

Blasts from the past

# Some Classic Trout Flies

Stevie Munn has always been a fan of old flies. For this special issue he looks at three of his particular favourites.



## FACT FILE

Stevie Munn has fished many places in the world but grew up fishing on rivers and loughs of Ireland where he now often guides.

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In this regular feature I will at times mention some obscure fly dressings from yesteryear, but also look at some extremely well known ones that you will find in most angler's fly boxes, not only in Ireland but worldwide. I'm trying not to sound too like an anorak here, but I must confess I have a passion for almost all fishing flies, and I don't care if it sounds strange or even downright weird. I just love looking at flies in fly boxes, whether they are modern or old, but I should say that I really admire and am fascinated by the older flies. Many of them are steeped in angling history. Many modern fly fishers just don't seem to realize this but personally when I know some of the history and stories behind a fly that I have just landed a fish on it makes the pleasure of the catch even more rewarding. There's something very satisfying about knowing a old fly pattern has worked for many years, before you choose to give it a swim and that that pattern will continue to fool fish for others many years after you've gone off to fish the great lake in the sky.

I like that aspect of our sport and craft, in fact I love that our pastime has a credible history that we can research. It's just something else for those of us strange folk who like that kind of thing. Now I'm not saying we should all know where each fly we fish originated from or what year it was first used, and I know that sadly many won't give a toss as long as it works for them. But I also know that there are many of you who, like myself, are curious about such great fly patterns. Also, we must remember these flies have been around for a very long time for the simple reason that they have been incredibly successful in fooling fish for thousands of anglers. So this month I'm going to mention three real classic dressings that I'm sure a lot of you will be aware of, and for a good reason. They are tremendous fly patterns so you can fish them with that vital ingredient, confidence.



Peter Ross was a storekeeper and keen angler from Perthshire in Scotland. He first developed the Peter Ross in the 1890s as a variant of the old dressing, the Teal and Red. His creation has become one of the best-known flies in Europe. It's fished on stillwaters or loughs for trout and sea trout, normally as a point fly, and is a very useful pattern to try around duckfly time in the spring and again later in the year when trout are feeding on pin

## THE PETER ROSS

**Hook:** 8-14

**Thread:** Black or red

**Tail:** Golden pheasant tippets

**Body:** Rear third med flat silver tinsel, front two-thirds red seal's fur or sub

**Rib:** Fine silver wire, full length of body

**Hackle:** Black hen, three turns

**Wing:** Teal breast, folded

fry. In rivers it is also a very successful pattern, not only works for trout but also for migratory species. I know it is an extremely useful grilse pattern for many anglers. It's a perplexing pattern, as many anglers I've spoken to don't seem to do well on it, while others – myself included – are extremely successful with it. My advice is to fish this fly and think to yourself that it will work. It's a true great.



The Butcher, which was originally named the 'Moon's Fly', was invented over 170 years ago. It was created by two gentlemen from Tunbridge Wells in England, a Mr Moon and a Mr Jewhurst. Moon was a butcher, and the colours of the fly are supposed to represent the hallmarks of his trade, red blood and a blue apron. The Butcher catches fish on stillwaters and on rivers to this day. There are a few flies in the Butcher series, including the great Bloody Butcher, the Irish Butcher and a personal favourite of mine, the

## THE BUTCHER

**Hook:** 8-14

**Thread:** Black or red

**Tail:** Red ibis or swan dyed red (duck)

**Body:** Flat silver tinsel

**Rib:** Oval silver tinsel

**Wing:** Blue mallard, crow wing or magpie tail feather

**Hackle:** Black cock

Kingfisher Butcher. All these attractor patterns work well for sea trout and browns. The Butcher and the Bloody Butcher are fantastic flies to use when fish are feeding on fry, as with their silver bodies and dark wings they look very fishy. As for the Irish and the Kingfisher Butchers, I've found these great river flies in when fishing for migratory fish. I know quite a few anglers who tell me the Kingfisher Butcher also is a great in peaty lakes for brown trout and takes rainbow trout on stillwaters in early spring.



The Zulu is a very old fly which takes its name from the headdresses worn by Chief Cetawayo, who was king of the Zulu nation. It's a very effective fly throughout the year. It's particularly successful when fished in a team, positioned on the top dropper for trout and sea trout on loughs. It can also be a useful pattern on rivers where I'm sure trout take it as a terrestrial or aquatic beetle. I know some old anglers who use it when fish are feeding on Corixa,

## THE ZULU

**Hook:** 8-14

**Thread:** Black or red

**Tail:** Red feather or red wool

**Rib:** Silver tinsel

**Body:** Black seal's fur or sub or black wool

**Palmered:** Black

**hackle**

**Head:** Black (optional)

**hackle**

which may not be as strange as it sounds as the silver rib could give the illusion of air trapped around the body. There are many variants of the Zulu, the Blue, Gold and Silver being the most well known of them. The pattern seems to have been first used in the northern loughs of Scotland and its isles. The Zulu was reputed to be so effective that it was once banned from competitions. I find it a good pattern to have in your box early or late in the season.