

The voice of game-fishing

C O M M E N T

Dreaming of trout

AM I THE ONLY ONE who struggles to tie flies at this time of year? Despite the horrible weather and my having plenty of time between finishing the Christmas pud and toasting the New Year, I still couldn't muster the enthusiasm. I tried. I always do. I got out the bucktail, a few Sawada doubles and some hackles. But I just stared at them – and then put them back. Out came the B175s, the seal's furs, some bronze mallard and a golden-pheasant crest. I'll tie some wet-flies, I thought.

But inspiration was not forthcoming. Even a tea-break with yet another mince pie couldn't spark me into life. The urge was missing. I needed the anticipation of a trip, or to be inspired by a reader's or contributor's fly, to get me in the mood.

Deciding where I will be fishing in 2011 will get me going. But this is easier said than done when *T&S* dictates my every move, and when and for how long my "own" fishing will be. But there are at least two "me time" trips that I just have to repeat – trips where I can leave the cameras, the magazine and the pressure of needing to catch a fish behind.

I must return to the Annan this spring. Last year I fished it for trout for the first time. It was a flying visit – a five-hour drive from Peterborough followed by a few hours' fishing and then on to Kelso and the Tweed Angling Fair. It was a typical spring day: bright light, a low, clear river and vivid buds bursting into life. I was lucky to have Annan regular and *T&S* contributor Paul Procter as my chaperone. We scanned the pools for rises, and then after an hour's surveillance and a planned approach I opted for a fish rising at the tail of a long pool. It was a good fish, though smaller than two others showing further up the pool. The challenge was too much to resist. The fish was in a foot or so of water and a rod's length from the lip of the next pool where the pace of the water was faster. It would not be the easiest of fish. But two hours later, after slowly getting into position, watching the trout's behaviour, resting between every cast and chopping and changing the length of my leader, a beautiful Annan brownie of just over 3 lb (pictured above) lay in my net. The killing pattern was a size 12 CDC Olive on an 18 ft leader. This magical moment was a welcome reminder that perseverance really does pay. I can't wait to return.



I also have unfinished business on the Corrib. In the past two seasons I've fallen in love with the