



Ceiriog Fly Fishers ^{Limited} Newsletter



TENKARA FISHING ON THE CEIRIOG

In past editions the CFFC Newsletter has featured articles on Tenkara fishing.

In 2016 the use by members of this technique has increased. We have also hosted another successful Tenkara Day organised by member Louis Noble and this again attracted specialist Tenkara fishermen from a wide area.

The Ceiriog is proving to be a highly suitable river for this technique and therefore :-

- we are updating the club website to highlight CFFC as a suitable club and river for Tenkara enthusiasts
- we will be hosting the Tenkara day again in 2017 - the date is Saturday 24th June
- we are arranging a Tenkara workshop for CFFC members which Louis Noble has kindly volunteered to run and provide equipment - more details will be sent to all members when date agreed.



CEIRIOG - DRY FLY ? NYMPH ?



Although the CFFCLtd Forum has been marvellous for news and recording members catches and experiences it is difficult to use to try and summarise catch trends and a view of the season so far. So I decided to review the season for this newsletter but my conclusions led to some questions that new and existing members might like to see answered by better fishermen than me ... so here goes.

The 2016 trout season can in brief terms be described as having good water conditions, plenty of rain, and mostly very good catches particularly compared with the last two seasons. Small wild brown trout have been more prolific with the usual plentiful salmon par. The club has stocked on three occasions and there are a reasonably high proportion of returns where members have caught these stocked brown trout and also lost plenty. Some rainbow trout and grayling have also turned up in unexpected places.

Yet there are some other interesting features of the season especially fly life, rises and successful artificial flies. Fly life on rivers is declining and recent published UK wide research has confirmed this. Members of even a few years can see this on the Ceiriog as elsewhere even through the Ceiriog retains reasonable fly activity and hatches which have been more prevalent in early July.

But until the last few days nearly every posting on the Forum records little or no evidence of fish rising even when there are flies hatching. Dry fly will and does catch fish even when fish not rising but there is certainly some pretty clear evidence that nymph fishing on the Ceiriog will account for more fish and especially more stocked fish than dry fly.

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What are these cows doing in the Ceiriog Fly Fishers newsletter? Club Secretary Peter heath knows - all other readers should look on page 5



CEIRIOG DRY FLY ? NYMPH ?

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On the recent Tenkara Day when several highly competent rods fished with a technique ideally suited to the Ceiriog exactly the above scenario unfolded - very few rises, some flylife, plenty of wild small fish but stocked fish nearly all caught on nymph. Indeed where stocked fish had been put in only a few days before they were elusive except on nymph where some rods were prolific.

I put forward the above not to be agreed or disagreed with but to allow me to get the views of some the club's best rods so here are some excellent comments for which I am most grateful

Roger Greenway



CFFC Forum members will be familiar with Dryflydave , who recently joined CFFC and is an experienced Dry fly devotee. Dave provided an excellent and lengthy article on his early experiences on the Ceiriog and captured the nature and challenge of our river. Sadly I cant include all of his article but here are some extracts

..... the challenge of this river meets you head on, in the main , fast , broken pocket water , much covered with low overhanging foliage , occasional deep pools , and frequent difficult access , what more could you want ? .

These deeper areas of the river will I am sure , or at least I hope , hold the larger fish , and coincidentally ,give me the opportunity to float the dry fly along its currents .

I get as much pleasure from presenting a fly in such a way that it stands a chance of tempting the fish as I do from actually catching fish....

I know that the catch rates are significantly higher , with the Czech Style nymphing method, but I like to target a rising fish , or put the fly where rivercraft would imply a fish may be stationed , defeat the dreaded drag imposed by hidden currents and generally outwit the fish , regardless of whether I catch several , or none . It's just bliss to be there doing it , more so on a little river like the Ceiriog.

Typically , Beat 2 from the weir to Castle Mill Bridge . Flat calm water at the weir above which there is continuous broken pocketed water with the occasional glide of varying depth.

This was probably the most fun I have had in several years.....upstream dry fly fishing (small Blue winged olive) the whole length , finding fish in most spots , I could not believe it . They were small fish , which is as would be expected on a river like this , but that's of no consequence , the pleasure is in putting the fly where you feel is a spot that will hold a fish , and in a way that will attract that fish .

The sane would , no doubt , opt for wet fly or nymph..... but to me that's boring , the adventurous might try , Oliver Edwards Style upstream spider fishing , but if your utterly mad do it with a dry fly , it's truly Fly Fishing ! And can't be beaten (in my opinion) .

This piece of advice came from Steve Murgatroyd - recently CFFC Secretary - and advocates wet fly fishing on the Ceiriog

Because of the nature of the Ceiriog it can often be difficult to fish a dry fly effectively before drag takes hold. Whilst this can be challenging and satisfying I sometimes just like to take things a little bit easier and adopt the style of fishing that I was first taught; traditional down and across wet fly.

I like a soft actioned rod - cane or glass - that will perform easy, gentle roll casts under the trees. You need no more than about twelve feet of fly line beyond the tip ring if you are wading. Using this method you can search the water - especially the deeper riffles - casting a couple of times over the same water then moving on if the fish don't respond. I tend to use exclusively a size 16 Black Pennell - de-barbed and with offset point- during the summer months it works for me and will, more often than not take fish that are rising to dries.

A nice easy gentle way to fish!



CEIRIOG DRY FLY ? NYMPH ?

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here are some very relevant words from our respected member and APGAI Louis Noble (Orange Otter)presenting his thoughts on dry fly vs nymph and putting the debate into a historical context

At first sight this title reminds us of the battle that G.E.M.Skues had with Halford about nymphing on the hallowed chalk streams in the early 1900's. Thankfully, we have carte blanche to use whatever method we choose but there is in my eyes, a parallel with the great debate.

Skues would never have subscribed to the indiscriminate use of a nymph, only accepting that it should be offered to a fish which was clearly preoccupied with them. This was very much in line with the theory of dry fly fishing and eventually Skues won the day with both methods being accepted.

Although ethics were prevalent in the debate, I think we also have to look at the logicality of the issue when choosing a technique for the Ceiriog. It's perhaps simplistic to say that if fish are taking the floating fly then offer them a dry, and if they're not then a nymph should work but are they truly taking the floating fly. How often do we drift our fly over a rising fish only for it to be refused, maybe the presentation wasn't good enough or are they in fact taking a nymph just sub surface. In this instance the decision is obvious, an un-weighted nymph fished as delicately as a dry and all being well, the leader will draw or the swirl will be seen as our offering is taken.

This scenario is more common than we perhaps realise and the art of single nymphing should be learned. But what do we mean by a nymph. Modern fly fishing is dominated by the various aspects of nymphing be it single, French or Czech and this is now becoming the 'go to method' on many rivers, and maybe even the Ceiriog. The common perception of a nymph nowadays is generally the bead head and using one doesn't make you a bad person but I feel it should be used in the right context.

The target species is a good barometer of when to use the relatively heavy beaded nymph. We are led to believe that 95% of a grayling's food is on or near the bottom so it's pretty logical to get a nymph down there. I'm sure we all enjoy using a nymph under a dry fly (duo, Klink & dink etc) and it's super effective especially in autumn and winter. Grayling on the Ceiriog are in the lower reaches and the use of a heavy nymph in the deeper pools can be just the medicine.

Wild trout are more inclined to take food from the upper layers and even when hatching flies are scarce, a general pattern, often of a large size will bring a fish up. This is logic kicking in again and the shallower runs are ideal for this kind of prospecting. But what of the stock fish that are regularly introduced. For some considerable time after their introduction they will shoal up in the deep holes and not start to take surface food until well acclimatised. These are put in to provide sport so we need to use an appropriate method or the exercise becomes pointless. It's not hard to guess that a deep nymph fished correctly will prove irresistible. Recent catch returns have proved the point.

In conclusion: my assertion is that both nymph and dry fly are logical choices when conditions dictate. We all have techniques which give us more pleasure than others, even if it means we'll catch less fish but although we fish primarily for fun results can be better ' with the appliance of science'.



If 2015 was the year of the Baby Sun Fly then 2016 seems to be the year of the nymph and particularly the Peeping Caddis. The CFFC Forum has many posts of the success of Simon Hayes with this fly particularly in conjunction with his Tenkara rod.

Many members have asked for Simon's tying pattern for his peeping caddis - in his own words they are "I use a weighted bead on some fishing line, the head is some light yellow foam coloured with a black marker, the legs are rusty hackle and the body is squirrel dubbing. Hope this helps" The end result is the fly shown to the left

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It is almost three years since then Club Secretary Alan Hudson so sadly died . If Alan was alive now he would have loved a lively discussion on dry fly and nymph fishing but in his absence here are some thoughts from recollections of this larger than life character , fine fly tier, author and fine rod.

David Palmer fished for 35 years with Alan and " marvelled at many aspects of his fishing skills. He was a superb fisherman on river and lake especially with a nymph - which I think he actually preferred to dry - although he was equally successful with both".

After he died the Club Newsletter featured three of Alan's favourite flies - significantly two were nymphs including his absolute favourite.....The Ridgeback (see photograph)

It seems pretty certain that Alan would have opted for nymph if he could only fish one type of fly and perhaps the give away was when asked at an early stage of his last illness what should be said to members in the newsletter about his health - his simple answer was....."Tell them thanks for all the good wishes and I am on the road to recovery and - oh - for those who have askedNo.... you cannot have my box of nymphs"



To conclude these exchanges about dry fly and nymph fishing on the Ceiriog as Newsletter editor I sought out the views of Club Vice President Ben Kelly. Long standing members need no reminding about Ben's standing in CFFC but for recent members here goes. Ben is a fine fisherman - first and foremost a dry fly perfectionist with particular interest in klinkhammers but appreciative of the value of nymphs on the Ceiriog. Ben was the driving force behind CFFC for many years as Chairman , Treasurer and when the club became a company in 2008 Chief Executive and Finance Director and his knowledge of the Ceiriog is second to no-one.

Ben's first input was to remind me that "The River Ceiriog is one of the fastest flowing rivers in the country and was devastated during the flood of November 2000 with the loss of holding pools ,wild fish and fly life, but the river is slowly recovering."

Ben then continued " After this event the clubs stocking program was to help the river to recover some of the loss of breeding fish by using Chirk Trout Fishery, these being the next best thing to wild brown trout having been bred in Ceiriog water"

Ben then went on to tell me his views on the introduction of legislation on the stocking of rivers with Triploid fish. I wont print his actual words but let us say he does not support the policy!!

As Ben looked back he commented that "wild trout in the Ceiriog have always been free rising to the dry, but also noted the great value of wet fly fishing in the early months of the fishing calendar due to the river being very cold . Stock fish having been introduced into the river could readily be caught with heavily weighted flies /nymphs. To fish lightly dressed wet flies downstream would result in the flies being quickly moved to the surface where the occasional par could be expected."

Ben's advice on nymph fishing was that "he and the long serving members of the club will always advise fish hard on the bottom until you feel the river bed /stones" and use "heavy nymphs Czech style or if it is your preference , Tenkara".

Ben perceptively comments that " stock fish are reluctant to rise to the dry fly they only identify food as being on the bottom of the river having been fed sinking pellets which sink to the bottom of the rearing ponds giving them maximum nutrition for little energy spent." Ben contrasts this with "wild Brown trout from when they hatch in the river have to fend for themselves using energy derived from any food they can find at all levels of the river and expending half on fighting the flow of the fast flowing river Ceiriog."

Finally Ben advocates that work to open the river to more sunlight should continue, so improving the river habitat would be conclusive to more top of the water fishing.

Well this was not quite finallyas Ben returned to Triploid policies but this must be another debate for another day!!!



On a lighter note for those that missed and those that wish to be reminded here is a posting by our Club Secretary Peter Heath on his birthday spent fishing and communing with nature and cows on the Ceiriog

As it was my birthday on Sunday I had promised myself a days fishing and having achieved all my domestic chores on Saturday I was ready to go. I checked the water level before leaving and although it was a bit high after all the rain we had Friday and Saturday it appeared to be steadily dropping.

My intention was to fish from Pont-y-Blew Bridge up to the weir at Brynkinalt and therefore parked under the viaduct intending to walk down to the bridge and fish back upstream, this would also give me a chance to observe the river on the way down stream. The plan seemed like a good one so far. As I was going to be most of the day on the river I has taken my fishing vest with the back pack which was loaded with everything I would need for the day including sandwiches, fruit, flask of tea and water. Loaded up and ready to go I made my way into the field to head down to the river. Then I spied them, "COWS" a lot of cows, all hanging around by the river. Now cows and I have an agreement, I'll stay out of their way if they stay out of mine. So change of plan: I decided to follow the track and would end up at Lady Bridge where I could then follow the river down stream. As I made my way down the track the cows started to move, at first just walking, then jogging, then running as fast as they could, picking up more cows as they went and heading for me. I quickly retreated up the bank and across the fence into the field above. The cows kept running at me then moving away then back again, by the time I had got to the corner of the field they had finally moved off about 100 yards. I then decided to get back over the fence and make my way to the cattle grid crossing point which is about 75 yards away. Of course as soon as I started down the bank they started to run back along the track trying to head me off at the pass, I started to run down the bank towards the cattle grid. Half way down the bank was when I realised that felt soled wading boots are really rubbish at gripping on wet and muddy grass, just before I reached the gate they went from under me and I ended up on my back slipping the last few yards to the gate in cow poo. The cows obviously felt they had achieved their aim as they suddenly stopped running, stared at me for a few seconds then ambled off. Remember the fruit and sandwiches; they are what broke my fall!!

After cleaning off what a could I made my way to Pont-y- Blew Bridge without further mishap. Fished from the bridge up stream with only one small par for my efforts. The river was running fast and coloured but seemed to be clearing. I hadn't seen any fish rising until I got to just below the little foot suspension bridge so decided to change from a nymph to a dry. As I was using the Tenkara rod I wanted to change to a lighter line and kneeling in the river, on my Ninja kneepads, proceeded to do just that. I my haste I snapped the end of the rod off and it started to throw it down. I did have a spare tip which was in the car. So back down the river to find a safe crossing point, back along the bank, avoiding the cows which had spotted me again, made my way back to the car to carry out repairs.

The rain just got worse from this point so I finished the day fishing from the viaduct up to the weir. Managed one small WBT in the hand and lost a decent fish which managed to get into some deep and fast water. Went home very wet and very smelly, but would do it all again? Definitely.

Peter Heath

Longstanding member Kenneth Jones (aka Ginger Quill) has been a regular contributor to newsletters and in recent months has unfortunately been unable to fish. But he has extended his poetry writings and this piece recently appeared in the Grayling journal.

Heron Fervent

I wandered up from Duffer's Pool along the Ceiriog Stream
And just on ahead I caught a glimpse of old grey lag - treat
The run with flat-end glide is favourite spot of mine.
The stalking bird was bent covered down and did in reflection shine
He looked down attentively ,in the broken light, for a trout to eat.

The grey heron is a very patient sort in seeking out its prey,
So may spend a long and ponderous stand at any time of day.
The smaller parr can take to flight before the much bigger trout.
They scare the younger ones to swim and keep those legs at bay.
On which the heron may surely root and forever stand about.

Attracted by his most dexterous skill, his perfect stance to stab
The scene was still and fanciful, though I felt that I should chide,
But I was surely spotted before his dagger strike did jab
And show his fleeting kill between his bills: I nevertheless did sigh.
Then in slow grace broad wings did beat to take him up on high.

Ginger quill

