



MY FISHING LIFE

Michelin-starred chef Chris Galvin shares his treasured angling objects

1. SAGE ROD AND HARDY REEL

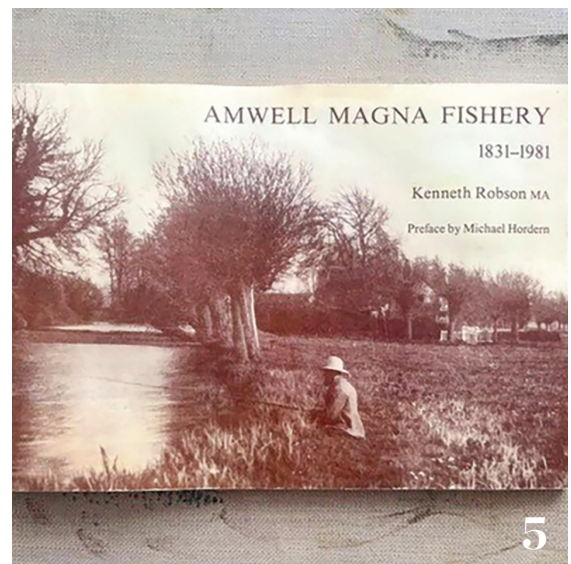
Coming to fly-fishing relatively recently, I found the array of tackle, methods and terminology dazzling. I eased myself in with entry-level and pre-loved rods and reels before investing properly. When the time came, the excellent team at Farlows helped me choose a Sage Dart four-weight paired with a Hardy Resonate 3000 reel, loaded with a Rio Creek line. The outfit casts like an arrow: feather-light, precise and a delight whether playing a small wild trout or something rather larger.

2. BOOKS

At six, I discovered *Mr Crabtree Goes Fishing* and can still recall the thrill of turning each page, captivated by the words and illustrations of Bernard Venables. Years later, *Blood Knots* by Luke Jennings revived that magic, quoting Venables' description of chalkstreams as "rivers of idealised imagining... so improbably pure, so crystalline, so opulently stocked with great trout". I had not realised how extensive fly-fishing literature was until visiting the library of the Flyfishers' Club. I have also enjoyed the work of John Gierach, whose writing places me beside him on the bank. In a digital age, it remains special to hold a book.

3. FRIENDS

Although I am content fishing alone, nothing matches a shared day on the river. Whether we blank or catch





magnificently, we share nature, conversation, food, drink and laughter – often at our own expense. Though competitive by instinct, I now take genuine pleasure in a friend landing the better fish, even if my expression occasionally betrays me. One such companion is Roger Pizey (*pictured left*), who is among Britain’s finest pastry chefs. As young chefs in Michelin-starred kitchens, leisure was scarce; now we can stand together on the water. He is a superb fisherman and storyteller.

4. FLY-TYING

Discovering fly-tying felt like opening Pandora’s box. My friend Derek Gee introduced me with a travelling vice on the riverbank. Under his guidance my flies have slowly improved – ‘less is more’ – and I shall never forget the first fish taken on one of my own creations.

Tying also sustains me when I am away from the water; sitting at the vice briefly transports me back to the bank.

My wife is astonished by the quantity of fur and feather I accumulate. I watch YouTube for technique, particularly Davie McPhail; his gentle guitar introduction even lulls her to sleep. Who said romance was dead?



5. MY CLUB

I am proud to belong to Amwell Magna Fly Fishing Club, the oldest fly-fishing club in the UK. The walk to its gate always stirs anticipation; when it opens, Heaven seems revealed. This stretch of the River Lea was once fished by Izaak Walton, and I tread it as hallowed ground. The club offers a winding river bordered by countryside: church bells, cuckoos in spring, farm machinery in distant fields and abundant wildlife – kingfishers, birds of prey, voles, grass snakes, deer, stoats and rabbits. The river demands stealth, skill and patience. A successful grayling introduction now yields fine fish, and we owe much to Martin, our bailiff, whose knowledge has led me to memorable catches. Members work tirelessly for the river, balancing progress with respect for tradition.



6. RICHARD WHEATLEY FLY-BOX

On a bright, testing day I met an angler succeeding with a small blue olive fly. He carried a single compact box. When he opened it – revealing spring-loaded compartments beneath a clear window – I was captivated. He offered me a fly; it worked immediately and became a small trophy. The box maker was Richard Wheatley, a family firm founded in 1860. I now own two such boxes, which I treasure and hope one day to pass on.

TALES TO TELL?

We would love to read about your treasured angling possessions and the memories they evoke. Six stories and pictures. Please write to: troutandsalmon@twsgroup.com