

## Rob Denson's trout fly of the month

# The Shortshank Redemption



**Hook** Size 10-14 Kamasan B170/175/160/100/100 or Hyabusa 751  
**Thread** Black **Butt** Mirage  
**Body** Two strands of peacock herl  
**Thorax** Glo-Brite No 4 or 5  
**Hackle** Black hen, tied Stewart style



**Rob Denson** has fly-fished for trout for 25 years, visiting all four corners of Britain and Ireland, combining his love of fly-tying, photography and a rolling wave.

AS WE MOVE, inexorably, into the first winter month proper, things are beginning to cool down. Life is beginning to slow down, and being cold-blooded, so does the trout's metabolism. The trout must still eat, though, as any weight and food reserves packed on in the autumn will soon be used up by simply existing, breathing and waving their fins. Adjustments have to be made, so out go long, fast chases, and in come easy, lazy pickings.

One food item that fits the bill is the humble chironomid. "Buzzers" as we fly-fishers tend to call them (strictly speaking, the adult, airborne stage of the life-cycle, which buzzes, but has come to include the pupae, too), are very

much on the menu through the winter, for several reasons. First, there's barely a watery hole on the planet, let alone the UK, that doesn't contain buzzers. Most waters contain several species, and will, on every day of the year, have a degree of buzzer activity, at one or other stages of its life-cycle. Best of all for fly-fishers is that as a result of such ubiquity, the slim, simple profile of the chironomid pupa is the most easily recognised and the most commonly encountered of the trout's food sources. Indeed, on most trout waters, chironomids account for a minimum of 50 per cent of the trout's diet.

Trout like buzzers, then, and buzzers, when they hatch, are easy pickings. Whether deep

down on the lake bed, hovering up bloodworm (the larval stage), or intercepting, as they rise through the water column, the pupae that we imitate so well with our flosses and tinsels on our little curved hooks.

The first half of this piece will tell you all you need to know about why and how to fish the Shortshank Redemption in December. It's basically a Buzzer, with as many buzzer features thrown in as possible. By packing in the features, hopefully in a cohesive and convincing way, the trout will be drawn by the feature(s) which pertain to the stage it is feeding on - the gas-filled shuck, the slim body, the bloodshot thorax, and the emerging appendages, all instantly recognisable to the trout. As the winter draws in, we will generally be fishing deeper, but sunny days and seasonal/atmospheric blips can bring the fish up in a flash to intercept pupae higher in the water. Try a floater with the Shortshank in December, and by varying retrieve, leader length and position, it can be fished very effectively at a variety of depths.

I have a confession to make: this "Shortshank Redemption" - well, the name came first! When I'm with my good friend and fishing pal, Alex Ferguson, and sport is slow, foolish ideas, whimsical notions and occasionally silly names for trout flies take over! A fishless drift or three on a loch, the name of which escapes me, was enough to have us resort to the latter, and thus the Shortshank Redemption was born. I got the job of bringing it to life.

### TYING TIPS

- Don't lose any sleep over sourcing short-shank hooks. Tie it on your preferred Buzzer hook. Light hooks for fishing high in the water, heavier hooks for deeper.
- Twist the peacock herl around your thread for a more durable body.
- The hackle is tied in at the tip, and wound along the thorax, Stewart style.



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