



Grafham Water Fly Fishers Association

Welcome to our November Newsletter

I always find it amazing what difference a drop in water temperature makes to the fishing. We have had a long warm and dry summer and the water temperature in Grafham for several months has been twenty deg plus which makes the trout very lethargic and also looking to the depths for cooler water. Now that the water has cooled the fishing has just taken off from boat and more recently the banks, Grafham has and continues to produce some cracking rainbows and browns, many in the 4lb+ category and a good few doubles. Word spreads fast with social media and this has certainly encouraged the bank anglers out, just the other day there were 25 anglers on the dam and another 11 on G marker, and with the low water the whole reservoir is fishable but the 'go to spot' is still for many the dam which with the low water levels is fully open.

It is good to see plenty of anglers on the banks. The boats are more problematic at the moment due to the low water levels and that the harbour is nearly dry and are now being launched from the sailing club, a reduced fleet due to the logistics of moving the boats as this is very time consuming for the rangers. With some reasonable autumn and winter weather we can look forward to some excellent sport. Editor.



A very dry harbour. Boats had been rowing out until the water levels dropped too low to use the harbour. The boats now moored offshore and brought in as required for launch at the sailing club.



The Grafham Dam

A busy morning on the dam with often up to 25 people fishing and more coming and going during the day. It has been fishing incredibly well with some big trout as well as numbers of trout being caught. Often it's the early bird anglers who are doing really well, but it is not always like that. Sometimes it does not switch on until later in the morning as I found the other day that the fish in front of me did not start moving until 10am, so you don't have to get up at the crack of dawn to enjoy some sport! And it's often best to sit on your box or stool and keep a low profile and the fish will come within feet of the edge of the water, short casts are often all that's required.

GWFFA Activities

We have had a very full programme of activities this year led by our club captain Christopher Faulkner. They comprise our GWFFA championship bank and boat matches, social boat days, Members Day, and away days such as the River Test. These have been well supported in particular the social boat days. Our thanks go to Christopher for all the hard work involved in managing the days and obtaining the sponsorship which adds yet another dimension to the days. We particularly encourage new members to come and join us for one of the social days. We pair less experienced members with experienced which is the best way to learn about the water, tips and tactics and of course meeting our members and making new angling friends and boat buddies.

Social Boat Day 22nd October



This was our last social boat day of the season launching from the temporary pontoon at the sailing club.



Every attendee enjoyed a free tackle item, on this occasion sponsored by Veniard.

The car was not one of the prizes!

GWFFA 'A' Team bring home the AMFC group 1 trophy

We have had a very good season in the Association of Major Fishing Clubs (AMFC) series of matches. There are 6 matches in total. 2 x Association matches where competitors from all 3 groups fish together and 4 rounds where only the teams in that group fish together.

GWFFA 'A' won the group in 2023 came mid field in 2024 and champions again in 2025. This was a nail-biting finish with Tunbridge Wells not far behind us. In the final match our team had a great performance with a clear lead of 19lb over the 2nd team. Finishing the series with 25 points to Tunbridge Wells 23.5 points.

Our congratulations to all the anglers who fished the series and also to Chris Bobby who has managed the AMFC matches and led the 'A' team to success.

GWFFA 'B' Have also had a good AMFC season fishing in group 3 they have come 3rd place overall in the series finishing on 24 points to the winners Derbyshire's 26.5. GWFFA 'B' also had a very good final match of the season finishing in 2nd place and only 2lb behind the winners.

We also encourage our members to join the B Team and this way gain experience of competitive loch style match fishing. The AMFC is a friendly series but you also get the chance of fishing with some very experienced fishers and gain experience as well as the enjoyment of the day. Simon Goodland has ably managed the B Team, and I am sure would be delighted to hear from you if you fancy trying your hand.

GWFA 'A' Team Group 1 Presentation – Overall Group One winners 2025



GWFFA 'A' Team
From the left
David Franklin
Paul Cramp
Chris Bobby
Wian Terblanche

Club Captains Report

As the year draws to close I would like to thank you all for the fantastic participation at this year's events. 2025 has been a busy year with 28 days of GWAFFA events and record attendance at some of the social days. It's been great to see so many new members and we will be continuing with the new member initiative next year allowing this year's new members to take up the £5 social day offer (but only if you have not used it this year) I'd also like to thank all the experienced members who have been paired with new and less experienced members and shared their knowledge. It's the whole ethos of the club and one of the key factors in the club's success.

The final event of 2025 is the Winter Plate on Sunday 9th November - it's a six fish kill bank match and is supported by local businesses so there will be plenty of festive goodies for the table to be taken away. 0800 to 1500. Weigh in and celebrations at 1515. Do come and fish (you can fish catch and release and partake in the celebrations and goodie give aways). Please register on Clubmate and it's £2 cash on the day match fee.

The only disappointing thing has been the low participation in the club matches. They should not put you off as they are very relaxed days and I hope that next year more of you will fish the club championship matches. They are also a great stepping stone to those who want to then represent the club at AMFC level.

We will again have the two teams in the AMFC next year as well as participating in the 6x4. I'd just like to thank Chris Bobby, Simon Goodland and Alex Green for their management of the 2025 teams and congratulations to all those who fished in the A team for being AMFC champions again.

I'd also like to remind you all of our membership of the East Anglian Fly Fishers - the UK's only predator fly fishing club. We have 4 tickets a day for their river or lake, and they are on our Clubmate. I can highly recommend the river pike fishing and if anyone wants a trip to the Little Ouse, I'd be happy to accompany you. Let's fill a car and four of us go. There is plenty of fishing to be had.

www.eaflyfishing.com

Finally, I will be starting to plan 2026 soon and plan to have a similar program to this year with our days on the Test, Dry Fly Day at Draycote and a bank trip to Elinor in February. If anyone has any other ideas they would like me to consider please do message me.

Fish of the Month

Can I remind members that the best fish submitted to me each month with a photo and a GWFFA or Ranger witness wins £10.00 and the picture goes on the website. There was no submission for September and none so far for October but you can still submit as I know lots of good fish are being caught.

Recent Match Results

3rd Boat Match Sunday September 8th 2025

1st Steve Cracknell 12 Fish 19lb 15oz

2nd Paul Cramp 12 fish 19lb 5oz

3rd Roberto Toptalo 12 fish 19lb 1oz

2nd Bank Match Sunday 21st September 2025

1st Wian Terblanche 6 fish. 16lb 2oz.

2nd Mark Brinkman 6 fish 15lb 13oz

3rd Steve Cracknell 6 fish 14lb 8oz

3rd Bank Match Sunday 26th October 2025

1st Wian Terblanche 6 fish. 16lb 2oz.

2nd Mark Brinkman 6 fish 14lb 9oz

3rd Christopher Faulkner 6 fish 14lb 8oz

This year's Club Championship had been a close call and will be announced at the AGM and Awards ceremony in the new year. Date to be announced.

3rd Bank Match Winners



Top Rod Wian Terblanche and
Best fish Mark Brinkman



Winners of sponsorship draw for £20.00
of Flash Attack Flies Mark Brinkman & Andy Linwood

New to GWFFA?

The report below by Alan Brighton who recently joined the club gives his experience of his first year of joining, I am sure that many newcomers to our sport may empathise with Alan's comments:

I finally gave it a go – a novice's first year with GWFFA

If you're new to GWFFA or to fly-fishing (or both), this article is for you. I hope it nudges a few fellow beginners to come along to one of the many club events that help us "newbies" catch a few more fish. As a novice I was slow to take advantage of all that's on offer at GWFFA to help people like me, and now I'm cursing past lost opportunities to enjoy the sport more. I've blanked a fair few times over recent years as I mostly fished alone. My wife and daughter delighted in saying I was going "blanking" rather than going fishing. Ha ha.

Would I get frowned at when I shared a boat?

The short answer is never.

Now I've done some very scary events over the years, but for some reason the thought of sharing a boat at a social day with a complete stranger, who would be an expert, scared the pants off me. What would they think of my casting, the more than occasional tangle, and my general lack of knowledge?

It was only this year, when after I semi-retired I joined the fly-tying classes, that someone convinced me to give it a try. No pun intended, I was hooked from the word go. I was given encouragement, advice, flies (!), and my boat partner worked hard to put me over fish. It's been the same over and over throughout 2025. I might be a slow learner, but my fishing has definitely improved, and I've had a lot of fun.

I've been to several of the winter meetings, almost all the club social days, where I've fished with a different seasoned angler each time, joined the fly-tying group, and just recently helped at the bank clearance sessions.

It's helped my fishing

So has my catch rate improved? Definitely yes. I haven't had any red-letter days this year, but I've caught fish most times I've been out. I'm much more confident that I'll find a way to get my string pulled, whatever the weather or conditions. More than anything, I've met some super people, made new friends and learned loads. I'm more committed than ever to take my fly-fishing to the next level.

What have I learned over the last year?

I realise these are basics, at the same time I also realise that we need the basics in place to be successful. This is just some of what I've discovered.

There is no one answer to how to land and catch fish. I very quickly realised that my "tutors" this year almost all have different styles of all aspects of fishing. There is no one way of catching or landing trout on any given day. Bully them in and get them to the net quickly, or take a little more time? Each to their own.

Rod position in relation to the water makes a difference to hook rate. I thought the more direct contact I had with the business end, the quicker I felt the take, so I could strike sooner. I guess that's an overspill from coarse fishing. I've now learned the opposite is true, to allow a loop from the rod to the water, and to let the fish get a proper hold before lifting into it. Someone had to put it into capitals for me "DON'T STRIKE".

Find the fish. Sounds so obvious, but some of my boat partners have moved often if we weren't catching, and it's worked.

Find the depth. If I'm confident in the flies I'm fishing and I'm not catching, I'm either in the wrong place or at the wrong depth. I've been slow to change lines and change depth, I know I can improve here.

More false casts (often) don't make for more distance. I was amazed at how true this is, and it makes for an easier life.

The one thing above all others

I quickly realised spotting fish move has all sorts of benefits. Increased catch rate, understanding what the trout might be eating, general confidence you're in the right area. I just wish I could spot those movements. My last boat partner could spot fish I didn't even know existed. I nicknamed him Tonto — he seemed to sense them like in those old westerns where the tracker puts his ear to the ground. Definitely one for me to work on.

Learning to tie flies has helped

Joining the beginners and improvers fly tying group opened my eyes to what might catch and why. I realise that little things can make such a difference, like adding trigger points. I'm one of the least practical people you could meet, so catching fish on my own flies has been hugely satisfying. I suspect I'm catching the lower-IQ trout, given what some of my creations look like.

This is another area where I can't say thanks enough to the tutors who have so much patience. It must have been headbanging trying to teach me at times, but I've been on the receiving end of loads of help and encouragement. They're great at telling porkies too, I've never yet been asked "what on earth have you just tied?"

An unexpected benefit has been that I've met a great bunch of people learning alongside me, and we all now go out fishing together.

Aside from fly tying I've probably learned as much off the water as on the water. Chatting over lunch and afterwards at social days, and recently at bank clearance sessions, have made me think and given me valuable information about exactly what might be working and where.

So many people want to help the novices – thank you

This is also my way to say thank you again to the many people who have been so giving of their time, advice and encouragement to a lot of newcomers in 2025. The seasoned flyfishers who come along to the social days realise they're probably going to be in teaching mode for the day, sometimes with duffers like me, and they happily turn up and give up their time. It goes way beyond the social days, thanks to you all.

So to everyone who's given time, advice and encouragement this year — thank you. And if you're new and hesitating, don't. Come along and see what happens. Worst case, you'll blank in good company. *Alan Brighton*

Have you ever fancied becoming a fly-fishing coach?

As a club GWFFA has a number of qualified fly-fishing coaches. Our club captain Christopher Faulkner has recently decided to embark on a journey to become a GAIA qualified game angling instructor. Below is an account of Christopher's journey to becoming qualified.

My GAIA Journey

My GAIA journey started in March 2023 when I attended my first GWFFA AGM.

Well, what is GAIA. It's the Game Angling Instructors Association and is the UK's leading fly fishing organisation for the development and teaching of fly fishing. All GAIA instructors are GAIA certified which means they undergo rigorous training and assessment and enjoy the benefits of Continuous Professional Development.

To quote the last GAIA chairman, John Reynolds, who has fished Grafham since it opened "GAIA is a huge network of friends and associates with a shared passion. We love fishing and we love teaching fishing. We're happily in a process of continual development, in terms of our skills and knowledge. We communicate and we share, no one in GAIA ever stops learning."

So back to March 2023 I had recently made the decision to retire and had engaged with GWFFA. My lifelong passion for fishing was giving me huge pleasure and I was starting to learn about reservoir fishing.

At the AGM our President, Peter Hartley, stood up and gave a speech. He reminded the audience of his age!!! And the years of experience he had as the Anglian Water Instructor. He then said that he needed some help for the future, before moving on with some fishing stories told in his usual engaging style. Peter is a GAIA certified professional game angling instructor.

On my way home that evening it was like an electric light switching on. "I would love to take up Peter's challenge and help him in the future" So I started the journey. I contacted GAIA and became an Associate Member and was told it would take at least 18 months to gain the certification. I can do it quicker I thought to myself but how wrong I was. In reality, the certification is a really enjoyable journey but involves a great deal of learning and reading about the principles of casting and fly fishing. There is a detailed syllabus of theory, knowledge and practical skills which enables you to build a reference portfolio and finally take an assessment.

The first step was to then find a mentor to work with on the practical and I was so lucky to be mentored by John Reynolds the then chairman of GAIA. Interestingly John and Peter both took their assessments on the same day in 2006.

I'd been fly fishing for 55 years. I thought I was a good caster, and the practical would be easy. How wrong I was. My first session with John was an eye opener. My casting action was wrong. My grip was wrong. I was far too forceful. Those knots in my leader that I'd always blamed on the wind were not the wind but my casting creating tailing loops. Maybe it was going to take longer than I thought.

In fact, for a number of reasons, including the desire to actually fish rather than practice, it took me 3 years. I am lucky as I was able to create a casting patch in a field next to my home and I've spent many hours there honing my skills and getting rid of my bad habits. I had many a trip to Blackdyke Trout Fishery to meet John for a couple of hours on the grass. (Sometimes followed by a few hours on the fishery. A special mention to Dean for all his efforts to save the lake and make the best of a difficult situation with disappearing water. It's now a great small water to fish.)

Finally, on the 10th October, in the grounds of Chatsworth House and alongside the river Derwent, I took my assessment. Initially it was a nervous experience but once in the flow the line went where it was meant to go, and the fly hit the targets. My style is still much as it was but the substance (the technical aspects of casting) is now much improved and after a demanding few hours, and 24 distinct casting tasks, I was told I had passed. The sense of achievement and satisfaction was immense.

I am now a GAIA certified professional single-handed rod game angling instructor and I am really looking forward to helping Peter in the future.

As a GWFFA member if you want some help, please do give me a call. I'd be very happy to meet up on the bank and fish with you or just find a patch of grass and help with your casting at no cost.

In 2026 I will be offering both teaching and guiding services and am in the process of building a website. More on that in the future.

Thank you, Peter, for that lightbulb moment and all the support and inspiration over the past few years and to John Reynolds for his excellent mentoring and support, it's been really enjoyable and made retirement from the corporate world very easy.



GWFFA Club Captain Christopher Faulkner receiving his GAIA accreditation



GWFFA – Grafham Bank Clearance

Our bank clearance sessions have been well attended this year. We work with Anglian Water to help manage the bankside vegetation which can impede our fishing. Willow and bramble growth are some of the key issues that we tackle in particular the brambles growing in and around the rocks as without maintenance we would quickly lose access to many of the banks. With low water levels that we have now it hardly seems relevant but come the new season with a full reservoir it makes all the difference and makes the banks and access points accessible.

The Anglian Water grounds maintenance team have this year been working closely with us and have cleared where possible to the bank's edge leaving us to work on the brambles and areas that they cannot access with the tractor, but this still leaves us plenty of work to do.

If you fancy a bit of fresh air you would be welcome to join us. It's some light exercise, some good company and a great way to get to know spots on the water.



Clearing brambles from the top of Long Bank. The remainder of the team are working below clearing willows and brambles. You can just see in the distance smoke from the bonfire burning the cut material.



Clearing the path known as 'Wyndham's Way'. This leads from the top of Plummer car park to Sludge Point. At the current low water levels this could be one of the key spots on the reservoir. This path now makes it an easy stroll to get there.



The team enjoying a bacon bap and a coffee courtesy of Anglian water after a morning clearing. We also get a FOC boat voucher for every 4 sessions completed.

These are the sessions for this year and into 2026. We clear up until the end of February when birds nesting season begins. All dates are Mondays, and we work from 0930 to around 1pm and wrap up with lunch.

Mon 28th July	Mon 11th Aug	Mon 8th Sept	Mon 22nd Sept	Mon 6th Oct	Mon 20th Oct	Mon 3rd Nov	Mon 17th Nov	Mon 1st Dec	Mon 15th Dec	Mon 5th Jan	Mon 19th Jan	Mon 2nd Feb	Mon 16th Feb	Mon 23rd Feb

If you would like to join us, please contact Mark Brinkman at ‘mark.brinkman@btinternet.com’

GWFFA Winter Programme






We are shortly to start our winter programme which this year will be held upstairs in the Harbour View Restaurant rather than the downstairs training room. This is because on several occasions due to the numbers of people it became too crowded in the room.

We plan to have a mix of evenings some more hands on such as the popular fly-tying evenings where you can pick up tips on tying flies and also get to see some of the key patterns our members have had success with during the year on Grafham. We will also have a number of guest speakers. Last year we live streamed evenings that lent themselves to the media and the intention is to do the same this year. This enables members who have further to travel to join the meetings using Zoom, this certainly proved to be popular. We have listed below the first couple of evenings as the programme is still being worked and speakers being confirmed. We would welcome suggestions of speakers or topics that would be of interest as we look to bring new content to the evenings.

Tuesday 4th November

Key Flies of 2015 Fly Tying and Member Social

We are delighted that we have some of our talented tiers, tying their key flies

 Simon King	Damsels & Lures
 Stuart Steenning-White	Shammies
 Keith Hazel	Pike Flies
 Alex Green	Gymys and Daddies
 David Blake	Easy flies for the beginner

Tuesday 18th November

Semperfli

 A chance to see the Semperfli range of fly-tying materials

Further dates for your diaries are as below with speakers to be confirmed.

2 nd Dec
16 th Dec
13 th Jan
27 th Jan
10 th Feb
24 th Feb

All evenings are at the Harbour View Restaurant (above the lodge shop) and doors open for 7.30pm with a start time of 8pm. The evening finishes at 10pm. For live streamed evenings we will provide log on and password details by email prior to the evening.

Obituary

With sadness I report the passing of Ian Ruff who died peacefully in hospital on 27th October 2025. Ian was a long-time member of GWFFA he joined at the club's inauguration. Ian was particularly well known for his expertise at fly tying, and one fly in particular the Ruff Raider that as I understand helped clinch a Benson & Hedges team match (now known as the Airflo International).

Ian has presented for the club on numerous occasions; he was part of the Fly Tiers Guild and would make difficult techniques look easy such as the 'Walley wing' and extended body daddies. Also, a keen fisherman he could on occasion be found at Pitsford sitting on his box fishing close in on corixa patterns which were highly successful in taking fish picking corixa off and around the weed beds. While Ian has not been a regular fisher recently due to mobility issues, he still liked to stay in touch on the WhatsApp groups. He also attended the fly fair earlier this year at Tempsford where he chatted with many of our members. He will be sadly missed.



The framed picture is the GWFFA Benson & Hedges winning team from 1986. From left to right the members are Mike Ball, Denis Cooper, Andy Linwood, Roland Hudson, John Moore and Ian Ruff.

GWFFA Committee

We are pleased to advise that we have two new members that have been co-opted onto the committee: Alan Brighton and Alan Saffer. Mark Brookbanks our treasurer has given notice that he would like to stand down from the committee at the end of the year. Alan Brighton subject to ratification at the AGM will take over as treasurer with support from Alan Saffer. With the club now increasing in size and workload it is important to have a continuity of support in the officer roles, and we welcome them to the committee.

The GWFFA Committee

Below contact details and committee roles.

Committee Members

President	Peter Hartley hartley.p@btconnect.com
Chair	Lianne Frost liannefrost@googlemail.com
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Committee	Stuart Stenning-White Stuartsw61@gmail.com
Committee	Alan Brighton bigalbrighton@gamil.com
Committee	Alan Saffer alan@saffer.org.uk

We are always interested in articles and topics to cover in the Newsletter if you have suggestions or content, please contact the editor Mark Brinkman at

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