

A Historical Fly Fishing book “Archive”

Now that the river fishing season is coming to a close and the weather gets a tiny bit colder, many people will turn their attention to getting ready for the next season, putting their gear away and tying flies to replenish those lost this season. That is of course after you have cleaned your rods and reels and have cleaned and conditioned all of your fly lines.....you are planning on doing that.....aren't you??

A cold winter's night is ideal for spending some time at the tying bench, in front of a heater in a warm environment, learning how to tie the latest fly you wish to add to your fly-box, but it is also conducive for curling up in a chair in front of a fire with a good book (*and perhaps a glass of good wine as well*). If you want to combine the two activities (*fly tying and reading – I wouldn't recommend adding wine to fly tying.....*), many people would naturally pick up a book on fly patterns and study that before they actually tie the fly. What if I could show you how to access a series of historical books on fly fishing and tying, some dating back to the beginning to the 19th Century, would that make it more ideal to curl up with a book? Unfortunately this is the 21st Century, and access to these books in the normal 'book' format is difficult, if not impossible. However, with a modern computer, iPad or eBook reader there is a way thanks to an online website, the *Internet Archive* – www.archive.org.

If you have not heard of this website before it has been around since about 1996, close to the beginning of the internet and its first job was to start archiving all the webpages on the internet. As the web archive grew, the site soon branched out to other forms of published works, including books. Now before people start to get uptight about copyright, the Internet Archive has taken care of that and only makes full copies of books available that were published before 1923 (copyright has expired), or books where the copyright owner has given permission for them to be used. They digitise about 1000 books a day all around the world and make them available on the website. Those that still have copyright issues can be 'borrowed' digitally for 14 days before having to return them – much like a library. Those that are not in copyright can be downloaded to any electronic device connected to the internet. Let me show you how.....

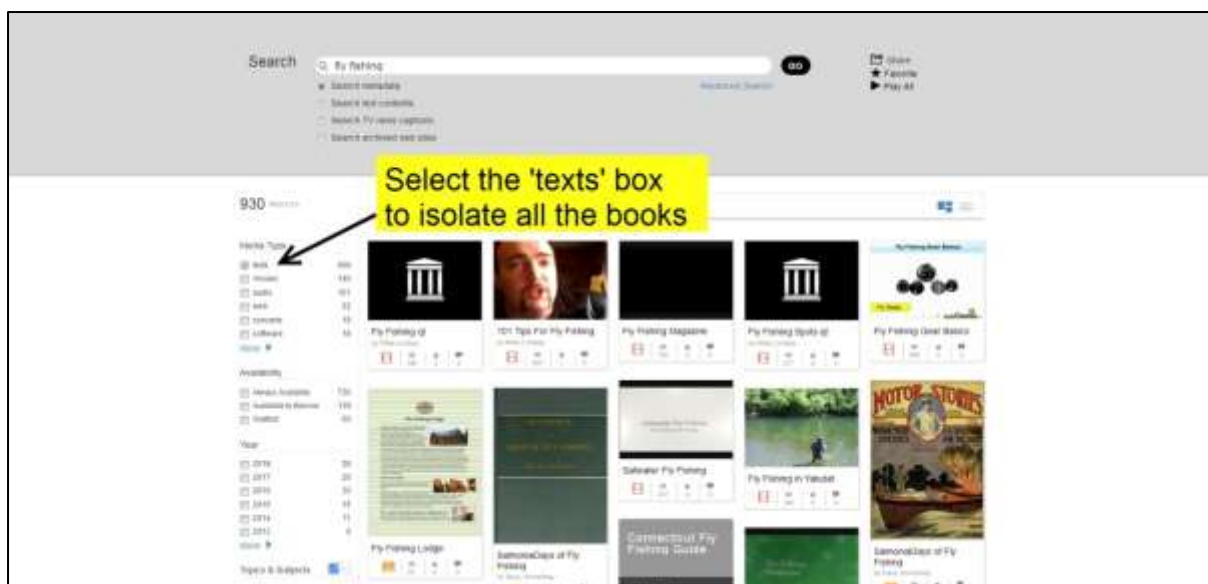
Open your normal web browser and enter the address of the Internet Archive – www.archive.org. When you arrive at the homepage of the Internet Archive, you will be presented with two search engines, the upper one on the page is for searching webpages and is known as the WayBack Machine. It is a very useful resource to find old webpages that may not exist anymore (they claim to have over 327 billion stored). The second, lower placed search engine on the webpage is the one that will find the books that you are after. - figure 1.

Figure 1



To conduct a search of the archive, enter the search term in the engine. I have used 'fly fishing' as this example. Once the engine has completed its search, you will be presented with the following page, which contains all types of items and in various forms – figure 2.

Figure 2



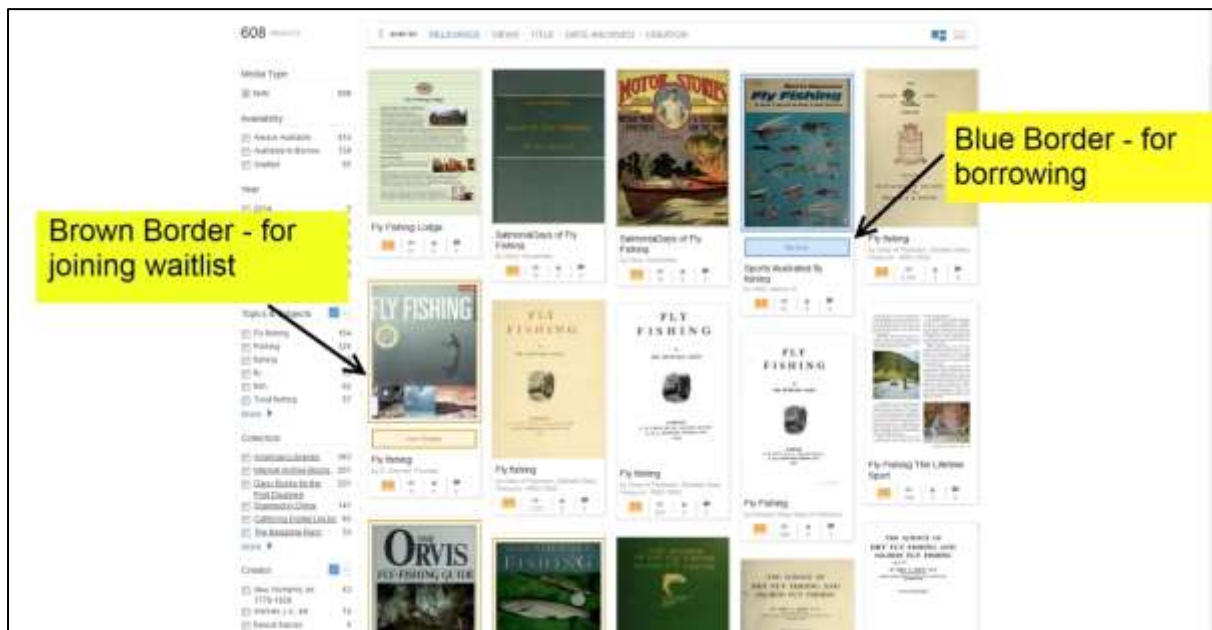
As I type this article, a search using the term 'fly fishing' returns 608 texts, 146 movies, 101 audio files and other more specific types of media. These figures will only grow as more items are added to the collection. On the left is the list of the types of media that the collection holds. If you click on the 'texts' box, it will isolate all the books that are in the collection. Once these have been isolated, the page will change and will show you the front page of all the books found in the search.

The first thing you will notice is that some of them have a blue border around them, with a box below with the word 'borrow' in it. This indicates a book that is more than likely still within copyright and it can be borrowed digitally. The borrowing process involves setting up a free account with the

Internet Archive and installing a version of Adobe Digital Editions applicable to your device. You then download the book into your device and you are allowed to view it for 14 days.

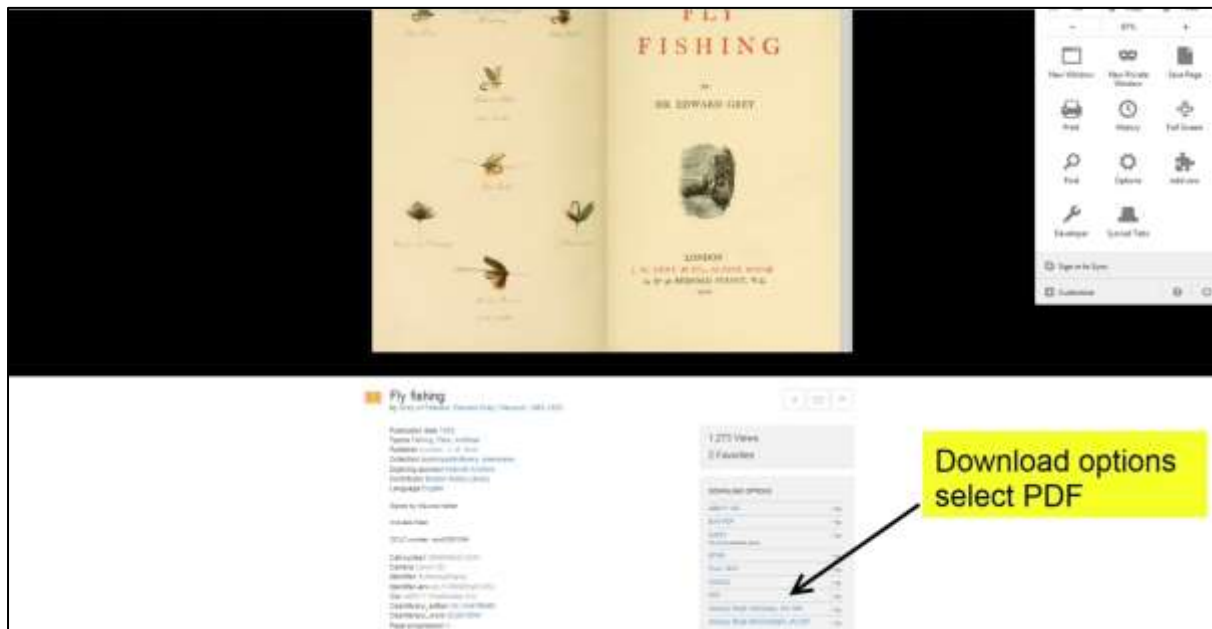
You will also notice certain books have a brown border with a box with the words 'Join Waitlist'. This indicates that someone has borrowed the book and you can use your account to join a waitlist to borrow the book, once it has been returned – figure 3.

Figure 3



The other books in the list have no coloured border and a copy of these can be freely downloaded to your device. When you click on the title page of the book, you will be taken to another page where you flip through the book on screen or you can arrange to download a copy of it in various forms. If you scroll down the page slightly, on the right of the screen you will see a section titled 'Download Options', under which you will see numerous formats from which you can choose – figure 4. Don't be overwhelmed by the number as many are proprietary for various software programs; however the popular portable document format - PDF - is nearly always there. Click on the PDF link and the book will be downloaded for you. It will make sense if you have a separate folder on your device to store these files in so that you can easily access them when you want to.

Figure 4



There is a myriad of books contained in the archive covering the subject of fly fishing, and among them are copies of what is widely reported as being the first book written on the subject. All fly fishing historians would know of *A Treatyse of Fysshynge wyth an Angle* by Dame Juliana Berners. This was a work added to the 1496 edition of an English book titled *The Boke of Saint Albans*, which was a compilation of matters relating to various outdoor interests at the time – namely hawking, hunting and heraldry. For those that don't wish to spend time searching for the treatise, one of the copies in the archive can be found at the following address - <https://archive.org/details/treatiseoffysshyy00bernuoft>.

Although the entire manuscript is not available, as no known complete copies of it survive, it does contain reproductions of portions of the actual manuscript. For a more detailed and coloured rendition of a book containing a similar partial reproduction of the treatise, Yale University holds a copy in their rare book collection and it has been digitised into a rather nice PDF which can be downloaded from <https://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/4083652>. Be warned though, that the manuscript is written in 'ye olde English' and can be difficult to read at times, but now back to more modern books...

To give you a brief idea of what titles and subjects are available in the archive, I have produced a short list that follows:

- ***Fly Fishing*** – Sir Edward Grey, London 1901 – contains chapters on dry fly and wet fly fishing for trout.
- ***The Science of Dry Fly Fishing and Salmon Fly Fishing*** – Fred G Shaw, London 1907 – contains chapters on casting, wet and dry fly fishing, double-handed casting and basic fly tying.
- ***Practical Dry Fly Fishing*** – Emlyn M Gill, New York 1912 – an American publication with methods of adapting English fishing methods to American conditions.

- ***Fishing with the fly*** – Charles F Orvis, Vermont 1883 – a collection of stories on fly fishing subjects, with a number of colour pages of various flies.
- ***Wet Fly Fishing – Treated Methodically*** – Ewen M Tod, London 1907 – various chapters on wet fly fishing from streams to ‘burns’ (*those in the know will understand what these are*).
- ***Practical Fly Fishing*** – John Beever, London 1893 – contains original tying recipes for many of the old traditional flies – the March Brown, the Granam, the Cowdung, the Grouse and many more.....
- ***Fly-fishing and Fly-making for Trout, etc*** – John Harrington Keene, New York 1891 – contains chapters on fly fishing, and making flies for trout as well as lessons in fly making.
- ***The trout fly dresser's cabinet of devices, or How to tie flies for trout and grayling fishing*** – Harry G McClelland, London 1919 – a book totally devoted to tying flies, with a chapter entirely on hooks!

I'm not going to list every book in the archive on fly fishing, for that would take away the enjoyment of reading though lots of books and uncovering many interesting articles on the subject. If you find a book that you find interesting and you think will help others, why not write a short article for Flylines? I hope you find these instructions useful; remember, you don't have to restrict your search to fly fishing! Enjoy the off season....

Brett Leyshon