

So, farewell then, Head Keeper

By David Marriott

### *THE CURSE OF CRESSBROOK*

“I’m iridescent with rage!” The Head Keeper was having one of his weekly rants on the phone. A picture formed in my mind of David Percival gently changing from blue to green at the other end of the line. His choice of language has always been a joy and we spent a minute or two discussing the difference between iridescent and incandescent. There had been an incident on the river involving an infringement of the rules by a member and the Head Keeper was not best pleased. He was considering invoking the Curse of Cressbrook on the miscreant, a punishment discovered by accident in 1999 when a new member, suspected of worm fishing, had departed this life in mysterious circumstances before we could catch him. We agreed that on this occasion the offence probably did not warrant such a terminal solution and that perhaps the Committee should be allowed to deal with the matter.

### *THE NAMING OF RIVER KEEPERS*

The question of the proper form of address for the Head Keeper had become somewhat problematical following the appointment of his successor in anticipation of his retirement. In his original job description he was designated Water Bailiff but this did not seem to do justice to the status he had achieved within the Club. By custom and practice we had settled on the appellation Head Keeper. This seemed only right and proper, even though for most of his career there had been a singular deficiency in the Under Keeper Department. Indeed, so established has the title become that even his long-suffering wife Valerie is now known to all as Mrs Head Keeper. We considered several alternatives. The P\*\*s - Artist formerly known as Head Keeper, whilst accurate, was deemed unwieldy and perhaps grounds for constructive dismissal. The Erstwhile Head Keeper? Head Keeper Emeritus? These were distinct possibilities. The Head Keeper, with disarming modesty, suggested The Legendary One, pointing out that he had been so described in the blog of a WTT Auction Winner following a memorable day on the river. This could not be denied but we felt that constant repetition might result in hubris on the part of the nominee. So Head Keeper it would have to remain.

### *THE HEAD KEEPER GOES TO HOLLYWOOD*

It had been another good year on the river - members had enjoyed excellent hatches and record catches. The Head Keeper’s pride and joy, the Mayfly Re-colonization Project, had been so successful that some members were now calling for a Mayfly Reduction Programme. Film crews had been despatched to Derbyshire to record the event and an unusually coy Head Keeper was persuaded to reveal his propagation methods in the resulting DVD, “Trout Porn III” \*. The intriguing possibility of an acting career now beckons. His Curriculum Vitae does reveal previous experience, the Head Keeper having once appeared in an episode of “Peak Practice” with the lovely Miss Amanda Burton. Regrettably, almost all the day’s filming in beautiful

Water-cum-Jolly-Dale was left on the cutting room floor, with just a few second's footage under the closing credits - the Head Keeper a mere speck in the distance. Then there was the occasion last year when he provided personal assistance behind the scenes to the equally lovely Miss Julia Bradbury whilst she filmed one of the BBC's "Railway Walks" programmes, also, as it happens, in Water-cum-Jolly-Dale.

#### *END OF THE SEASON AND END OF AN ERA*

Every year we foregather at the Hut on the last day of the Season. By tradition, the Head Keeper cooks breakfast for us before we head off up the Dale for a little light fishing. This is followed by a late lunch, heavy drinking and communal singing of the End of Season Hymn, composed by the Good Doctor and sung to the tune of "The day thou gavest Lord is ended". This time, we assembled David's friends from far and wide to give thanks for the pleasure he has provided over the years, to rib him mercilessly and, on this occasion, to wish him a long and happy retirement. The pink shagpile carpet was rolled out for him; the Annual Beige Jobbie Award was presented to the member who had been most spectacularly caught short on the river and Don demonstrated his deodorant-powered spud gun to the delight of all the middle aged small boys present. Unfortunately, the Girls in Waders from the Buxton Lady Freemason's Strippagram Troupe were unable to find the Hut, which on reflection was perhaps for the best. Things may never be quite the same again without him but perhaps we can look forward to welcoming him on the river next year as a member. As for the Head Keeper, he is looking forward to three square meals a day and a bit of supper, courtesy of the new keeping staff.

\* Actually "The Complete Mayfly" £24.95 [www.fishonproductions.co.uk](http://www.fishonproductions.co.uk)

Published in the 2010 edition of *Salmo Trutta* magazine