



# WINNER AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



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November 3, 1998

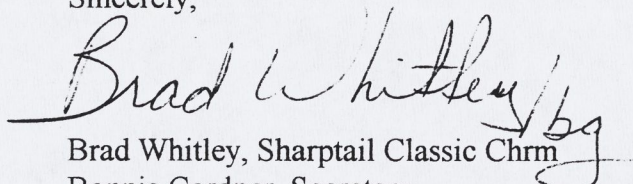
The 1998 Sharptail Classic Committee would like to thank all of you for your past participation in the Grouse Classic. As the 8th Annual Sharptail Classic ended successfully, the grouse season flourished in Winner, SD. The initial purpose of the Classic was to invite writers from around the US to write & share their experiences about our great grouse hunting & encourage hunters to come to Winner for other hunting besides just pheasant. Another intention for the hunt, was to invite economic development prospects to see all that Winner has to offer & we hope they will continue to consider Winner a place for their company.

The Sharptail Committee has decided that the Classic has indeed fulfilled both of these goals. We are planning on taking one year off from the Grouse Classic & maybe trying a new endeavor in the year 2000. We will let you know in advance of our plans.

All the past & present Sharptail Classic Committee Members truly thank you for your support & hope that you continue coming to Winner to hunt & stay.

Stop in at the Chamber Office & say "Hi" when you do.

Sincerely,

  
Brad Whitley, Sharptail Classic Chrm  
Bonnie Gardner, Secretary



February 15, 1988

Mr. Dave Whitlock  
Route 2, Box 12B  
Norfolk, Arkansas 72658

Dear Dave,

Tom Pero has asked me to do a story on trends in flies 1959-1989. The idea is to run this in Trout as part of an issue on TU's thirtieth anniversary. The subject sounds like a good one to me: I was tying flies in the 1950's and have seen changes worth noting.

You don't need a research project, but I'd welcome any comments you feel like making on the enclosed questionnaire. I've been admiring your stuff for years and have the impression that you were a leader in extending some bass-fly techniques to trout flies -- maybe because you live where both kinds are important.

I really designed the enclosure for big firms like Orvis and Dan Bailey, so please just use it as a point of departure.

Thanks.

Yours,

Enclosure





R / WHEELER  
F I L M S

January 27, 1995

Mr. Datus Proper  
1085 Hamilton Road  
Belgrade, Montana 59714

Dear Mr. Proper:

I am writing at the recommendation of my friend Jim Babb, formerly with International Marine Publishing and now with Lyons and Burford. Jim tells me that you have been a long-time proponent of the good stewardship of our fishing resource and concerned with the continued good health of recreational fishing in the U.S. This is the essence of my reason for writing.

I am, by vocation, a documentary film-maker, located in the metropolitan Atlanta area. I am also an avid fisherman and the father of two children, ages 9 and 7. Much of my time with my children has centered on teaching them to fish, the responsible use of our resources, and having a healthy respect for the natural order of our world. These are things in which I believe, and I feel it important to pass these along to the generation that will be in charge of this mess pretty soon.

As I have considered it recently, there seems to be a natural fit between the passing-on of our nation's fishing heritage to our children and what I do as a documentary film-maker. I believe that there is a legitimate need for a quality documentary film or series of films targeted to our youth on the act of fishing and its many other varied aspects.

Now, let me also say that my concept is not another "Bubba goes fishin'" how-to videotape, repackaged and marketed to kids. Instead, this effort should be of the highest quality, shot on film, and done in such a way that demonstrates utmost respect for the resource and the act of pursuing it.

You are far more knowledgeable on all the statistics than I, but I've heard that fishing is the number two form of recreation in the country, second only to gardening. But, I also think that there should be some concern about the long-term good health of fishing based on much misguided, politically correct thinking and pseudo-conservationism that pervades our society these days. To be direct, if not overly dramatic, I believe the future of our fishing heritage could be at stake. I also believe that, properly done, this film series could go a long way toward helping assure the preservation of that heritage.

Has 'phone  
conservation in Fed.,  
& sent some  
articles. It was  
included in "Spring"  
exp.  
Trying to get funding.



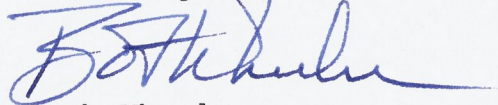
Mr. Datus Proper  
January 27, 1995  
Page 2

I cannot claim, however, to be totally benevolent. I do after all make my living, feed my family, and am able to take them fishing as a result of film-making. I would approach this project as a for-profit venture - but one that I believe has great merit and should be done.

I would really like to know your feelings on all that I have said here, and would welcome a conversation. If you have an opportunity, please give me a call at 404-386-7244 or drop me a note to 28 East Church Street, Cartersville, Georgia, 30120.

I sincerely appreciate your consideration and hope that we'll talk with each other soon.

Best Regards,



Bob Wheeler

BW/eh

Letter sent 2/12/95

Enclosed: "Scoring"

"Foreword to Ortega y G."

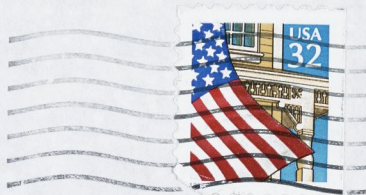
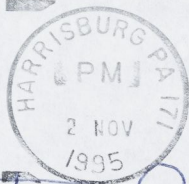
Intro to New Edition of Marinero

"The Brown Treaty & the  
Street Tradition"



MILTON WIEST

PILLOW, PA.  
17080



Mr. Datus Proper.  
1085 Hamilton RD.  
Belgrade,  
Mt. T.

59714

In The  
Ring of  
The Rise  
SH 687 1997 1976



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11/2/95  
Pellou, Pa

To a Fleeting Friend Dates.

About 2 yrs ago we met at the Blue Rock Hole on Penns Creek, Remember if you + Ford come up the Creek, The Henrickson hatch was on, and I had a nice Brownie on, you said, "There my friend you have a Kaper", I said "but we don't keep them here," Remember? After we met, I told you my daughter Dawn had given me your book that previous Xmas (which I read a lot) Since I know you + Vince Morinaro were close friends, I really think you + I knew him better than anyone.

He actually found the Trico hatch at Chambersburg altho another claimed that honor, but I know it was Vince.

From '71 he and I fished that hatch every Monday, from 7/20 to 10/22, and caught many Trout, In those years, Always with Bombo, he actually didn't like Graphite, as I know you know too with your writeup in "Trout Relate's"

I miss him very much, we too were very close, and Martha treated me like one of the family. About 3 yrs before he died, it was an awful hot morning, and he suggested we stay together at the Barn pool.

Dates, every time he hooked one he'd say uh, uh, milt and I did the same thing I'd say uh, uh, Vince, I then said, I'm going to count this morning,



H.

Between us we hooked and released 29 nice  
Trout, all good sizes - we could see the better ones.  
On the way back, he said, "Wilt that was the best  
morning I had on Telling Springs, and am happy  
you could be with me."

His memorabilia is in the fly fishing museum up in  
Manchester, and Leigh <sup>(partner)</sup> asked me for a picture of  
him & me, his letters are there also.

He took pictures of me and wrote some very beautiful  
memories for me, which I cherish highly.

He always admired my shadow box and said I  
had the only one of its kind; I expect to keep it  
as long as I live.

My birthday July 20, '11 Juiced 12/3/11 but he  
always fondly would say, that I looked so  
much older than he, and I told him he never  
worked manually like I did, also played Pro. Ball.

Dates, am I asking too much? Would you please  
send one of your flies for my shadow box,  
I will gladly pay for it if you tell me, am  
sending the list of the men that I already  
have.

Surely wish we could meet and fish together  
sometime, I could relate lots of things that  
happened with our friend while he was with  
us. "He always said 'all this beautiful water  
and not enough time to fish it'."

Sincerely. Wilt Wiest



Bradford R. Voight  
The Morell Company  
#315 West St.  
Needham Hgts. Ma. 02194  
Ph/fax (617) 455-6905

Call F+s - Jean?

Do story in light vest: weigh it.  
(carry other gear in a bag.)

7/23/95

Dear Mr. Proper,

Thank you for your interest in our products. It was indeed the reduction of the weight that one must carry in their vests which led to the boxes development, though many collateral benefits evolved as a result of our efforts. My partner and I are very committed fishermen and we tend to spend an inordinate number of dawn to dusk days astream, as many of the zealots do. We found that it was our lower backs that got the worse of these excursions (and very seldom the trout). Our collective experience in the plastics and design fields led us to the box as it exists today, though we are currently developing other flyfishing products, some of which utilize the same technology and some that don't. We find the box is quickly gaining acceptance by the public though the industry embraced us almost immediately.

The constantly changing weather and stream conditions here in the East, coupled with the ever-growing sophistication of our heavily fished species, demand that the successful angler be well arsenalled with flies. I'm sure this phenomena has been witnessed by those in the West as well. The Morell box allows you to fill every available pocket in your vest with a minimum of additional weight.

Also, the box floats well, like a piece of foam would, and pops to the surface even when submerged open. Boat fishermen find that when they drop one of our boxes in their boat, the pond doesn't explode with alarmed shadows seeking refuge. Personally I like the box for what we call drive-by fishing, or that fishing that's done as you sacrifice your lunch hour for a few casts. The box is quite comfortable in your shirt pocket or tucked in the waist band of your shorts. We know that our hinge will never fatigue as they do in styrene boxes and our closures simplicity speaks for itself.

Finally, our boxes are currently among the least expensive, those units originally designed for organizing screws and nuts notwithstanding. I have enclosed two boxes representative of our styles and sizes and there is a saltwater version that we shall have ready for market in 2 weeks. Please enjoy these boxes and do let me know if you have any comments, encouraging or critical, as we are most interested in others opinions.

Sincerely,

*Bradford R. Voight*

Bradford R. Voight  
President Morell Company

Talked to Selma Skous 8/22/95. Thanked  
them for boxes + referred to Doug Harteau.

- Can write name inside boxes with indelible ink.



Paul Jorgensen,  
Vince Marinero  
Tommy Rosenbauer  
Bob Laird  
Dave Whitlock.  
Charlie Fox  
Dr Clayton Beecham  
Paul Antolosky  
Frank Angelo.  
Charlie ~~Dodd~~ Dodd Wetzel  
Dr. Fred Hawk.  
Dr. Reed Gray.  
Ned Smith  
Bob Bredd  
Geo. Schreffler  
Frank Verdoliva  
Joe Brooks  
Ed. Hoch-  
Bill Grant:  
Dr. Boyd Aigner

over



John Shollenberger.

John Snider

Clate Peters

Geo. Myers.

Bruce Schaeck



**Simon J. Ward**

20 Primrose Way, Locks heath, Southampton,  
Hampshire. SO31 6WX

Telephone: 01489 579295

Read next spring  
write Simon

Send card

Datus C. Proper Esq.  
1085 Hamilton Road  
Belgrade  
Montana 59714  
United States of America

16th October 1998

Dear Datus

What a fantastic time Jane and I experienced in your Big Sky State, so many memories to hold our thoughts until we can return.

Thank you so much for your and Anna's hospitality and for allowing me to fish your delightful spring creek, it was one of my fishing highlights of the trip — it is indeed humility creek and a real challenge.

I have passed on to Roy Darlington the copy you gave me, he will no doubt contact you direct. Our trout season is sadly over for another year, although we are off to the Houghton Club's beats on the river Test next week for two days grayling fishing. These dates are becoming a regular feature of our off season fishing, saying over night at the Three Cups Hotel in Stockbridge where we entertain Ray Hill (Houghton's head keeper) and his wife Sue to dinner.

I hope you found the Marryat articles I left with you of some interest. He has been a large part of my life for over eight years now, truly a fascinating man of many parts.

Once again Datus and Anna many thanks for your kindness and hospitality, we look forward to returning it the next time you both are in the UK.

Kind regards.

Simon

Pat w/  
Skuer  
books.



# A TRIBUTE TO THE MASTER

## George Selwyn Marryat Remembered

Simon J. Ward

In October 1892, F. M. Halford writing in the Field under his pen name of "Detached Badger" wrote the following, not knowing Marryat would be dead within four years:

*"I first met F.F. (Francis Francis) on the 1st May 1879 during a snowstorm in the hut of the Sheepbridge shallow. It was I thought too, that I made the acquaintance of M. (Marryat) and learnt from him, all I know of dry fly fishing. Of those departed it is permissible to sing the praises; but of him, the most unselfish of men, all good and honest fishermen should wish that he may long be spared to give the benefit of his varied experience to another generation of dry fly fishermen."*

### Testimony

Over the decades since G. S. Marryat's untimely death, the memory of this mighty fly fisher has rested on the testimony of the people who knew him. A hundred years ago on 14th February 1896, he passed from this world. Marryat had perhaps the greatest influence on fly fishermen and fly fishing in his time. He died leaving behind him the most uncontested reputation in the history of trout fly fishing. William Senior, then, angling editor of The Field, recalled his:

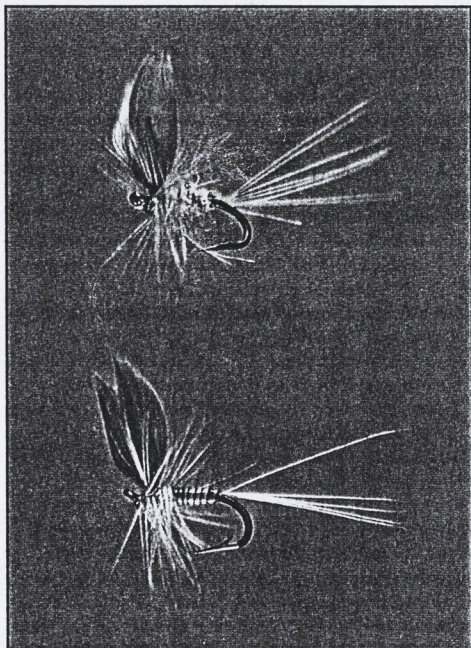
*"Wholly beautiful character, a more agreeable companion in short, there never was than GSM. It is not too much perhaps to state that Mr. Marryat was practically the father of the now fashionable dry fly school of trout fishermen."*

### Sportsman and Gentleman

Dr. Thomas Sanctuary. Marryat's life long friend, remembered him with affection in The Field:

*"It was his great characteristic to be careless of himself and thoughtful for others. In every true sense he was a thorough sportsman and gentleman and as a fly fisher he had no equal. Marryat was more instrumental in bringing the dry fly to its present stage of development than any fisherman that exists."*

A legend in his own lifetime! Charismatic springs to mind as the right way to think of him. I am sure that Marryat



TONY PUGH PHOTO

Two flies devised by George Marryat. The Little Marryat (16), and the Quill Marryat (16).

The copies shown above were tied for us by Jacqueline Wakeford, Life Vice President of the Fly Dressers Guild. They conform to tying instructions conveyed by letter from Marryat to Henry Sinclair Hall in November 1882.

would not have taken kindly to being thought of as having charisma, he might have been embarrassed. All that Marryat did was to go fishing for his own pleasure. That he could impart his knowledge to other fly fishermen, only added to that pleasure.

George Selwyn Marryat was only 56 years old when influenza struck him down. After nearly three weeks of delirium, he lapsed into a nine hour coma, finally succumbing to a stroke that left him paralysed down his right side. His ashes are now resting beneath, a simple

(continued over) ►



marble tablet under the cedar trees in the Cloisters of Salisbury Cathedral. Even in death, modest and reserved - as he had been in life. He passed from this earth without leaving any generally known published work on fly fishing. There is only one proper title for this man of genius. He is truly the "Father of the Dry Fly" as we know it today. Marryat's ethos was the cutting edge of dry fly fishing knowledge for nearly thirty years.

## Birthplace

Geo S. Marryat (as he called himself) was born on 20th June 1840, at the Chewton Glen in Hampshire. By 1854 the family had moved down to Mapperton House in deepest rural Dorset. In that same year Marryat went up to Winchester college, in 1858 he joined the Carabiniers as Cornet, lowest of the low in the officer ranks. He served in India just after the great mutiny. Returning to England in 1861, he was promoted 2nd Lieutenant, finally resigning his commission in 1864. He now spent five years in Australia, where among other things he was a stock rider in the bush. On his return to the UK in 1870 he married Lucy Clinton and lived in Scotland from 1872, coming south to Shedfield Grange, Hampshire in 1874/5. After his return from Australia, it was fully ten years before he met F.M. Halford and the start of their collaboration on the dry fly. These ten years were to see Marryat become the finished master with the dry fly.

## Instructor

Marryat, in the truest sense of the word was one of the first professional fly fishing instructors, and I do not mean that he received payment to do it, far from it. He would have been aghast at the very suggestion. The way he went about his fly fishing had professional written all over it. The instructional plates in F.M. Halford's 'Dry Fly Fishing in Theory and Practise' show a man going through all the casting actions. All these are of Marryat. William Senior said at the time:

*"- that anyone who knew Mr. Marryat could not fail to realise who the figure was."*

Think of any of the chalk stream pioneers, and not just Halford. He came into this close circle much later, after Marryat had everything in place. The main beneficiary of Marryat's skill was H.S. Hall who first made the acquaintance of Marryat in 1876. To start with these were just chance meetings on the Old Barge beats of the Itchen. I will let Hall continue.

*"On a later visit to Winchester, in August, 1879, I had taken up fly-dressing, and was experimenting on eyed hooks. From this our common interests drew us together, and my long and lasting friendship with Mr. Marryat began. He would frequently spend the hot afternoons in my rooms tying flies and beguiling the time with pleasant chat.*

*The first lessons in fly tying I ever had, except from books, were obtained in this way from his skilled hands. For many years we kept up correspondence and interchange of ideas on all the minutiae of the fly fisher's craft, and it would be impossible for me to say how much I learnt from him. He was eminently practical and original in everything he took up, and the invaluable assistance I received from him in perfecting the smallest sizes of eyed hooks has placed the present generation of dry-fly fishermen under an obligation that they will not be slow to recognise."*

It was Marryat who worked out the methods, and showed Hall how to wing the new eyed "Snecky Limerick" hook's that, Hall and George Bankart had been evolving, and Hutchinsons had been manufacturing. These were the first dressings of the double-dressed split-winged dry fly. Hall again:

*"There is, as a matter of fact, very little indeed in the dry-fly fisher's outfit which has not been directly or indirectly, brought to its present state of efficiency by some clever wrinkle originally due to Marryat. Although he was always ready to place everything he knew at the disposal of his brother anglers, he could not be induced to write on the subject on which he was so well qualified to instruct others."*

Marryat did write to the Field, and it gives us an insight into how far sighted he really was. Hall could remember only "once" seeing a letter of Marryat's in The Field, this, he preserved in his scrap book for posterity. The subject was "Quill Bodies for Flies" and Marryat wrote it in response to an article that Francis Francis had penned in the previous edition. Hall wrote about this letter fully fifteen years after it was first published. This was in his tribute to the master in 1896 from The Fishing Gazette. It shows us, how far Marryat was ahead of his time. At the time of writing this letter, Marryat along with Francis Francis were the lease holders of the Abbots Barton water on the Itchen, and both members of the Houghton Fly Fishing Club, (not the club that still has its base in Stockbridge, as has been supposed in the past).

## Research

Obtaining a copy of this letter, for me was some kind of mile-stone in my research into his life and times. This one letter gives us more than a glimpse into the thoroughness with which he went about his fly dressing and dying. All this was new, and don't forget, right at the cutting edge of fly fishing thinking in the 1870s and 80s. The letter is typical of the time, eight hundred words long with no paragraphs and very long sentences. It is plain to see that Marryat used the same methods as Ronalds for his dying, but he did not always agree with the theories of the old entomologist, and fly fisherman. Most, if not all of Marryat's fly-tying practice of the time is in this



letter. So many are the variations that can be achieved with different coloured dyes, while maintaining simplicity of structure and materials. He then coupled this too effortless, pin-point upstream presentation, to a rising fish. Although H.S. Hall is credited with the first tying of the split-winged dry fly on the eyed hook, my belief is that it was by Marryat's hand that the first examples of the split-winged floater were tied, (both single and double dressed). He fished with them in the mid 1870s, possibly even before this. Hall had started his experiments with eyed hooks, and by 1879 the two were married together. The first reference to the Blue Winged Olive by name, according to G.E.M. Skues, is attributed to Marryat, this came from a letter Marryat wrote to Hall in 1879 when the two men were conducting trials with the eyed hook.

## Collaboration

Over the years there has been speculation as to just what kind of relationship Marryat had with Halford. Some have said that after their near six year collaboration on Halford's first book *Floating Flies and How to Dress Them* (1886), their differences were so great that they never had anything to do with one another again. This is just not so. I have evidence that places Halford as a house guest of Marryat in 1892. Just as in any partnership I am sure they had their differences of opinion. Halford came to the Test in 1877 from the Wandle where it was normal to fish the dry fly, whereas Marryat learnt his craft on the Dorset Frome with the downstream wet fly. The choice between dry fly, wet fly, right or wrong was, some people have said, the start of the parting of the ways and the break up of the partnership. Marryat liked to fish on the rain-fed rivers of the North and South-West, where even today the wet fly sits alongside the dry fly as normal practice. Marryat was still a boy of 13 perhaps even younger, when he first started fly fishing, Halford started fly fishing on the Wandle, when he was 23, and fished with the dry fly from the start. I do not believe that, Marryat's liking for the wet fly, turned Halford away.

## Flies

One of the things' surviving that belonged to Marryat, that is not still with the family, is a fly book containing many hundreds of flies. This fly book or 'The Portmanteau' as it became known by his friends, passed from Marryat to Basil Field, thrice President of the 'Flyfishers' Club'. When Basil Field died in December 1908 this fly book passed into the hands of James Rolt. K.C. Skues gained permission from Rolt to review the contents of the Portmanteau and he concluded this review with the following:

*"Looking back over the collection one cannot help being impressed with the enormous predominance of patterns better calculated to fish wet than dry, and it seems impossible to doubt that at one stage of his angling career, and that not separated much from the period of Marryat's collaboration with Halford,*

*indeed overlapping more or less, the great man must have been content either on chalk streams or on other waters to fish what Mr. Aspland called "wet as Niagara." - "There may, however, be members of the Flyfishers Club or others who occasionally or possibly frequently fished with Marryat in those great days and it would be of immense interest to angling history if any of them would recall for the benefit of posterity whether Marryat continued to rely on the book under review to the end, or whether he latterly carried a fly box for chalk streams and used the book for the rough water fishing of other rivers."*

Skues is right in his deduction when he says that Marryat used other fly boxes, I have discovered that there is in existence a dry fly box of Marryat's own construction. This fly box has been handed down in the family, and is now in the care of one of Marryat's great grandsons, I have yet to find out whether there are any flies still in the box, (watch this space). Could this be the fly box that Marryat used on the chalk streams, that Skues alludes to in the above passage? I think it could be. The predominance of wet flies in the Portmanteau has led people over the years to mark Marryat as more of a wet than a dry fly man, but what would our view be if all the flies in the Portmanteau had been single and double dressed split-winged floaters? Very different I think. The existence of this dry fly box, only reinforces my long held view that Marryat was the complete all round fly fisherman. In that he had a fly for every eventuality, be it, on chalk streams or rough and tumble rain-fed streams, but Dr. Thomas Sanctuary, Marryat's life long friend has said:

*"The dry fly was always his principle study."*

If there was a major differences of opinion between Marryat and Halford - and I think there may have been - right from the very start of their collaboration, Halford in his wisdom, considered that the dry fly fisherman needed an artificial fly dressing for every natural insect likely to be encountered when on the stream. Marryat, I think, thought otherwise, as can be seen by his statement:

*"The quill dyed olive with onion dye, and a blue dun hackle dyed in the same dye, in three shades and sizes, no fisherman should ever be without. I should not be afraid to back it against any other single fly that can be tied."*

Three shades and sizes, this is what a fly fisherman today would call a system fly, to be used for the variation in colour and size of ephemeral insects. Marryat tried to persuade Halford that the endless list of fly patterns that he dressed, were not needed to be successful. Marryat's genius with the fly rod is well documented. It was this that was the key to Marryat's fly fishing, presenting the fly to the fish with perfection. In no way did any differences affect their friendship, they remained very close right up to the end.

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A simple marble tablet under the cedar trees in the Cloisters of Salisbury Cathedral marks the resting place of Marryat's ashes.

(continued from previous page)

It was Dr. Thomas Sanctuary who composed the most heart rending tribute to Marryat. This was published in the Wykehamist, magazine of Winchester College, on 30th March 1896.

"WYKEHAMICI OLIM ALUMNI  
VIRI PRAECLARI INGENII,  
ET PISCATORUM FACILE PRINCIPIS;  
QUI OBIT FEB. 14, 1896 ET IN CLAUSTRIS  
ECCLESIE CATHEDRALIS APUD SARUM  
SEPULTUS EST.

(Former pupil of Winchester School. A Man of outstanding talent, and easily the leading fisherman who died on February 14, 1896 and within the confines of the Cathedral church in Salisbury buried.)

*Sleep, cherished friend, secure from storm and wind;  
Thy life well acted, and thy part well played!  
Where could a Selwyn fairer haven find,  
Than 'neath the sacred spire in cloistered shade?*

*Snatched from our hearts he journeys forth alone  
With keener gaze than mortal powers admit:  
At last he lifts the veil from the unknown,  
And solves the secrets of the infinite.*

*Shrewd humour, caustic wit, to chosen friend  
A friend always, than brother more to me:  
Why to a life like his such early end?  
Yet deeds, not years, count immortality.*

*No more for him the bleating snipe shall twist  
Beneath the slopes of wind-swept Eggardon;  
Nor woodcock flushed from out the purple mist,  
On Cornish moor, or woods of Mapperton.*

*And ne'er again, where Avon's waters glide,  
Shall watchful keeper hear his footsteps pass;  
Nor Ichen's wave, nor Test's unequalled tide,  
Reflect his features in their limpid glass.*

*Unharm'd the monarch of the pool shall thrive  
In safety 'neath the overhanging bough:  
No unsuspecting fly will e'er contrive,--  
For Marryat is gone-- to reach him now.*

*I would I had been near him at the last  
To have eased his pain, and held his hand in mine:  
They said not he was sick, and so he passed  
Into the shadowland without a sign.*

*Not more than once to each in life is given  
From such a friend of boyhood's years to part:  
My deep regret, the chain so sharply riven!  
Time, only time, who smote, can heal the smart.*

*Surely for him, we may believe, there lies  
Some happy hunting ground in realms a far;  
Remote from feeble gaze of human eyes,  
Some crystal stream beyond the evening star.*

*Where, due reward for this life's honest work,  
The gentle grayling of the almond eye,  
And the spotted trout by verdant cresses lurk,  
And ne'er refuse a well adjusted fly.*

*There Walton, Francis, aye, and many more,  
Those master-minds of intricate device,  
Shall meet again on some eternal shore  
To revel in an anglers Paradise*

Sanctuary's prose speaks volumes about his relationship with Marryat and the tragedy of his death. It came as such a shock to everyone who was numbered as a friend.

In this the centenary year of his passing we should remember him always as our patron saint of the dry fly, for without his immense contribution to fishing the floating fly, it is doubtful even if Halford would have written his books. George Selwyn Marryat (1840-1896), you will never be forgotten - may you rest in peace. ●

*Editors note: This fascinating article is the first in a series by Simon Ward on the flyfishing life of GS Marryat.*



# THE MARRYAT LETTER

## George Selwyn Marryat Remembered (part 2)

In the second a fascinating series of articles,  
**Simon J. Ward** gives a perspective  
on the early use of dry flies in England

*tie some quills for 1012 times pale*

**W**e regard today the books written by F. M. Halford as the bench mark for chalk stream dry fly fishing as practised over one hundred years ago. Even today his book's still offer much that we can learn from. Halford made the acquaintance of G. S. Marryat in the Spring of 1879. Halford's first book *Floating Flies and How to Dress Them* was still seven years away.

Long before this however, through the pages of *The Field* and *The Fishing Gazette*, the upstream dry fly on the chalk streams was written about before Halford even fished on the Test, let alone him writing about it. The pen of Francis Francis in *The Field*, regularly wrote about the dry fly, (he was the angling editor from 1856 to 1881). Also, Francis and Marryat were old and very dear friends. They fished together as often as they could. I am in no doubt that some of the articles that Francis wrote for *The Field* about the chalk streams and the dry fly came from the mind of Marryat. — Marryat spoke, and Francis wrote the words! Francis always referred to my friend M in his articles.

### Article in The Field

One such article in *The Field* from Francis appeared in the Christmas number 1880, where, amongst other things, Francis wrote about quill bodies for flies. This three thousand word article inspired George Selwyn Marryat to put pen to paper, and, for perhaps, the only time in his life wanted to share first-hand, his fly dressing knowledge with his fellow readers. Marryat's inspiration to write came from the following

paragraphs of the article, and no doubt some gentle persuasion from Francis.

*"The fly on which there has been a very unusual rim this year has been the brown dun, or 'light hare's ear,' I suppose it would be called, though hare's fur, particularly when wet, does not give the colour at all. I may state here that we are gradually weeding out the old materials which we used for bodies of flies formerly, and fur and silk bodies are more and more falling into disuse among first-class trout fishers, being gradually ousted by the introduction of 'quill', &c. Fur, and more particularly silk bodies, and especially floss silk bodies, are always many shades darker when wet than dry; and, though you may seek to allow for this, yet you cannot always be at all sure to what shade the wet silk will darken. There are one or two flies with light watery, semi-transparent, washy bodies, which floss silk alone, when wet, will give a decent imitation of; for all the others, and particularly darker bodies, we are rapidly eschewing it. The difficulty for some time in respect to quill was to get it the right colour; but of late the practice of dying and staining has been resorted to, and beautiful and accurate effects have been the result. And there is this further benefit in quill bodies, viz., that they hold no water, and float so much better than fur or silk; and as the dry fly is now so very much in favour, that is no small advantage. It is quite surprising how you can see a good, well-tied, quill body float like the natural fly. I have seen one often in the dark, all across the Itchen, as plainly as I could see the real fly, or almost more so; and when a fly floats like that, any reasonable, well-disposed fish which is well on the rise and at fly (not larva) will often take it, even though it be not the precise fly which he is taking at the moment.*

*My friend M., who is sure to spot any prominent fly, has his imitation of it too, and a very good one it was,*



and killed lots of fish this season on the Itchen; but his was open to the same objection as mine—it had a fur body which darkened when wet. The other day, however, he had some flies something like it, only hardly as dark as the original in the water as regards the wing, and redder in the legs, but tied with a brown quill body. It was a very pretty fly indeed, and he gave me three; and so as we now stand on an old wooden bridge, looking down, a charming shallow, we will put it up. Just here the other day M., who was standing on the bridge putting up, said, "There's a three-pound grayling gone up—a real big one". A short time after this, Francis after an epic battle, landed this 3lb grayling using one of these brown duns that Marryat had given him."

Eight hundred words, and written using very long sentences, with no paragraphs, which was so typical of the written word one hundred and fifteen years ago! Perhaps for the first time since publication, Marryat's letter sees the light of day again:

"Quill Bodies for Flies".

"It may be advisable, for the benefit of the enthusiasts in fly-fishing who still tie their own flies, to give a few hints on the material mentioned by Mr. Francis, in his charming article in the Christmas number of *The Field* as "Quill". Let no one suppose for a minute that he can get it from his "grey goose quill," or any ordinary feather. It requires careful selection and careful dying to arrive at a satisfactory result. It is obtained from the feather of the peacock; a single herl is divested of the metallic fur which adheres to it by repeatedly drawing the strand sharply downwards, from the point to the heel, between the ball of the forefinger and the thumb nail of the right hand, the end of the strand being held in the left hand. The strands from the eye of the peacock's feather are those selected; those from below the eye of the feather will be found to be of uniform dark dun, and are of little use, as they are too dark to take the light olive-yellow or brown tints required for the bodies of the duns and spinners, for which alone they are useful. The strands from the eye of the feather are of a lighter dun (if obtained from a good feather, those with the largest eyes are the best), having one edge of much lighter colour than the other. It is this that gives the ribbed appearance to the body of the fly when tied, which constitutes its killing quality. I remember a fisherman on the Itchen telling me one day that he had killed with a particular quill gnat which he showed me, having this rib, while he could not do anything with any of the rest of the half-dozen which he brought with it, though they were otherwise exactly the same in hackle and wing. But to return to our quill.

Having, as I have said, selected a good feather, cut off the eye about half an inch below the metallic green; the rest is valueless for quill bodies. If on stripping a strand, it shows nearly all the width a pale colour, you are right; if not, go higher up the eye. For the grey quill gnat the natural is right, and with a light blue dun hackle, and light starling wing, it is a deadly fly on a bright day; the same with darker wing and hackle is better for a cloudy day. The quill dyed olive with onion dye, and a blue dun hackle dyed in the same dye in three shades and sizes, no fisherman should ever be without. I should not be afraid to back it against any other flies that can be tied. For the brown dun mentioned by Mr. Francis I use Judson's olive-brown, which looks purple when mixed with water, but, *mirabile dictu!* dyes olive-brown. This, with ginger-brown hackle, and starling (or for a change coot) wing, is a nailer for the autumn months. A fine red spinner is tied by using Judson's light red for the quill, with a coch-y-bonddu hackle and light dun hackle wings. This fly should be ribbed with fine gold wire. Of course, these flies may be varied to any extent by dying to match any required shade. If a fly is required of a uniform colour, the quill should be so laid on that the light edge of the quill overlaps and hides the dark edge. This lightens the colour of the fly considerably, but does away with the ribbed look of the body. I think white peacock herl would make a good body dyed, but have been hitherto unable to procure any, though I have been promised some by several friends. The roots of some of the strands of the longest tail feathers of the peacock are sometimes nearly white for an inch or two from the base. I have used them for light/brown/duns with success. For all the dyes the feather should be soaked in hot alum mordant before attempting to dye them, and they should be well washed in cold water when the tint required is obtained, or the quill will rot. I do not agree with the theory of Ronalds, that a fish spits out a hard-bodied fly of quill or hair quicker than a soft-bodied one of fur or dubbing. Any way, if he does, it is good enough for me if I can get him to take it into his mouth at all; and that takes some doing on parts of the Itchen and Test nowadays".

All that Marryat did, by way of signing the letter, was to add his initials to the bottom, but instead of G.S.M., he put G.T.M., this was possibly a printer's error, or it could have been his desire to keep his identity unknown to all except his close friends. As a footnote to the letter Francis Francis wrote the following:

"[Our correspondent is a past master in the art, as may be easily seen, and all his advice can be relied on. Can any correspondent oblige us with the eyes of



a few tail feathers from a white peacock?—Ed.]"

I wonder if they ever did get any white peacock eye feathers sent in by readers?

Francis Francis was the granddaddy of chalk stream fly fishermen, having fished them for over forty years. By 1880 he had become very mixed up in the matter of fly selection. He wrote this in *The Field*:

*"After about forty years or more of fly fishing, I thought I knew all about it, and fancied myself an Authority. But one never knows all about fly fishing and would not even if he lived to the reputed age of Gaffer Methuselah. There is always something to learn, and the less you lay down the law at one time, the less you will have to recant thereafter. So "give everyone thine ear, but few thy voice." For, though you may occasionally "meet a fool i' the forest," still even fools pick up facts, if you know how to use them; and the further I go, and the longer I live, the more I get puzzled and confounded, the experience of one year so often differs from that of the next."*

These words of Francis could almost be

Marryat's reason for not wanting to get too involved with book writing. That, it is very important to keep an open mind in everything to do with imitation and the selection of fly, season on season. Success during one season does not necessarily mean that you will have the same success in succeeding seasons with the same flies and artificials.

Over six years after Marryat had his letter published, Halford had his first book published, *Floating Flies and How to Dress Them*, (1886), and after all the work Marryat had put in, helping Halford acquire the entomological and fly dressing knowledge contained in the book. The author wanted nothing more than to have Marryat's name alongside his own on the title page. Marryat wanted none of this, and being the open minded fly fisherman that, I think he was, it is easy to see why he refused. Halford's ideas on dry fly imitation had, in the six years of their work together, become so set, and Marryat being the free thinker he was, could not apply his name so finally to a subject that was, and is still, always changing and evolving.

Marryat, as he was always at pains to point out to his friends, was not so much interested in the

Whitlock, Cortland, ORVIS, Sharpes, Bob Church....

Spirit River, Bruce & Walker, Greys.....

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beauty of nature, but in the wonderful mechanism of all things living. This is what fascinated him, and held his attention. He told Major Turle one day:

*"That when he took up a subject he could not rest until he had made something of it."*

The dry fly was always his principal study. After George Holland had moved to Salisbury in 1885, and took upon himself the task, under the tutelage of Marryat, the tying and selling of the dry fly. Marryat felt he could concentrate solely on the study of entomology, this is what he did after moving to "The Close" at Salisbury in January 1885. When Francis Francis the elder statesman of the chalk stream passed away in 1886, friend M. as F.F. liked to call him, lost a very dear friend, who very early on in their friendship, became the sounding board for Marryat's early ground-breaking deliberations on the dry fly.

In 1857 Francis Francis, the then thirty-five year old angling editor of *The Field* first wrote about the dry fly on the Itchen, calling it:

*"an established institution on that river".*

My view is, the seventeen year old Marryat read these articles in *The Field*, and chanced one day to be on the Old Barge water of the Itchen at the same time as F.F. This is not so far fetched as it might seem at first. Marryat, nearing the end of his time at Winchester College, probably fished there every day, and Francis came down regularly to fish the same water. It is not hard to see that their paths could have crossed at sometime. He almost certainly fished with the floating fly at this time. It was not a fly with upright split-wings, using slips of feather, possibly it was just a wound hackle, or, the wings were made with two upright bunches of feather fibre, which was quite a common method of winging at the time.

The split winged floater might not have been generally available in the mid-to-late 1870's, but make no mistake about it, Marryat was using it for his own fishing and taking to Francis about it. Dr. Thomas Sanctuary, Marryat's life long friend, has told us how famous anglers of the time used to travel into Winchester with the sole purpose of watching Mrs. Cox dressing flies in her Parchment Street emporium. She used to tie in the wings using bunches of feather which

sometimes split. From this method of winging Marryat set about refining it, to what we know today, as the single or double dressed split upright wing. Marryat had already made the acquaintance of H.S. Hall by 1876, by 1879 their common interests had drawn them much closer together. Marryat with his new winging methods and Hall with his up-eyed "Snecky-Limerick" hook. By putting the two together, the wheel of the dry fly mill really started turning, it was only a matter of time before many, if not all the south country fly fishermen would know of this split winged sensation.

Rightly or wrongly, it is still variations of the split-winged floater (or the hackled floater), that first saw the light of day about one hundred and twenty years ago, and still are the first and only choice for the vast numbers of fly fisher's world wide today. First from the vice of Marryat at Shedfield Grange, then Hall working at Bristol, and then Halford in the mill at Houghton, when he finally complicated everything with his endless list of dry fly dressings, that set everything in stone. More dry flies have caught more fishermen over the counter in the tackle shop than ever caught fish in the stream.

In 1883 Hall penned three articles for the *Fishing Gazette*, (March 1883), called "Fly Fishing on some of the Southern Chalk Streams". (They were reprinted in the Summer, Autumn, and Winter 1992 numbers of *FLYDRESSER*.) These articles were the first comprehensive explanation of fishing the dry fly. In the second of these articles, Hall gives due credit to the assistance and advice he received from what he called "experienced amateurs", (looking back, Marryat can hardly be called an amateur). Hall admits that he never, either then or since, (Hall passed away in 1934) claimed any invention in this business. All he did was to freely make use of the information given.

Even now we should be reconsidering the modern view-point of Marryat and his place in the history of the dry fly. No longer should we think of him as that tall, gaunt, almost ghostly figure, unknown to all but the closest of confederates. There is no doubt, he was the key man in the game of the dry fly. Consider this. Marryat was teaching gentlemen to dress flies, and to fish the dry fly on the chalk streams over nine years before F.M. Halford came down to fish the Test for the first time in 1877.

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# THE MARRYAT LEGACY

## George Selwyn Marryat Remembered (part 3)

In the third of a fascinating series of articles,

**Simon J. Ward** gives a perspective

on the early use of dry flies in England

A part from a very few writers today, the modern view of Marryat is that he took a secondary role in the development of the dry fly in the 1870s, 80s and 90s. Granted it was Frederic Halford who penned the books on the dry fly discipline, but all the ideas and pronouncements were by no means all his.

My view is that the vast amount came from the mouth of Marryat, Halford was the one to put pen to paper. Right up to his untimely death in 1896, these two giants of the stream remained the closest of friends, sharing more than just the fishing. Halford was a regular house guest of Marryat's at "The Close" in Salisbury, while Marryat, when he travelled to London, would stay occasionally with Halford at Inverness Terrace. There is no evidence that I can find to support the widely-held view that Marryat and Halford had a parting of the ways after the first two books were published. Having said that, I am sure, just as in any partnership, there were differences of opinion. This was for the most part, a harmonious and very fruitful association. Halford was always ready to listen and learn from Marryat. Halford would refer to himself as the pupil and take his lead from all the information that came from his friend.

### Changed Outlook

We can see that after Marryat died, Halford changed his outlook quite radically on what he perceived to be the right way to go about deciding what was right and what was wrong with the insect imitation theories and practices that Marryat and he had worked out years before. I believe that Marryat had such an influence over Halford, that he had no other way of knowing what was the best way of proceeding. The books that Halford penned after Marryat's passing showed that he had lost his way and become somewhat dogmatic in his views. This might in some hallowed bastions be seen as heresy on the part of the writer — I believe the substance to be true.

### Split Wings

Halford had great difficulty with dressing the split-winged floaters. After meeting Marryat, he wasted no time in asking the master to instruct and guide him in the methods of dying the materials and tying these dry flies. Halford was so greedy for knowledge that he would, I think, have moved mountains to have acquired the wisdom and foresight of Marryat. I say this not as a disservice to Halford, but more as a compliment to Marryat — it was not a one sided partnership. We have to be thankful that Halford did not arrive on the banks of the Test from the river Wandle, full of self-importance, proclaiming: "here I am, the expert come and learn it all from me!" (author's quotes). Marryat would, I am sure, have turned his back on him and gone about his business.

### Imparted

Although Marryat had all the knowledge of all things fly fishing and he gladly imparted all his wisdom, he only conveyed it on a one-to-one basis. M would remain silent if the person he was conversing with had all the knowledge, and was a know-all, bragger and a show off, and was not prepared to listen to any hint that he would have freely given. M felt that there was no point in continuing with the conversation. He would leave the boasting vainglorious fellow to his own ends, with a pointed remark that left the man feeling very small.

*"Marryat was always fond of a joke. Once I remember we were fishing on the Old Barge, a dozen rods or so in a very limited amount of space, he being on the extreme right, and another great fishing authority (well known to readers of the Field in days gone by)" — (This was Francis Francis, authors note) — "at the opposite end, and whilst the rest of us were having very poor sport, Marryat, as usual, pulled out fish after fish. "What fly are you using?" Asked the great authority, passing the question down the line. Back came the answer, quick as thought, "The Driver!"*



"The Driver!" Repeated the puzzled questioner.  
"Never heard of such a fly. What the dickens is the Driver?"  
"The man who drives, old fellow, of course," was the ready reply."—

This was Major W. G. Turle's description of just one of Marryat's judgement's, said jokingly, but meant with serious intent. It's not the fly, it's the driver — means quite simply, that, it does not matter which fly you have tied to your tippet if you the driver, do not fish it in the right way. Hear to, Marryat's description of the essentials of a good hook.

*"The temper of an angel and the penetration of a prophet, fine enough to be invisible, and strong enough to kill a bull in a ten-acre field."*

### Popular Beat

The Old Barge water of the Itchen is always held by these piscators of the past, as one of the most popular beats to fish during the development of the dry fly. It wasn't the idyllic place, perhaps we like to think it was, looking back. It was on this water that Major Turle first came across Marryat. Turle writing in 1896, recalled the first meeting:

*"It was about twenty-eight years ago that I first came across him, fishing in the Old Barge, for he had always an affection, dating from the days when he was a Winchester College boy. It would have been a really good piece of water if old John Hammond who rented it, had not crammed in so many rods, or the weeds had grown less luxuriantly, fed by the town sewerage, which at the time was allowed to find its way into the river. As it was, we considered ourselves lucky if we could get hold of a clear few yards of bank."*

(This makes the year of their first meeting 1868.)

*"I wasn't much of a hand at dry fly fishing at that time, which fact did not take him long to find out, and he gave me such valuable wrinkles that I may say that what skill I now possess is principally owing to his effective coaching."*

Marryat was twenty-eight when he first met the Major, and obviously, an expert dry fly fisherman, even then! Turle again:

*"At one time he went in largely for fly tying, in which he excelled as usual, but he gave it up to a great extent after he had coached Holland in the art, preferring to get his supplies from him. It was Marryat who gave me my first lessons in fly tying, and a most indefatigable teacher he proved himself*

*to be. Many a time after keeping me up till all hours of the night yarning, and he was a rare one at telling a story, he would rout me out at seven o'clock the next morning to give me a lesson. And then on inquiring, I would find he himself had been up an hour before and down to the poultry yard, robbing some poor Andalusian cock of a few hackles, to which he had taken a fancy, and judged would make a killing fly."*

The reference that Turle makes to Marryat to a "great extent" giving up fly tying, happened when Lancastrian, George Holland moved down to Salisbury in 1885. It was Marryat and Dr. Sanctuary who found the shop, from where, Holland would make and sell the new split-winged floating fly. Ten Bridge Street, is just round the corner from Marryat's large house in The Close. Marryat made the acquaintance of Holland through H. S. Hall, after Hall had written about dressing the single and double-dressed split-winged floating flies in *The Field*, in 1882 and 1883. Holland tied some of these flies, and sent them to Hall for his opinion. Hall was impressed, and much correspondence past between them. This culminated in moving his business and his young family from Stockport near Manchester, to Bridge Street.

The methods for tying these dry flies had been worked out by Marryat in the late 1870s, although it was Hall who first wrote about them in the public domain. It was in the private correspondence between Marryat and Hall, that we can see, it is on Marryat's doorstep, where the true credit for these floating flies should be. In this one letter of Marryat's dated November 1882, we can see that this was so:

Sheffield Grange, Botley

*"My Dear Hall,  
A slack morning, and the spirit moves me to discuss a new method of winging for eyed hooks. I have not practiced it long enough to say that it is quicker than the old, I certainly think it is better, now—take 2 right wing feathers corresponding to the same 2 left wing feathers, which take also, cut them down the side of the quill till you have four bands of fibre thus—place 1 on 2 and 3 on 4 so that the points coincide all down as 4 and 5. Now lay 4 on 5 with points all coinciding—then take a pair of long jawed bulldog forceps (Weiss & Sons made me two pairs and will have the pattern) and grip the whole lot thus—Shift the whole lot each time you want to wing a fly till enough for one pair of wings is clear of the jaws of the forceps, take them between the left finger and thumb and they come away in perfect condition without breaking the fibre—now take*



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them on four turns of silk on the bare hook close to the eye, adjust the wings to the right length and tie down the old way—half hitch now draw the refuse fibre down and back, half on each side of the hook and tie down behind wings along the hook. Snip the balance to the required taper—put the hackle on hard up to wings tie down & go to the tail tie in whisks and, bring your quill or what not back from tail to head till close to the hackle and tie in this and finish with the whip finish at the shoulder. I like the look of the fly enclosed as well as any tie I ever saw—the wings stand well up—not to forward—they can't draw—there is no bother, the eye is clear and the taper of the body can be managed with comfort and satisfaction. I have only tied a dozen this way and think it is a good way—the difficulty is to get the refuse back tight and neat from the head but it is a matter of a little practice I think—of course one could tie a rougher fly quicker—that would kill just as well—we know that, but would it not gold medalize a man in a crowd.  
I'm off to Cornwall on Wednesday to frighten the snipe.

Yours truly

Geo. S. Marryat."

Game, set and match to Marryat! — Well almost.

R. B. Marston, one time editor of The Fishing Gazette, had regular correspondence with Marryat. Marston once sent him what he thought was a rather good fly, with these remarks:

"I also send you a couple of flies which Mr. Ogden of Cheltenham, makes for me, and calls 'Marston's Fancy.' How do you like it? It is a combination of what I consider good features in a fly—iron-blue wing, hare's flax body, yellow silk head, yellow silk ridding, silver twist at tail, blue dun whisks, and red cocks hackle at shoulder." — "I was with Mr. Marryat some time after, fishing our mutual friend Major Turle's water at Newton Stacey, with other friends, and asked him at lunch what he thought of it. He replied, 'Oh, my dear fellow, it is not at all a bad sort of a—of a—common or garden blue dun.'"  
— "Of course there was a roar of laughter, in which I joined, and never thought much of my fly afterwards."

"On another occasion, I remember, when dining in his company at the house of a mutual friend, and the May Fly was being talked about, I happened to say it appeared to be the oldest known form of life, being found in the old red sandstone — 'What', chimed in M., 'old red sandstone! Old red fiddlesticks; who's your authority?' "Professor Geikie," I said, pronouncing the name as an Englishman often does, as if it was Guykie. "Oh, Geekie," he said, correcting me; "well, I suppose he's good enough."



Marryat had made a life-long study of the mayfly, so was quite an authority on the insect himself.

William Senior was a great friend who spent many a happy hour with Marryat.

*"Many a time I have been kept to the armchair when the bedroom candlestick should have been lighted, by his recollections of the days when he had to earn the best living he could by stock riding in the bush, as many a well born gentleman has done."*

Major Carlisle ("South-West"), of The Field, could speak of Marryat after a friendship of twenty years:

*"I can safely say that during a long life of very varied experience in many lands, I never met a more upright, unselfish, thoroughgoing English gentleman than George Selwyn Marryat. It needs not my pen to extol his prowess as a fisherman, that is widely known. In that sport, as in shooting, he was equally proficient in both. His great unselfishness stood out prominently."*

*I have enjoyed many a days shooting in his genial company, and know what a thorough sportsman and good shot he was. I have frequently known him, in covert shooting, when a gun was required inside with the beaters, to volunteer for the post, saying that he preferred it. It is not a position that many of us would choose, and I feel convinced that he was actuated by a desire to force his host's hand in placing the guns in the best places. Marryat was one of the safest shots I ever knew, and I always felt happy when he happened to be next gun to me. I have stayed with him in country houses, where he was the life and soul of the party, Whether at the dinner table, in the billiard room, or the smoking room, and never once did I hear him say an ill-natured thing of anyone—he could not do it—it was not in him. His life might be justly written as sans peur et sans reproche."*

Marryat was an extremely good manipulator of the microscope. He was expert at mounting, and in the general work of the instrument. This he concentrated on after largely giving up fly dressing. In his later years his special study was Karyokinesis. In the 1880s and 90s, Marryat started work with the camera, taking many chalk stream studies, if these early plates could be found, they would be a unique record of the nineteenth century trout streams. Marryat had magnificent instruments at which he was always at work. He linked his abilities with the camera together with his microscope, and Karyokinetic studies. In the 80s and 90s, photo-micrography was really at the leading edge of micro-biological science. Karyokinesis is biological — it means, (so I have been told) the division of the cell nucleus by mitosis. Cytology is the branch of

biology that deals with the structures and functions of the cells, and mitosis, the division of the nucleus to produce sister cells, is part of this. Heavy stuff, and I don't for one minute understand it. Goodness knows where this study would have led, had he lived longer. Whole stretches of river re-populated, by rearing ephemerid's artificially, I wonder?

Out of all the material I have unearthed about Marryat and his doings on and around the chalk streams, there is one aspect his close friends hardly mentioned, only William Senior wrote of it. This was the all the work Marryat did helping F. M. Halford gain the knowledge he needed to write his books.

Was it perhaps, because men like, Hall, Turle, Marston, Carlisle, and Sanctuary, they knew full well that it was Marryat, and only Marryat who should be acclaimed as the true leader of the dry fly on the chalk stream? Did they, intentionally put the metaphorical boot in, by omitting Halford from their text?

Although Halford dedicated his second book *Dry Fly Fishing in Theory and Practice*, 1889, to Marryat, (perhaps he thought that was enough). I have yet to find any tribute about Marryat from Halford, after Marryat passed away. This is just an observation I make, please don't think I am trying to make mountains out of mole-hills, I just find it odd, that's all.

## Major Turle

I leave the last lines to Major Turle, who thought up the knot that bears his name. The Turle knot that kept many a strong fish from escaping with these intricate split-winged devices embedded in their jaw:

*"For twenty or more years Marryat and his Tam O' Shanter were a regular institution on the Test, and great was the sorrow expressed by rich and poor when it was heard we should see him amongst us no more. The worthy nephew of his famous uncle, he had a wonderful power of attraction to all who came under the sway of his genial manner and strong individuality. A remarkable man, and one, perhaps, who has helped on dry-fly fishing as much if not more, than any other man during the latter half of the century; and Marryat's doings and Marryats sayings will be remembered and repeated wherever the gentle craft is known and practiced in Great Britain, and possibly in many a distant colony besides."*

Turle was not wrong was he!

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# *The Houghton Fly Fishing Club 1878 - 1892*

*— The Engine Room of the Dry Fly*

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George Selwyn Marryat Remembered (part 4) by Simon J Ward

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One of the oldest fishing club's in the world is acknowledged as the "Houghton Fishing Club" formed in 1822 by Cannon Beadon and Mr. King, he was the landlord of the Grosvenor Arms, in the sleepy Hampshire town of Stockbridge. It was King who told the Cannon that the water at Houghton was for rent. By and by the club was set up, originally as a pike club to fish the waters of the Test around the village of Houghton. The thirteen original members would only come down about twice a year, for the Grannom in April and again in May for the Mayfly, they would stay for about three weeks at a time. This is all very straight forward, nothing really changed, until 1873, when this club lost over three miles of the very best fishing on the river. From this time until the beginning of 1893 the club was called the "Stockbridge Fishing Association".

A new club called "The Houghton Fly Fishing Club" was formed after Dr. Wickham took over the lease of the water from the club in Stockbridge. By 1875 the new club was created, and made up of twenty gentlemen. Bossington Mill became their base, and until the end of 1892 had over 3 miles of the most productive water on the Test. Through the pages of the *Field*, which in those days was published weekly, many of the members wrote of their doings. Having the angling editor of the *Field* as a member helped in getting all their jottings published. Francis Francis joined the *Field* in 1856, and remained as the editor of angling for over twenty-five years, William Senior taking over the post in 1881, eventually taking over as editor in chief. The members were able to chart the history of the club from the very beginning to the very last day, New Years Eve, 1892. For all the members it was a very sad ending, for there had been seventeen years of close companionship, with many joyous gatherings of anglers. Apart from the mill there was one other meeting place, the old thatched fishing hut, just upstream from the

Sheepbridge. The walls of the hut were made from railway sleepers obtained when the railway came to the Test valley.

In this hut was kept the club's portly note book, hanging from its own bracket. It was only in the latter years of the club that proper records were compiled. Until this time, the members must have entered all the information into their own diaries and journals.

This hut has passed into fly fishing history as the place where Halford became acquainted with Francis and Marryat, in the Spring of 1879. When Halford got to the Test in 1877, he found (as recorded in his autobiography) the quotation from Major Carlisle that — "of those who fished the Houghton waters only half—maybe fewer—had any idea of dry fly fishing, and it was a common thing to see an angler flailing away with two big flies on the thickest of gut downstream." — It has been assumed by many people that in 1877 F. M. Halford became a member of the club in Stockbridge, this is not so, as he makes clear in his autobiography. — "In 1877 I joined the Houghton Fly Fishing Club." — Twenty-eight April 1879 as recorded in Halford's autobiography is the generally accepted date for the first introduction by Francis Francis between Marryat and Halford. But, I have unearthed an article written by Detached Badger (Halford's Pen name). This piece was published in the *Field* October 1892. Halford made this statement. — "I first met F.F. on the 1st May 1879 during a snowstorm in the Hut of the Sheepbridge shallow. It was Houghton too, that I made the acquaintance of M., and learnt from him all I know of dry fly fishing."

If Halford met Francis for the first time on 1st May 1879 at Houghton, and the inference is that H. met M. sometime after this. How could Francis have introduced him to Marryat on 28th April 1879 in John Hammonds shop at the square, Winchester. What happened on 28th April seems to be this: Halford was invited down to fish the Old Barge water on the Itchen.





Bossington Mill as it looks today, very different from Marryat's time.

At the end of the day Halford and his host called at John Hammond's tackle shop to buy some flies. It begs the question, who was the host that Halford fished with on the Old Barge? Was it Francis, I don't think so. My view is that Halford's host was Major Carlisle. But, was Marryat in John Hammonds shop on 28th, he couldn't have been if we are to believe Halford's article from October 1892. The Major, Hon. Sec. of the "Houghton Fly Fishing Club", was to join Francis and Marryat for some fishing on their club water on the Test at Houghton two days later on 30th April 1879. Could it have been the Major who said to Halford while they were in the shop, "why don't you come and join me on the 30th, and I will introduce you to Francis and Marryat." So which of Halford's versions is the correct one, was it on 28th April 1879 or 30th or 1st of May 1879 that brought together these three gentlemen of the chalk streams. I know I will be accused of nit-picking about who met who, and where, and only a day or two either way. But, I do think it is important to get the dates as accurate as possible, and preferably from the participants themselves.

Which ever day it was, as so often happens in early Spring, that day 117 years ago brought a howling north easterly gale with heavy snow showers. No flies were cast, but the first of many discussions took place in the fishing hut hard by the Sheepbridge shallows on the Test. It was in this hut that Halford admitted to Marryat, his many shortcomings with the intricacies of fly tying. Knowing of the growing reputation that Halford had as an entomologist, and Marryat, being the finest entomologist, fly-fisher, and fly-dresser of his time, M resolved to help in any way he could.

In the preface to the first book *Floating Flies and How to Dress Them* published in 1886, Halford writes: —

*"About this period I took the council of a friend, whose acquaintance I had made some short time previously, and who, in addition to being*

*one of the best, if not the best dry-fly fishermen in England, was an adept in all the minutiae of dying, selecting, and preparing the materials, as well as the construction of artificial flies. To this friend George Selwyn Marryat, I desire to express the deepest gratitude for the unwearrying patience and perfect unselfishness with which he gradually inducted me into every detail known to him, and gave me the benefit of his invaluable experience, concealing nothing which would tend to perfect me in the art of imitating the various winged inhabitants of the stream."*

"Red Spinner" (William Senior) wrote about the meeting in the Field:

*"The reference in the above quotation to the manner in which two eminent dry-fly fishermen became acquainted suggest the intimate friendship that existed before Mr. Halford came into the circle, between Francis Francis and G.S. Marryat. The latter had just the right qualities that would attract the liking and establish the loyalty of Francis, who was not impulsive in his friendships, but who knew a sterling man when he met him, and became his steady comrade thenceforth. Those were halcyon days by Test and Itchen, when the famous angling editor of the Field and his young friend met together, each with his own special characteristics, both originals, both splendid fishermen. Marryat with his dry humour and marvellous reserves of knowledge, and Francis with his dogmatic ideas and sturdy John Bull way of expressing them, were the life and soul of fishermen's messes and gatherings, wherever they might be. The anecdotes they could tell, the hot discussions waged over a wing or hackle or the general principles of dressing and using a fly were something to remember."* —

Marryat was a hard man to get to know really well. He was essentially a loner who minded his own business. If the first contact was favourable and the newcomer was a friend of a friend of Marryat's, then, as in the case with his first meeting with Halford, a long and fruitful alliance was possible. Thomas Sanctuary gives us a glimpse of Marryat the private man when he wrote this in the Field, March 1996. —

*"Marryat's death is the greater loss inasmuch as he was such a many-sided man. As a reader and raconteur he was not often excelled in private life. He wrote some good sonnets, delighted in such books as "Problems of Life and Mind." "Phantasms of the Living," &c., and knew his Shakespeare pretty much by*



*heart; he also played a capital game of billiards. He was reserved by nature, essentially the student, and disliked above all things to be "drawn" or trotted out for the edification of any but his most intimate friends; though, when he chose to let him self go, he was the life and soul of the party, and enjoyed as he did an unlimited command of facial expression and original phraseology, it may be easily imagined what an acquisition he was to any social gathering."* —

In fishing messes all over southern England and especially in the mill at Houghton, Marryat was something of the court jester. He could be relied upon to entertain his friends, he was a great practical joker. It was during the days and nights spent at the old mill, and around the time that Marryat was introduced to Halford. I will let "Red Spinner" explain: —

*"This was about the time when Marryat, who was full of spirits and harmless jokes as a boy, seized the opportunity of Francis being late for breakfast to place empty eggshells with the unbroken ends turned upwards, before Francis's plate. Loud was the explosion of laughter when the latter discovered the little trick that had been played upon him. He knew at once who was the author and with a "what a confounded child you are Marryat", joined in the merriment".* —

The mill was a hot-bed of dry fly angling fervour and long were the discussions that waged over the properties of hackle and hair, and how best they could be used to imitate the natural insect. Halford's thirst for knowledge, and Marryat's expertise at the vice were just the right combination for the mammoth task they had set themselves.

Oh to have been a fly on the wall at the mill during the long summer evenings, with dinner being over, the port flowing and the pipes burning. What stories the old place could tell. Marryat's life had been a busy one, and in the early days an adventurous one. He had gathered an enormous amount of knowledge in his travels, and in a more serious vein, could be persuaded to expound on his theories, not just on fishing, but also on natural history and even more obscure subjects of science — what he called — *"the teleology of the infinite"*. — In the convivial atmosphere at the mill, and surrounded by his friends, this was one of the few places where Marryat felt comfortable and able to cast off his inhibitions and reticence. A typical day at the riverside, and with breakfast at the mill being over, Marryat and Halford

would set off on foot or bicycle to the river and the surrounding water meadows. Loaded down with bug nets and specimen jars, magnifiers, and all the other equipment they needed for the collection of the insects upon which the fish dine. In the course of the morning, hundreds of tiny winged insects would be gathered for further study back at the mill. This was the first time that such a comprehensive study had been undertaken on the invertebrate life of the chalk stream. The river Test was their main laboratory in the 1880s, the mill at Houghton was the ideal base for the study — of course, the river flows right past the door, well almost!!

When the two celebrated piscators ventured out with their rods, all the fish caught would go through an autopsy for examination of the stomach contents to see how good the choice of artificial fly had been when compared with the natural insects the fish had consumed. "Red Spinner" made these observations in the Field: —

*"I have heard men lightly joke about these two worthies going about the meadows with a bug net — it meant collecting hundreds of tiny insects, selecting the fittest preparing preserving and mounting them. It meant endless autopsy of fish. To stand by while Halford and Marryat with their scissors, forceps and whatnot laid out the contents of a trouts stomach was most fascinating".* —

There was no warning that the "Houghton Fly Fishing Club" was coming to the end of its existence on 31st December 1892. It was a shock to everyone connected with the doings of the club. All the members would disperse to new fishings around the chalk country. Halford would end up on the Kennet, and come back to the Test at Mottisfont and the Oakley stream. Marryat had his fishing on the Avon above Salisbury. The club had come to its end after nearly twenty years, it is not too much to say, it was on these waters of the Test at Houghton, that the modern dry fly was hatched. M. and H. conducted most of their work on the dry fly along its banks and meadows. Marryat had fished there for over twenty years, although, before the club was formed in 1875, he did most of his work on the Itchen at Abbots Barton and the Old Barge.

Marryat's views are not surprisingly, unrecorded, how I wonder did he feel about the end of the club. Halford writes in his autobiography, I think, for all the members about the shock and the sadness felt at its passing: —

*"The end of the Houghton Club. Truly*



*Houghton was a pleasant place to live near. Words fail to express adequately the feeling of delight those never-to-be-forgotten days and evenings at glorious Test side created. Grim winter had vanished, the month of April, all smiles and some tears, reigned. Lovely was the walk through the Marsh Court water meadows by the riverside."*

"Those who live near a river, and are constantly on its banks, see many interesting things, and some very strange ones. Kingsley truthfully said the ordinary wayfarer in the country saw but the outside of nature, whereas the angler saw the insides as well. —Below the place, some little way — was the charming and well-known mill, at which one of the members had quarters and dispensed lavish hospitalities to his friends, in fact, it may be said to have kept open house. The big waste water pool was noted for its heavy grayling, and many a goodly trout lived there as well."—"But our pleasant times on the beloved Test were coming to an end. Happily we did not know it. Eighteen halcyon seasons had flitted by all too rapidly, and then, without warning, the blow fell! The Houghton Club died suddenly. If one could, on December 31st 1892, have seen what was passing in the mind of him, who homeward bound with fish—bag full of grayling, as he crossed the bridge at boot island for the last time—a blended picture of present sorrow and past pleasure would have presented itself. Even as he stepped on the island and closed the wicket—from force of habit—the destruction of the bridge had already commenced on the far side. The Houghton Club died when in full vigour. At the time of its dissolution the list is full and with four names down for any occurring vacancies."—When the "Houghton (Stockbridge) Fishing Club" regained the water lost in 1873 on the 1st January 1893, they did not rent it back, it was brought lock stock and barrel. The club's journal recorded the event.: "This day will be forever memorable in the Club Annals. A lasting debt of gratitude is due those members of the "Houghton Club" who at the very critical moment, provided the greater part of the capital necessary for the purchase of our long lost water. This day we re-enter on the choicest part of the best trout river in England, with the satisfaction of knowing that we are no longer the lease-holders. Our work, however, is not yet finished. Further purchases (small in comparison to this) must be made to make our position secure. In taking the fishery over we find the banks in a shameful state of neglect, and the stock of fish very much smaller than when we gave up possession. All this is being remedied."

I am not surprised that the stocks of fish were smaller than in 1873, the members of the disbanded club were some of the best dry fly fishermen in the Country. The shameful state of neglect the "Houghton Fishing Club" found the water in, is due in part I think to the desire of the "Houghton Fly Fishing Club" to have as natural a fishery as possible. So perhaps it was somewhat overgrown in places and the banks broken. There was evidently some animosity between the two club's. The club at Stockbridge cock-a-hoop at getting their old water back.

While the defunct club, very sorrowful at the loss, though I think the reasons were the lack of having enough finance to out bid the gentlemen from Stockbridge, and not any lack of commitment to the continuation of their twenty year union. All through the tenancy of the "Houghton Fly Fishing Club" through the pages of the Field and the Fishing Gazette the activities of the dry fly pioneers, and the workings of a chalk stream fishery were laid bare for all to read about. This to a large extent stopped when the downstreamers and blowers from Stockbridge took the water back, and being the very private club that they are, went about their business as if the intervening years had not happened.

So instead of having today the two club's guarding the history of the dry fly. One is almost forgotten, and the other so hushed that it would take more than this humble writer to prise the truth from them, even if it were possible (which it is not) to do so at this late date. So much of the history of our sport died with the loss of "The Houghton Fly Fishing Club". Why, Oh why, did they (the Stockbridge Club) not realise at the time in 1893, that, what they had taken back at Houghton and all that had happened in the preceding twenty odd years, would be lost for ever.

This is the last in this series of articles. The telling of this extraordinary gentleman's life is not finished by a long way! There are many areas of research that I am still involved in regarding Mr. Marryat. What we must never forget, is that all those years ago, he was the leader of the pack in the development of chalk stream dry fly fishing.

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# The Missing Links: George Selwyn Marryat's "Portmanteau" and his Chalk Stream Fly Box

by Simon J. Ward



D. Downs

IT is a fact of life that many of flyfishing's most valuable historical artefacts are allowed to pass unnoticed into oblivion. The need to have these gems from our flyfishing past documented, and available for study, must always, it seems to me, be paramount. One distinguished member recognised this need and it is through him that we have today more than an insight into our flyfishing past. G.E.M. Skues was fascinated by the receding history of flyfishing. This master of the nymph recognised too, that, before recent history became ancient history, he could do something to make sure we always had in our modern minds the very essence of this history.

Skues has now become part of this history, and looks down upon us from his lofty stream side seat with some satisfaction, I am sure. In the Spring and Summer numbers of the *Journal* in 1923, Skues went to extraordinary lengths to analyse a fly book and its contents. This was no ordinary fly book; there is irrefutable proof that it once belonged to George Selwyn Marryat. Marryat's friends called it the "Portmanteau". H.S. Hall tells us what Marryat said to him in jest:—

"I can just lay this down on the bank till the fish crowd round and I can pick the big ones, saying, 'Shoo, fish, you are only 2lbs.' to the smaller ones."

Upon his death in 1896, Marryat left the book to Basil Field (three-time President of your Club) who passed away in December 1908; Skues deduced that Field hardly used the book at all. The book now passed to another member of the Club, James Rolt, K.C. It was through Rolt that Skues obtained permission to study the fly book. There are between eight and nine hundred



flies contained within the book, all but one tied on up-eyed hooks of the "Snecky Limerick" type; these hooks were not on the market until about the year 1880. My understanding is that this very important historical artefact passed into the care of the Flyfishers' Club upon the death of James Rolt. At this point things get a little bit foggy. It seems the Club had the fly book right up until the late 1970s or early 1980s; around this time, the Master's fly book was sold. No record of who the buyer was, exists, as far as I know. Until this fly book can be found and re-evaluated, we have to rely on Skues's words from the 1923 *Journals*. One passage is very interesting.

"Another feature of Marryat's fly book, and a very noticeable one, is the large size of the flies. There are few duns to be found smaller than No.0 and many run as big as No.2 long and the majority are larger than No.0 and on long wires. In fact one might draw from their size and indeed from some of the patterns, the inference that their owner was in the habit of fishing the rough streams of Devon, Wales and the Northern Counties as well as the chalk streams of Hampshire. Possibly it was so. Indeed I am informed by H.S. Hall that Marryat had a friend with a water on the Eden and used to fish with him. If he did so on the Eden and other rough waters, he might quite well have gone on using the patterns in question to the end. H.S. Hall tells me, however, that flies for chalk stream fishing were dressed bigger in those early days than would now be thought appropriate. The flies in the book (a variety of bumbles) are all large and no doubt tied for the grayling fishing with Francis Francis in Derbyshire which H.S. Hall tells me Marryat used regularly to take in October. Otherwise the evidence seems to point either to Marryat's having practically giving up fly dressing for his own use after *Floating Flies* was published or else having ceased to use this book and perhaps having taken to a fly box or some such container."

Skues is very perceptive when he writes about Marryat using a fly **box** instead of a **book**. At the end of this mammoth investigation into Marryat's doings, Skues made this request:—

"There may, however, be members of the Club or others who occasionally or possibly frequently fished with Marryat in those great days—and it would be of immense interest to angling history if any of them would recall for the benefit of posterity whether Marryat continued to rely on the book under review to the end, or whether he latterly carried a fly box for chalk streams and used the book for the rough water fishing of other rivers."

Now 74 years later I can reveal that, Mr. Skues was right in his deductions! Yes, Marryat did use a fly box dedicated to the storage of tiny split-winged dry flies for the chalk streams. My research has led me to send letters, faxes, and e-mails to many parts of the world. One such letter posted three years ago has put me on to one of the branches of the Marryat clan. So in the year of 1997 I will be making a journey to South Africa where I will meet some of Marryat's descendants, but it is the fly box that is drawing me like a magnet. There are 178 dry flies contained within the box's 24 compartments which have individual spring loaded lids. There are further internal sub-divisions, to give a total of 48 compartments.





*Marryatt with Nat Lloyd, William Senior and Frederic Halford*

The overall measurements of the box, are 6 in long and  $3 \frac{10}{16}$  in wide. The depth of the base is  $\frac{3}{4}$  in, and the lid depth is  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. The box is made of metal, with a black painted exterior with cream interior (probably weathered white). The box is divided into 24 compartments in rows of six, 12 in lid and 12 in base, approximately 1 inch wide by  $1 \frac{1}{2}$  inches long and  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch deep. Each compartment is divided by a metal strip into two sections one above, one below. Each lid is hinged along the top and spring loaded. Catch is a formed metal strip acting as a lip over lid. Each lid has a round hole cut out as a window, and is covered by a rectangular piece of clear celluloid which slides into two metal lips on the back of each lid. Each compartment is hand marked by Marryat on the celluloid windows in black ink, with the names of the flies contained therein.

The overall impression I get from the box is that it is very old, and of home construction, certainly not mass produced. There are no manufacturers' marks or stamps on it. In fact Marryat's great grandson tells me that, as far as the family is concerned, the knowledge that it is of Marryat's own design and manufacture has been passed down within the family since 1896. Hardy Brothers did offer in their catalogue of 1899 fly boxes with separate compartments, but these boxes did not have spring loaded lids. The fly boxes with springs in their lids made by Richard Wheatley, were first introduced sometime in 1908, and although similar to Marryat's box, differed in many respects.



Roy Darlington and I have a theory about the design and manufacture of this dry fly box. Three men, Marryat of course, H.S. Hall and George Holland, were involved. Hall was teaching at Clifton College in Bristol; he was head of the military and engineering side of the college; George Holland, fly dresser par-excellence and a fishing tackle manufacturer, came to live in Salisbury in 1885 very close to where Marryat lived. Engineering at the college means there were metal workshops; put this together with Holland's manufacturing abilities. It can be seen they had the skills and the facilities to make a small run of these boxes for their own use. Hall has told us how Marryat left no stone unturned in his quest to modernise the fly fisherman's equipment, and designing this new compartment fly box was, I think, just one of the many aspects of Marryat's flyfishing life. Dating this fly box is difficult, but the period from 1885 (when Holland was in Salisbury) to the early 1890s, is the most likely time that will give us the clues.

There is still much work to do on this fly box and its contents. Every aspect of the box, and the treasures held within will be photographed and very carefully documented. In the light of discovering one of the missing chalk stream fly boxes, that without doubt, once belonged to this giant of the stream it now becomes very important that we rediscover the whereabouts of the "Portmanteau." I do not think it or its contents have ever been photographed. In 1923 Skues did us all proud with his description of Marryat's book. Let us try and return the compliment, but first we have to find out what has happened to it.

Editor's note: See page 65 for Simon Ward's letter appealing for information about the "Portmanteau".





# On The Trail of the Master

by Simon Ward



G. S. Marryat — Prince of Flyfishers

“ON 14th February 1896 the world in general and that of fly fishing in particular became the poorer for the passing of George Selwyn Marryat. He died leaving behind him probably the most uncontested reputation ever enjoyed in the history of trout fishing for supremacy as a practitioner of that art and having, on the confession of F. M. Halford, exercised upon that writer the predominating influence which gave us the body of his great work on the dry fly and its entomology.”

G. E. M. Skues wrote this in 1923 in your *Journal*. Just who was George Selwyn Marryat, and what was he like? Major Turle called him, “unconventional, vigorous, and vivid.” It was Marryat who gave Turle his first lessons in fly tying, “and a most indefatigable teacher he proved himself to be.” Why hasn’t more been written about Marryat, this genius with the fly rod? Six years ago, to me, Marryat was only one of a crowd of wealthy gentlemen who seemed to spend most of their time fly fishing on the Test and Itchen, drinking port and smoking after-dinner pipes of tobacco. Over these six years, I have been able to build on my sketchy picture of him, by finding out how his contemporaries regarded him.

H. S. Hall wrote of Marryat — “He was eminently practical and original in everything he took up, and the invaluable assistance I received from him in perfecting the smallest sizes of hooks has placed the present generation of dry-fly fishermen under an obligation that they will not be slow to recognise — and it would be impossible to say how much I learned from him.” Marryat and Hall



became acquainted in 1876, but to start with these were just chance meetings down on the Old Barge water of the Itchen. By August 1879, their common interests had drawn them together. Hall had been developing the eyed 'Snecky-Limerick' hook, with George Bankart, and at about this time Hall and Bankart went their separate ways. All through this development Hall had gained all his fly dressing knowledge from books, until he received, in his room at Winchester, his first practical instruction from the skilled hands of Marryat.

Hall had the right hooks for the job, but it was Marryat who showed him the way to wing them. Skues only realised many years later, in 1923, that it was Marryat who worked out the method of winging for the double dressed split-winged floaters, and then invented the long-nosed bulldog clips, to speed up the winging process.

On 5th January 1885 R. B. Marston wrote to Marryat — "to ask him if he could help us with the Flyfishers' Club, just then established. He replied in his humorous way that he could not join, but that he would be happy to contribute a big wooden spade as a prize for the biggest fish story-teller." Marston again — "It was good to see Marryat saying something excruciatingly funny and trying to look serious; and then, when the point was reached, how the twinkling eyes and moving muscles of the face burst into laughter! It was most difficult to know exactly when there was some joke in anything he said; he was so full of them, that it was not safe to take him in earnest." — "Everyone who knows Marryat remembers how on one occasion he ruffled the feathers of an aristocratic angler who was fishing in vain a fine stretch of the Itchen. He was walking past on the opposite side, and called out, 'Find 'em middling silly, eh!' which was his quaint way of hinting that the fish were not to be caught too easily."

I did not set out from the start of my researches to find living descendants of Marryat. He had three daughters and this made it doubly difficult, not having a male line to follow. Through finding his eldest daughter's marriage certificate, (she married in 1897) I could at last follow the husband's line right up to the present day. I cannot say more about this, (I have to respect the family's privacy), than to say, I have found two Great Grandsons, and the widow of Marryat's Grandson who sadly passed away in 1988. The family are very much aware of Marryat's prowess as a fly fisherman, and still treasure some of the master's equipment.

In the course of my searching I have come across things, which while not directly concerned with Marryat, are nonetheless fascinating. George Holland moved down from Stockport to Salisbury in 1885. He admired all the chalk stream pioneers so much, that he named his first born son, Fred Halford Holland. Halford himself was a regular house guest of Marryat right up to his untimely death at The Close in 1896.

George Selwyn Marryat was only 56 years old when influenza struck him down. After nearly three weeks of delirium, he lapsed into a nine hour coma, finally succumbing to a stroke that left him paralysed down his right side. His ashes are now resting beneath a simple marble tablet, under the cedar trees in the Cloisters of Salisbury Cathedral.





*Marryat, Friends and Halford at Houghton*

My wife and I spent the morning, a few months ago trying to find Marryat's final resting place. To start with, we obtained the grid number from the Clerk of the works office. It just wasn't within the grid we had. So what to do, leaving Jane to continue the hunt, I went walk about, into the cathedral, but whom to ask. A cathedral guide told me the verger might be able to help. Knocking on a great oak door, it transpired that the grid number we had, was the wrong one. Armed with the right number, back in the Cloisters, we still could not find it. After about 20 minutes of fruitless search, the verger turned up to help. Laying his grid map on the ground, we narrowed the area of search to about 6 square feet. There was still no tablet showing. Down on my hands and knees I started, (with my fingers) to scrape the earth and debris from the cedar trees away. Catching my finger on something hard, I dug deeper. There, low and behold we found it. From nowhere the verger produced a bucket of water and a sponge. With this we were able to clean away all the muck from the tablet. It is very weather worn but luckily the lettering is in lead, so has survived the years.

Over the past year, I have at last, started to find some lost and forgotten letters and articles. They are directly to do with Marryat, his fly fishing, and his fly dressing; these date from 1880. I have barely scratched the surface of what there is waiting to unearth, it is only a shallow pocket that holds me back. What were the reasons for his not wanting to get on the bandwagon and join in with all the other Worthies who were leading the crusade towards the perfect imitation of the natural insect? I have asked myself this many times. I doubt we shall ever know!