

# Donnington Grove

time is precious.  
use it fishing



## WELCOME TO DONNINGTON GROVE

*Welcome to Donnington Grove and your fishing on the River Lambourn. By now I hope you are relaxed, reading this with a cup of coffee and preparing for a great fishing day.*

*Here is a summary of the fishing and what to expect; have a lovely day.*



The Donnington Grove Country Club came into being in the 1990's when the house, estate and river was sold by the Dashwood family around the time that the Newbury by-pass was being built.

It was bought by a Japanese corporation who created a magnificent golf course and a Japanese Temple which you can take a peek at through the gates of the walled garden.

Despite being a fly fishing mad nation, the Japanese took little interest in the river which had previously been leased by the Piscatorial Society for many decades. However, when the property changed hands about fifteen years ago, becoming a Country Club, we became involved.

The River Lambourn rises in the Berkshire Downs near its namesake village of Lambourn and is a tributary of the River Kennet, which itself is a tributary of the River Thames. It is almost unique in that its flow regime remains in near-natural form, not significantly affected by groundwater abstraction. Ironically, this situation developed because of a major groundwater abstraction project.

In the 1960's the long term water supply situation for London was regarded as vulnerable and one avenue investigated to rectify this was to use untapped water resources naturally stored in the chalk aquifer of low population density areas of southeast England. One such area was the West Berkshire Downs, including the catchment of the River Lambourn. The plan was to abstract groundwater from the chalk aquifer during times of drought and then use the existing river system as a natural conduit to transport the water to London, via the River Kennet and the River Thames.

An area in the catchment of the River Lambourn was selected as a pilot study to assess the feasibility of the project, and the Lambourn Valley Pilot Scheme was undertaken between 1967 and 1970. The final conclusion from the pilot study was that the overall scheme appeared feasible and a significant number of large abstraction boreholes and observation boreholes, together with pipelines and control equipment, were installed in the Lambourn catchment and also in other nearby river catchments.

The project, named the Thames Groundwater Scheme, was completed in 1976 to coincide with the most serious drought in 50 years, but on final testing of the scheme it was found that the effective increase in river flow downstream was minimal, and essentially the project was a failure.

Almost all of the infrastructure for the project (now known as the West Berkshire Groundwater Scheme) is still in place and maintained, albeit on a rather shoestring budget. But the lasting legacy of the scheme is that the catchment has been preserved as a near-natural groundwater system, almost totally unaffected by groundwater abstractions.

## THE FISHING

You have about 1,100 yards of fishing, of which I would estimate you must wade at least two thirds. The lake has a few rainbows with a limited section of bank to fish from if you wish.

You will find golf balls in the river; if you wish to pick them up and keep them, you are very welcome. Keep an ear out for balls that clatter into the trees and the occasional cry of Fore! No fishermen have been hit to date, nor have there been any near misses we know of, but it is best to keep your head down if you hear anything.

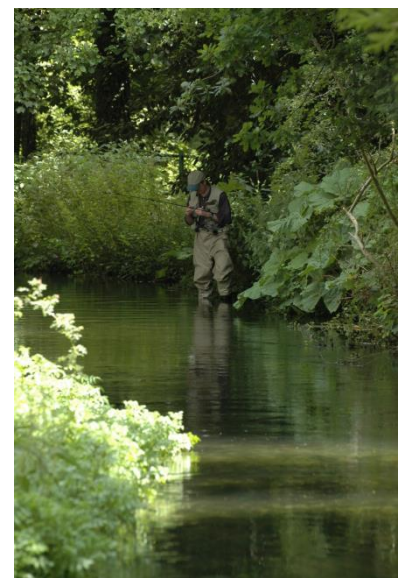


**The River (first 75 yards).** Below the flint folly is a pool below the sluice. It is a very tempting section for fish and fishermen; there are some good fish that hold here, but they see a lot of flies! The beat ends at the concrete bridge just downstream of the platform. If you can safely walk across the sluice apron, the 50 yards of stream to the road bridge holds some good fish and may be fished from the bank or waded.

**The River (wading section)** Enter the water beside the arched bridge. This is an all wading beat; chest waders are strongly advised. It is important to note that from this point there is no exit from the stream until you get to the gate at the halfway point or close to the top of the beat.

Just a little background as to why: the river is bounded by a footpath and until we erected the fence the river was paradise to every dog, walker, golf ball hunter, child, swimmer et al who fancied a paddle. The combination of a high bank fringe, fence and no access points protects the river.

The best way to fish is by very gentle wading, casting to observed fish or drifting a speculative fly through likely riffles and pools. There are mostly browns to 15", some grayling and the occasional rainbow that has made its way out from the lake.







As you enter the water at the bridge you are in one of the narrowest and fastest sections of the beat and getting a fly down to where the fish are is a challenge. The fish can often be tempted to a dry pattern appropriate to the time of year – aim to run the fly tight to the bank vegetation. NB Fence and stile in photo no longer in place.

The next section of water you come to is wider with some overhanging trees, here the fish can be sight fished with either a nymph or a dry fly as appropriate. Remember



with the speed of water you will need to give a nymph plenty of time/distance to sink. Keep a lookout for the various deep holes and holding spots, these can be three to four feet deep and the fish are often stuck to the bottom at the front edge of the pool waiting for food to come over the edge.

Continue on your stealthy way, you will come to a tree on your left that has very low branches covering the river, under it there are usually larger fish, both trout and grayling. Above this tree is a pool on the far bank (lake side) this also holds some very nice fish. They can also be found in the overflow from the lake but watch out for your back cast and also the “rusty” bush above the overflow, it does tend to collect flies.



From here up there is a mix of riffles and glides where fish can be found almost anywhere. You will come to a large riffle that is the full width of the river. Take your time to check the water both below and above, as the fish tend to hang in both areas. The glide above this riffle (which is created by a tree lying in the water) usually holds a number of fish and if there is a hatch of flies, they will raise to surface flies.

By now you should be accustomed to spotting the fish and or seeing their holding places. The river now meanders as you head towards the green Golfer's Bridge. This section has a mix of fast and slow water with weed beds down the centre. The fish can



be found tight into the bank and behind any obstruction in the flow that will provide shelter from the current.



As the fence on your left ends you will approach a stand of trees and a dark section which brings you to the end of the first part of the beat at the green Golfers Bridge; this dark section right up to the bridge is excellent holding water. Please keep in the river rather than fish from the bank in the garden of the lodges on the left.

**From the Golfers Bridge upstream to the A34** is the four hundred yard section that was extensively restored fifteen years ago. As you look upstream from the green Golfers Bridge you have two options: you can continue to wade or alternatively fish up the right hand bank.

Where the river narrows you will find it deep and fast. The beat ends a few yards short of the A34 road bridge.

## 2007/8 Restoration



BEFORE RESTORATION



DURING RESTORATION



RESTORATION COMPLETE

**Grove Lake:** we have stocked this in the past with rainbow trout but just for fun, so please don't look upon this as a proper stillwater fishery.

Best to fish the lake from the bank in front of the flint folly and from the same side beyond the arched bridge. Don't go beyond the tall trees or you will become a target for golfers on the driving range! Golf club members are allowed to fish the lake by any method but they are not allowed on the river.

## **Facilities for the Angler**

Please make use of the facilities at the Country Club. The golf bar serves excellent food and drink. If you wish to make use of the changing rooms, do so. There is a ground floor entrance beside the putting green.

The Reception should be able to answer most queries regarding the fishing, but if not call the Fishing Breaks office.

## **Catch Record Book**

It is fascinating for us, and for the anglers who follow you, to have a record of how your fishing day went. Do record your catches (even nil returns!), successful fly patterns and any other items or events of interest.

## **WC**

There is a WC in the hotel.

## **Places to Eat & Stay**

- Donnington Grove Country Club. You do not need to be member and your fishing dress will pass muster. Good food and drink in the golf bar.
- The Hare & Hounds, Speen (1/2 mile) – Restaurant and traditional pub bar. 01635 521152.
- Hungerford (8 miles) is a thriving market town.

## **Local Stores**

- Beer, wine and food – plenty of shops around but there is a Waitrose with free parking less than a mile away. Oxford Road, Newbury RG14 1NB.

I will be sending you an email in a few days' time. If you have a few minutes to give us some feedback from your visit it would be really appreciated.

I hope that you have a great day with us at Donnington Grove and that we see you another time.

Tight Lines!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Simon Cooper**  
**Fishing Breaks Founder & Managing Director**

**Emergency**

The postal address here is:

**Donnington Grove Country Club & Hotel, Grove Road, Newbury, Berkshire  
RG14 2LA**

Local hospital with A&E:

Craven Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5AN

0118 322 7019

NHS Direct 111. Emergency 999.

Chemist:

Waitrose, Oxford Road, Newbury RG14 1NB.

Ends.