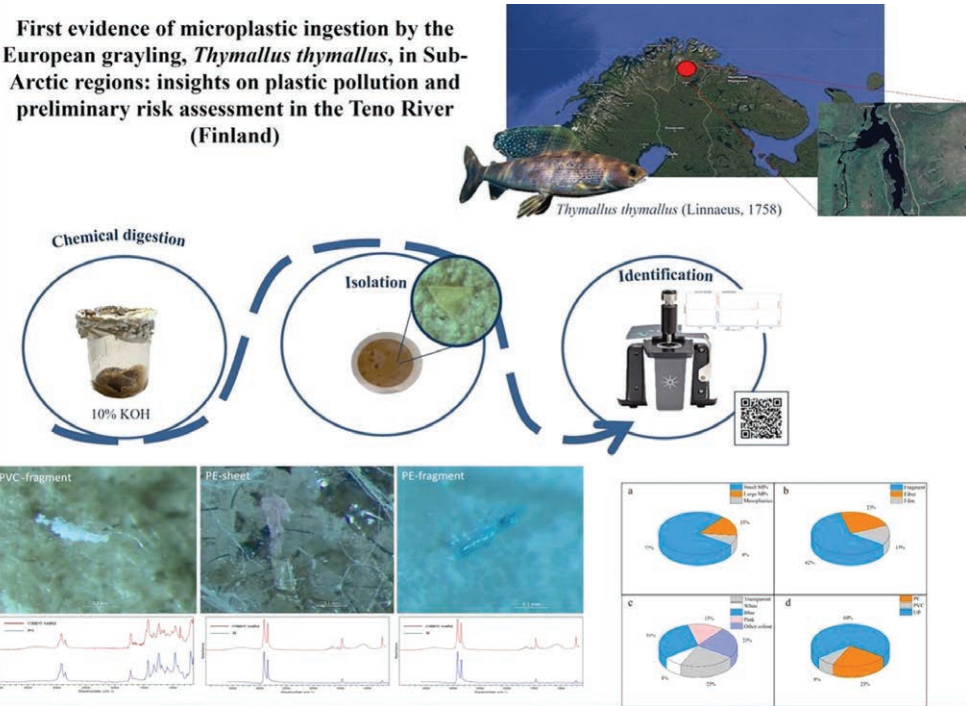
Marine litter pollution affects even remote environments such as the Arctic. However, due to the inaccessibility little is known

about the effects in these locations. This investigation provides evaluated microplastic ingestion by European grayling resident in the Tana River in Finnish Lapland where grayling is an important fishery resource. Plastic abundance and characterization were explored, and microplastic concentrations and polymer presence were also used to assess human and environmental risk. Six male and 4 female grayling between 30-43 cm length and between 4 and 7 years of age. Fish were aged by examining the growth rings on otoliths (ear bone). Stomach contents were examined for microplastics using filtration of digested

solutions, microscopy with measurement of isolated plastics and classification by size. The type of plastic was determined by an infrared spectroscopy technique. Thirteen plastics were isolated from 50% of the fish stomach contents with a range of 0-5 items per fish. The findings confirm those on several Arctic marine fish species (e.g. cod). In these river fish it is thought that the main source of plastics was from the extensive recreational fishing and commercial in-river netting. Most plastics were microplastics between 0.04 and 8.51 mm long and 0.01-0.33 mm width with fragments (62%), fibres (23%) and film (15%) with one larger (mesoplastic) piece of PVC. Only 31% of plastics could be identified; these were the world's most widely produced with three-quarters were polyethylene fragments and film and a quarter

PVC fragments. The remaining 69% were undetermined polymer fragments and fibres. Given that this area is sparsely populated it's likely that the plastics derive from the fishing industry rather than wastewater and inefficient waste management, although that could not be excluded. Furthermore, grayling feed on drifting plankton, insects and crustaceans and may accidentally ingest microplastics due to similarity with prey. The polymeric risk assessment criteria ranged from low to high in this study area, however, but the polymeric risk index was low because of low level of those polymers considered to have a high risk (to human health) score such as PVC. This small study indicates the widespread presence and potential problems due to microplastic contamination even in the most remote environments (Peda, Rizzo et al. 2024).

First evidence of microplastic ingestion by the European grayling, *Thymallus thymallus*, in Sub-Arctic regions: insights on plastic pollution and preliminary risk assessment in the Teno River (Finland)



Studies on the value of stocking grayling

Interest in boosting grayling stocks in Europe is being researched. Grayling stocking is common in the UK being the most stocked fish by the EA where they may be introduced or re-introduced into rivers where stocks are low or have vanished. In the UK grayling are stocked as fingerlings reared from grayling taken from the Derbyshire Derwent. Test and Yorkshire Ouse in the EA's fish farm at Calverton. However, little is known about the survival of these introduced fish and there is concern that the introduction of non-native grayling to a river might dilute the genetic structure of the local populations given that genetic diversity in grayling is clearly catchment related and likely to be the result of adaptation to that catchment (Cove, Taylor et al. 2018).

A study investigated how 2+-year-old stocked pond-reared European grayling acclimatised in six stretches (within a 6Km stretch) of the River Blanice in the Czech Republic in the six months (May–October 2019) after release. This was done by examining the quantity and composition of lipids in the liver, muscles and visceral adipose tissues (VAT), as well as size parameters, condition factors and stomach contents. Sixty-two stocked fish were recaptured of the 1200 released (a post-stocking recapture rate of 5.17%) suggesting poor adaptation to the wild environment. Compared to wild grayling from the same stretches stocked fish exhibited a sharp decrease in lipid content in all examined tissues. The authors concluded that fish cultivated for extended periods struggle to acclimatise to the wild environment and that this commonly used stocking practice seems unsuccessful when done to boost wild grayling

populations.(Avramović, Turek et al. 2024) A subsequently published study confirmed these findings for 150 mature tagged grayling but of which only 11 were recaptured (7.3%) showing significantly decreased condition in line with the findings for juvenile fish.

These studies suggest that stocking grayling is generally unsuccessful as a means of boosting a local population although it may have value in areas where stocks are critically low (Avramovic, Turek et al. 2025).

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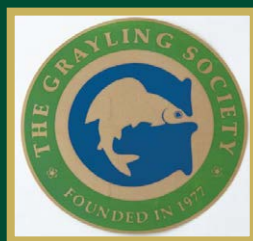
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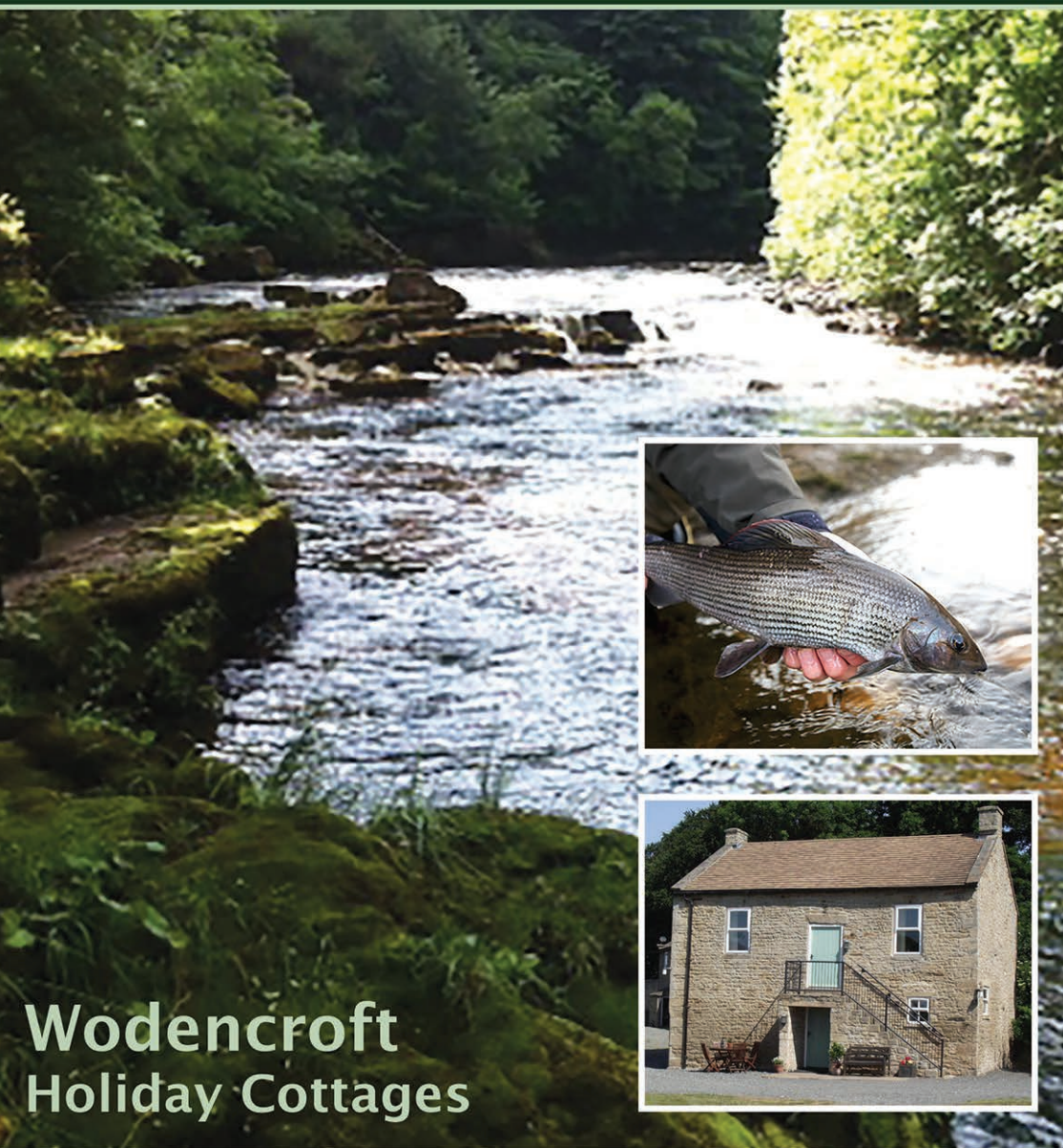
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