

# *The FDG Dressings Library*

by Bernard Sunderland

The Summer 1991 issue of *Flydresser* includes an article on a most generous gift recently received by the Guild: a detailed catalogue of fly patterns and references in the form of a large card index and detailed supplementary notes and appendices. The collection was the work of many years of a keen fly-fisherman and fly-dresser, the late Major Francis Howard Nalder MBE TD and was donated by his widow, Mrs. Gwen Nalder.

It was hoped at the time that the Guild would establish a major computerised catalogue of fly patterns and that Major Nalder's compilation would be a significant contribution to the project. However, it was not until 2008 that the Guild was technically ready to take the materials off their custodian, Mrs. Jean Turner (a former Secretary of the Wiltshire Chalk Streams Branch) and commence the task of turning it into a database.

By the time I started using the list, it was available as a list on the Guild's web site. I found it invaluable on occasions when I was asked for patterns with which I was not sufficiently familiar and for settling on a "personal standard dressing" for patterns that have been dressed in a number of variations by acclaimed tiers over the years. It became even more useful for me when I found that I could simply copy the list from the web page and paste it into a text editor. Having some programming ability, I then created software which enabled me to sort and search the list.

Prior to joining The Fly Dressers' Guild I had assumed that the Guild would be the fount of all fly-dressing knowledge and would be able to provide a definitive source for any established pattern. On reflection, I realise that even given the rapidly developing technology with its capacity for data storage, compiling a fully comprehensive and rigorous resource it is still an onerous task, albeit a desirable one. Before the advent of the computer and the internet, it would have been an almost impossible undertaking, but Major Nalder's collection represented a very strong and useful start.

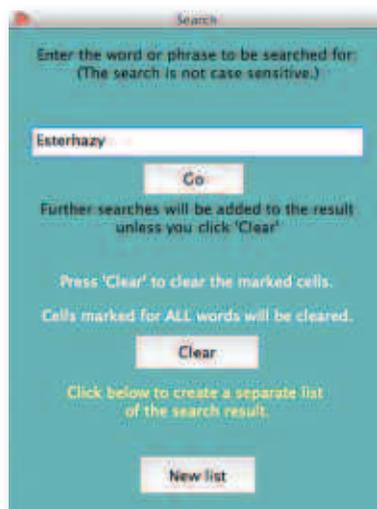
Inclusion of thousands of photographs in the current database presents a



There is one problem with format of the original entries in that no distinction is made between the author of the source of information and the originator of the pattern. In some cases they are one and the same of course, but there are many instances of an author recording patterns devised by others who perhaps were not inclined to put their creations into print. In rejuvenating the list, I have introduced a new field so that “Reference” and “Origin” are distinct. Unfortunately it has not been possible to correct the bulk of the original list in this respect, but the approximately two hundred new entries do record these separate attributes.

When the old *www.the-fdg.org* web site ceased to operate, I realised that I had a potentially valuable set of records which in fairness were not really mine, so I offered the list back to the Guild. The FDG Dressings Library is now available on the new web site and can be viewed on PC or Mac computers using my software or in Excel. It should be noted that the list of dressings itself, though packaged with software to make it more easily searchable, is a stand-alone item which remains in a simple text format. This is judged to be the safest way of preserving the information over the long-term, as the accompanying software or Excel format is likely at some point to be invalidated by the continual operating system or software updates. Even in the absence of any bespoke software, it should always be possible to copy the ANSI-format text list into any spreadsheet software to facilitate its interrogation.

Looking to the future, it is hoped that members who possess suitable



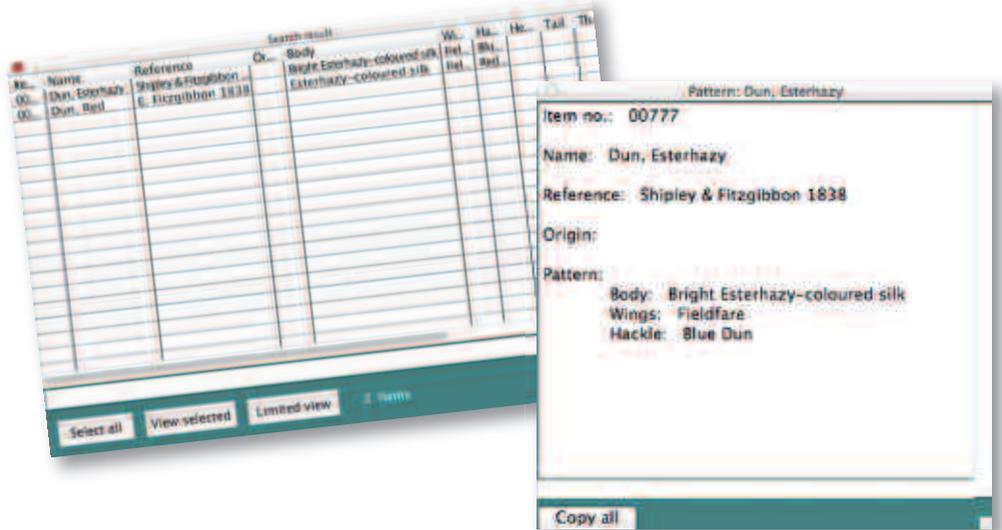
*Search facility*

*“I never read Fly-Fishing  
& Fly-Tying.”*

Blanked out angler, Opening day

**FlyFishing  
& FlyTying**

bibliography will volunteer to add more patterns to the Library. This can easily be done via a form provided by the custodian of the system (currently me). The form automatically generates a new list which can then be emailed to the custodian, who will add it to the main list. However, please note, it is clearly not practical to include every new or re-vamped idea to the list. Entries to date, like classical music, are those which have stood the test of time. Perhaps the test for new additions is that a respected author should have considered it suitable for inclusion in his work. This remains to be seen – pending the emergence of voluntary compilers!



Results for search for "Esterhazy"

### ***To access the Dressings Library***

To access the FDG Dressings Library, go to the Members' Area on the FDG website ([www.flydressersguild.org](http://www.flydressersguild.org)), log in and select the "Dressings Library" link. (*Note: if you have not applied for a username and password, you will need to do so first*).

*Editor's note: the page opposite is a re-print of the 1991 article on Major Nalder's extraordinary gift and its philosophy behind its origins.*

## A Gift to the Guild

The Fly Dressers' Guild has recently received, as a most generous gift, a detailed compilation of fly pattern information that was the work of many years by the late Major Francis Howard Nalder MBE TD. The gift was made by Major Nalder's widow, Mrs Gwen Nalder, for which the Executive Committee, on behalf of the Guild, offers most sincere thanks.



Major Nalder was passionately keen on his fishing and fly dressing and this is amply displayed by his detailed catalogue of fly patterns and references. The collection takes the form of a large card index of fly patterns, with detailed supplementary notes and appendices. If, as is hoped, the Guild can attempt to establish a major computerized catalogue of fly patterns, then Major Nalder's compilation will be a significant contribution to that project. It is only fitting that Major Nalder's own introductory note should here be reproduced.

"The idea of collecting the dressings of Trout and Sea Trout flies started soon after I started to make my own flies, when I was about twelve. It has developed over the years into a hobby in itself. The collection has been lying dormant during the 1950's to 1980's whilst I was busy earning money, bringing

up the family and serving in the Territorial Army. When I retired gradually from these activities, I found my old records and refurbished them.

Many of my friends have suggested that my collection should be published for the amusement of others and, indeed, to preserve, perhaps, those flies that are no longer in the catalogue. Who has heard of the Esterhazy Dun, or the Proud Tailor fly?

Many of the earlier books on fly tying, like Roger Woolley's *Modern Trout Fly Dressing*, published in 1932, or William Blacker's publication, in 1843, form part of my personal library. Other books, I have borrowed from my friends or from public libraries. However, probably the largest English source is W.H. Lawrie's *Reference Book of English Trout-flies*, published in 1967. This book reprints the dressings given in many of the old books, no longer accessible to the ordinary mortal.

In this book, I have listed under the Fly Name all of the different dressings I have been able to find and have shown links with flies of a similar dressing. It is extremely difficult to identify the original dressing of a particular named fly, eg. Greenwell's Glory, because from the moment that a dressing is published, the amateur (and possibly the professional) rush to produce 'improved' versions. This is human and laudable provided that they do not call their concoctions by the same name. This has, over the years, led to some flies with identical names, but with unreconcilable dressings. Could we not resolve, from now on, to christen our copies of famous originals using a prefix or suffix, eg. 'Red-wing Greenwell', or some such?

Obviously, many of the older dressings specify feathers that it is now illegal to use. I have, however, included the original materials for interest. Most good material dealers will be able to provide substitute materials for those no longer obtainable."

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In future issues of *Flydresser*, it is intended to extract some of the more unusual patterns listed in Major Nalder's collection. What better way to start than to follow his prompt? In the Autumn issue, we shall include details and dressings of both Esterhazy's Dun and the Proud Tailor Fly.