

MANY of us like to write a fishing diary, and I'm no exception. But then one day I wrote about a tandem hook link I was using on reservoirs and *Trout Fisherman* magazine published it. Some months later I bumped into the then editor John Wilshaw, he asked if I'd anything else I could contribute, and the rest is history.

Now, hundreds of articles later and many editors, I'm happy to still be contributing.

The past 40 years of this magazine is a complete record of all that's happened in trout fishing as the new reservoirs developed, along with the proliferation of small waters, and stocked trout came to dominate.

Then and now

Nothing ever remains the same and it's fascinating to see how, in recent years, there's been a strong return to wild bred fish with grayling having led the way. From the days when they were persecuted on the chalk streams they have become a revered species and many anglers now choose not to fish stocked waters. Indeed, river management is often in favour of only wild bred stock, both trout and grayling.

However, it was the growth in the availability of stocked trout which led to the boom in trout fishing for all, and unless you have been in from the start it now must seem hard to believe that the conventional close season, which still applies to wild-bred trout in both rivers and lakes, was accepted as being the same for those waters containing stocked fish which were not expected to breed. We were a long way from the development of single sex and triploid trout such that fishing for trout in the winter months was actually illegal until the rainbow trout had a year-round open season and it was to be many years before a further change in legislation allowed for the brown trout to be fished for in enclosed stillwaters.

March and April in the 70s and 80s would see a huge increase in trout fishing as there was then a close season for coarse fish on all waters and it's often thought that the change to allow coarse fishing on stillwaters marked the beginning of a big downturn in the popularity of trout fishing.

Black & white to colour

Older issues very clearly document the changes with April and May issues absolutely full of fishery open day events and catches.

Back then the supporting images were almost wholly in black and white. Slowly the magazine changed to its current all-colour format and it's fascinating to see how the emphasis is now on the quality of individual fish instead of showing 'limit bags' spread on the ground.

The pictures also trace the huge improvement in quality of stock fish from the all-too-frequent very dark-coloured rainbows with really poor fins and tails through to today's utterly magnificent 'trophy quality' fish.

The average weight of the trout we catch has also changed remarkably over time. 'Pre-cormorant' days the basic reservoir trout was less than a pound and even the famous 'big fish' waters had a base weight stock of just 2lb. Massive changes indeed and yet the biggest fish

remain as they were some 30 years back when the first 20lb rainbow was recorded.

The magazine followed the quest for records as fisheries competed to either rear onsite or buy in the ultimate 'beastie' and also reported on the few inevitable 'falsifications'. Nowadays the emphasis is on quality and a genuine '20' remains a very big fish indeed.

The first blue rainbows aroused much interest and we continue to feature new hybrids and species as fisheries compete to have something different to attract custom.

There has been a change from the proliferation of 'holes in the ground' to a smaller number of fisheries with excellent lodges offering food, tackle and creature comforts which has also traced a change in angler habits. Nowadays it's more on the short-term visit and an interaction with the fishery itself in which tuition and guiding plays an important part.

The competition scene

Competition fishing really took off with the hugely popular 'Benson and Hedges' reservoir matches and England hosting the World Championships really helped. We have had several of our own anglers claim this prestigious title and *Trout Fisherman* continues to report the current competition scene which is again showing signs of growth. Indeed, the magazine's own Troutmasters final is a major event promoting smaller and larger waters.

Possibly one of the biggest changes of the past 40 years has been with fly patterns where synthetics now almost dominate lures and the impressionist flies came to embrace the qualities of CdC. Our own Peter Gathercole has been at the forefront for this period and

remains top of the tree.

Fly-line development has also changed a lot with ever-faster sinking rates for searching the depths where previously it would have been floating lines almost dominating the market.

Leader materials have changed too and although basic essentials such as Maxima and Drennan Sub Surface have stood the test of time it's the emergence of fluorocarbons which have come to be the market leaders.

We constantly review the latest products and have seen carbon fibre technology produce ever-lighter and more-responsive models, although surprisingly a genuine 30 yard cast remains a commendable distance.

Considering the vagaries of the British weather it's amazing how we survived long days afloat with such old-fashioned gear as heavy sweaters, oiled cotton jackets and rubber wellies. Breathable materials and fleece along with neoprene lined boots appear throughout the magazine's pages and we really were a scruffy lot in those early days.

It's hard to say that 40 years back were the best years and it's maybe just simple nostalgia that makes us hanker for a simpler era. In truth, we're experiencing some of the best trout fishing ever and *Trout Fisherman* continues to lead the way.

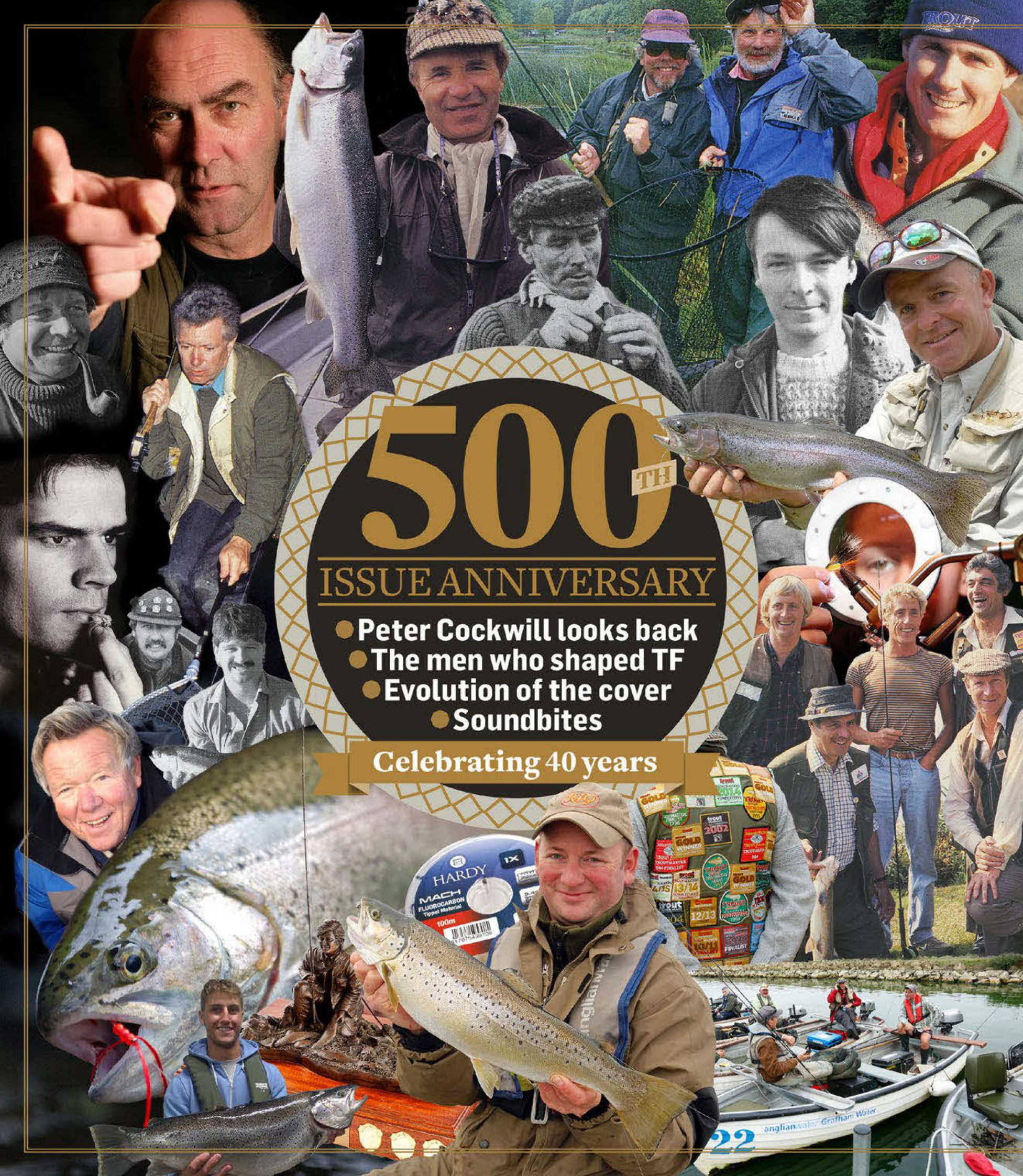
Peter Cockwill



500TH ISSUE ANNIVERSARY

- Peter Cockwill looks back
- The men who shaped TF
- Evolution of the cover
- Soundbites

Celebrating 40 years



THE MEN BEHIND TROUT FISHERMAN

They shaped our future (from left), Peter Gathercole, John Wilshaw, Arthur Cove and Bob Church.

IT'S been enjoyable searching back through the archives. Past pictures brought back memories and reminded us of our sport's, and this magazine's, rich history. Strong characters and influential people have helped shape stillwater flyfishing into what it is today. Here's some background about a few of them...

John Wilshaw

The man who launched *Trout Fisherman* magazine. After the momentum of Grafham's opening in 1966 and the growing stillwater scene via Two Lakes and Avington, Rutland Water opened. John argued the case for a stillwater magazine because Rutland really helped open flyfishing up to the masses.

Coming from a newspaper background he knew the importance of being on the phone talking to people. Every chat led to a potential story or, in TF's case, a feature based on a technique. He cultivated great friendships with the talented trout anglers of the day – Arthur Cove, Bob Church and (although aged only 17 at the time), Peter Gathercole – and John was, and is, a very good angler himself.

Apart from gaining information, John was a terrific ghost writer and sub editor,



The first-ever UK-caught 20lb trout. Peter Cockwill, Avington 20lb 7oz in 1986.

TROUTMASTERS WINNERS

A bottle of brandy and a badge for Eyebrook's first Troutmaster champion, Kenneth Shipton – 1979.

Brian Lillie won a trophy and a cash prize in 2016.

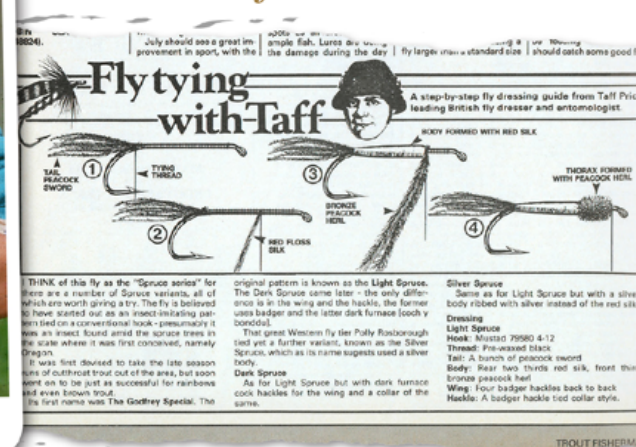


Cockwill predicts the future.



Mark Sheppard June 2007. He had every copy!

"Bob received a call from a teenager saying his flies were rubbish."



An early article from Taff Price.

and made the information gleaned from the experts sparkle on the page.

These early days were very exciting times indeed. Now the average guy could go flyfishing for trout and TF magazine reflected this.

Arthur Cove

A very good coarse angler and flyfisher, particularly with nymphs, but really championed the idea of watching the leader for takes while fishing static or with a very slow retrieve. The idea was pioneered by Cyril Inwood but after he died Arthur really took it on. Prior to this, everyone retrieved flies so watching the leader was a big breakthrough. Arthur would cast out with a long leader and if it twitched, he'd strike!

It was said that he could see a leader move at 30 yards and, while possibly a little far-fetched, the point had been made. He developed many great flies notably the Cove PTN. Arthur was straight-talking,

CELEBRATING 500 ISSUES

Past and present contributors of *Trout Fisherman* recollect and congratulate...



"At the forefront of techniques; Trout Fisherman has been inspiring and improving game anglers for decades."

NICK HART



"I grew up with TF. All my heroes were in these pages – Bob Church, Chris Ogborne etc. I learned from reading their articles"

RUSS OWEN



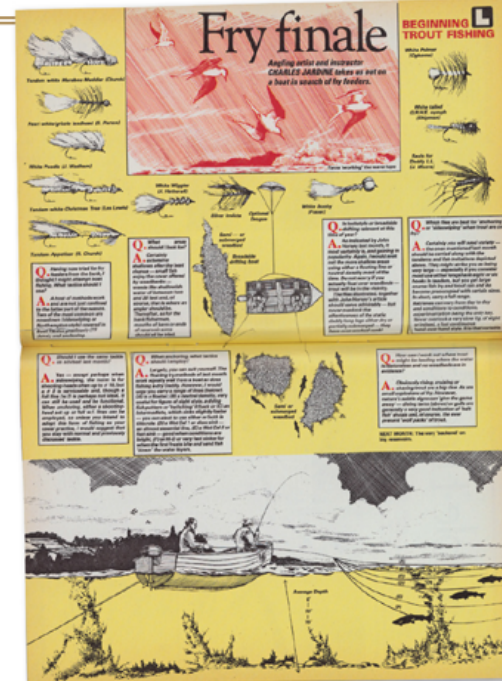
"TF has evolved and embraced the changes that we see around us. It reflects the flyfishing world as it is today."

RUSS SYMONS



"Quality writing and pictures – inspiring new techniques, fisheries to visit and tackle insights."

PAUL RICHARDSON



A beginners' feature about fry feeders.

abrasive at times and had a love of roll-ups and woodbines. He was Field Marshal Montgomery's driver in WW2 and later earned a living selling maggots for coarse anglers in Northamptonshire. A character who made a huge contribution with his book *'My Way With Trout'*.

Bob Church

Originally a clicker (leather cutter) in a shoe company and another very good coarse angler who turned to the fly.

Bob started the Bob Church Tackle Company and received a phone call from a rather confident teenager who told him in no uncertain terms that his flies were rubbish! Bob agreed because mass produced flies at the time were quite poor. Peter Gathercole and Bob have remained friends ever since!

Peter began tying for Bob and Bob often contacted him for new pattern ideas for his *Angling Times* column.

Being a skilled leather cutter, Bob pioneered the leather fly wallet which was hugely popular at the time. Bob then grew his business, teaming up with Peter Dobbs and also Bruce & Walker for rod creation. The Bob Church boat seat and drogues were popular. He was a member of the first England team to win the world championships. Famously met resistance when first entering the England fold because he wrote a column in *Angling Times* and was therefore deemed by some to be a professional.

Peter Gathercole

First started contributing to the angling media when just 17 years old, via the *Angling* magazine edited by Sandy Leventon. Peter had come highly recommended as a fly-tyer by Dick Walker but Sandy had no idea of how young he was! When Peter arrived at the office, a shocked Sandy made him address the



Cockwill predicts the future.



MEMORABLE MOMENTS

1977 *Trout Fisherman* launched to cater for numbers of stillwater trout anglers.

1977 Bob Church publishes *'Reservoir Trout Fishing'* then starts a company.

1977 Rutland Water opens and became the most famous trout fishing venue in the UK. It didn't fill up until 1979!

1978 *Trout Fisherman* magazine launches Troutmasters, now the largest flyfishing competition in Europe.

1979 Stillwater Guide first published as a supplement in TF.

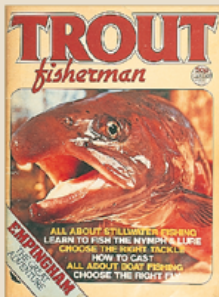
1984 Hanningfield opens as a day-ticket water. It was soon to become famous for producing huge trout from under the cages.

1985 David Train from Swindon invents the deadly Cat's Whisker.

1986 Arthur Cove publishes *'My Way with Trout'*.

1993 *Trout Fisherman* goes full colour for the first time (both editorial and adverts), capturing the sport in all its glory.

1995 Stalker Clive White claims the UK record 36lb 14oz trout at Dever Springs. But it was not without controversy!



1977 Trout Fisherman launch issue.



1988 Despite being a male dominated sport.



1993 Many say this was their favourite TF logo.



2000 A brighter, cleaner look for TF.



2006 Logo change and PG's best shot.



2008 Did very well at the Emap awards!



2006 Did we focus too heavily on tying?



2007 Our bravest cover ever, Tim Small!



2009 Another logo change. Modern look!



2011 Green? What were we thinking?



2013 Order in the universe is restored!



2016 The modern face of Trout Fisherman.

The first trout waters

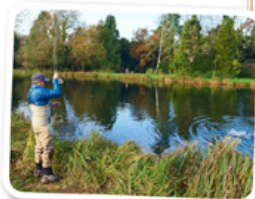
Earliest stillwaters making their mark

Two Lakes

Rose to fame in the late 60s and early 70s and was the first stocked small stillwater in England. Created by former German POW Alex Behrendt who stocked no more than 100 fish per lake and imposed strict fishery rules.

Avington Trout Fishery

Opened in the late 1960s, this Hampshire three-lake complex flanked by an Itchen feeder stream was run by Sam Holland. It was the first small water promoting the big fish scene and home to Peter Cockwill's UK-first 20lb-plus rainbow.



Grafham Water

Opened in 1966 and quickly established itself as a rich, productive reservoir where early flyfishing techniques were born. The Cambridgeshire water's reputation for quality trout is legendary.



"According to many, the most gifted match angler the UK's ever had. A keen coarse angler and golfer, Brian won back-to-back World Championships."

office manager as Auntie Barbara! Sandy asked Peter for a fly picture and that started Peter's photography career, later contributing to both *Trout & Salmon* and *Trout Fisherman*. Peter's written and collaborated on many books.

Dick Walker

Again, a great coarse angler famous for catching the record 44lb carp 'Clarissa'.

Dick loved to wind people up and his engineering background gave him the skills to develop tackle ideas and fly patterns. He mostly fished small waters and really championed shooting heads, claiming that they were far less effort than a weight forward line. A regular at Hanningfield and Avington where he caught an 18lb trout, which was a British record at the time.

Brian Leadbetter

According to many, the UK's most gifted match fly angler. A keen coarse angler and golfer,



Dick Walker



Brian Leadbetter



Chris Dawn

Brian won back-to-back world championships in the late 1980s. He later left the stillwater scene to fish for grayling on rivers.

Peter Cockwill

Famously caught the UK's first ever 20lb trout (20lb 7oz) from Avington on September 16, 1986. It was briefly the record until a bigger one came from Loch Awe. Twenty-pound fish aren't that common even today. TF's most experienced contributor to date having run a tackle shop, a fishery, and guided trips to Alaska.

Chris Dawn

Trout Fisherman's longest-serving editor, doing an admirable job for 19 years. A talented writer who rose to fame with his column in *Angling Times*: 'The Dawn Patrol'. Collaborated on many books while also being a keen ornithologist. One of the sport's true characters. Sadly passed and sorely missed.

2003 Clive White admits he did not catch the 36lb 14oz rainbow. He'd found it dead and made a false claim.

2003 Russell Hill becomes editor of *Trout Fisherman*



2005 Free top 50 fly chart proves one of TF's most popular gifts.



2016 TF launches its Bankside Clean-up campaign to remove litter.



2017 Trout Fisherman contributor Bob Carnill sadly passes away.



2017 Troutmasters final moves from Grafham to Draycote Water in Warwickshire and there's a new format for the final.

Soundbites...

500 issues captured in quotes. More on our website www.troutfisherman.co.uk



"I fish until closing day then it's back to Gloucester for the winter...Tying flies for next summer, a spot of bingo and ballroom dancing."

Rutland junkie Stan Swan, who slept in his van by the reservoir all summer, describes a typical close-season; December 1978 issue.

"...the number of continental anglers, on holiday in the West Country, quite openly fished bait and spinner on a number of fly-only trout waters...Their ignorance of English... had to be accepted by frustrated bailiffs."

Not much European union in evidence in our January 1979 editorial.

"In an attempt to curry favour he bought his wife a car number plate reading 'T8OUT'. To Graham's surprise, but nobody else's, his wife didn't like it."

A motor trader's romantic gesture goes horribly wrong. News, September 2002

"Eventually, I lost him altogether. I'm standing there with a fish in the middle of the Czech Republic, screaming..."

England international Andrew Scott laments an AWOL scoring official during the World Championship, but for whom, Scott's individual bronze medal might have been silver. Jul-Aug 2014.

"I read with interest your editorial comments regarding my Dog Nobbler Trade Mark. It would seem that no-one likes the idea, possibly because they did not think of it first."

Imitation the sincerest form of flattery? Not if you're hyper-protective fly designer Sid Knight. Letters, August 1985.

"Growing a 60-pound trout will be a lot easier than staying married."

While savouring his next ambition, twice-divorced Nigel Jackson reflects on the challenge of balancing fishery management with a personal life. May 1999.

"A day's trout fishing for quality trout in quality surroundings should be at least £250..."

Easily the most eye-popping quote when we invited Lechlade owner Tim Small to tell anglers a few home truths. February 2007.

"The technique is an out-and-out floatfishing method. To my knowledge, I was the first to write about this tactic...good, bad or indifferent, the bung - or indicator - is here to stay."

Gloriously defiant, Bev Perkins claims to be the man behind the bung. Letters, May 2005.

"At least Trout Fisherman writers are as baffled as we beginners on occasion, which is nice to know."

A compliment of sorts. Letters, May 1978

"Frank was never afraid to bend the rules a little... An angler of the old school, he never came to terms with putting fish back."

Editor Chris Dawn gently remembers match ace Frank Cutler. February 1999.

"In the boat, fish come to you. On the bank, the angler becomes the hunter searching for his quarry."

25 years after "continental anglers" were decried by TF, they were starring in it. Italy's Alberto Salvini romanticises bank fishing at Ravensthorpe. June 2005

Turn to p77 to see how modern materials have altered two flies and p88 for tackle evolution...