



Fun for all - photo by Duncan Soar.



# AN ANGLER'S GUIDE to the RIVER WANDLE



*In memory of Jed Edge - a fine fisherman and great friend of the Wandle.*

## JOHN O'BRIEN

with expert input from Theo Pike, Jason Hill and Stewart Ridgway.  
January 2018

THE WANDLE  
PISCATORS  
FOUNDED 2004



Living Wandle  
Landscape Partnership

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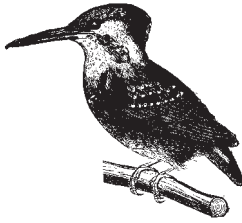
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# AN ANGLER'S GUIDE *to the* RIVER WANDLE



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# INTRODUCTION

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Before the industrial revolution the River Wandle had a reputation as one of the finest trout rivers in England. Flowing North from the chalk downs of Surrey, it was a true chalk stream identical in nature to the Test or the Itchen. Its water filtered slowly through the chalk rocks, collected and cooled in the underground aquifers and flowed from springs at a fairly constant rate and temperature of 9-10 degrees throughout the year.

The Industrial Revolution brought a dramatic change to the river. Its relatively steep gradient made it ideal to power mills. Each mill required some form of dam across the river to create a head of water to be used to turn one or more mill wheels. It is thought that there have been over 90 mills throughout time on the River Wandle. The mills brought with them an increasing discharge of industrial waste into the river. As this pollution increased, so the fish population started to die off. The last recorded brown trout was caught in 1936.

The river became no more than an open sewer. Children were warned not to play in it and nobody bothered to fish it because there was nothing to be caught. As industry moved on, the water powered mills on the Wandle slowly started to close and the levels of pollution discharge decreased. Mother nature started her own slow process of recovery. But the river was still littered with weirs and impoundments and in the accumulated silt behind each of these was a deep layer of toxic material from the industrial discharges of the previous 150 years.

In 1970 the river was electro-fished by Thames Water and the only species discovered along its length were three-spined sticklebacks! However, analysis of water samples revealed that the river was now sufficiently recovered to support a larger fish population. A restocking programme started introducing a variety of coarse fish into the river. They survived and grew.

The river remains exposed to serious pollution threats from the Beddington sewage works which discharges into it in Poulter Park, about one third of the way down its length. In September 2007 a tragic accident at the sewage works led to a massive fish kill. Thames Water accepted full responsibility and established a very substantial fund to repair the damage caused. This money has helped to finance major improvements to the river environment, removal of blockages, reprofiling slow silted reaches and restocking of coarse fish.

In 2001 the Wandle Trust launched the Trout in the Classroom initiative. Local schools received fertilized trout eggs, which they tended, reared and eventually released into the river. This continued for 12 years and in 2008 it was established that the trout population was now reproducing and was self-sustaining.

There are two fishing clubs on the Wandle, Morden Hall Park Angling Club and the Wandle Piscators. There is also an informal group called The Wandle Fishermen who have their own Facebook page.

The Wandle now offers fishermen the chance to catch a wide variety of species - chub, barbel, roach, dace, trout, gudgeon, eels and carp are the most common.

This guide by fishermen for fishermen who love the Wandle is produced by the Wandle Piscators. It is part of the Living Wandle Landscape Partnership Scheme (2013 - 2018), which aimed to celebrate and connect people to the special heritage of the River Wandle. The National Lottery, through the Heritage Lottery Fund, supported it. More information about the River and the Wandle Valley Regional Park can be found on their website.

## CATCH AND RELEASE – FISHING WITH CARE

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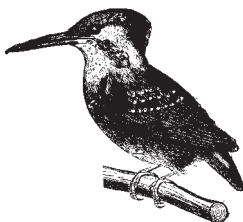
Over the last 30 years the River Wandle has made remarkable progress, but it has a long way to go. It is still a recovering river with many issues to be overcome. The fish in it are precious and have been nurtured. They need special care from the fishermen who take pleasure in catching them. Any fisherman concerned about the health of the river and the future of their fishing pleasure should return fish they catch to the river carefully with minimum distress.

Once you have a fish in your landing net, keep it in the water for a while, giving it a chance to recover before taking it out to unhook. Handle fish with wet hands; minimize the time they are out of the water (especially trout); place them back in the water rather than throw them; hold them in the flow to revive them and let them go when they are recovered and ready.

Landing net, unhooking mat and disgorger should be a mandatory part of your tackle bag along with barbless hooks.

The Environment Agency South East Region regulations state that you can take fish from the Wandle. (A link to the regulations is provided in the *Useful Information* at the end of this guide.) However, eating fish from the Wandle is a risky business. The water in the Wandle these days is perfectly safe, but the major weirs on its course create deep deposits of silt, which contain the pollutants and heavy metals from former industries. The insect life of the river lives and eats in that polluted silt and the potential contamination is passed on to the fish that feed on them.

Even though the law allows you to take fish from the Wandle, your concern for the health of the river should lead you to practice catch and release, and your concern for your own health should reinforce that decision.



# GEOGRAPHY AND MAIN FEATURES

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The Wandle flows North for around 12 miles from the chalk hills of the North Downs near Croydon towards the River Thames, which it joins at Wandsworth.

On its journey to the Thames the river has nine major obstructions that make it virtually impossible for fish to move upstream from the section of the river they are in. They can travel downstream, or be washed downstream in times of flood, but may then find it very difficult or even impossible to move back upstream again. The river is a collection of ten ‘self contained’ sections, each with a relatively fast upper part, slowing to a deeper calmer end just before the weir that divides it from the next section downstream. In between there may be deeper pools or pockets particularly in the upper and middle sections of the river.

Environment Agency investigations of the fish stock suggest that each section has its fair share of big fish, but the smaller fish are less abundant. They hypothesize that the fingerlings, with limited places of shelter in times of spate, are washed downstream in floods and end up in the Thames. They have adjusted their re-stocking policy and now introduce any new fish in the upper and middle part of the river, allowing them to wash down when floods happen. Time will tell if this is the right strategy. River restoration work has also given priority to creating safe havens for fish in times of flood.

This fisherman’s guide to the river divides it into four distinct sections. Each is introduced below, followed by detailed description of the fishing potential from source to delta.



*The Grotto, spring 2014, original source of the Wandle in Carshalton*



The course of the Wandle and transport links, reproduced courtesy of Wandle Industrial Museum



## The headwaters

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The River Wandle flows from springs on the North Downs. To the East the river now emerges in Wandle Park and Waddon Ponds near Croydon, while in the West they rise in Carshalton Ponds and around Beddington Park. Originally they rose further up the chalk slope but water abstraction and periods of poor rainfall have lowered the water table. In the very wet winter of 2013/14 some of the original springs started to flow again. In particular the Grotto in Carshalton Park, one of the original sources of the Wandle, returned to full action.

## The main chalk stream

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The two arms of the upper river meet in the wonderfully named Wilderness Island near Hackbridge to form a true chalk stream environment. There is a major dam across the river below Wilderness Island, which would take a very major project to remove. The river flows under Hackbridge, around Culvers Island, over another major dam at Goat Bridge and then into the top of Poulter Park. A water recycling system is in place here, which pumps about a third of the water flow back up to Carshalton Ponds to make sure they and the upper river do not run dry!



*The upper river at Mill Lane, Carshalton.*

## The middle river

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The nature of the river changes radically in Poulter Park where the discharge channel from the Beddington sewage works joins the Wandle chalk stream, more than replacing the water extracted to be pumped back to Carshalton. The sewage discharge is perfectly clean water but it is also higher in temperature and nitrates and phosphates than the chalk fed water it joins. From this point down, the river is no longer a pure chalk stream and the balance of fish moves from game to coarse – a mixed fishery. There is much excellent fishing in the middle river with easy access from parks and in those places where the Wandle Trail runs close to the river. The island at Trewint Street marks the lower end of the middle river.

## The lower river

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Access to the river becomes increasingly difficult below Trewint Street. In places where it flows through parks there are railings preventing easy access. A little below Trewint Street the river is artificially divided into two streams by a substantial concrete wall in the middle of the river.

As the river approaches Wandsworth, it disappears into a tunnel under the Southside Centre and emerges in what used to be the Youngs Brewery. When re-development is complete, there will be access to the riverside but as with the rest of the river from here down to the Thames, metal railings and high concrete walls make fishing difficult or impossible. The Spit at the mouth of the Wandle allows access to the delta at the junction with the Thames. The river is tidal here and subject to very big changes in water level – a trickle at low tide to 20+ feet at high tide.



*Two channels created in the Earlsfield area.*

# WHAT FISH ARE IN THE RIVER?

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Since 2008 the Wandle Piscators have run a yearly competition called the Species Hunt. The winner is the fisherman who catches the most species from the Wandle during the coarse fishing season. Photographs are submitted as evidence. This gives an insight into the many species that now inhabit the river. The most common fish in descending order of frequency are:- chub, dace, brown trout, roach, gudgeon, stickleback, barbel, rudd.

Other species that have been counted in the competition are bullhead, common carp, mirror carp, stone loach, eel, tench, grayling (only 1), perch and minnow.

There are also fish known to be in the river, but which have not yet been caught in the competition. These include bream, koi carp, ghost carp, goldfish, crucian carp, flounder, dab, pumpkinseed, ruff, and catfish.

There have also been unsubstantiated rumours of pike, sea trout, salmon and rainbow trout.

In 2017 video footage was posted on social media showing two large catfish being illegally released into the Wandle. The Environment Agency want to remove these fish if possible. If you should happen to catch one of the suspected catfish can you please contact the EA on 0800 80 70 60. The call will then be passed onto an on call duty officer who will then be able to speak directly with you. Hopefully they will be in a position to collect the catfish from you.

The Wandle Fishermen Facebook page maintains an unofficial list of specimen records for the Wandle. At the time of publication it showed:-

<b>Mirror carp:</b>	28lb 10oz
<b>Barbel:</b>	14lb 9oz
<b>Koi/ghost carp:</b>	14lb 8oz
<b>Common carp:</b>	13lb 3oz
<b>Koi:</b>	12lb 0oz
<b>Trout:</b>	7lb 0oz
<b>Chub:</b>	6lb 1oz
<b>Eel:</b>	5lb 0oz
<b>Rudd:</b>	2lb 8oz
<b>Gudgeon:</b>	2oz 11d
<b>Roach:</b>	1lb 8oz
<b>Dace:</b>	Not recorded

# A GUIDE TO FISHING THE RIVER

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The Wandle is classified by the Environment Agency as a coarse fishing river with a closed season between March 15th and June 15th. However, there are game fish in the river and it is legal to fish for them during the coarse fish closed season. The game fishing closed season runs from October 1st to March 31st.

You can fish for trout with a fly from April 1st to September 30th inclusive, and then carry on fishing for barbel, chub, roach, dace and the rest with the same fly all the way to March 14th. Thus the only time you can't get out onto the Wandle with a fly rod is March 15th - 31st!

Many game fishermen choose to observe the coarse fishing closed season in order to emphasise the importance of the closed season and to avoid setting a confusing example to anyone who may consider fishing out of season.

Since the massive pollutions of the Industrial Revolution, most of the fishing rights along the river have passed into the hands of the local councils. With the exception of the National Trust owned sections in Morden Hall Park and Watermeads, there are no restrictions on who can fish. The National Trust has leased the fishing rights on its water to the local Morden Hall Park Angling Club.

The river flows through four London boroughs. Wandsworth, Croydon and Merton have no byelaws preventing fishing on the river, but Sutton does have a potentially restricting law about fishing in parks.

## “LAWS FOR PLEASURE GROUNDS, PUBLIC WALKS AND OPEN SPACES

### Part 5 Waterways

**34.** No person shall in any waterway cast a net or line for the purpose of catching fish or other animals.”

Sutton Council have clarified that they operate a tolerant approach to responsible fishing and would expect the Parks Byelaw to be applied only in traditional parks and ornamental areas, where people fishing can cause annoyance or danger to other park visitors or endanger wildlife. Fishermen will be asked to stop and move on if they are found fishing in parks locations. If they fish on one of the traditional fishing spots on the semi-rural sections they are unlikely to be challenged unless they are causing a nuisance.

The one thing you need to have to fish the Wandle legally is a valid Environment Agency rod licence - available online or from any Post Office.

There are a number of helpful maps available to download and details are provided in the Websites section at the end of this guide. The fold out map on the back cover should help you get familiar with the river and to find all the locations documented in the Guide. In the following pages you can follow the river from source to delta, learn the major landmarks and understand the fishing potential in each place.



*Passing under the railway arches below Butter Hill.*

# THE HEADWATERS



## Croydon



The river emerges from underground in Wandle Park, Croydon. In 2012, Croydon Borough Council and the Environment Agency deculverted the river in the park. After a brief exposure it returns underground until it is joined by springs in Waddon Ponds. It again flows underground emerging from a wall at the end of Richmond Green Road. From there the fairly small stream meanders across Beddington Park and Grange Gardens where it expands in size to form a shallow ornamental lake. From there it runs between adjoining gardens of residential houses. It increases in depth as it flows under a railway bridge and joins the smaller Carshalton branch of the river at the lower end of Wilderness Island, just above Shepley Mill in Restmor Way.

Beddington Park, Grange Park and Wilderness Island are all listed in the Sutton byelaw mentioned in the previous chapter. Fishing in this section of the river is not productive.

## Carshalton



Carshalton Ponds are now the source of the western arm of the upper Wandle. The river tumbles fast and narrow away from the ponds in a mini gorge. The major weir at Butter Hill was modified and reduced by the Wandle Trust in 2015. A redesigned fish passage was built and the whole area upstream and downstream was re-profiled to provide a typical chalk stream headwater environment. Tonnes of gravel were re-introduced to make ideal spawning grounds and trout now regularly spawn here in winter.

These improvements meant that this stretch of the river won the urban category of the UK River Prize in 2016 and has been given the status of 'Good Ecological Potential' by the Environment Agency. As such, this area is considered very important spawning and juvenile fish habitat, but it is mostly very small and narrow, and fishing is not generally productive.

# Wilderness Island

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**W**ilderness Island is a statutory Local Nature Reserve managed by the London Wildlife Trust. Tufted ducks breed on this part of the river and common darter dragonflies can be seen in the summer. Kingfishers breed along the river between Wilderness Island and Beddington Park. Some thirty species of birds have been recorded on the island, including all three British woodpeckers, tree creepers and nuthatches. There is a back-water for fish/flood relief in Wilderness Island created by London Wildlife Trust. Wilderness Island has very forceful 'No Fishing' notices on the notice board at its entrance from Mill Lane, which should be adhered to.

The major weir at Shepley Mill at the top of Restmor Way creates a substantial slow deep section of river. The two arms of the upper river meet here. Access is possible from outside Wilderness Island but is difficult.



*Two rivers join at Wilderness Island – iron bars guard the weir.*

# THE CHALK STREAM

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## Restmor Way

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The river flows under the remains of Shepley Mill at the top of Restmor Way and emerges from two tunnels on either side of a wide deep pool. This area is a popular fishing spot, particularly from the left hand bank (looking downstream). The high concrete wall makes it easy to sight fish and there is a substantial undercut to this wall, which holds many larger fish. Some fishermen prefer to wade up to the tail of the pool and fish from there. Ledgering, trotting, float fishing and fly fishing all produce results.

Below Shepley Mill the river runs fairly fast in a series of riffles and pools down to Hackbridge. Chub and trout abound in this water and both trotting and fly-fishing are productive methods. Just below the riffle at the top of this section, there is a large log fixed at an angle in the river – this was the Wandle’s very first river restoration structure, a flow deflector installed by the Wandle Piscators in 2008.

## Hackbridge

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The river below Hackbridge was substantially re-profiled by the Wandle Trust in 2014, to create a safe haven for small fish in times of flood. The small weir and deep silt were removed and fresh gravel introduced.

Under the bridge itself is a good holding place for trout, chub and roach. Some fishermen use ledgering tactics here but trotting is also productive as is up stream fly-fishing with a low horizontal cast into the dark.

The large pool below the bridge often holds small fish rising to flies on the surface – trout, dace or chub. At the tail of this pool the river divides into two channels around Culvers Island. Both of these channels flow fast and fairly shallow over gravel. There is a deep pool where the two channels meet in the vicinity of Buckhurst Avenue. It frequently holds larger fish. The river then flows at a medium pace over gravel with luxuriant weed growth – a typical chalk stream environment – towards Goat Bridge.

Just above Goat Bridge there is a substantial weir and as the river approaches it, the flow slows, the water deepens and the weed growth thins. An interesting footbridge over the river is a popular spot with local lads who long trot bread downstream under the trees on the right hand bank. Some large trout and chub have been caught in this way. Down stream of this there are several deep pools holding larger fish. You will have to battle with neck high nettles and fallen trees to get to the river but there are fish there to be caught including some carp. The weir itself is inside a small industrial complex (which may be scheduled for redevelopment in the next few years) and fences prevent entry.





*Re-profiling the river at Hackbridge – September 2014.*

## Goat Bridge

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Goat Bridge is at the junction of Goat Road and Middleton Road. It is easy to enter the river at Goat Bridge and wade back upstream over gravel and through significant weed growth to fish the weir pool. Fly-fishing with nymphs in the weir pool or simple trotting tactics can produce good fish, both trout and dace.

Below Goat Bridge the river runs down Watermead Lane. There are railings and over hanging trees that make access awkward. However it is possible to get behind the railings and edge along the fairly narrow top of the concrete bankside. Once you are inside the railings fishing can be quite comfortable sitting on the concrete wall. Ledgering and trotting work well here and there are always substantial numbers of chub, some very large, and the occasional large trout.

In this part of the river, fish that favour the purer chalk stream water are confined to a stretch of around 200 yards between the weir above Goat Bridge and the sewage works inflow at the start of Poulter Park at the end of Watermead Lane. Some of them grow very large.

At the bottom of Watermead Lane is the abstraction plant that takes some of the chalk stream water and pumps it back to Carshalton Ponds. There is a small pool at the abstraction point that always holds a shoal of small chub and would be an ideal spot to take a young angler to experience the joys of fishing. Maggot or bread will do the trick.



*A lovely trout above Goat Bridge - photo by Duncan Soar.*

# THE MIDDLE RIVER

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The middle river offers most of the very best fishing on the Wandle. Some of it is exclusive to Morden Hall Park Angling Club. Most of it is free to all who hold an Environment Agency rod licence.

## Poulter Park

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As the river enters Poulter Park the discharge channel from Beddington sewage works joins it. The inflow is fast and powerful creating a significant pool at the junction. This is a favourite fishing spot for ledgering or long trotting the fast current downstream of the confluence. Koi carp are frequently spotted on the margins of the confluence pool, though rarely captured. Trout and chub are more obliging.

At the top end of Poulter Park the river is quite narrow and fast flowing with a series of very small weirs creating interesting variations in fishing opportunities. Spinning, trotting and fly-fishing are all possible. If the time is right, the smell of bread baking in the Hovis Factory on the far side of the river is a pleasant addition to this lovely part of the river.

Towards the middle of the park the river starts to widen and weed growth increases, but so also do silt deposits. Several of the bends on the river have relatively deep holding pools including the interestingly named Bennett's Hole.

## Mill Green

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Mill Green is just a few hundred yards away from the Wandle at Goat Bridge. Some fishermen drop a line into the sewage works discharge channel as it crosses Mill Green. The water is a dead straight canalized channel, fast flowing with some rocks. It emerges in a lovely pool at the southeast corner of Mill Green. At the time of the 2007 pollution incident large numbers of big fish were removed from this water. You can sometimes see barbel immediately downstream of the Goat Road bridge. The section of the river also holds good numbers of chub.

## Watermeads

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At the bottom of Poulter Park the river takes a sharp bend and enters Watermeads. It is a National Trust nature reserve. It was recently opened up for fishing to members of the Morden Hall Park Angling Club. It offers many different fishing environments and is a very popular spot with barbel fishermen.

The main river flows at a medium pace in a widening channel towards a significant weir in the middle of the reserve. As it approaches the weir the flow slows and deepens. The water is usually clear and it is possible to sight good specimen trout and chub.



There is a typical pool below the weir with opportunities for many different angling approaches. The river then runs fast and powerfully towards a very large, deep pool on a sharp bend at the end of the Reserve. This pool is often called the White House pool, because of the beautiful house on the far bank. Trotting and ledgering both work well here but so also does rolled meat, targeting barbel.

A small carrier stream at the upstream end of the reserve feeds a significant lake area. A great deal of voluntary work was required to remove the almost total cover of floating pennywort when fishing was reintroduced to the reserve. The lake is now clear of major weed obstruction but ongoing maintenance by volunteers is needed to keep on top of the pennywort.

The bridge on the A217 London Road is the lower limit of Watermeads.

## Ravensbury Park



The river flows under London Road and into Ravensbury Park. This is a very popular fishing venue and is free for anyone to fish as long as they have an Environment Agency rod licence. Trout, chub, barbel, dace, roach and gudgeon are all to be found in the park, as are some very large carp towards the lower end.

As the river enters the park behind Octavia Close, there are two deep pools that hold trout and chub. Frequently shoals of dace can be found rising here. The river then broadens, shallows and speeds up.

Two back channels branch off the main river to form a single channel that flows in a loop around the northern side of the park and eventually rejoins the main stream at the bottom end of the park. The first back channel leads to a silted and weeded lake created by an old weir. There are few fish of significance in this lake though it does serve as a refuge for smaller fish in times of flood. An elaborate platform for fishing and recreational use has been erected on its bank but the water there is only inches deep and heavily silted. It was erected by the Friends of Ravensbury Park through the Living Wandle Partnership and provides an accessible viewing platform for general wildlife. The second channel has three tiny weirs just above the confluence with the first channel. The confluence pool and the stretch below it provide lovely trotting water and can be relied upon for some small chub action.

Significant restoration work has been done on the back channel to remove some of the dense tree cover on the bank, allowing more light to get to the river. Sections of it have also been re-engineered to remove wooden board banks, create more natural banks and introduce meanders to improve the speed of flow. Shoals of small chub are always around in this area and it provides lovely water for introducing children to the joys of fishing. Small barbel and perch are also caught here.

The main channel gradually increases in width as it flows through the park. Swarms of midges are a regular annoyance in the park, so walk, cycle and fish with your mouth closed! There are plenty of trees on the bank and no railings. Several deeper pools invite ledgering tactics and rolled meat is often successful for barbel. Experienced fishermen often run a float through these pools before moving on to ledgering tactics.

By the time the river reaches a footbridge in the middle of the park it feels more like an ornamental lake than a river. It is shallow, wide and silty. Access is perfect here with a low concrete wall and a bankside lawn. However, the fishing quality is poor with tiny chublets being the likely capture.

The fly fisherman can enter the river at this point and fish upstream with dry fly or dry fly and nymph combination. Roach, chub, dace and trout are all possible from this stretch plus the rare encounter with a barbel on a nymph. The wading fisherman may well encounter a bank fisherman ledgering and some common sense and courtesy will avoid any disappointments.

Below the footbridge the river starts to slow and narrow and deepen as it approaches the weir at Ravensbury Mill. On the park bank, railings make fishing awkward but not impossible. The far bank has easy access over a low railing for most of its length and is a regular haunt for fishermen who like to ledger. This wider slower section of the river is prime carp spotting/catching territory with many visible there at times, particularly in the summer. At least one of them runs to about 30lb.

The lower end of the park is also a magnet for carp fishermen. They ledger-fish over the railings from the park bank as access to the far bank is prohibited close to the mill. The river splits and spreads around the mill creating a calm bay on the far side in front of residential flats. This is where the carp like to bask and eventually venture out into the main flow. Casting boilies, pellets or meat to the far edge of the main flow can tempt a very substantial fish to bite. The real problem then is to play the fish in a confined space and safely land it over bankside railings. This is not a job for an inexperienced fisherman. The slower deep water close to the weir also provides good roach fishing.

Below the weir is a long, shallow, fast concrete run off taking the river under the road and into Morden Hall Park. This channel does not hold fish but does have embedded in it a line of upright rubber fingers acting as a 'road' for small returning elvers to negotiate the stretch and reach the eel pass that has been constructed to help them over the weir and on upstream. The pass has a counting box mechanism to allow data collection on eel movements. Environment Agency electrofishing suggests that the Wandle is one of the few rivers where eels continue to thrive. This is likely to improve with the implementation of further plans to ease eel passage in the river in Morden Hall Park and five other weirs along the river's course.



*Fishing platform over the lake in Ravensbury Park.*

# Morden Hall Park

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In Morden Hall Park the river splits into multiple channels with various 'lake-like' areas. The National Trust has leased the fishing rights for some of this water to the local Morden Hall Park Angling Club but has prohibited fishing on the rest of the water including the lovely pool below the Snuff Mill in the heart of the park. The angling club has nominated a short section of the river for fly-fishing, though it is not a promising stretch. The rest of the club water is reserved for coarse angling tactics.

As the river enters the park it turns a sharp angle and this has created a surprisingly deep pool on the far bank. This is a holding place for some larger fish, particularly barbel. Ledgered halibut pellets work well here.

The river shallows and widens, running fast and wide over gravel. Barbel can often be spotted in the shallow clear water. A small pond has been created linked to the river by narrow channels at top and bottom. This provides a valuable fish refuge in times of flood. The river splits into two much smaller channels. You can often locate a shoal of small chub along them. The two channels rejoin at the head of a lake-like pool just upstream of the weir at the Snuff Mill. This lake area is a popular fishing spot for members of the angling club with carp and chub often visible from the bank.

A slow deep channel leads from the 'lake' to the weir and float fishing and very slow trotting can produce fish here.

The National Trust constructed an Archimedes screw electricity station alongside the weir. It had significant impact on the fishing. During construction the water level above the weir was accidentally allowed to fall rapidly and many good fish were washed downstream. While the screw was working it created significant noise. Local anglers believe this drove fish away from the area. Thanks to the Wandle Trust and the National Trust there is a working eel and fish pass on the structure now, and eel monitoring by volunteers takes place over the summer months. No fishing is allowed for several hundred yards below this point.

Towards the bottom of the park the various strands of the river come back together and then flow in two parallel channels divided by a long thin island. Club members are allowed to fish some of the right hand channel (looking downstream). There are plenty of chub in this section but they are particularly difficult to catch.

The Wandle Trust and National Trust undertook a river restoration project in Morden Hall Park during September 2017. The work was completed on a small channel of the Wandle close to the entrance of the wetlands/boardwalk area in the park. The banks of the channel were softened and re-profiled to create meanders in what was an artificially straightened and toe-boarded stretch of the river. The coir matting used to re-shape the banks was planted with marginal vegetation to create habitats for river wildlife and shallow scrapes have been dug out to provide refuge areas for small fish during times of flood.

The bottom limit of the park is the tramline from Phipps Bridge to Morden Road.



*No fishing allowed for this shoal of chub in Morden Hall Park.*



## Deen City Farm

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Below the tramline the river continues to flow in two parallel channels. They rejoin just above Deen City Farm. Restoration to the left-hand channel (looking downstream) took place in summer 2017 by the Environment Agency and Wild Trout Trust. A number of deadwood deflectors were introduced into the overly straight and deep channel to break up the river's steady, slow flow and scour out sections of the river bed for habitat variability, making it more like a natural chalk stream. Coir rolls planted with vegetation were added to the river banks to increase habitat cover for fish and invertebrates whilst also helping to stabilise the soft banks. Gravels have also been introduced to increase spawning grounds for coarse fish in a stretch of the river that is heavily silted.

The left hand channel is easy to access with frequent 'pegs' easily identified from the beaten paths through the nettles and weeds. This is ideal territory for ledger tactics. There are a number of deeper holes, some caused by fallen trees. Trotting is possible in the areas where restoration work has increase the speed of flow.

Access to the right hand channel is difficult. Allotments and private land bound it on the far bank so wading across the left hand channel is the only viable entry. Brambles, nettles and general overgrowth make the central island difficult to navigate. The end result is that the right hand channel is rarely fished.

There is a lovely pool where the two channels meet up, just upstream of the footbridge at Homefield Gardens, close to Deen City Farm. It is another popular fishing spot for the coarse fisherman. As well as the resident population of fish, wandering carp frequently pass up and then back down this pool heading to the deeper water downstream. There is some access from the far bank below the bridge in Phipps Bridge Road with a nice run suitable for trotting.

The major weir at Merton Abbey Mills starts to impact the river here. It slows, widens and deepens as it flows towards and under the bridge at Windsor Avenue. There are numerous swims for coarse fishermen along this lovely stretch of the river and the Wandle Trail follows close to the river with no railings.

Below Windsor Avenue the river narrows as artificial banks deepen the river in its approach to the weir. There are good chub and roach in this stretch and a wide range of coarse tactics can be employed. Loose fed maggots can get the chub biting. Close to the weir there are often carp fishermen ledgering for their quarry.

## Merton Abbey Mills

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The mill wheel still stands at Merton Abbey and the pool below the weir is another popular spot for fishermen. There is room for only two anglers on the left hand bank (looking downstream). Eels have been assisted to move upstream by the installation of an eel pass, similar to that in Ravensbury Park. Roach, gudgeon and small barbel (under 1 lb.) can be caught in this fast rough spot. Sweetcorn and maggots both perform well in this turbulent water. There are snags galore in the white water so be prepared to lose the odd rig.



*Merton Abbey Mill, weir and eel pass.*

Trotting a bait down into the shallower, fast water below the weir pool can tempt chub to take.

There is a footbridge below the weir and the river runs fast in a concrete channel towards and under Merantun Way. Chub can frequently be spotted holding in this fast water between the footbridge and the road bridge.

The footpath below Merantun Way is high above the river as it tumbles fast towards a lovely pool about 50 yards down. Fishermen are sometimes tempted to fish this pool from the high footpath, but this is not to be encouraged. No landing net could reach a captured fish, nor return it unharmed to the river. Hauling a fish up over 20 feet and then dropping it back the same distance into the river below can do only harm to the fish stock. This pool can be reached on the far bank by climbing a wall behind the petrol station in the Savacentre car park. From this single vantage point the fisherman can float fish or ledger the deeper water, trot bait down the main current or even flick a small spinner down and across.

Back on the main trail the height drops rapidly to river level and there are several fishing swims giving access to relatively fast but reasonably deep water. This is ideal barbel country and rolling bait or ledgered offerings in under trees on the far bank both work. It is also possible to trot down this stretch though the float moves pretty fast and frequent recasting is required – not a relaxed trotting run.

## Savacentre

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The footbridge across the Wandle leading to the Savacentre, now a Sainsbury's and M&S, marks the start of one of the prettiest stretches of water on the river. If you could cloak out the main road on one side and the shopping precinct on the other, you could convince yourself that you were fishing in the heart of Wiltshire on one of the more famous chalk streams.

The bridge itself often hides a number of barbel and this is a popular spot for ledgering a bait in the short dark stretch. The river shallows for 15 yards just below the bridge and a shoal of dace is frequently found rising to fly life on the surface. They are easy to tempt with a dry fly but much more difficult to hook, their take and reject is so fast.

The next 100 yards provide excellent fishing by fly or trotting. The river flows at good pace and depth over luxurious beds of weed. The dry fly can tempt dace, roach, chub and trout, while trotted baits can add gudgeon and the occasional barbel.

Fly fishers should be wary of casting from the Savacentre bank because there is a continual flow of pedestrians in the back cast area. The safest way to fish it is upstream while wading or standing in the margin.

At the end of this lovely run the river takes a right angle bend to the left under Merton High Street and into Wandle Park.

## Wandle Park

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The river runs fast and a little shallow at first over a gravel bed. This area is popular with barbel fishermen who find fish holding in any of the slightly deeper pools under the trees on the right-hand bank (looking downstream). Access to the river from the park is difficult, while on the other side, railings line the river on Wandle Bank. It is possible to fish over the railings but a long handled landing net would be a must. Some fishermen wade under the bridge at the end of the Savacentre stretch and fish in the river.

As it nears Connolly's Mill some 150 yards downstream the Wandle deepens and maintains speed though with more weed growth on the river gravel.



*Looking upstream from Connolly's Mill*

# Wandle Meadow

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The river emerges from Connolly's Mill in the Wandle Meadow Nature Park. Until recently it was a sewage works, but is now managed as a Local Nature Reserve. In the top end of the meadow above North Road the river is inaccessible. The old sewage works are heavily fenced preventing access from the meadow and residential houses on Bewley Street guard the far bank. However, below North Road the river runs through woodland with a number of easily identified access points leading to very tempting pools. There are many fallen trees in the area and some are partially in the river. Above and below these obstructions are some excellent fishing spots for ledger and trotting tactics.

The river shallows and broadens a little as it progresses through the meadow and offers some nice trotting water. Towards the bottom of the meadow access again becomes difficult and the main Wandle Trail veers away a fair distance from the river in order to get under the main railway line to Haydon's Road station. It leaves the park via a gateway next to the tunnel under the railway line. This tunnel indicates the position of the Surrey Iron Railway (early C19th).

Below the railway line the Wandle's main tributary, the tiny Graveney, flows in. The river then runs fairly fast down towards the bridge at Plough Lane. The path is high above the river on the right hand bank and access is limited, unless you are already in the river.



*A likely spot in the lower Wandle Meadow.*



*Below Plough Lane - hard to access.*

## Plough Lane

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The Wandle Trail moves to the left hand bank at Plough Lane and runs high up above very attractive sections of river. There are occasional 'paths' into riverside swims but there should be more. The river looks very 'fishy' in this stretch.

A massive electricity sub-station is somewhat intimidating half way down the run to Garratt Park but the pylons and cables are well away from casting height.

## Garratt Park

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As the river passes through Garratt Park it widens, deepens and slows. There is plenty of branched bur-reed in the river making trotting quite troublesome. Ledger techniques are better and in addition to static bottom baits, rolling meat techniques would allow much more water to be covered in a short time, with the added advantage of the current washing the bait into likely fish holding spots, under bushes, undercuts and deeper sections. There are some big fish to be had here including carp and the occasional koi.



*Slow, deepening and weedy in Garratt Park.*



*Downstream from Trewint Street island.*

## Trewint Street

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At the end of Garratt Park, where the Wandle passes under Trewint Street, it splits into two channels around a small island, the site of a former mill. Each channel has a concrete weir, but the Wandle Trust has addressed the fish passage problem by installing a pool and baffle fish pass to the right hand weir, as you look downstream. Fishermen can access this island from the bridge and, from a high vantage, fish the large pool below the weir. This is a popular fishing spot with a good variety of fish holding in the deeper pool alongside the fast run off from the right hand weir channel. This is a good location for a fly fisherman who can approach the large pool from downstream and fish for trout and dace.



# THE LOWER RIVER

## Earlsfield

From Earlsfield down to the Wandle Delta, access is a real problem. Both banks are flanked by residential or business properties and bridges are well fenced. A substantial stretch of the river is divided into two channels by a concrete wall up the middle. The water in each channel flows at a good pace and is relatively shallow in normal conditions.

A fisherman who is prepared to put waders on and enter the river either at Trewint Street or much further down at Mapleton Road, could access many interesting areas - although there are deep pools at Ravensbury Terrace and King George's Park, which may not be passable in most heights of water, even with chest waders.

At one of the bridges in this stretch a tradition of throwing pennies into the river seems to have emerged. They are clearly visible on the concrete river bed.



*The river artificially divided into two channels.*

## King George's Park

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King George's Park is the only potential access place on the lower river. The park runs for over a mile alongside the west bank of the river, which flows at a medium pace and medium depth for most of the way. There is no access to the river on the far bank unless you live in one of the houses. Metal railings varying from 4 to 5 feet in height hamper access from the park. In some places the railings have pointed tops – not worth the risk of climbing! The bank is heavily vegetated and steep in places. Much of it is also heavily wooded. There are no tell tale signs of a fisherman's beaten track down to a riverside swim. The intrepid fisherman would have to wade up from the bottom of the park to gain access to this part of the river.

A small industrial estate takes the park and the path away from the river and blocks access. In this stretch the river is again divided into two channels by a concrete wall in the middle of the river. At the end of the industrial estate the river steepens and the flow increases to a small weir above a right angle bend taking the Wandle out of the park to run alongside Garratt Lane.

## Garratt Lane

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A shallow side channel is divided from the main river by a small spit of land. This can be reached either by wading the side channel or risking quite a steep drop from the railings. There are two lovely pools just above and below the confluence. The water is ideal for trotting or for ledger tactics and chub are the likely quarry.

The river below the Mapleton Road bridge looks very inviting but again, access to the bank is almost impossible. Wading under the bridge is the only way of exploring this stretch.

The river then runs fast, wide and shallow towards the two tunnels that take it under the Southside Shopping Centre and South Circular Road.

## Ram Quarter

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The Young's Brewery site redevelopment will allow access to the steep concrete riverside and includes work to improve the riverbank, reducing the industrial feel and introducing more natural features. There will almost certainly be fencing. When complete, this section of the river will be known as the Ram Quarter. At the lower end the river flows under a bridge carrying the Wandsworth one-way system.



*Looking upstream into the Ram Quarter.*



*The last weir on the Wandle at the end of the Causeway.*

## The Causeway

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**B**elow the Ram Quarter the river continues to run in a tall concrete channel towards the Thames. Metal fencing prevents easy fishing. There is a small area of rough parkland above a railway bridge and once inside, the fisherman can access the water. It does not look attractive and is covered in several areas with dense sheets of floating pennywort. However, it offers opportunities for ledgering and some good fish, carp and trout, have been caught along the Causeway.

There is a multi-level weir at the end of the Causeway, which takes the river down to the tidal delta area. At some times of the year the high tides flow over the top of the weir and raise the river levels in the Causeway. This is the final major obstacle on the river but does allow fish passage up river when the tide is highest.

## Bell Lane Creek

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**J**ust above the railway bridge over the Causeway a substantial part of the river flow is diverted to crash down into the tidal Bell Lane Creek. Fishing possibilities here are the same as in the delta which it joins 200 yards downstream. The Creek experiences major fluctuations in water depth depending on the tide and any attempt to wade in it would be dangerous.



*The run off to Bell Lane Creek – can you spot the bell?*

# The Spit

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The Spit is an area of land protruding into the Wandle just before its confluence with the River Thames. Bell Lane Creek is to the left as you look downstream, and the main Wandle flows to the right. Dab and flounder spawn in this area, attracting a variety of birds including the great crested grebe. There are large numbers of eels in this stretch and pike can occasionally be seen taking advantage of this food source. The water level varies a great deal with the tide from a mere trickle at low tide to over 20 feet at high tide. Not many fishermen venture to this part of the river.

In 2017 the Half Tide weir structure at the mouth of the river was removed to return the delta to a more natural state. A lot of the contaminated silt was removed and safely disposed of through this project coordinated by Wandsworth Borough Council. Access to the Wandle Delta from the Thames at low tide is possible but precarious. There is still a lot of deep mud in the area. As nature takes its course, things may improve and entice the fisherman back to the river's end.



*The delta at low tide after the removal of the Half Tide weir.*

# FISH FOOD AND POLLUTION

## Riverfly monitoring

The health of the Wandle fish stock is dependent on two things; an adequate supply of food and clean, unpolluted water. The Riverfly Monitoring project contributes essential information on these two things. Each month volunteers check the quantity of fly and insect life in the river using a 3 minute kick sampling process where the dislodged river life is collected in a net and then analysed to come up with an abundance score. This is relayed to the Environment Agency, who record the findings and investigate fully if there is a major decline in species or abundance. The target bugs are caddisflies (both cased and caseless), up-winged flies (mayfly etc.), stoneflies and freshwater shrimp. On the Wandle we have all groups except stoneflies. Each fly has a specific tolerance to various conditions and chemicals in the water. For example blue-winged olives are highly susceptible to silt and will move away.

Riverfly monitoring gives valuable data on the health of the insect population in the river and provides an early warning system for possible pollution incidents that might otherwise go unnoticed. The river is at its healthiest just above the sewage works discharge channel at Goat Bridge with a typical abundance score of 10, dropping to just 3 in Poulter Park, before recovering to 7 or 8 further downstream.

The dominant food source along the whole length of the Wandle is the freshwater shrimp.

## Pollution control advice from Theo Pike

So how can we all get personally involved in spotting – and stopping – pollution problems? Theo Pike is a fishing writer and also active member of the Wandle Piscators. There is a list of ideas that Theo has been developing which FishTec published on its website see *Useful Information* page.

### *Go fishing in the rain*

River restoration professionals always jump at the chance to explore their catchments in the most horrible conditions – taking so-called ‘wet weather walks’ to see where the water really goes when it falls out of the sky, and what it looks like when it reaches the river. In this urban area, with runoff from roofs, roads, building sites and car parks, this can sometimes be a real eye-opener.

### *Follow your nose*

If something doesn't smell right, it's probably wrong, and you'll often sniff out pollution before you see it. Another sign of water quality problems is ‘sewage fungus’ – a grey, gelatinous or feathery mass of bacteria that grows in the presence of very high nutrient levels like those provided by slurry or sewage.

## *Look out for misconnections*

On streams and rivers everywhere, toilets, sinks and washing machines being wrongly plumbed into rainwater pipes instead of foul sewers cause many insidious pollution problems. If there's a nasty smell, or if you can see milky discharges, toilet paper or sanitary products in your river, chances are there's a misconnection somewhere nearby. But on the upside, the local water company should be keen to get it fixed (and it's illegal for homeowners to refuse).

## *Get trained as a riverfly monitor*

Once a month, a 3-minute kick sample can tell you almost everything you need to know about the health of your local river. Different species of aquatic invertebrates are differently sensitive to pollution, and repeated sampling can locate the source and even provide evidence for a prosecution. Find out more from the Wandle Piscators' website and from the Riverfly Partnership website.

## *Join the pollution monitoring programme*

As well as riverfly monitoring, more and more rivers trusts are setting up networks of local volunteers to spot pollution and help to deal with incidents. Some water companies are recognising the benefits of citizen science too: for example, Thames Water is working in partnership with the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) who run 'outfall safaris' and identify problem areas for their surface outfall remediation programme. They've also launched a rapid response unit, which aims to get to the site of any reported pollutions within an hour. The Wandle Trust organises pollution monitoring and more information can be found on their website.

## *Make that call*

Wherever you live and fish, keep one or both of these pollution hotline numbers in your phone, and don't think twice about calling if you spot a pollution problem:

England, Scotland and Northern Ireland: 0800 80 70 60; Wales: 0300 065 3000

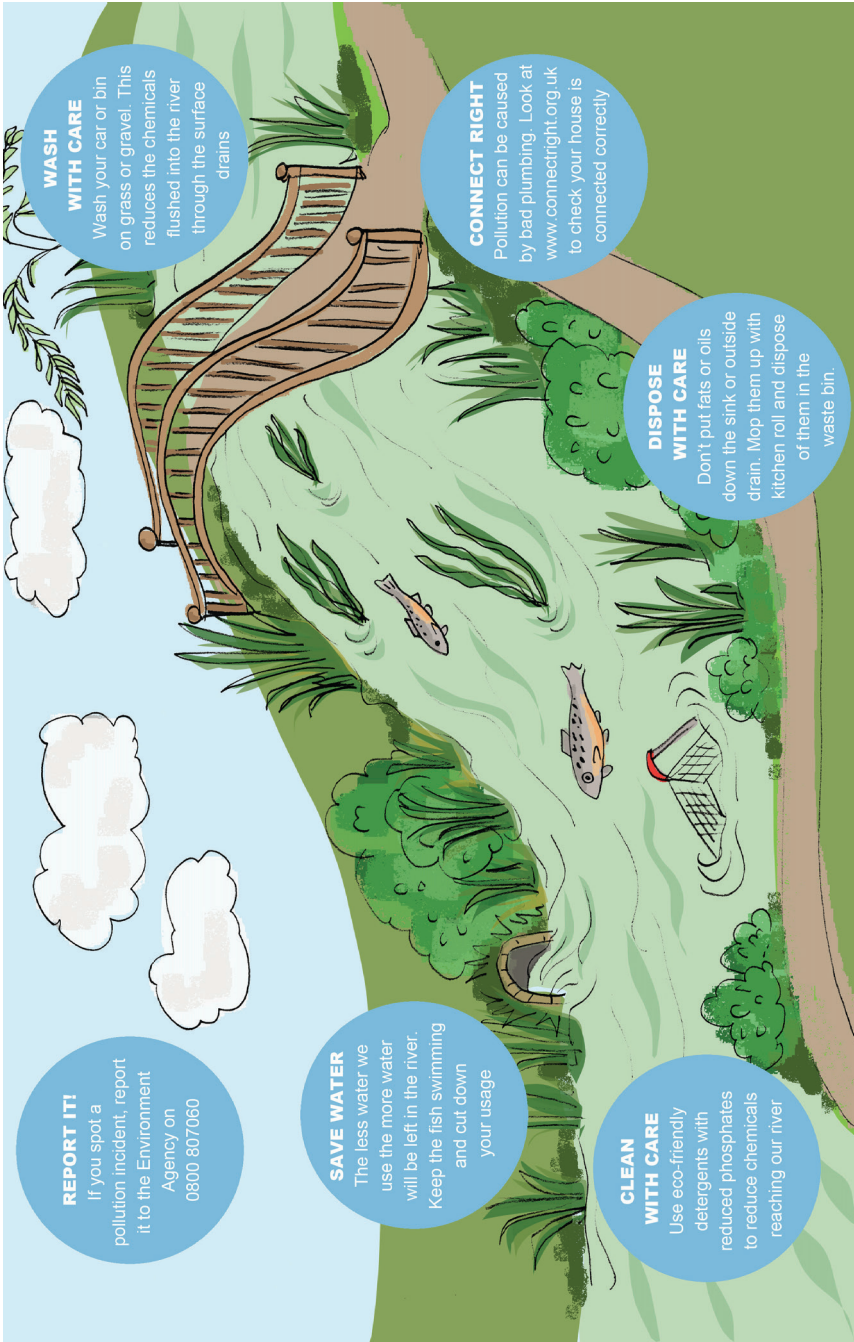
It's far better to be safe than sorry, and every report helps to build up a picture of what's going on. Your vigilance really can make a difference. Put the number in your phone NOW!

## River clean-ups



On the second Sunday of every month the Wandle Trust organises a clean-up working party on the Wandle. Between 30-100 people turn out to remove rubbish from the river and clean the banks. Protective equipment is provided including waders. This is an excellent way to get to know so much more about the river than can ever be experienced from the bank alone. You can experience the depth of water, hidden pools, significant areas of floating or undercut bank. You can also contribute to the improving health of the river and be amazed at how often, when a motorbike is pulled from the river, there is an eel in the exhaust pipe! You can find out more and sign up for notifications at the Wandle Trust website.





**REPORT IT!**

If you spot a pollution incident, report it to the Environment Agency on 0800 807060

**SAVE WATER**

The less water we use the more water will be left in the river. Keep the fish swimming and cut down your usage

**CLEAN**

**WITH CARE**

Use eco-friendly detergents with reduced phosphates to reduce chemicals reaching our river

**WASH WITH CARE**

Wash your car or bin on grass or gravel. This reduces the chemicals flushed into the river through the surface drains

**CONNECT RIGHT**

Pollution can be caused by bad plumbing. Look at [www.connectright.org.uk](http://www.connectright.org.uk) to check your house is connected correctly

**DISPOSE WITH CARE**

Don't put fats or oils down the sink or outside drain. Mop them up with kitchen roll and dispose of them in the waste bin.

# TACKLE TIPS

## Fly fishing tips from Theo and Will

Will Tall (1962-2016) was a stalwart of the Piscators and expert fly fisherman who loved the Wandle and its people. In 2009 Peter Lapsley published an article in *Fly Fishing and Fly Tying* magazine based on interviews with Theo Pike and Will Tall. They shared their suggestions for the eight best flies to use when fishing the Wandle. The following summary version was published on the Wandle Piscators' website.

### *Black Clouser*

Hook: wet fly (Kamasan B830) size 4-8  
Thread: black  
Eyes: red or yellow dumb-bell  
Body/ tail: black bucktail  
Wing: black bucktail



#### **Will Tall's comments**

*The Wandle is a mixed fishery dominated by coarse fish so there are few traditions and, whilst Halford may have learnt the art of fishing a dry fly upstream on the Wandle's headwaters, we're open to new ideas. Rich Baker, original Senior Vice President of the Wandle Piscators, caught his best Wandle brownie (3lb 7oz) at the start of the season on one of these clouser minnows. He's also had some good days with an olive clouser. I find it works well jigged through the deep holes or fished down and across and it's brought me my best chub on a fly.*

### *Waldo's Minkie*

Hook: long shank lure (Kamasan B800) size 6-8  
Thread: black  
Tail: red wool  
Rib: silver wire  
Underbody: 15-20 turns of medium lead wire mainly in the front third of the hook shank  
Overbody: pearl fritz chenille  
Wing: brown mink  
Cheeks: fluorescent orange dyed jungle cock (or orange marabou)



#### **Will Tall's comments**

*In the late summer and early autumn we get large shoals of chub fry that last until the first storms wash them into the Thames. This is a favourite pattern of one of our club members (Waldo Meyer-Wentzel) who used to tie flies professionally in South Africa. It is a good match for the chublet and is hammered by their mums and dads when fished down and across.*

## Black Gold-ribbed Hare's Ear

Hook: wet fly (Kamasan B175) size 10-14  
Thread: black  
Tail: dyed black cock pheasant tail  
Rib: wire  
Abdomen: dyed black hare's ear  
Thorax: dyed black hare's ear and 3mm gold bead  
Wing case: dyed black cock pheasant tail



### Will Tall's comments

*Adrian Grose-Hodge, another Founder Member of the Wandle Piscators, gave this pattern to me. It's by far his most successful fly on the Wandle and it works fished upstream or down.*

## CDC & Elk

Hook: Partridge Captain Hamilton YL2A size 12-14  
Thread: brown  
Body: grey CDC  
Wing: elk hair



### Will Tall's comments

*Insect hatches on the Wandle are limited to the black gnat, olive or caddis and it's been this way since the middle of the 19th century. This is my favourite dry fly as it will bring the chub and trout up from the bottom, carry a small nymph NZ style or act as proximity marker if I'm using a black gnat.*

## JG Emerger (variant)

Hook: Varivas 2200BL size 14-16  
Thread: black  
Shuck: shrimp H2O polar fibre  
Rib: gold wire  
Body: olive antron floss  
Wing Post: grey dust fibre (Roman Moser)  
Hackle: silver badger cock



### Will Tall's comments

*A variant on John Goddard's superb pattern as I couldn't source the grey calf tail and shuck material nor did I have the correct hackles to hand. Despite straying from the original pattern it works and it's been very successful with the dace and rudd on the slower stretches in Ravensbury Park.*

## White Bibio

Hook: Partridge Surehold Lightning Dry barbless size 14-16  
(dressed relatively short on either)

Thread: black silk

Body: buggy green peacock herl with fluorescent red dubbing target spot, well picked out

Hackle: palmered white Indian cock (softer than genetic hackle)

Rib: fine silver wire



### Theo Pike's comments

*Like Will's little black JG Emerger, this is a midge pattern – but one to choose when the chub and dace want a fly that can be twitched across the surface without sinking. Far from the Scottish lochans where I fished it first, it's produced many memorable evenings for me in the lower Wandle's concrete canyons. Although convention says that fast-rising dace need a hook of size 18 or smaller, I find my hit-rate actually improves by dressing a small fly on a larger hook.*

## Carshalton Dun (tied by Roy Christie)

Hook: light wire size 16

Thread: black silk

Body: black silk

Rib: fine silver wire or tinsel

Tail: grizzle cock hackle fibres

Hackle: grizzle cock

Wings: dark starling slips



### Theo Pike's comments

*200 years after the Battle of Trafalgar, in October 2005, the Salmon and Trout Association hosted a fundraising dinner for the Wandle at St Paul's Cathedral. Each guest was presented with a pair of traditional Wandle flies, researched and tied by eminent fly-dresser (and Wands Founder Member) Roy Christie. This is one of them – which still works very well either as black gnat or iron blue dun.*

## Carshalton Cocktail (tied by Roy Christie)

Hook: light wire size 14

Thread: black silk

Body: dubbed mixture of hares ear, muskrat and yellow mohair

Tail: grizzle cock hackle fibres

Hackle: light dun

Wings: light starling slips



### Theo Pike's comments

*Probably representing a large dark olive, the Carshalton Cocktail is another historic Wandle fly listed in Hofland's *British Anglers' Manual* (1839). Roy Christie based the distinctly swept-back style of this dressing on a single surviving example, dated to 1853, discovered by Flyfishers' Club archivist John Morgan.*

# Bait fishing advice from Stew and Jason

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Stew is an avid angler, chair of the Piscators and spends more time fishing the Wandle than at work, we suspect. He says that most of the regular coarse fishing baits will work on the Wandle. The best three to use on a regular basis are maggots, bread and luncheon meat, in that order.

Jason, also a Piscator, loves to target barbel, chub and roach. Here are his top tips based on years of experiment.

## *Wandle roach tips*

Maggots are excellent bait for roach, but you can enhance their attractiveness for Wandle redfins by adding essential oils and spices to your bait tub. Coriander and turmeric are excellent choices with geranium and aniseed tried and tested essential oil additives.

Consider the time you head to the bank. The last hour of daylight and the first hour into dark are the prime times as roach lose some of their inhibitions and feed with vigour.

Roach are sensitive feeders and will reject bait if they feel the weight of the hook. A lightweight fine wire hook is therefore essential – good selections include the Kamasan B511, (or B611 for bigger baits) Drennan Fine Match or Tubertini Series 2

Hempseed makes great loose feed to go with maggot and caster hook baits. There's nothing wrong with the tinned variety, but you can save money by preparing your own hempseed beforehand by boiling it for 30 minutes, with bicarbonate of soda added to the water.

Roach are easily spooked and will move around the swim, particularly if there's splashing on the water from a hooked fish. One useful tip is to cast just a little further downstream from where you've fed, especially if bites have dried up. This is often where fish back off to, frequently the bigger fish, too.

## *Wandle barbel tips*

Luncheon meat is usually seen as the target bait for barbel but it's not the only bait that works well to catch a 'whisker'. Wandle fishermen have caught lots of barbel on bread. A large chunk of long-life white bread on a size 6 hook can be a killer bait.

Barbel like to feed in low light. The more pressured the swim, the more likely they are to follow this pattern, though there will be exception when you catch in blazing sunlight! Make an effort to fish early morning or late evening into the darkness if you are struggling to catch.

Look for deep far bank channels, with 'walking pace' water. Barbel will often sit in these places, under overhanging trees and under weed beds.

Fish-based, flavoured boilies will catch lots of Wandle barbel. Fish them on a hair rig with a PVA bag packed jam-full of freebies.

In the summer, in low clear conditions, try using a long fluorocarbon hook link. Barbel associate lines on the water with danger, so in gin clear conditions, swap normal mono for fluorocarbon hook lengths of up to 6ft in length, pinned down with tungsten putty.

## *Wandle chub tips*

Find overhanging cover and chub won't be far away. Overhanging trees with branches trailing in the water, undercut banks, deeper holes in the river bed and far bank reed beds are all areas to look out for.

Chub adore bread. Not much works as well as a big piece of flake on the hook and an open-end feeder full of liquidised bread.

Looking for a bigger chub? Lobworms are excellent baits for specimen chub, particularly in summer when you can present them on a light link leger, under overhanging trees.

Cheese paste is one of the all-time winning chub baits. Melt a little stilton in the microwave and add breadcrumbs to get that putty-like consistency that sticks on the hook well. Add a little margarine to stop it going hard in the winter.

Chub will feed in the coldest of conditions, making them a viable target in winter, particularly with smelly baits, when the colour in the river is dropping out and the river is fining down.

## Spinning

Spinning is an effective method in some parts of the river particularly in the middle section. Small mepps spinners will catch chub and trout in the right waters. Small shads will also do the trick. Spinning is particularly effective for larger fish as the dusk sets in (so too is fly fishing with streamers). To make catch and release easier and safer for you and the fish, it is a good idea to replace barbed treble hooks on your spinners with barbless singles.



*Mayor of Wandsworth helps release Trout in the Classroom fingerlings - March 2012*

# INVASIVE SPECIES

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On the Wandle, there are four invasive non-native plants that are of most concern: Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam, floating pennywort and giant hogweed.

All four of these species are established along the banks of the Wandle and use the river as a dispersal corridor to spread throughout the catchment. Each species causes its own issues for ecology. The Wandle Trust has an Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) plan to tackle them and there is an online form you can use to report any plants you find along the river.

In the river itself they are keeping a careful eye out for signal crayfish and 'killer' shrimps.

Detailed information and identification assistance is available on the Wandle Trust website.

Theo Pike's *Pocket Guide to Balsam Bashing* (Merlin Unwin Books, 2014) contains a wealth of knowledge about invasive species.

## USEFUL INFORMATION

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### Tackle shops

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<b>Cheam Angling</b>	705 London Road, Worcester Park, Sutton SM3 9DL 0208 330 4787
<b>Farlows</b>	9 Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5NP 020 7484 1000
<b>Fine Line Tackle</b>	299 Mitcham Road, London. SW17 9JQ 020 8672 1699.
<b>Orvis</b>	11B Regent Street, London SW1Y 4LR 020 7930 8521

### Websites

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<b>Wandle Piscators</b>	<a href="http://www.wandlepiscators.net">www.wandlepiscators.net</a> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/thewandlepiscators">www.facebook.com/groups/thewandlepiscators</a>
<b>Fly patterns</b>	<a href="http://www.wandlepiscators.net/?p=399">www.wandlepiscators.net/?p=399</a>
<b>The Wandle Fishermen</b>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/1501287976770547/">www.facebook.com/groups/1501287976770547/</a>
<b>Riverfly Partnership</b>	<a href="http://www.riverflies.org">www.riverflies.org</a>

## Websites Continued...

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<b>Wandle Trail Map</b>	<a href="http://www2.merton.gov.uk/wandle_trail-4.pdf">www2.merton.gov.uk/wandle_trail-4.pdf</a> <a href="http://www.wandlevalleypark.co.uk/interests/walks/">www.wandlevalleypark.co.uk/interests/walks/</a>
<b>Wandle Trust</b>	<a href="http://www.wandletrust.org">www.wandletrust.org</a> <a href="https://www.facebook.com/groups/138852979465496/">www.facebook.com/groups/138852979465496/</a>
<b>Invasive species</b>	<a href="http://www.wandletrust.org/invasive-species/">www.wandletrust.org/invasive-species/</a>
<b>Pollution monitoring</b>	<a href="http://www.wandletrust.org/pollution-monitoring/">www.wandletrust.org/pollution-monitoring/</a>
<b>Clean-ups</b>	<a href="http://www.wandletrust.org/cleanups/">www.wandletrust.org/cleanups/</a>
<b>FishTec</b>	<a href="http://blog.fishtec.co.uk/river-pollution-how-anglers-can-help">blog.fishtec.co.uk/river-pollution-how-anglers-can-help</a>
<b>INNS reporting form</b>	<a href="http://www.gigl.org.uk/online/wandle-watchers.aspx">www.gigl.org.uk/online/wandle-watchers.aspx</a>
<b>Non Native Species</b>	<a href="http://www.nonnativespecies.org">www.nonnativespecies.org</a>
<b>Wandle Valley Regional Park</b>	<a href="http://www.wandlevalleypark.co.uk">www.wandlevalleypark.co.uk</a>

If you Google 'youtube wandle' – you will find a selection of videos about fishing on the Wandle.

## Byelaws

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The full Environment Agency South East Region byelaws are available on-line at [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/617739/LIT\\_10140.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/617739/LIT_10140.pdf)

The Environment Agency's pollution hotline number is 0800 80 70 60





# ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND CONTRIBUTORS

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**John O'Brien** is a Wandle Piscator and long time committee member. Since retiring, he has invested much time in re-establishing the fly fishing skills of his youth and adding some of the 'black arts' of the coarse fisherman. He is an active volunteer in river restoration projects not just on the Wandle, but as far afield as the Wiltshire Avon and the upper Tyne. He is member of the Prince Albert Angling Society (the biggest in Europe), Salisbury and District Angling Club (the best value in England) and the Fly Dressers Guild. [jfobrien@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:jfobrien@blueyonder.co.uk)



**Theo Pike** is a Founding Member of the Wandle Piscators, and served as the club's Senior Vice President from 2004 to 2014. He has also been Chairman of the Wandle Trust since 2008.

His first book, *Trout in Dirty Places*, was published by Merlin Unwin Books in 2012, and his *Pocket Guide to Balsam Bashing* appeared in 2014.

Find him online at [www.theopike.com](http://www.theopike.com) and [www.urbantrout.net](http://www.urbantrout.net)



**Jason Hill** is a Wandle Piscator, committed coarse angler and a fishing journalist.

His big break was writing for *Improve Your Coarse Fishing* magazine, where he edited the Q&A section and the Where to Fish guide. He wrote features based on the exploits of some of the angling greats, such as Bob Nudd, Matt Hayes and John Wilson. He first fished the Wandle in 2001, catching perch from a submerged washing machine in Earlsfield.

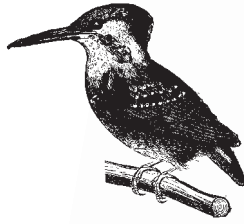
A regular at the Wandle Trust clean-ups, Jason has walked the entire length of the river but still gets excited at discovering unseen parts of the waterway.



**Stewart Ridgway** is the current Chairman of the Wandle Piscators having previously been the membership secretary for a number of years, juggling club operations whilst working full time as a Business Development Manager and still managing to find a little time to fish the Wandle. An active supporter of the Wandle Trust, he has fished the Wandle for a number of years but finds it a radical change to the Welsh coastline of his youth.



A special thank you to **Rebecca Watts** and **Sarah Perry** from the Living Wandle team who provided support and Wandle knowledge throughout the creation of this book.



# AN ANGLER'S GUIDE to the RIVER WANDLE

## RIVER MAP

