

## Fishing on the River Wharfe - Yorkshire Dales

During the Sep 2014 trip to UK I managed to get agreement to taking one day off fishing. Since brown trout season closes at the end of September a decision was made to undertake this during our time in Yorkshire rather than later in the trip. Harrogate was identified as a good compromise for locale as it allowed my wife to have a day of history and shopping while I headed to the nearby Yorkshire dales. Some research on the web identified a suitable guide - Stuart Minnikin of Yorkshire Dales Flyfishing. Email exchange determined that the optimum rendezvous point was Bolton Abbey - an easy and straightforward 30min drive from Harrogate.

A quick SMS to advise safe arrival and UK mobile number was followed by a phone call from Stuart the night before to finalise arrangements. Stuart explained that the lack of rain has meant all the rivers in the region were running very low and so the Bolton Abbey section of the river would be best and we're to meet in the car park for the Devonshire Arms brasserie. Next day my wife headed off to York for the day while I drove across the hilltops to Bolton Abbey. While waiting for Stuart, a butcher's van turned up to deliver sausages to the brasserie. I struck up a conversation with the driver who turned out to be the President of Ilkley Angling Association. I promised to put up a link on our page and I told him how to get to CAA page ... I later discover theirs looks very impressive.

[www.ilkleyanglingassociation.co.uk/index.html](http://www.ilkleyanglingassociation.co.uk/index.html)

Stuart arrives and we prep up for fishing. We stroll down to the nearest pool. Things are pretty grey, missle has set in and the wind is sharp running upstream, thankfully with a bit of left shoulder. Stuart is sanguine about our chances here but thought we could get some warm up casts with an off-chance of fish (I suspect while he makes some judgements on my casting abilities noting his remarks about his client the previous day not being able to reach some rises due to downstream wind). On goes a small grey CDC caddis pattern - "let's try some dries in this pool even with no rises". The Frog's Fanny is very successful in keeping it up high in the water. The #5 Hardy rod is something I've not cast before but I soon get the feel. While there were no signs



of fish when we arrived once we got into the water we start seeing some splashy rises nearby. Within a few casts these get converted. The fish are not New Zealand sized but are colourful and energetic browns who put on some great entertainment.

Stuart explains that we can expect fish up to a pound or so and I'm happy that I'm landing fish quite regularly up till lunch with some in this class. The CDC caddis proves to be the winner fly with switches to parachutes and "upwings" spinners proving less successful - partly I think because of missing subtle strikes and not seeing sunken flies in the slightly broken water due to low light (and small flies with my failing distance vision)



The BYO sandwich is consumed looking into a favoured pool of Stuart's. As it happens this turns about to be very quiet until we get up to the head of the pool where we see perhaps three fish actively feeding in some quiet water close to the edge. Poor strike on my part results in my getting busted off a good sized fish sight fished in the quiet run. Our hopes that the ructions of this bust off not disturb the other two fish appears to be dashed and nothing more results.

We move further upstream and experiment with indicator and Czech nymphing in faster water. The combination of lower light, tannin water, slippery uneven river bank and stupidly going with my bifocal sunnies (ie looking through reading lenses to find my footing) made for some exciting wading into the faster water to reach the good runs.



Poor results in some of Stuart's favourite water can like be put at the foot of this angler's incompetence though we eventually achieved one smallish grayling (my first). We follow this with working the rest of the run using Stuart's variation of Czech nymphing - using Czech nymph rig cast

straight upstream with a longer line; immediately lift fly line off the water at a rate commensurate with river flow. This comes with better success - indeed Stuart catches one fish during the demonstration. I do well with another grayling and one good brown - perhaps hooked on a floating dropper when the point fly was caught on the bottom. I'm sure many more fish would have been caught by a more competent fisherman. By this stage it definitely beer o'clock so we head to the brasserie for a cask ale.

The cost for a day with all gear (though not lunch/snacks) was £220. Deposit of £50 was paid on booking via paypal. Balance in cash on the day. Stuart's skill as a guide

was matched by his excellent instructional prowess - I learnt so much this day on how to read the water, seeing fish moving in water of poor visibility and that winning Czech nymph variation.

Accommodation in Harrogate is plentiful. We stayed in a very nice bed and breakfast Geminian Guest House. Paid by Expedia \$240 for two nights, Room Double En-suite including full breakfast, free (on street) parking and free fast wireless Internet.