

*Angling club of the month***RICHMOND & DISTRICT
ANGLING SOCIETY****BRUCE SANDISON** meets three stalwarts of an ancient Yorkshire club

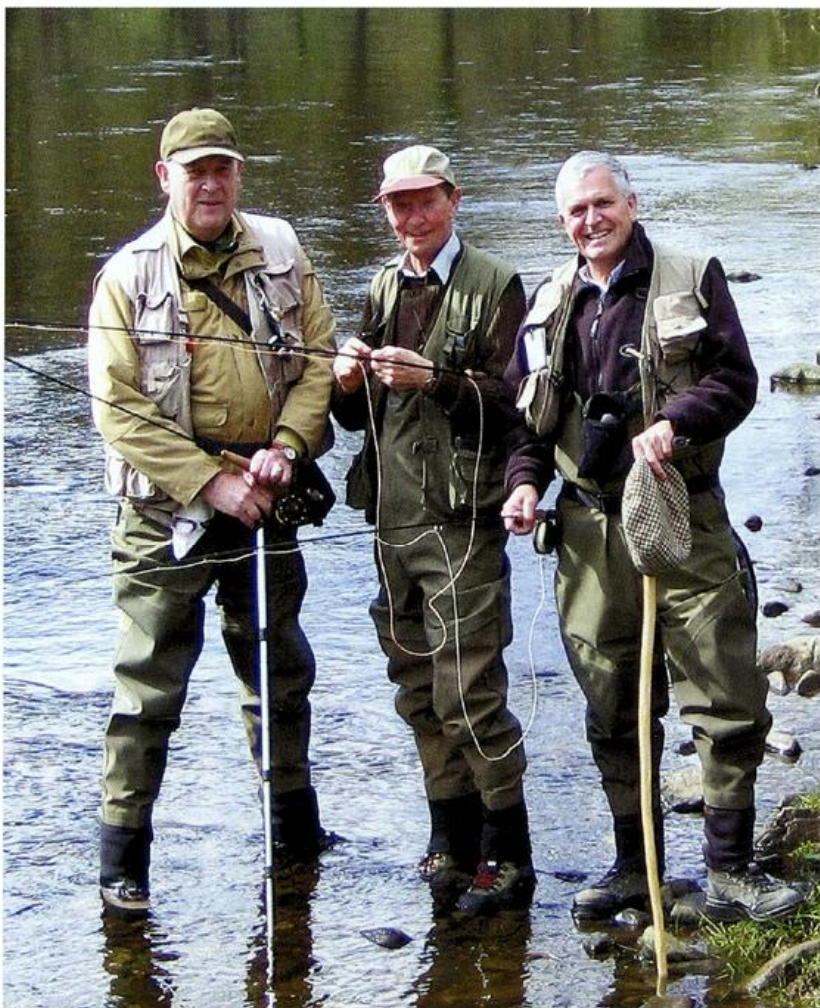
I married a Yorkshire lass, an angler, a fact I discovered when boasting about my own piscatorial skills: Ann produced a photograph of a trout caught in a highland stream, "2½lb it was," she said. There could be no doubt - a ruler had been placed above the fish. Ann is also a hill walker; another fact I discovered when she introduced me to relatives who lived near Leyburn in Wensleydale. We climbed Penhill (1792ft) and thoroughly explored Bishopdale, Coverdale and Swaledale.

The River Swale captivated me and I was thrilled when Phillip Brown, secretary of the Richmond and District Angling Society (RDAS) introduced me to three club members: Bill Ankers, David Woollard and John Scoble. Bill and David are retired clergymen, John a ukulele-playing former head master. They have fished the Swale together for more than 20 years. Having enjoyed the television show, *Last of the Summer Wine* and after hearing some of the stories the trio told, I was not too surprised learn that they had been dubbed by John's wife, 'The Last of the Summer Wine - in Waders'.

The River Swale rises amidst high Pennine hills by Birkdale Beck and Great Seddale Beck close to the border with Cumberland. It winds its way eastwards for more than 73 miles, past the ruins of the great castle at Richmond, begun in 1071 when William the Conqueror came north to subdue a rebellion by his less-than-willing subjects. The Swale joins the River Ure near Boroughbridge and carries the stream for a further 52 miles east to become the River Ouse at Ouse Gill Beck.

In the final 60 miles of its journey, the river meanders sedately across the vast, fertile Plain of York, which it frequently inundates when the Ouse floods; past Eboracum, the Roman name their ancient capital city of North Britain, York, where its majestic Minster overlooks the flow. The combined waters eventually mingle with the rivers Trent and Humber in a wide estuary before meeting the cold grip of the North Sea by Kings-town on Hull, so named by Edward the First in 1299.

The RDAS was formed by a group of eight anglers meeting in the Buck Hotel in Richmond on 30th September 1912. A contemporary report noted: "The early driving force was P.C. Wenham, who was newly arrived in town. The anglers offered the landowners a good deal: they would take over the fishing rights, maintain paths and fences and gates and the banks, restock the river with fish, keep it clear of weeds and pollution and cut down on poachers. Lord



The Last of the Summer Wine - in Waders: (left to right: Bill Ankers, John Scoble, David Woollard).

Zetland of Aske Hall was so impressed that he agreed to lease his fishing rights to the Society for £5 a year - a sum that he immediately returned as a donation and became the Society's first president."

Bill Ankers told me, "The river was given the name Sualuae by the Saxons, from which, I suppose, we can derive the word 'swill' or 'flush'; a good description of the Swale because after heavy rain it certainly does swill and flush. If it was raining heavily my father would often say, 'It's swaling down'. The Swale is one of the steepest and fastest emptying rivers in the country and is an awesome sight in full spate. But just as it comes up quickly, it goes down quickly as well and doesn't take long to clear."

David Woollard commented, "The Swale may be modest in size, but it can pack a big punch. At times it rises at a speed that makes your hair stand on end. Like the day we arrived with the river a tasty malt colour only to find, minutes after wading across to the far bank to put up our rods and choose the right fly, that the river was flowing round our boots; so no fishing that day, or wading back across to where we'd parked the car. There was nothing for it but a long hike in chest waders to the nearest bridge then a trudge back up the road to the car."

I asked the three what they thought was special about their river? John Scoble replied, "This river is a magical place and although there are miles and miles of water we



The River Swale at Langton.



A River Swale wild brown trout.



Deer-hair Dry (tied by Bill Ankers)

Skill level: 🟡🟡🟡🟡🟡

Hook: Light wire, size 16. **Thread:** Black silk.

Body: Yellow Orvis Ice Dub.

Hackle (optional): Grizzle.

Wing: Dark coastal deer hair.



Woollard's Spark (tied by Bill Ankers)

Skill level: 🟡🟡🟡🟡🟡

Hook: Light wire, size 16. **Thread:** Black.

Body: A sparkly thread which comes from his wife's textile materials.

Hackle: Pink under-covert feather from a jay.



Bill Ankers returning a Swale trout.

tend, when we're together, just to fish certain areas and pools. I fish with two angling-crazy clergy friends. They are my gurus. If I've caught nothing by lunchtime they offer me comforting, pastoral advice, such as 'I would stick to playing the ukulele if I were you.' I return home with my batteries recharged and aching from the laughter and banter we've shared. These are special times in a very special place."

Bill told me, "I've fished many of our northern rivers and quite a few famous rivers in Scotland but, in my opinion, none can compare with the Swale. When fishing for trout above Richmond you are in one of the prettiest of the Yorkshire Dales with stunning scenery and wildlife. I always take my rods with me when I go on holiday, but every time I can't wait to get back to my Swale." David echoed these sentiments and added, "Red-letter days come along just frequently enough to bring a rosy glow to memories, but the real satisfaction is winking a wild brown trout from under the far bank; where I've no right to cast let alone expect to catch it, or, at last, connecting with a grail that's been giving me the cold shoulder for 20 minutes."

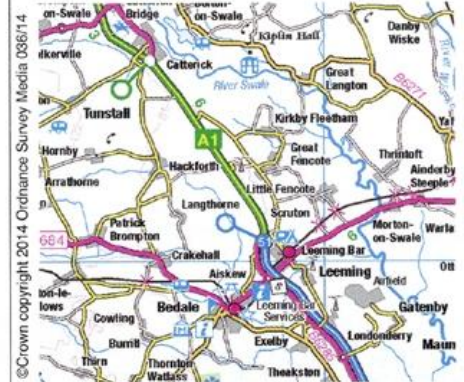
Let RDAS secretary Phillip Brown have the

last words: "From a tumbling dales stream, down a scenic valley past wild flower pastures, limestone screes and drystone walls and barns. That's where I fish for the Swales' handsomely marked brown trout and feisty grayling. Am I lucky? I know I am, and I love every minute of it."

The essential flies

When it comes to flies Bill told me that at the beginning of the season he would not be without his Northern Spiders; very sparse dressings of course, being a tight-fisted Yorkshireman. Snipe & Purple, Partridge & Orange and Waterhen Bloa are his favourites, tied on very small (size 16/18) hooks. "This season I am struggling to find either snipe or moorhen wings - keeping my eye open for a road kill," he said.

He talked of three dry flies - including a Roberts' Supapupa, a Hare's Ear and a variation of a Griffiths' Gnat - which he featured in the June issue of FF&FT. In addition, he gives two more here, one for early season, and one he ties specifically for David Woollard, incorporating thread from his wife's sewing box and a pink jay under-feather.



Further information on the RDAS website at www.richmondangling.org.uk, or email the Society at contact@richmondangling.org.uk. I am indebted to Phillip Brown, the Society Secretary for his support and help in preparing this feature and the images that illustrate it. Also, my thanks and regards to 'the three wise men in waders'.