

# Tying North Country Spiders

In his second article David Westwood offers more advice on tying these beautiful and effective flies

When Pritt first published his excellent book on the flies of Yorkshire and the North he entitled it "Yorkshire Trout Flies", changing the title to 'North second edition. There is in fact a distinct difference between the Yorkshire fly patterns and those of the Border Counties, but it is about the former now.

## Yorkshire Patterns

The patterns I have chosen for this article are all to be found in the serious works on the genus (and see the bibliography), but even within Yorkshire theme. I **will concentrate on the better known versions**.

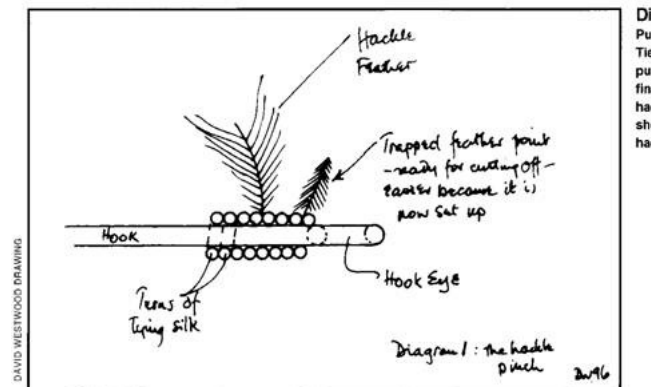
**The Hook** There is a lot of rubbish bandied around in the name of Pritt as far as hooks are concerned. I was recently told by a fellow professional Country Flies can only be tied on short shank wide gape hooks. I do normally do this anyway, but for the purposes of a demo (in bad light, in a pub to tie on bright, standard hooks. In fact there is no reference in Pritt to a specific hook pattern. It is here that I hope that the argument dies. Tie Yorkshire flies on any hook, that suits you - proportions that matter, not just the hook. All the patterns for this article are tied on Partridge Z2 hooks - in my opinion the purpose - short shank, a wide gape, and most importantly, a straight eye.

**Proportions** (see Diagram 2) Pritt says two things which are fundamental to getting the proportions of a Yorkshire fly right. These are:

1. They cannot be "dressed too sparingly in the matter of feather".
2. Tie a smaller version of the fly on a normal hook, rather than going down in size, for "fishing hooks which are too small" has the result that "you note too that Pritt emphasized the importance of the hackled wet fly, noting that winged wets got too much attention. I have found this to be true of wet patterns in Scotland.

## Diagram 1

Putting in the hackle. Tie in, put 3-5 turns in front, push up the tip and put the final turn of silk in front of the hackle stem and pull up at the shoulder to finish the head.



Di  
Pu  
Tie  
pu  
fin  
ha  
sh  
ha

## The Patterns

### Snipe and Purple

A really good fly for downstream wet fly fishing. Especially valuable in spring and autumn. Can be tied with a peacock herl thorax or with a peacock

**Thread:** purple tying silk

**Body:** purple tying silk

**Hackle:** one turn of dark Snipe feather, taken from the marginal coverts of the topside of the wing.

Notes

- The silk colour is once more a matter of concern to some, arguing that only the true "original" Pearsall's colour is valid. One more example of rot Pritt's day was due to vegetable dye, the colours today, and for the last 90 odd years is due to chemical dyes, which vary from decade to decade.
- The feather should be dark, although there is no problem with a little yellow at the tip after all the Golden Plover feather works well with fish, and use the longer, larger feathers as well the tip of each will tie a good fly too!
- Note also the method of tying the head foundation around the feather tip, and the importance of the last turn of silk before turning the hackle (see

### **Waterhen Bloa**

This famous and ubiquitous fly, at its very best in the spring. It is a variant of the Blue Dun.

**Body:** yellow tying silk dressed really lightly with a chopped mixture of blue rabbit underfur and blue mole. Just touch the silk (after waxing) with th remove excess. The silk colour must show through.

**Hackle:** one turn of waterhen marginal covert feather.

### **Coot Black Spider**

I have lost count of the variations on this theme the Black Spider but the coot feather does suit the fly. Another version of prime importance is Stew is another story!

**Body:** waxed black tying silk. The wax (bootmakers) should be applied cold, and run up and down once or twice to impart sheen to the silk.

**Thorax:** peacock herl tied tight two or three turns will do leaving just enough room for the hackle. **Hackle:** a charcoal grey feather from a coot's wi

### **Woodcock and Hare's Lug Spider**

This is a good fly to imitate the dark olives in spring and early summer.

**Thread:** primrose yellow (always keep yellow silks in a plastic bag or other container between uses it gets dirty faster than a child! Tag: fine gold ti

**Body:** the silk, with a thorax of hare's ear fur (mixed)

**Hackle:** one turn of a woodcock feather from the undercoverts or marginal coverts.

### **March Brown Spider**

Wherever the March Brown hatches, and in many places where it is never seen, this fly does sterling work.

**Thread:** orange (light, not fluorescent)

**Body:** mixture of all the shades of colour from a hare's ear dubbed onto the tying silk, ribbed with yellow silk. I find this also works well with a lime

**Hackle:** a well speckled partridge back feather.

### **Partridge and Orange**

The fly can be dressed with a fine gold wire rib, which can enhance its sparkle, although I have found that on its day the fish will take it even on the a chance to sink.

**Thread:** orange

**Body:** tying silk

**Hackle:** a brown speckled partridge back feather, not too long.

### **Greenwell Spider**

This is a case of borrowing a really first class pattern, and making it your own! The original Greenwell's Glory is, of course, a Tweed fly, but the spi Nevertheless, it works. The body colour should lighten during the season from dark to pale olive.

**Silk:** primrose yellow

**Body:** tying silk, gently waxed with bootmaker's wax (coldis quite efficient) and ribbed with a maximum of four turns of ultra fine gold wire

**Hackle:** a good quality Greenwell hen's feather, or a furnace hen's feather.

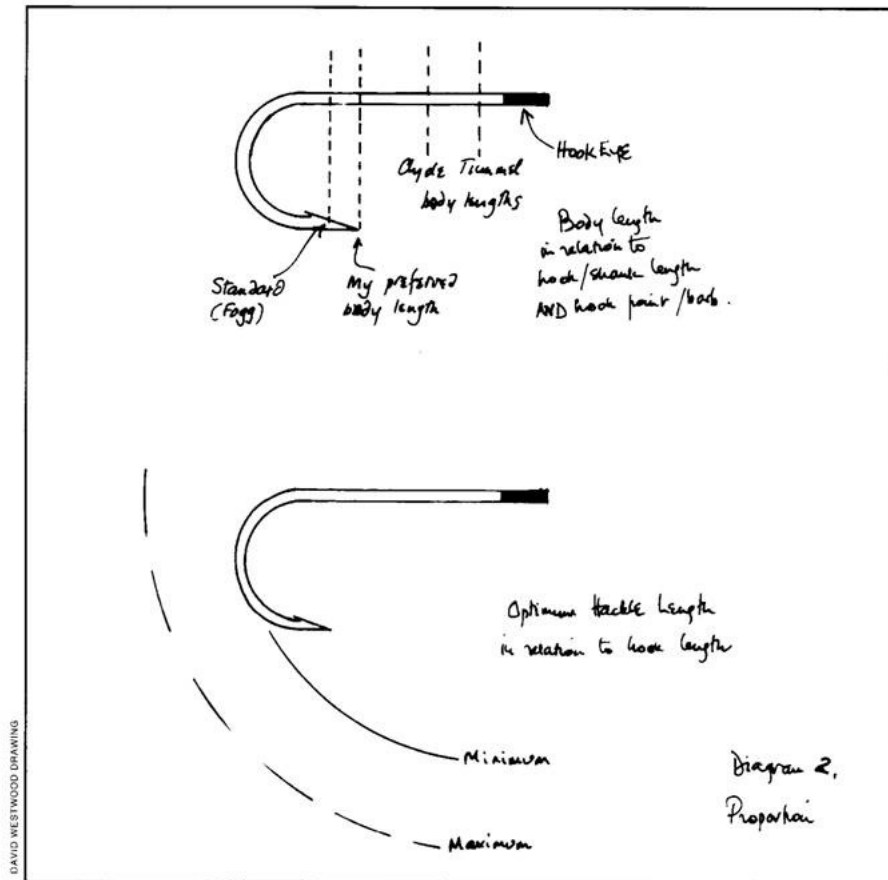


Diagram 2 - Proportions to consider when tying spider patterns

### General Comments

1. ALWAYS tie the hackle in by the tip, not the stem. Take a feather, and holding it by the tip (your fine pliers holding the stem will help) and stroke it you the tying point and show the length of the hackle to be. With partridge feathers, choose the well speckled feathers, but do not be afraid to use feathers, otherwise you will be paying too much for whole partridge skins!
2. Always ensure that you tie down and back in touching turns of tying silk. I always use 8/0 thread for the job, and take particular care not to overlie more unsightly, an error which is soon eliminated with care and practice.
3. Always use hen feathers when tying a poultry hackle. Some professionals use cock feathers, saying they retain their stiffness in the water. The fly upstream it holds the fly vertically in the water, downstream it flows around the body, giving the fly the appearance of a nymph. The game and other naturally, being soft of fibre.
4. Use a wax for the dubbings natural fur will not stick to silk the way the artificial dubbings may do, and in any case you rarely need a lot.

FLYDRESSER Spring 1996



The fly in the middle of the left row is a Woodcock and Hare's Lug Spider