COMMON GROUND

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAUL SMITH

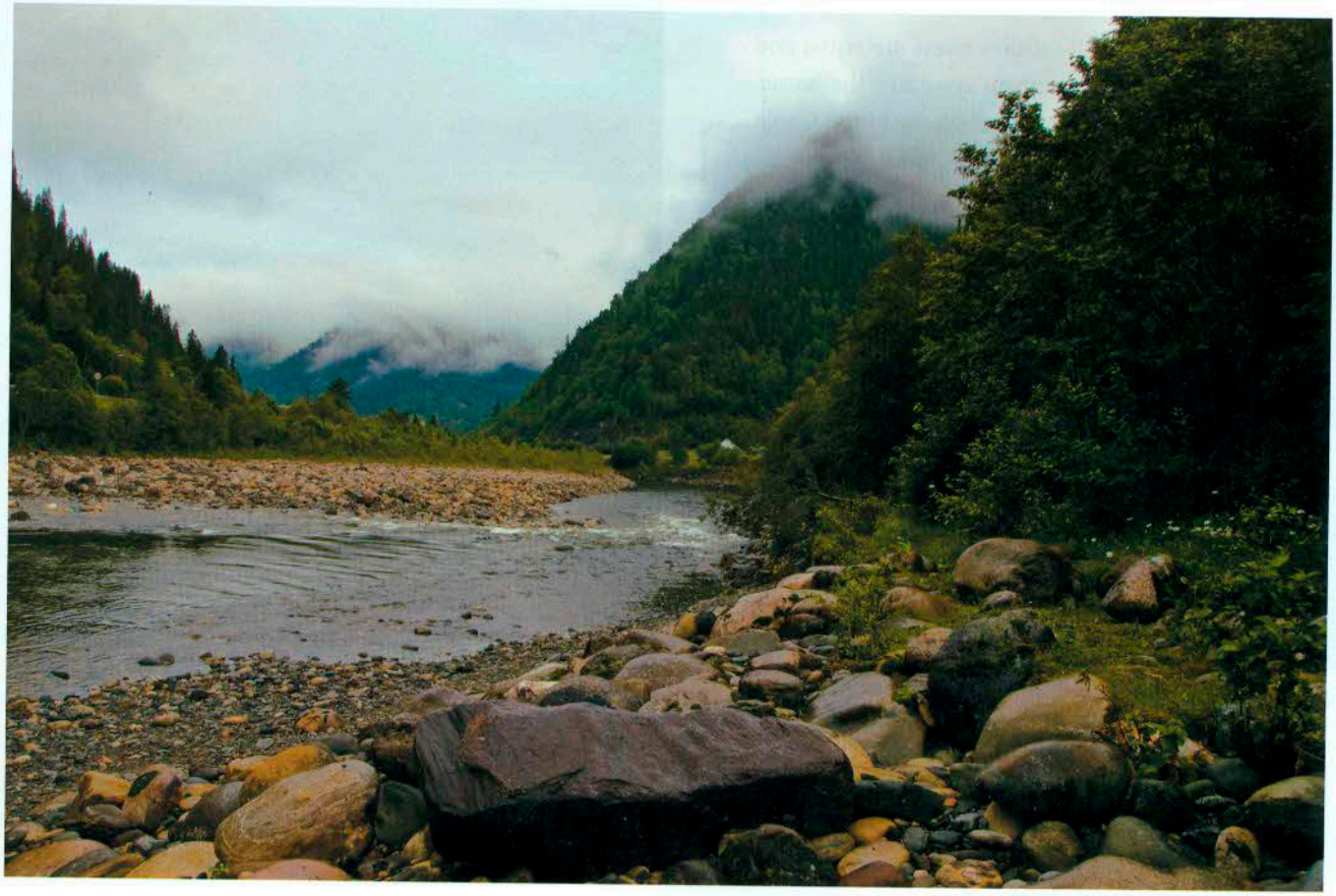
TWO NEWFOUNDLANDERS IN NORWAY EXPERIENCE CULTURE SHOCK. AS IT TURNS OUT, THEY "RIFFLED" A FEW FEATHERS OF THEIR OWN.

IN WINTER WINDS AND SUMMER HEAT, BENEATH STEEP-SIDED MOUNTAINS cloaked in giant spruce, during war and in peacetime, the mighty Gaula River thunders through the Gauldal Valley in south-central Norway. Born in Lake Gaulhåen, and flowing for 145 kilometres before meeting the sea in Trondheim Fjord, this magnificent river is also adorned by picturesque, immaculate family farms. Quiet Norwegian pride emanates from brightly painted barns and worn, but meticulously maintained tractors.

From Newfoundland we come, Rod Hale and I. An island, once a colony, now a province that is no stranger to the violent excesses of the 20th century. The Royal Newfoundland Regiment served valiantly in the First World War, which helps us appreciate the sense of history carried on the cool breeze off the Gaula. Our fellow islanders fought at Gallipoli, the Somme, Ypres and Cambrai, but too many died awfully at Beaumont-Hamel, illustrating the futility of war between peoples.

We have travelled many miles to pitch battle against a Gaula salmon, but perhaps it is our home's wartime history that allows us to see how here the past nudges up against the present. Our guide, a Swede, is introduced to us by Manfred Raguse, who hails from Germany and is head of the Norwegian Flyfishers Club.

Per shows us to our country house at Bogen Sondre farm. It was the site of a final World War II battle on May 3rd, 1940. A group of Norwegian soldiers were positioned strategically to slow the German advance. Likely, Norwegian troops were holed up inside this very house. Bullets from German rifles probably remain imbedded in the stout, solid timber walls. The skirmish ended when the Norwegians retreated their positions, leaving 10 German troops dead.



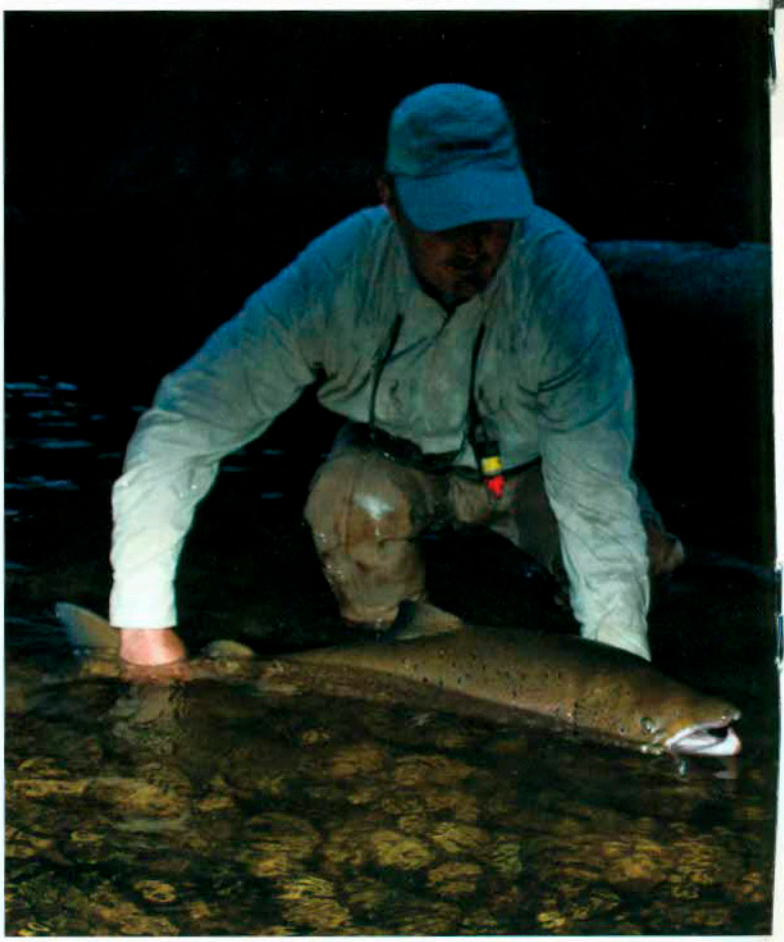
But war is long gone from this now peaceful valley. Germans, Scandinavians, Brits, Americans, Japanese, anglers from all over the planet come here not to fight, but in search of salar. We notice this right off. In spite of barriers in language, culture, and customs, friends are made easily on the banks of the Gaula. All men are equal on a salmon river.

Of course not all salmon rivers are equal and not all pools on any given river are the same. Speaking of this, the top pool on the entire Gaula beckons to us from just a few hundred yards across a field of swaying hay.

We might be tired and it may be late (11:00 PM), but we from the Rock are made of tougher stuff. We "wader up" and navigate to the river around cultivated ground, under the drawn out dusk of an arctic sky. Per has headed home, so we fall back on Newfoundland-style fishing, riffling Blue Charms across this foreign water. In not too much time, Hale releases back into the wild a deep, rotund 30-pound Atlantic salmon. Five minutes later, I follow suit with a bright 22-pounder. It turns out, on this night anyway, a salmon is a salmon no matter where it swims.

Then the rains came. Our single-handed Newfoundland style of fishing no longer cuts the mustard on the runoff swollen Gaula. It is time to change gears and learn new tricks from Per. His expertise with the underhand cast, shooting heads, and Temple Dogs on sinking tips helps us cross the fly-fishing cultural divide.

Still, we can't resist dead drifting the odd Bomber. And it works, sometimes. Culture shock is a two-way street. Per is thrilled with seeing his very first take on a dry fly. Later, he catches his first dry fly salmon on one of my Caribou Bombers. And when the high water subsides, we delicately present tiny wets on a riffling hitch with light, single-handed rods. For a week, we share knowledge accumulated from lifetimes of fishing on opposite sides of a vast ocean. There were differences in style, gear and technique but on a deeper level we have much in common, more specifically, a love of free-flowing rivers and a wild, at times, mysterious fish.



Fly-fishing for salmon, I think, transcends cultural boundaries. This place is living proof of it. Hale and I have become good friends with, and have learned much from, our Swedish guide and German host, as well as our Norwegian roommates in the Bogen Sondre country house. Talk is not of the past, but how different fishing cultures all seem to be more readily accepting of one ritual we have come to hold dear—live release.

All agree it is a sure way to guarantee that our children will be able to live the same cultural exchanges we have been lucky enough to experience. Whether you fish a Temple Dog on a sinking tip, or delicately float a bomber over a salmon-filled pool, when the barb is pinched the future holds greater promise.

Regular Journal *contributor* ***Paul Smith*** *is a lifelong angler hailing from "The Rock"—Newfoundland. Manfred Raguse, who founded the Norwegian Flyfishers Club in 1988, facilitated his trip to Norway last summer. For more information visit* ***www.nfc-online.com.***

Dogging It

Atlantic salmon are not traditionalists.

In 1968, on Newfoundland's Great Northern Peninsula, catching salmon was all about the moose. At the local gas station my Dad bought #6 and #8 Black Silver Tips, locally tied with stiff black moose hair. He bought them by the dozen—one utilitarian simple fly pattern. Just the wing, a black body ribbed with oval tinsel, and a flat silver tag was all it took to entice salar. Salmon were plenty in those days, and their enthusiasm for these creations meant I did not stray from father's counsel for many years—presenting classic patterns in body only, ordained with the wing of mystical moose.

Decades later, temptation got the better of me. Forgive me, father: I began to mix flash amidst the sacred moose. Pretty soon I strayed further, tying flies of squirrel tail and bear hair. When I solidly hooked a salmon on a squirrel-winged Blue Charm, after reluctantly switching from moose after too many half-hearted rises, my world came tumbling down. The floodgates opened, and I began to imagine a world of once forbidden possibilities.

A scientist at heart, I analyzed what had happened. The moose winged fly, with its stiffer wing, is fantastic for kicking up a dramatic wake on the riffling hitch. But salmon are moody, mysterious creatures. Some days, they like that offering just a little under the surface, swimming and pulsating like desperate fleeing prey. Moose sure doesn't pulsate much. Softer hairs like bear and squirrel do. Aren't I the cat's meow? I certainly thought so, until I discovered others had figured this out long before me.

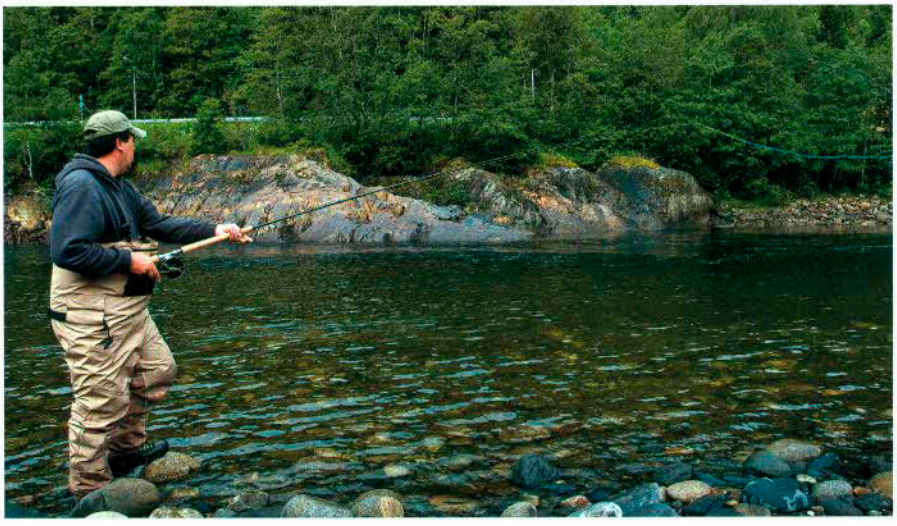
In the early 1980s, across the broad Atlantic, Hakan Norling, an innovative Swedish angler and fly tier was on his own quest for greater mobility in fly wings. He took it light years further than me, obviously not nearly as caught up in father-son traditions. Some call his style of tying "fatback." The wing of the fly is initially tied with the tips forward and the untrimmed roots facing the hook end. The wing is then folded rearward over the untrimmed ends and fixed by turns of thread built up in front of the bend. So the whole wing sort of sticks off from the fly, shored up by the butt ends, and pulsates in the current.

Norling's original patterns were tied with fox tail, a super mobile material. After stellar success on the Gaula's giants, fatbacks became a hot commodity. Norling ran out of fox tail and substituted hair from a Shitzu dog, whose lineage goes back to the temples of Tibet. The fly's name became Temple Dog and it stuck, although just about everybody I know of, now ties the fly with arctic fox tail.

BLUE CHARM TEMPLE DOG TUBE	
Tag:	Silver oval tinsel
Tail:	Golden pheasant crest
Rib:	Oval silver tinsel
Body:	Black floss
Body Hackle:	Soft brown hen
Throat Hackle:	Brown hen
Wing:	Dyed blue arctic fox under black arctic fox, flanked with pearl crystal flash
Cheeks:	Jungle cock (optional)

In 2010, I spent the second week of July on the Gaula. I brought over an ample supply of Temple Dogs. As you have probably figured out, the Temple Dog is not a particular pattern but a style of tying, generally on tubes with the characteristic fatback wing. They can be tied as Blue Charms, Silver Blues, Green Islanders—you name it. No surprise, I leaned heavily toward tradition. My box was filled with Blue Charm Temple Dogs. And they worked, pulsating through the swift waters of the Gaula and capturing some fine Scandinavian salmon. Referring to fishing high spring water with very big fatbacks, a Gaula guide said to me, "When the fly is fishing well, it feels like you have a grilse on."

Pssst . . . . Want in on a secret? They work on this side of the pond as well. Uh oh, now that the cat—or in this case dog—is out of the bag, all my Newfoundland buddies will be tying Temple Dogs night and day and hanging up the old riffling hitch. Sorry, Dad!



PAUL SMITH (2)

***Paul Smith** used his Temple Dogs while angling on the Gaula River in Norway (left).*