



SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

Don Stazicker must think again when he fishes the
River Nadder in Wiltshire after the mayfly hatch





DON STAZICKER

is a highly experienced trout fisherman, fly-tyer and instructor. He co-authored the groundbreaking e-book on trout behaviour *Trout and Flies – Getting Closer*, and is the river conservancy officer for Cressbrook and Litton Flyfishers in Derbyshire.

The Nadder can be affected by a tinge of colour.



I’M SURE YOU REMEMBER THAT Monty Python scene when, after eating everything on the menu, Mr Creosote is offered a final wafer-thin mint by the waiter, played by John Cleese.

His response? “@&\$* off, I’m full. I couldn’t eat another thing.”

Well, this is what’s supposed to happen after the mayfly hatch is over, trout having gorged themselves, are unable to eat another thing.

In *Modern Trout Fishing* (1938) W. Carter Platts wrote, “... after a surfeit of mayfly the trout lie low and fly-fishing is practically at an end until the reawakening in September”.

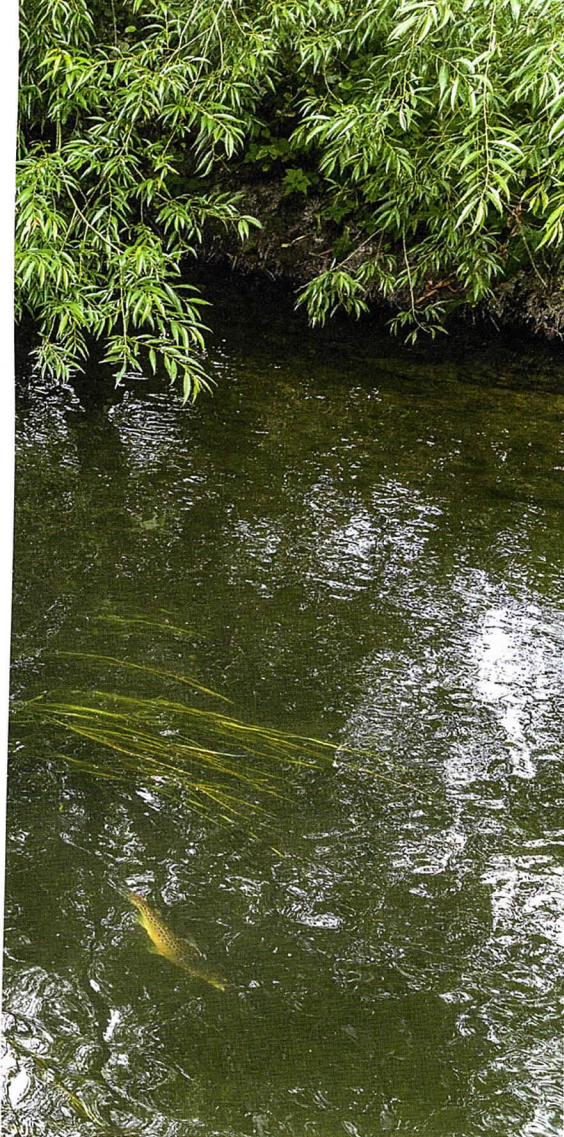
“The trout spread its gill covers wide in a threat gesture”

Not everyone felt that this was true. Halford thought that any drop-off in sport after the mayfly was more likely to be because of the high-level of angling pressure the fish had experienced, rather than their appetites being satiated.

Personally, I agree with Halford and catch plenty of trout immediately post-mayfly. But many anglers cease fishing once the mayfly has finished. This is a mistake.

Peter Hayes and I visited the River Nadder at Compton Chamberlayne in July, a few weeks after the mayfly hatch had ended. The largest tributary of the Wiltshire Avon, the Nadder flows 20 miles from its source near Shaftesbury to its junction with the Wylfe, then flows a further two miles to join the Avon at Salisbury. Despite being fed by several chalkstream tributaries the Nadder is not a true chalkstream as its source lies in greensand, a type of sandstone. The result is a stream that provides excellent fishing but is slightly more prone to colour after rain than a chalk-stream.

The Nadder at Compton Chamberlayne lies in a



feeding brown trout. I could clearly see the fly as it sank through the water towards the fish. I'd allowed for refraction and judged the cast well; it was obvious the fly would pass close to the fish's head, and I was confident it would take. It rather surprised me when, instead of taking my fly, the trout's pectoral fins flicked out and it spread its gill covers wide in a threat gesture before fleeing at high speed. The next two trout behaved similarly, not attempting to eat the fly but displaying obvious unease before swiftly departing the scene.

You can tell a lot from the body language of fish, and these trout obviously feared my size 14 fly, because of its size or its appearance. When you encounter this behaviour, there are two alternatives to explore: either fish a similar but smaller fly; or try ➤

Success on a tiny nymph when the trout were wise to larger offerings.



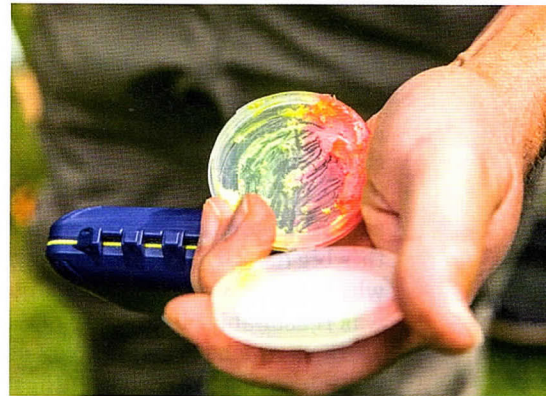
green valley surrounded by chalk hills. The hills to the south, at Fovant, bear regimental badges carved into the chalk by troops stationed in the valley during the First World War. The badges are clearly visible from the A30 as you near the fishery.

We met Charlie Patrick, the keeper, in the tree-shaded car park of beat two, one of seven beats on the Nadder owned by the Compton Chamberlayne Estate. Charlie showed us the river and explained the fishery rules: catch-and-release with barbless hooks; upstream dry-fly and nymph allowed; wading permitted. It was a hot summer's day with clear blue skies and little sign of surface activity, but my polarising glasses revealed a good head of fish, some of which were clearly feeding deep beneath the surface, moving a few inches to each side to intercept drifting nymphs.

I set up a simple sight-nymphing rig using a four-weight floating line, 9ft 4X (6lb) monofilament leader with 5ft of 5X (4.75lb) tippet and a size 14 gold-bead shrimp with a body of natural fox-squirrel fur.

I delivered the shrimp pattern a few feet above a

Loon's Biostrike putty can not only be used as a floating indicator, but in small doses can be added to a leader to slow a fly's descent and offer a visual indication below the surface.



A long-handled net is useful at Compton Chamberlayne.





Marginal growth offers cover. Polar opposites (right): The daddy-long-legs extracted from a tree branch and Don's size 20 beaded black nymph.



a fly of the same size that looks completely different.

Earlier, I'd removed a snagged fly and leader from a tree branch, a bead-head Daddy Long Legs on a size 8 barbed hook. There's always someone who doesn't read the rules: barbless or de-barbed hooks, size 10 or smaller. If the fish had encountered flies this big during the previous few weeks, it explained why large nymphs were causing alarm. As the water was reasonably clear, I knew I'd have no problem seeing a much smaller fly, so I changed to a size 20 nymph with a 2mm white tungsten bead and a body of fine black wire coated with UV resin. Although it's a tiny fly, because of its entirely metal construction and minimal water resistance, it sinks fast. I located another feeding brownie, and this fish took the small fly without hesitation. It was large and fought well, and I was glad of having a telescopic extending net to reach over the bankside vegetation.

The white bead-head nymph took several more fish, all of whom ate the fly without hesitation.

Peter was taking it easy. He was fishing in the shade of the bankside trees and regularly catching

“The river meandered through profuse ranunculus beds”

fish on terrestrial patterns, so I made off upstream and encountered some large deep pools where the flow was much slower. The river was carrying a tinge of colour, I couldn't see the bottom and I knew I wouldn't be able to see my nymph. Fish can take and eject small flies quickly; watching the leader butt or fly-line tip for a sign would have meant many missed takes. Instead, I attached two blobs of Loon Biostrike putty to my leader, one 2ft from the fly and another 2ft above that. Biostrike is a soft biodegradable floating putty that is usually used as a surface indicator, but the tiny blobs, 2mm in diameter, were small enough to be pulled underwater by the nymph. The blobs of Biostrike slowed the fly's descent slightly, which needed to be compensated for by casting a little further upstream. The bright fluorescent yellow putty was easily visible at depth, and as soon as there was any sign of it hesitating, a strike usually resulted in a fish. As an alternative, I sometimes fish nymphs on 18in of clear tippet attached to 3ft of 4X Rio bi-colour indicator nylon. The bi-colour nylon is easy to see beneath the surface and usually drifts with a slight curve — any straightening of the curve should be met with a strike.

Trout don't seem to be put off by the coloured

nylon as long as it is not too close to the artificial.

The fishing hut, shaded from the hot sun by a grove of mature trees, was ideal for a spot of lunch. Afterwards, I explored downstream where the river meandered through profuse ranunculus beds and fewer bankside trees. There were fewer fish visible where there was less cover, hardly surprising at mid-afternoon in bright sunshine, but I spotted a good brown trout in a gap between the weed beds. The fish was regularly taking nymphs, and it took my artificial on the first drift. I connected on the strike, but the line went slack after a few seconds. I retrieved my fly and checked the hook point; it was sharp and there was no damage to the tippet. I find small nymphs hook well and I lose few fish when using them, but no system is perfect and occasionally one comes off. When this happens, it is essential to check the hook in case the point has broken. Sometimes when I've failed to check, I've missed several more fish before the penny has dropped. The trout seemed unperturbed by its experience and returned to its original position where it resumed feeding. A second presentation of the nymph resulted in a positive take, and this time the fish stayed on.

We had a great day fishing in tranquil, beautiful surroundings. The beat held a good head of brown trout and we observed some interesting fish behaviour that made for fascinating fishing.

You don't have to stop fishing when the mayfly hatch is over, the fish will still feed, and if they are feeding, they are catchable. But remember, they will have seen a lot of flies and it's usually better to show them something different. Using significantly smaller flies worked well on the Nadder, but, if in doubt, you could always try a wafer-thin mint. ■

PHOTOGRAPHY: RICHARD FAULKES

Factfile

THE FISHING The Compton Chamberlayne Estate owns seven beats on the Nadder. Each beat is for one or two rods.

SEASONS AND PRICES April 17-May 14, £158 per rod; May 15-June 15 (minimum of two rods), £234 per rod; June 16-October 9, £158 per rod

Book through Fishing Breaks.

Tel: 01264 782 590. E-mail: info@fishingbreaks.co.uk

Web: fishingbreaks.co.uk/chalkstream/nadder.htm#compton

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The website has details of guiding services, local pubs and places to stay.



ALAMY

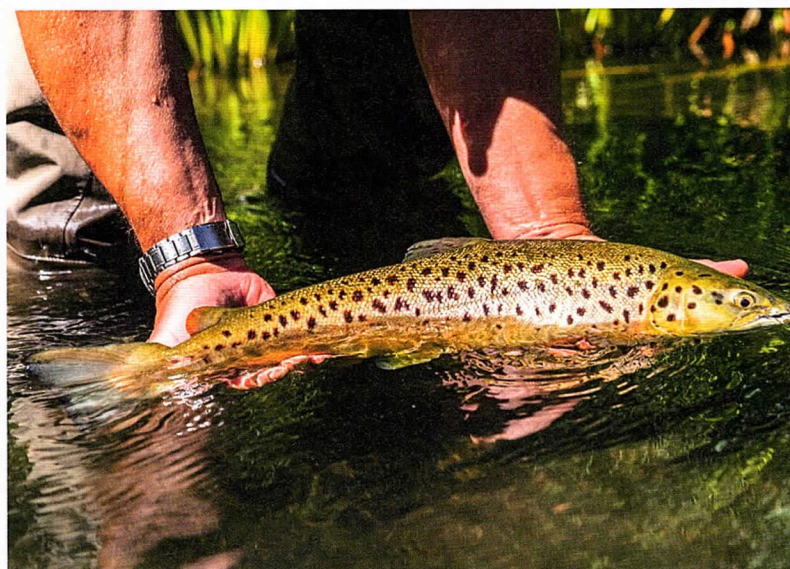
FOVANT REGIMENTAL BADGES

The first badge was cut in 1916 by soldiers from the nearby garrison who were waiting to go to France. Each badge required up to 50 tons of chalk to construct.

There were originally 20 badges, nine of which still remain. To commemorate the centenary of the first badge, a new badge in the shape of a poppy was created in 2016.

There are badges for six regiments and for the Royal Corps of Signals, the YMCA and the Australian Commonwealth Military Forces. The latter is the largest badge at 51mx32m.

The badges are at 51° 3' 12.24" N, 1° 58' 41.88" W. Approximately 400m to the south of the A30 between Fovant and Compton Chamberlayne. Well worth stopping for a look.



A beautifully-marked Nadder brownie.