

Simons Story - How I started Trout Fishing with GWFFA's Help

Hi, my name is Simon and am now in my third year of fly fishing and being a GWFFA member. Here is the story of my journey into this sport. Just before my birthday my neighbour invited me to fish Grafham, so on my 50th birthday at 06.00 I was standing on the dam with a fly rod in hand and a couple of shrimp attached, whipping them out like I was trying to make a horse go faster, convinced that the harder I whipped the rod the further my flies would travel. In fact, all I was doing was disturbing the water in front of me, smashing the flies against the dam and achieving no distance. After another bit of tuition from my neighbour and another set of flies I had calmed down and could get the flies 10m into the water. Far enough for a fish and before long I caught my first trout, a 2lb brown that I put back. A few months later I'm sat at home with nothing to do. My boys were growing up fast and required less care and my wife has always been independent, at this moment I decided I needed a hobby, so wrote a list of what I needed from it. It had to -

- keep me fit – mentally and physically and be outside
- help me meet new people
- keep me interested, needs to evolve
- cost less than £1000 to set up and then £1000 a year to maintain
- be something I can continue to do when I retire and will be a basis for future travel.
- be something I can do in all weather and day or night

I could think of 2 things that meet these requirements, fly fishing and walking, so fly fishing it was. My neighbour gave me a rod, a couple of reels with line and I booked a boat at Grafham. At 08.00 I was in the lodge with my rod asking lots of questions about what flies we needed, where were the fish etc; I was very excited. What I didn't know was standing behind me was Martin Brocklebank, who introduced himself and proceeded to provide all the guidance we required and suggested I join GWFFA, which I did. A few weeks later I'm sitting in a boat at a GWFFA social day fishing absorbing all the information provided from a significantly more experienced fisherman. This friendly willingness to share knowledge is a key objective of GWFFA and supporting this personal approach to upskill new fishermen and women. GWFFA have active WhatsApp groups that provide up to date information on fishing locations, techniques and fly tying, a new Web page, and they provide regular meetings

to support further development. During the season GWFFA runs 15 fishing events and has 2 competitive teams in the AMFC. This combined with a busy winter programme of events which include talks, demonstrations, and advice. The GWFFA members have been key to my development of this fabulous sport and have always made me feel welcome.



Recently my 12-year-old son has shown an interest in this sport and has already caught some good fish. However, he now needs to learn the basic elements, like how to cast and retrieve a fly using different techniques and we have both been excited at the offers of 121 coaching from other GWFFA members. Sometimes it's good to learn a skill from someone different than your dad and I am keen to encourage him and other juniors into this sport as I know the GWFFA club supports this.

The last thing to say, is to thank the GWFFA for not only the technical support but all the other support provided. Being in a boat with someone for a few hours really does provide a platform to discuss the challenges that life throws at you and simply having the opportunity to discuss these with likeminded people is a real privilege.