

Meet a firm that's the Dee's friend

IN these affluent days when money seems to matter more than quality of life, no wonder the environment takes such a battering.

Couldn't-care-less companies churn obnoxious waste into our waterways and we anglers face a desperate battle to save our sport. Depressing, isn't it? Well I have a tale to tell of the Welsh Dee.

It may be hard to believe, but I have just been shown a multi-billion pound chemical company on the banks of that famous river, which takes in thousands of gallons of water a day yet returns it pure and clean. The staff at the Monsanto Company own a stretch of the Dee near Ruabon, just downstream of the works. And more salmon are caught from below the works than above it.

England's world championship chief Geoff Clarkson invited a squad to fish the Dee in preparation for next year's world event on Finland's rivers. Unfortunately, heavy rain had turned the river into a chocolate brown mess. Fishing was out of the question so off we went to visit the impressive American-owned chemical company.

The Monsanto Angling Club also stock the river to keep trout in this heavily fished area. Moc Morgan said he would be happy to drink a cup of water from the river upstream of the works if fishery manager Ken Bathers would drink one from below. Ken said without hesitation that he would.

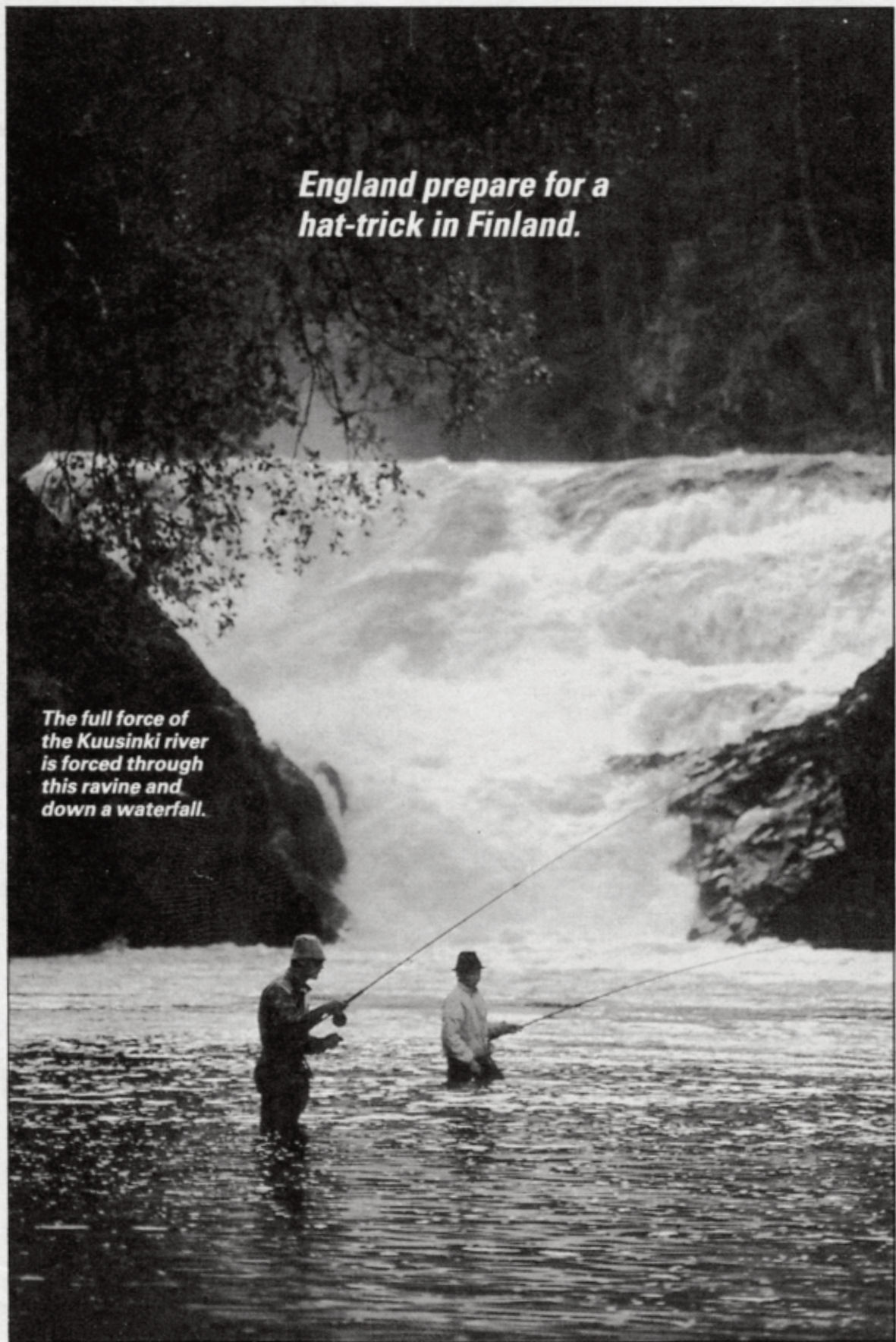
The motto of the firm is. "Be open with the public, answer any questions, and in return you will get credibility." The company make aspirins, and Frank Cutler quipped: "I'll bet there's not a fish in the Dee with a headache."

If Monsanto can make big profits without damaging our environment, then why can't others? Some of our rivers, particularly coarse fish waters, must battle to survive against unacceptable pollution levels. The culprits have no excuse and must be punished.



ENGLAND'S world-beating fly-fishing team actively backed a safety campaign by Yorkshire Electricity Board during a visit to the River Ure. Practising for this year's World Championship to be held in Finland, the anglers took time off to get a full explanation of the danger of high-voltage overhead cables, easily forgotten by anglers. Well-known fly-fisher Mike Mee (left), himself an electricity engineer, shows the team the latest warning poster.

MATCHSCENE



England prepare for a hat-trick in Finland.

The full force of the Kuusinki river is forced through this ravine and down a waterfall.



THE ENGLAND fly-fishing squad faces its toughest task yet in trying to win a hat-trick in the ninth World Fly Fishing Championships. The contest will be fished on the Kitka and Kuusinki rivers in remote north-eastern Finland early in July against a host of countries, including the Scandinavian and eastern European teams, which may include Russia.

The main quarry will be grayling and white fish, with brown trout also likely. And there's always the chance of hooking one of the migratory Russian trout which run the rivers to spawn from Lake Paanajarvi just across the border in the Soviet union. These can average five to seven pounds, and the best reported in 1988 was around 20lb.

But the England squad will be up against it from the start as the five team members have to call on all their reserves of skill, strength and experience to conquer the conditions. To repeat their victory in Tasmania last year and England in '87 the squad will have to cope with

- Eighty-degree temperatures from a sun that never sets.
- Long fishing periods of seven hours, both day and night.
- Hordes of ravenous mosquitoes that call for total body protection.
- Long walks up and down rocky, steep banks in chest waders.
- All-river venues that alternate between flats and white-water rapids.
- A main quarry of grayling and white fish,



England's non-fishing team captain Geoff Clarkson test fishes Finland's Kitka River last summer.

which are very soft mouthed.

- The possibility of a confrontation with a brown bear. 64 were recently counted from the air in the Kuusamo region.
- A diet of reindeer meat.

"There's no doubt that this will be the hardest World Championship we've ever fished," said team manager Geoff Clarkson. "We are up against a bigger group of countries, a different sort of river fishing and different species. The long fishing periods will make a gruelling event, but we've been practising hard for it on British rivers."

The first practise session was on the Welsh Dee, as the conditions there were the nearest I could find to the Finnish rivers. Here all the team caught grayling on wet fly, while we experimented with a variety of tactics. Brian Leadbetter and myself had visited the Kuusamo area of Finland on a reconnaissance trip last summer, so we knew more or less what to expect.

The next practise session was on the Ure in Yorkshire, where the local grayling experts were very helpful with patterns and advice. And the final session was on the Test, which we found absolutely stuffed full of grayling. Here there were so many — I was catching them two at a time — that we could afford to try out different techniques, and flies."

Geoff revealed that the main challenge would come from countries like Czechoslovakia, Finland, Poland and Italy whose teams are experienced in

catching river grayling while there was the chance that Russia would compete for the first time, along with newcomers Sweden, Iceland and Denmark.

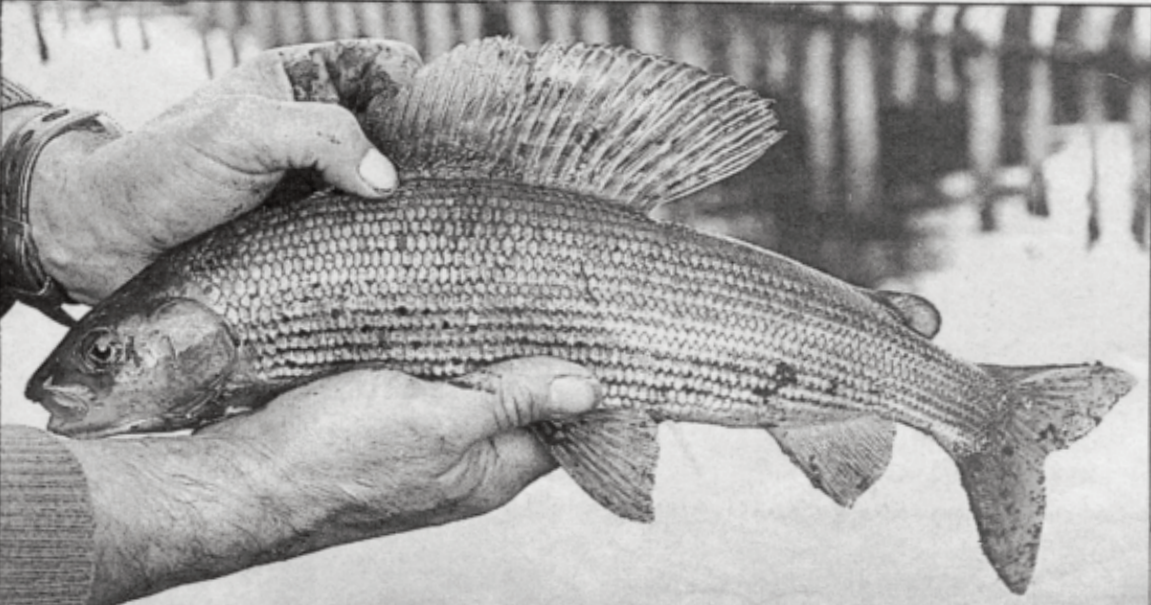
The England team of Bob Church, Denis Buck, last year's World Champion John Pawson, Brian Leadbetter, Brian Thomas, plus reserves Chris Ogborne, Chris Howitt and Paul Canning, will arrive at the venue seven days early for practise on the rivers.

The Kitka river runs deep in a canyon surrounded by pine forests with steep banks. Like many British venues the river alternates between flats and rapids but at three metres is deeper than most.

Some 16 km of the Kuusinki river will be fished, and the hosts rate it their premier flyfishing venue along nearly all this length, excluding some rapids which are unfishable. However mosquitoes which favour the wooded shores of the streams demand complete protection with insect repellent. On last year's visit Brian Leadbetter was bitten through his thick moleskin shirt.

The whole event is forming part of a fishing carnival to celebrate the brief four or five-month fly fishing season. Incidentally, if you fancy an expertly-guided trip of the area you can contact a firm called Kuusamon Lomat Oy, at Kithantie 20 SF 93600 Kuusamo, Finland. A seven-day white-water rafting and fishing trip along 30 miles of river, living in rough Lapp huts, will cost a group of eight people 29,000 Finnmarks around £500 each at current exchange rates.

Grayling like this beauty will be the target species for the England team. The other species is the herring-like Vendace, a white fish which averages between a pound and two pound and is netted out for supermarket consumption.



'Give new names a chance'

THERE WERE mixed opinions from readers who filled in our April questionnaire on the reselection of the England team that won so handsomely in Tasmania, with those who wanted to see fresh faces each year in the England squad actually in the majority.

Even those readers who were happy to see the same '88 team fish in Finland this summer did not think that a winning team should always be automatically reselected. "This would be morally wrong," commented **B Andrews**, of Richmond, N. Yorks, who also thought that only the team's top performer should be reselected for the following year. New rules mean that now a maximum of three anglers only can be reselected for next year's team.

Mr Andrews also thought that the England squad should qualify from selected matches and made the point that as grayling fishing was so important in Finland then maybe the winner of the Salmon and Trout Association's grayling match in Yorkshire would have been an appropriate choice.

In contrast, Mr **Freeman** of Walsall, West Midlands, said that he would give a winning squad three years before reselecting, while **Andrew Poole**, of Warwick, believed "There is no point in changing a winning team for the sake of it," he wrote.

On the other side, Mr **Learwood**, of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, thought that the team should be for amateurs only with no tackle dealers included. He believed that every year's squad should be completely reselected.

For the Welsh team, Cardiff's **Ken Bowring** thought that the selection had been "unsatisfactory". He commented: "Due to lack of sponsorship, the expenditure has been left to those that could afford to go."

"Even the present team to fish Finland this year was drawn by lot out of current international team members. Still, I feel, undemocratic, but I wish them success."

"Sponsorship is the key to a successful team as England has shown us. I would like to take this opportunity of asking the top tackle companies in the country to give Wales the backing it so badly needs."

The Scottish team is also not sponsored with members having to pay their own way to Finland. Scotland held their qualifier on the river Tummel among 14 anglers to select a team of four to join last year's top rod in Tasmania, Sandy Forgan. Those who will now fly out to Finland are Brian Stewart, Dave Lamb, Robbie McGregor and Jimmy Fairgreave.

● Spain is the venue for the 1990 World Match, followed by New Zealand in '91, Canada in '92 and Wales in '93.



The England squad for Finland '89.

ENGLAND IN BID FOR A HAT-TRICK

"The rivers are very varied. Finnish methods we picked up during our visit."



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Geoff Clarkson (captain), Dennis Buck, Bob Church, Brian Leadbetter, Chris Ogborne & John Pawson

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POLE-AXED

After winning the last two World Championships on stillwater, England slumped to 13th place when it came to the fast-flowing rivers of the Finnish forests. STEVE WINDSOR reports from near the Arctic Circle.

POLAND took the team and individual 1989 World Flyfishing Championships in Finland as **England** failed to complete a hat-trick of wins. **Scotland** returned delighted with their sixth place, both team and individual, the latter being the top British angler **Brian Stuart**. Wales pulled up from a lowly position to ninth on the final session, while **England** had to be content with a share of 13th position alongside **Canada** and the **USA**. **France** and **Finland** supplied the second and third teams, and despite having fourth and fifth individuals, **Italy** took fourth place. Wales' top man was young **Justin Roberts** in 33rd place, while England had the dogged **Brian Thomas** at a creditable 16th. Last year's champion **John Pawson** sank to 57th. But without exception the British teams were full of praise for the superb Poles, with their champion **Wladyslaw Trzebuinia**, and for second placed former World Champion **Slavoj Svoboda** of Czechoslovakia. Their superb grayling skills came to the fore, and fascinated all who witnessed them. Their technique is often described as the "rolling nymph" which gives some

Last year's World Champion John Pawson nymphs the fast-flowing Kuusinkki River in the birch forests of northern Finland.



indication both of the casting involved and the action of the flies, but leaves the majority in the dark. The Poles are virtually professional anglers in a nation where the economy dictates that fish are an important food supplement and item of barter. As a consequence they have developed an eerie skill both for sussing out the exact location of the grayling shoals and of hitting takes that others never see. One Pole related how he'd only got six metres of fishable water in his allotted pool so for six hours he fished it, and took four sizable grayling from it. The technique is to cast out a short line, perhaps two rod lengths of line, usually with two heavily-led nymphs on the end. The lead wire to weight these flies, often dressed on heavy irons as large as size six, is sometimes smuggled from the shipyards. The flies are very basic, plump, and without hackles. Their two deadliest flies were a green pattern and a yellow fly with a brown back very likely imitating the free-swimming or net-weaving sedge pupae like *Hydropsyche*. The short cast is made one-handed and the rod is lifted to stay in touch with the

flies as they come downstream. A number of gentle lifts, jigs, or strikes are made during the drift down (depending on which translation you believe). This lifting at apparently random intervals, hooks a number of grayling and whitefish, and its fair share of trout. It's also likely to induce takes from the fish. Two flies are used with a very heavy sacrificial nymph on the point, but most fish take the dropper. Most of the teams tried to imitate the Poles but few succeeded. To better understand the technique you also have to know the river venues. The pools on the Kuusinkki and Kitka rivers consisted mainly of long canal-like reaches interspersed with boiling runs which held the grayling, trout and sik (whitefish). To control a fly in this water (and to wade it) is an art in itself and the tight control of the Poles with the nymph, and the Italians with the dry fly was superbly suited to the waters. Standard wet fly style tactics, often with a streamer or Muddler also scored, especially with the few Russian trout that were taken. These fish, with the other species mentioned, made up the four target game fish and are the special

attraction of the two venues. The beautiful sea-trout like silver fish run up the rivers from their Russian lake home across the border to spawn in Finland. Top Scotsman Brian Stuart captured two on his best night on the Kuusinkki, and lost three more and with them his chance of being individual World Champion. **Controversy** THE EVENT was not without its controversy. Size limits for the grayling and whitefish were increased just before the event, while the brown trout were worth a bonus 30 points — a fact made ridiculous by a heavy stocking of browns just before the event. These fish were easily-taken, but even more ridiculously, they often measured just a fraction under the size that scored. All fish were measured then released, though hooks were not barbless and the minimum hook size was as large as a two! Not a few of the stockie browns were seen to have turned over, unable to recover in the full force of the water. Each pool was fished day and night for two and half days, with only the briefest respite, so results could be expected to tail off by day three. But a bigger problem than this was the pools themselves. Chosen it seemed mostly for their ease of access from the forest logging roads, many of the pools offered little or nothing for the fly fisherman. **Chris Ogborne's** final pool had less than 15 metres of fast boiling water. Fourth placed Italian **Mario Altor** had perhaps 20 times as much fishable water on the next pool, and brilliantly worked his dry fly skills there. The rest of Chris's pool was a long shallow lake by contrast. There was also the problem of the Kitka river which simply didn't fish throughout the contest. Some 90 anglers on the river took just 99 sizable fish through the contest and many pools produced no fish at all. This meant that for one session of their three the contestants were guaranteed to struggle. Even anglers as competent at grubbing out the sik and grayling from poor pools as Svoboda were forced to suffer blanks here. England's five men managed seven fish and three blanks on the Kitka. **England's agony** ENGLAND left their base at Ruka with comparatively long faces. The luck of the draw was undoubtedly not with them and several of their pools had no sizable fish and few of the right species. Casting to a rise brought a pound and a half pike to **Bob Church**; he also hooked two perch at once. On another occasion Bob needed to take 51 grayling to score with just three. He ended in 48th place. **Brian Leadbetter** also took vast numbers of stocky browns to measure in 14. Brian then needed six stitches after cutting his hand on a glass, and **Chris Ogborne** was called into the team. Brian's disaster rapidly became Chris' nightmare as he recorded two blanks, losing a 2 lb brown at the net on a pool that had only previously produced one fish. Brian's first day performance alone was enough for 70th place. Once again it was bulldog **Brian Thomas** whose thorough, painstaking but intuitive approach covered the water so completely that he dredged up fish from each of his venues, including a rare four fish on the

TROUT FISHERMAN



Bob Church with a magnificent 7¼lb Russian brown trout taken on a size 12 Hare's Ear variant from the Kuusinkki River. Bob had to land the migratory trout without a net during practise.

Kitka — his reward was top English individual at 16th. **John Pawson** once again showed the virtues of perseverance — and wading to the collar button — as even when struggling on the Midnight sun Kuusinkki session he scraped together four late trout — but the former World Champion could only manage 57th place this time. **Dennis Buck** lacked the draw to make much impression and two indifferent pools, plus one blank left him with just three fish and 85th place. Gnawed by mosquitoes, distrustful of the limited hotel food of sausage, fish, reindeer and potatoes, and savaged by the draw, England's team spirit was not easily revived by Lapin Kulta lager at £3.70 a half litre. It was an occasion that they'd like to forget, and with team changes to be enforced before next year's championships in Spain, it marked the end of an era for this most successful World Team. Symbolically they presented their rods to their Polish victors. **Brian's triumph** SCOTLAND'S **Brian Stuart** had quality on his side when he needed just 14 fish for sixth place — compared to the mainly grayling catch of Belgian **Jaquie Lemmer** in seventh place (25 fish). Brian had a pretty good draw, not least in taking two Russian browns from one pool, but he had to adapt his tactics, and watercraft. The Scots scored well with all the available tactics depending on the water. A Sculpin pattern was successful swung around wet fly style, while others in the team scored with the nymph. Brian had few opportunities for his favourite dry fly tactics. He also had to account for stockies that held in far more powerful water than he'd even fish in Scotland — as did many of the native fish. The Kitka was Scotland's problem water too. "When the Russians hadn't run on the Kitka, they opened a dam or something, pushing the water 18 inches over normal. Nothing was caught on the Kitka bar grayling, and few of those were sizable" Brian told me. Brian had six on this first session — two measured. When he drew a top pool on the Kuusinkki, Brian didn't mess about, tackling it with 14 lb nylon and an Intermediate line. "Wading was so difficult that I hooked one Russian and before I could get out to the bank it was out of control and away on the backing." But despite losing two others Brian

covered the water thoroughly to pick up two Russians and four browns for his best session. Brian too, had his problems with mosquitoes. "I made the long hike down to the Kitka without my waders on the first session. The next morning I had been so badly bitten that on one ankle I couldn't get both my sock and my waders on." Brian was ably supported by the 24th place of **David Lamb**; 27th of **Robbie McGregor**; 51st of **Jim Fairgrieve**; and 66th of **Sandy Forgan**. **Wales revive** WALES were the pride of Moc Morgan as his team lifted themselves from a lowly position on the final evening, to ninth on the next afternoon. Team manager Moc told me: "There were problems with the draw as too much depended on the pools as opposed to the skill of the angler — every pool should have had something to reward the skilful angler. We got the impression that some beats were devoid of the right sort of fish. "Each pool demanded its own tactics, though we were greatly interested in the Russian trout which called for sea-trout tactics." Locals recommended black flies for the Kuusinkki but the Welsh found red — and in case of **Osgar Evans** red and white extremely effective. The Welsh too, found the stockfish took up positions in remarkably fast water. Moc paid tribute to the Scots and their workrate — and to young Welshman **Justin Roberts** almost certainly the youngest competitor, who did not blank on any of his pools. Justin was 33rd; **Osgar Evans** 35th (with twice as many fish as Justin); **Ralf Osowicz** was 43rd; **Adrian Nixon** was 53rd; and **Alan Lewis** 68th. **RESULTS** **TOP TEN TEAMS** (18 took part) 1. Poland; 2. France; 3. Finland; 4. Italy; 5. Belgium; 6. Scotland; 7. Czechoslovakia; 8. Norway; 9. Wales; 10. Spain. **TOP TEN INDIVIDUALS** 1. Wladyslaw Trzebuinia, Poland; 2. Slavoj Svoboda, Czechoslovakia; 3. Jyrki Lamsa, Finland; 4. Maria Altor, Italy; 5. Enrico Copella, Italy; 6. Brian Stuart, Scotland; 7. Jaquie Lemmer, Belgium; and John Sautelle, Australia; 9. Henrie Rahier, Belgium; 10. Jaques Boyko, France, and Veikko Hiltunen, Finland.

England
Denis Buck, Bob Church, Brian Leadbetter, John Pawson & Brian Thomas. Geoff Clarkson (Manager). (Reserves) Chris Ogborne (1st Reserve), Chris Howitt (2nd Reserve) & Paul Canning (3rd Reserve).

Teams:	Individuals:
1. Poland	1. Wladyslaw Trzebuinia (<i>Poland</i>)
2. France	2. Slavoj Svoboda (<i>Poland</i>)
3. Finland	3. Jyrki Lamsa (<i>Finland</i>)
4. Italy	4. Mario Altor (<i>Italy</i>)
5. Belgium	5. Enrico Copella (<i>Italy</i>)
6. Scotland	6. Brian Stuart (<i>Scotland</i>)
7. Czechoslovakia	7= Jaquie Lemmer (<i>Belgium</i>)
8. Norway	7= John Sautelle (<i>Australia</i>)
9. Wales	9. Henrie Rahier (<i>Belgium</i>)
10. Spain	10= Jacques Boyko (<i>France</i>)
	10= Veikko Hiltunen (<i>Finland</i>)
13. England	

BOB Church returned from the World Championships with tales of woe for England's hat-trick title bid, but he also enjoyed moments of pure angling excitement. Find out how he fared chest deep in a Finnish river fighting with a massive Russian trout.

DRAW DAMPENS A SHOOT-OUT

BY now you all know the result of the 1989 World Fly-Fishing Championships held in North-East Finland next to the Russian border.

Without wishing to winge too much, the draw was so unkind to the England team we had no hope of coming in the top six.

This is the first time in a fly-fishing contest I have noticed the draw for beats upsetting the form book so dramatically. Now we understand what coarse fishing competitors put up with every week.

However, the two-week trip was not without incident and left many good memories. The internal flight from Helsinki in a small prop aircraft allowed our party to get a look at the Finnish countryside which altered little all the way.

We saw thousands of lakes and endless forests of pine and silver birch trees.

The England team hired a mini-bus and practised at various stretches of river with quite excellent results. Each day more than 100 fish were being caught consistently including grayling, white fish and trout. Some days we caught nearly twice that number. We were obviously in confident mood.

Climax

This came to a climax on the final practise day when we landed four of the elusive and massive Russian brown trout. Chris Ogborne took one of 6 lb, Brian Leadbetter landed a 6½ lb specimen, I took a fish of 7¼ lb, and our Finnish guide Juha Vaino took his best Russian brown of 8½ lb.

My 7¼ lb fish too was the largest brown trout I had caught from a river and it took a little (size 12) weighted Hare's Ear variant given to me by Charles Jardine and fished on a 5 lb nylon leader.

I had been fishing all morning for Russian browns with heavier tackle without success except for a few grayling. No sooner had I changed to the lighter outfit and walked half a mile from the rest of the party than I hooked the big fish and was into one of the best fights I can remember.

I was fishing a white water rapid, which was quite shallow and rocky, and I had waded a third of the way across the River Kuusinkki. I cast my nymph into a flat mini-pool when all hell broke loose.

The first leap was a magnificent four-footer and I thought I'd never land the fish, for I was on my own without a net, as we had been returning everything.

My luck was in though, for after several dazzling runs I was still keeping



a steady, even pressure. At the same time I was keeping my rod very high because I didn't want the size 12 Zulu on my top dropper to catch on one of the many rocks the trout was zig-zagging past.

Stunned

The trout kept looking for an escape route, but the hook held firm and after about 15 minutes the trout was getting closer.

I had slowly backed up and was near to the bank. The fish made another leap as it raced into one foot of water and on falling back it stunned itself on the bottom. Without ceremony I leapt on to it and pushed it on the bank.

I was overjoyed and this was the only fish out of over 200 I kept during two weeks. It was a magnificent specimen

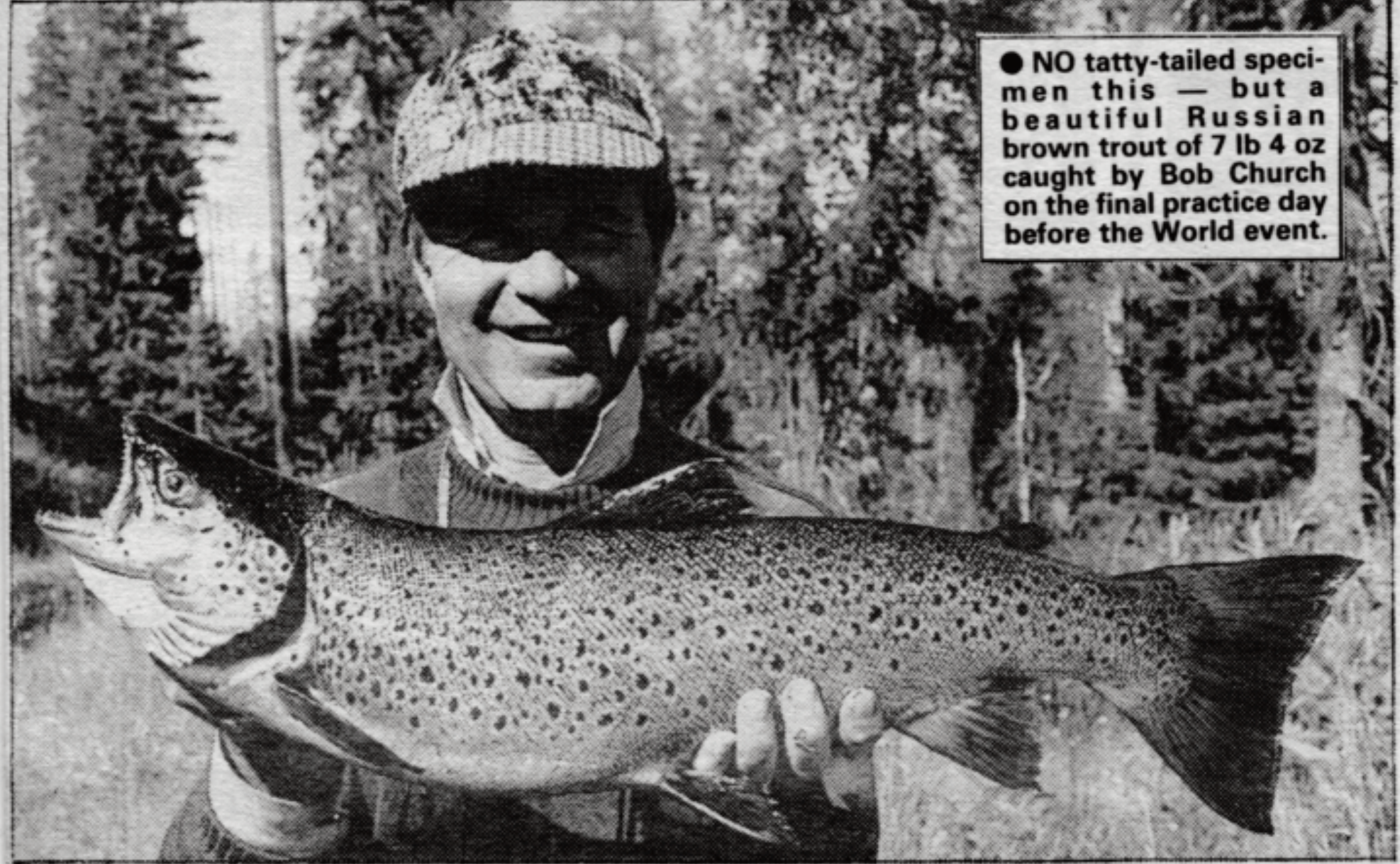
and it made a good meal too and was a welcome change from reindeer meat!

Russian trout begin their lives in one of the two Finnish rivers, the River Kuusumi and River Kitka. After two years they migrate downstream, crossing the Russian border and moving into a giant lake called Paanajarvi.

Here they continue to grow as a salmon would in the sea. At a minimum of 4½ lb they become sexually mature and ascend the rivers to spawn. Each year some 500 specimens are caught up to 20 lb.

After the fish return to the river they behave just like salmon and you have to tempt them by fluttering a fly across their path, which they take as an intruder.

Apart from these migratory trout there were large stocks of grayling and white fish. I also caught perch, pike and



side — a fish that looks like our roach but it has a record weight in Finland of 11 lb!

I thought you might be interested in some more of the Finnish fish records, so I made a point of finding some out during my stay. Their bream record is over 24 lb, pike over 52 lb, perch over 8 lb, Atlantic salmon over 88 lb, sea trout over 40 lb, brown trout over 32 lb, Arctic charr over 19 lb, grayling over 14 lb, zander over 35 lb, and the burbot, which is now extinct in the UK, over 33 lb.

The staple diet in Finland meant all our party lost weight. I lost three-quarters of a stone. Every meal was reindeer meat and or raw fish, and this coupled with walking in chest waders in temperatures of 86/88 made us melt away!

Another hazard was the mosquitoes, which were present in their millions and they even managed to bite through the layers of jumpers, shirts and thick moleskin.

Did I enjoy it? It is difficult to say but it was certainly very different from anywhere else in the world I've been.

From now on those reindeers on the Christmas cards will never look the same again and with a pint of lager around £4 life was quite tough.

However, we did beat the Aussies, even if our cricketers cannot. Congratulations to the Scots for finishing sixth, and to Stuart Brian, who also managed sixth in the individual stakes.

To sum up, it seemed wrong to have to rely on a lucky draw for a beat which held stocked browns to give you a high weight. The organisers also raised the size limit of grayling which counted from 25 cm to 28 cm and this proved difficult. For example, I caught 51 grayling on my first heat with only three going on my score.

Next year the event is in Spain where perhaps stock brown trout could again make the whole thing a lottery. It is to be fished on either the River Tormas or at Leon.

I have asked the Finnish tourist service to send me all the details for trip for parties of six anglers wishing to tackle the big Russian brown trout. I will give all the details in a future Bob Drift.



DISASTROUS draw robbed England's fly anglers of the chance to pull off an historic hat-trick of world championship victories.

Their hopes of bringing back a third consecutive world title were dealt a blow by the last minute stocking of hundreds of brown trout in the rivers Kuusinkki and Kitka in Finland and horrendous luck at the draw.

Their successful practice session counted for nothing when the two-day competition got underway and the reigning champions had to settle for 13th place at the end of the two-day competition.

Attacking the rivers with a series of leaded nymphs, England couldn't find the magic touch from a number of swims which were devoid of fish.

And when they did find the fish, they found the organisers' decision to increase the size limit for grayling from 25 cm to 28 cm and stocked brown trout from 28 cm to 30 cm too much to overcome.

It left the way clear for Poland to take the title with a ranking score of 161. France finished second with 170 points and host nation Finland were third with 187 points.

Top British team turned out to be Scotland, who finished sixth with 214 points. They also had best individual placing in Stuart Brian, who finished sixth.

Wales were ninth with 256 points, while England could only manage 13th place and 292 points.

Dejected Angling Times columnist Bob Church said: "We're all very disappointed because in another

we've tasted defeat and we don't like it.

"It was a grueller for us and the luck of the draw completely ruined it. There were five pegs which produced nothing during the competition and we had three of them. There were several below average or average pegs and we drew 11 of them.

"When we did catch fish they were usually under the size limit," he added.

England's bad luck continued when former world champion Brian Leadbetter cut his casting hand on a broken glass and was replaced by Chris Ogborne for the last two sessions of the tournament.

The top performances for England came from Brian Thomas who won one of the heats and Bob Church who finished second all very disappointed because in another

REIGNING champions England slumped to 13th place while Poland lifted the 1989 World Flyfishing Crown on Finland's Rivers Kitka and Kuusinkki. Scotland were sixth.

Plagued by bad luck and mediocre draws, Bob Church, Brian Thomas, John Pawson and Dennis Buck were joined by reserve Chris Ogborne after first choice Brian Leadbetter cut a finger to the bone and needed seven stitches during the first day.

Scotland's Brian Stewart finished sixth in the individual listings, helped by two huge brown trout.

AFTER the World Championships in Finland, a lot of anglers showed an interest in the country as a flyfishing holiday destination, with those magnificent Russian brown trout as the ultimate goal.

If you wish to visit the Kussamo region in the North-East of the country and cast a line into the Kussinkki and Kitka rivers I

have been given details.

One enterprising local can provide accommodation in cabins of various sizes, transport and various other pastimes as well as fishing, such as river rafting.

Interested? Then contact Petri Pajunen, Petricon Oy, Merikatu 4A, 00100 Oulu, Finland.



Almost there! Chris Ogborne brings his first Russian brownie to the guide's tiny net.

To catch a Russian

THIS SUMMER I travelled to Finland as a member of the Drennan Team England party, to fish the 9th World Fly Fishing Championships, in Kuusamo. This is in the far north-east of Finland, just a few miles from the Russian border. The story of the championship has been told elsewhere, but this is something different — a story within a story. It concerns a game-fish quarry almost as elusive as the myth surrounding it, the Russian brown trout.

Most anglers have caught migratory trout, as many of our rivers still abound, thankfully, with sea-trout. However, the Russian brown trout is very different. They hatch in the upper waters of two of Finland's great rivers, the Kitka and Kuusink. As the summer in this northern latitude is so short, they grow very slowly, and at two years old they can be less than six inches long.

Gradually they move downriver, across the Russian frontier and on down until they reach the waters of Lake Paanajarvi. This vast stretch of freshwater is over 100 miles long and teems with fish of infinite variety. Just like salmon and sea-trout in the oceans, the Russian brown trout find a huge quantity of food and quickly put on weight. The sparse and short-lived summer feeding in the

A trip to Finland provides
CHRIS OGBORNE with an opportunity
to search for one of the world's most
elusive game-fish

rivers is replaced by a limitless bounty, and the trout become large and muscular inside two seasons.

The mature fish, weighing upwards of 4 lb, congregate at river-mouths towards the middle of June to begin their upstream journey to the spawning grounds. Again there is a distinct resemblance to salmon, as the fish do not feed in rivers. Some are netted and some fall victim to natural predators, but the strongest of them ascend a mixture of rocky pools and white-water rapids to complete the cycle. Their average size in the Kuusink is around 6 lb to 7 lb, but those in the Kitka run much larger, with fish up to 20 lb being taken every year. The flies used to catch them are far more varied than those used for salmon and sea-trout, as it seems that almost anything can provoke a reaction from a Russian brown, despite their non-feeding condition.

That is the theory. The facts were that my companions and I

had not even seen a Russian brown during the whole of our first week in Finland. We had seen the photographs both in the Finnish trout-fishing magazines and in tourist brochures. We had also heard stories from our guide of big catches of double-figure fish and from others who claimed to have seen shoals waiting to run the river, but none of our number had yet seen one.

Then came the torment. On one of those endless Finnish evenings (the sun barely sets and the light only fades slightly for a couple of hours after midnight) some French anglers returned to the hotel with a brace. Like all fishermen the world over they were only too keen to display their success, and we were treated to our first sight of these beautiful trout.

At first sight they were almost exactly like sea-trout, but with much heavier markings. Huge black spots ran right down the flanks, and the underside was more white than silver. We were later to discover that these

markings often run right into the tail — something unique in brown trout. The French were understandably euphoric, and the whole team were able to dine on one wonderful 6 lb fish the following evening.

Still we had no fish of our own. We were on the right river, or rather we were assured we were on the right river, we were fishing in very likely looking pools, sometimes well into the evening and night, our guide was becoming more encouraging, and promising us even better chances as each new stretch of river was explored, but still we had no fish. On one evening, after a full day of fruitless labour, Paul Canning and I decided to fish on into the night, on one particularly good-looking stretch of the Kuusink. Mike Mee opted to join us.

On our arrival we made a camp fire and rested the river for an hour or so. These camp fires provide a wonderful atmosphere, and in the half light around midnight it is easy to believe that one is many miles from another human being. Flights of mergansers were our companions, along with dippers and various finches in the fir trees overhead. This particular evening was crystal clear, and we were treated to what the Finns call a "white night", when the entire skyline takes on the palest pastel shades for the one hour between sunset and sunrise.

At around one o'clock we worked our way methodically through the pools, but either no fresh fish had run in, or we were simply using the wrong flies. Either way, it was yet another fruitless session.

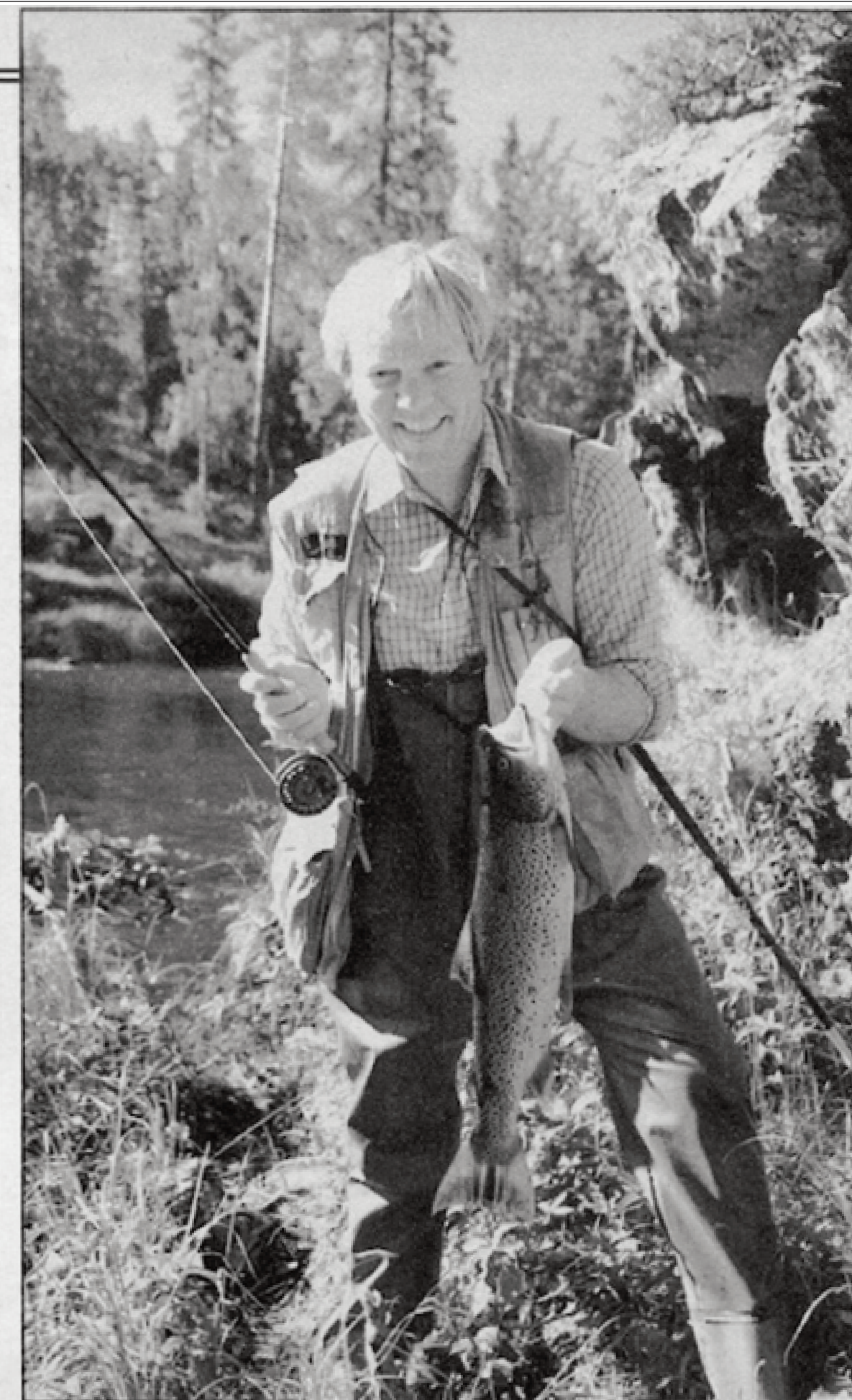
However, there were other benefits to our night's vigil, for on the way back to the hotel with the guide, at four o'clock in the morning, we were treated to the sight of four capercaillie moving in a very unconcerned way off the road and into the surrounding scrub. We left the car to try to catch them on camera, and after we had done so we experienced what our Finnish guide so often referred to as the "total silence" of the countryside. Standing on the crest of a small hill we could see for vast distances in all directions, without anything to break the landscape of pine forest and lake. Only a Russian guard tower on a distant horizon served to remind us of the real world.

The final thorn came on our return to the hotel, when a party of Norwegians, who had been fishing less than a mile downstream of us, were busily photographing five Russian browns. Needless to say we were the butt of much humour, as these Norwegians had achieved in less than two hours' fishing the same goal that we had been striving for fourteen hours to attain. At breakfast the next day one of our friends in the Australian team recounted his story of a Russian brown taken on dry-fly; it was rapidly becoming a point of some dishonour that the English had still to make contact.

This is not in any way to imply that we were not catching other fish. Quite the contrary, in fact, as the waters we were visiting contained plenty of small grayling, small brown trout and white fish. Great sport was enjoyed by all, and though the majority of the fish were very small, they were very good fun on light tackle. The problem was that we could not feed the whole team on six-inch fish, and all of us yearned, secretly or otherwise, to make contact with a Russian. Though few would admit it, a degree of despondency was creeping in that even the encouraging words of our guide could not dispel.

Then came the final practice day before the World Championships, which in the view of many would be our last chance to make amends. We were scheduled to fish a very likely stretch called Takupyörre, from which two big trout had been taken the previous day. However, the runs of these fish were so unpredictable and we had by now become so used to the disappointment of not seeing one that we could muster only marginal enthusiasm. Even the glint in the eye of our guide when he confidently predicted that today would be the day was not enough to quicken the pulse.

We drove down yet another of Kuusamo's endless dirt tracks until we parked in a small logging



An ambition realised: Chris Ogborne with his six-pounder.

clearing just two miles from the Russian border. Our first sight of the water went some way to lifting our spirits, as there were three main pools that looked absolutely perfect. Had this been in England we would have guaranteed trout from them, but in Finland we had learned not to expect too much at first sight. Geoff Clarkson nominated me to be first on the main pool, and with a small audience I laid out the first tentative line.

I was using a small squirrel-tail streamer fly with a lot of orange hackle and jungle cock, strongly

recommended by the Norwegians, and on my first cast I felt a solid thump on the line. My increased heart rate slowed down very soon, however, when the fish revealed itself to be a grayling of almost 1 lb — a nice fish, but not quite what I had been hoping for. Undaunted, I took a couple of steps downstream and laid out a longer line, to move the fly over and across the wake of a large boulder in mid-stream. The fish did not actually take the fly, but rather savaged it with a huge slashing boil right on the surface, and in one stark second of realisation I was



A welcome change from reindeer meat! Dennis Buck and the writer prepare a trout and grayling feast on the banks of the Kuusink River.

into my first Russian brown.

In an instant he took ten yards of line down to the tail of the pool, amid excited shouts from above. With much encouragement from my bankside colleagues, and with some tongue-in-cheek comments about waiting for cameras, I steadily played the fish through the pool. I was using a 9ft 3in prototype rod, and with the benefit of hindsight I should perhaps have chosen heavier tackle.

Fortunately, the light rod performed faultlessly, and after ten minutes the fish was looking decidedly tired. Our guide had joined me in the water with a very small net and commented that the fish was almost certainly fresh run and probably a little tired from his upstream journey, otherwise the fight would have been much more spectacular, accompanied by aerobatics that would have tested the 6 lb double-strength leader to the extreme. Finally, the guide posted himself some yards downstream of me and I eased the fish, tail first, into the net, which was far too small to allow conventional netting.

There followed the inevitable blurred quarter of an hour that seems always to take place after a special angling goal has been achieved. My fellow team members seemed almost as happy as I was, largely because honour had been restored, and perhaps even more importantly because just for once we would not be eating reindeer meat.

But this beautiful stretch of river had not yet finished with us. During the course of the morning both Brian Leadbetter and Bob Church had a fish. Then just after lunch our guide, John, made the tally two brace with a magnificent specimen of 8½ lb. Our fish had been about 6½ lb and were obviously fresh-run, whereas John's was much darker and more golden and appeared to have been in the river for some weeks. It had the most beautiful markings I have ever seen in a fish, with huge black and brown spots extending to the very tip of the tail. It was a perfect end to a perfect day, and we were a very satisfied group of anglers as we headed wearily homeward in the afternoon.

Even though beer cost almost £4 a pint, there was no stinting on the celebrations; we had finally tracked down one of the most elusive fish in the game-angling world. Obviously, luck played more than a large part — we had stumbled upon the right pool at the right stage of the run. In the course of a normal season only 500 Russian browns are taken from the Kitka/Kuusink system, so to catch four in one day was more than fortunate. For me it was undoubtedly the high spot of the trip, for at 6 lb it was the biggest wild brown trout I had ever caught. The memory of that short ten minutes will be with me long after the photographs have faded.