

Black Pennell

- an enigma



When H. Cholmondeley Pennell devised his 'Pennell Series' of flies and published them in his book, *The Modern Practical*

Angler in 1870, little did he know that he would cause such a dilemma for this writer some one hundred and thirty four years later.

It was to the above named book that I was guided as reference for the origins of the Black

So how and where did the 'Pennell' evolve?

It seems that Mr. Pennell, a prolific writer for the *Fishing Gazette*, a weekly fishing newspaper, published the dressing we are familiar with today in the course of his regular tracts in that paper. How it evolved from the pattern already mentioned to the one which appeared in the 'Gazette' in August 1889 is a bit of a mystery, but Cholmondeley Pennell was no ordinary angler or fly tyer.

In March of 1887 he published *Modern Improvemnets in Fishing Tackle and Fish Hooks*, and therein, on pages 108 - 109 he gives a hint as to how the 'Pennell' may have developed, he says :

	Hackle	Body	Wing
1. 'Green'	Dove green or black (natural hackle)	Dusky/green sewing silk, lightly waxed with col- ourless wax . . .	Cut end of hackle.
2. 'Brown'	'Fiery' (or cinnamon) brown, (not 'claret brown') . . .	Dark orange sewing silk, well waxed with col- ler's wax, and then drawn tightly between the finger and thumb . . .	Cut end of hackle.
3. 'Yellow'	Dusky/golden olive, or partridge or grouse (natural hackles)	'Golden yellow' sewing silk lightly waxed with col- ourless wax . . .	Cut end of hackle.

'I merely suggested the three patterns as a practical illustration of my theory designed merely as 'types' - and as such, of course, open to endless modification and extension. This is one reason, amongst others, why I have always refused to supply either tackle makers or individual anglers with patterns of them. Having suggested a few broad principles, I left it to others to accept, reject, or work upon them.'



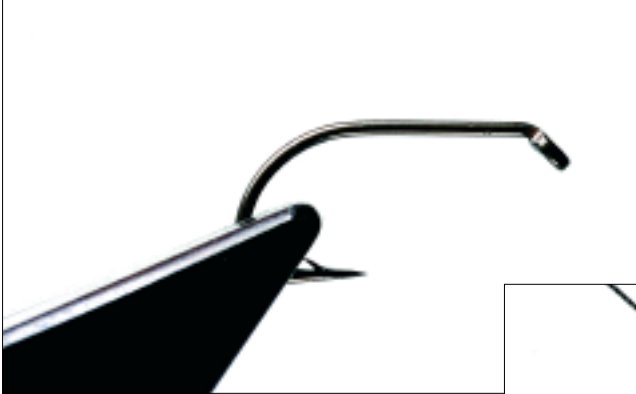
Pennell - a simple matter of research you might imagine. But not so, the 'black' fly which appears in the original

chart- above - of the three 'Series' flies, doesn't even appear as a prime pattern, but one of secondary importance, as a bi-product of the N° 1 -

the 'Green' fly.

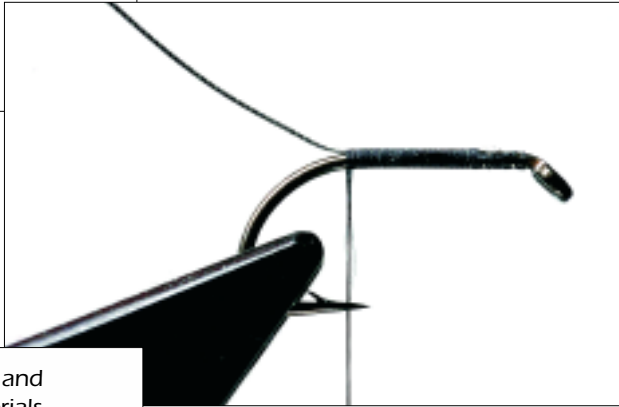
Brave man!, would that some of those sentiments could be adopted today, instead of the infighting which occurs when a pattern is preferred and then the claims and counter-claims spoil what should be a pleasure for many to share. I earnestly contend that more good flies are lost than are adopted from 'good ideas' due to dogma and umbrage.

So here we have the Black Pennell, a fly of such note that it is ignored by one of the finest reference books of modern times - A. Courtney Williams' *Dictionary of Trout Flies*.....but that's another story, read on.....



1

Set the hook in the vise.....



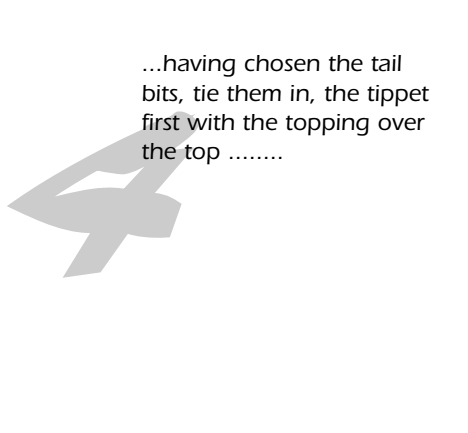
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....make some close turns of tying thread and catch in the fine oval silver tinsel.....



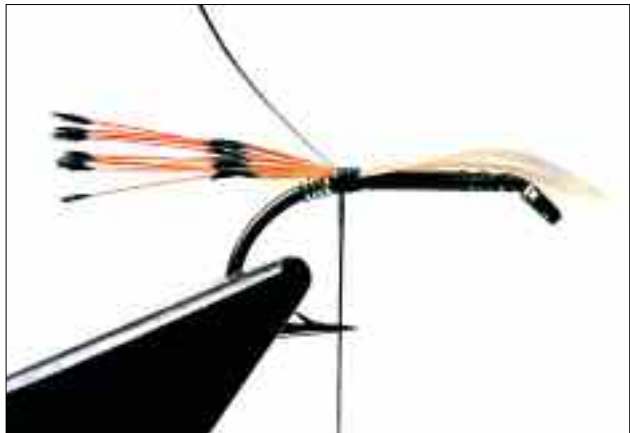
...make a four turn tag, and then select the tail materials, tippet and topping.....do not trim off the waste tinsel, it will become the rib....

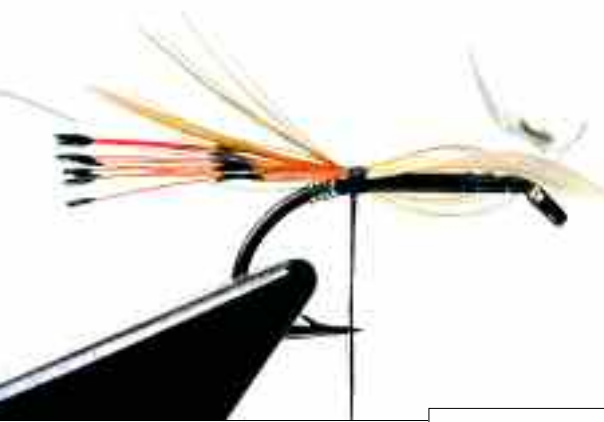
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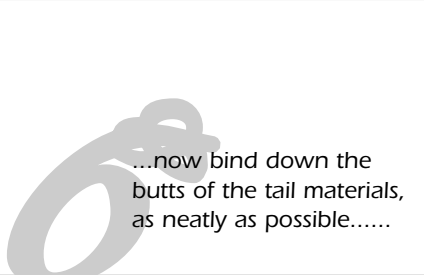
...having chosen the tail bits, tie them in, the tippet first with the topping over the top

4

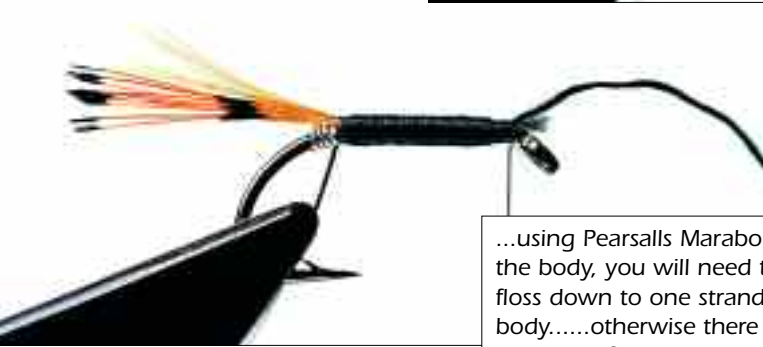




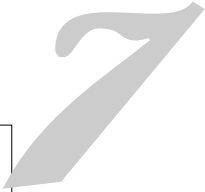
...try to ensure that the topping sits on top of the tippet when you tie it down.....

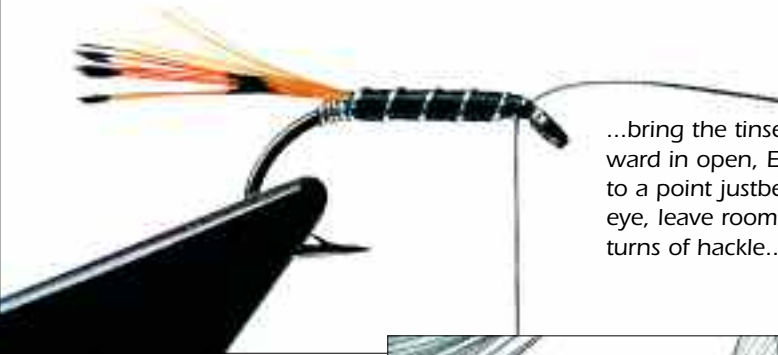


...now bind down the butts of the tail materials, as neatly as possible.....



...using Pearsalls Marabou floss for the body, you will need to split the floss down to one strand to form the body.....otherwise there will be just too much floss resulting in too bulky a body.....

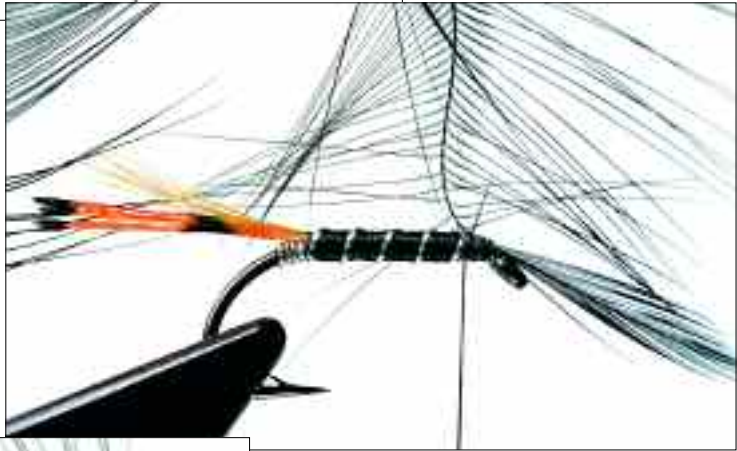




...bring the tinsel rib forward in open, EVEN, turns to a point just behind the eye, leave room for the turns of hackle.....



...chose a black cock hackle, it should be noted that the hackle is NOT too short in the fibre, any movement that this fly has relies on the length of the hackle fibre, too short and it will appear lifeless when fished.....



...make only three or four turns of the hackle, and bind off at the eye, trim the waste and make your finish.....



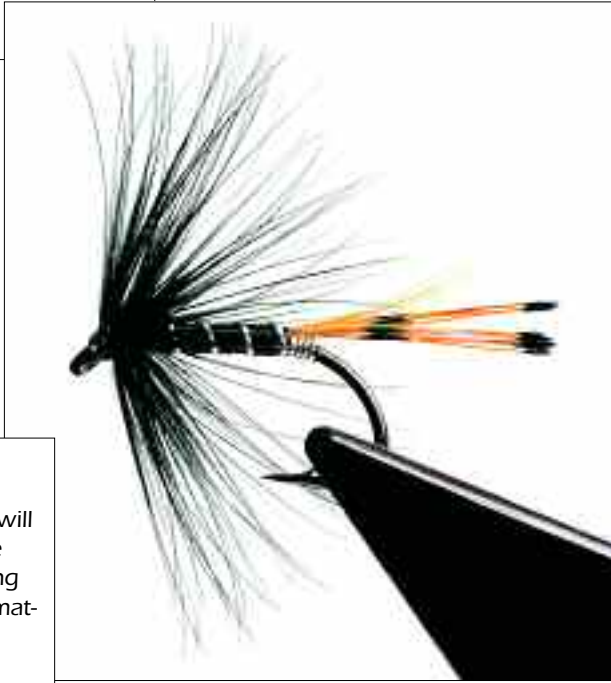
11



...the use of cock hackle is the way prescribed in Tom Stewart's books, but, a fine soft hen hackle can make a perfectly acceptable fishing fly.....



...a 'webby' cock hackle, or a good quality hen hackle will make for a fly more suited to fast moving streams - a simple matter of needs and taste.....



CLARET



RED

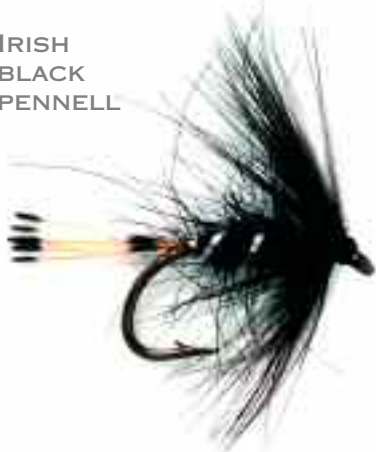


YELLOW

BLACK
PENNELL



IRISH
BLACK
PENNELL



WILLIAMS
FAVOURITE



The omission of the Black Pennell from A. Courtney Williams' - *A Dictionary of Trout Flies* - intrigued me so much that I had to dig a little deeper.

Allegedly, Mr. Williams father came up with a pattern not too dissimilar to the 'Pennell' which he called the Williams Favourite - see fly at bottom - which does get a listing in the 'Dictionary' - a flagrant bit of plagiarism and umbrage if ever I saw it, and thus Mr. Cholmondeley Pennell gets only the scantest of mentions in what is otherwise one of our most important reference books on fly patterns, and nothing of the Pennell series! To imagine that this was an oversight would be a bit naive, but at the time when these books were being produced, men were men, and sheep were frightened!

As an illustration, I quote from the Appendix 1 section in the 'Dictionary' on Hooks and Hook sizes, which relates to the furore that ensued after Mr. Pennell introduced his 'new' hook size scales :

"The t.d.e. hooks did not find much favour with wet fly anglers until some years later and because most of the fishermen were hard headed north-country men, more conservative in their outlook than southerners, they would have nothing to do with the 'new' scale....."

The writer is indebted to the following for their help and permissions in preparing this article : Paul Morgan (Coch-Y-Bonddu Books, E.J. 'Ted' Malone, Swan Hill Press and David Beazley the doyen of piscatorial book collectors, who read huge tracts from valuable books over the telephone, to all of you, many thanks. T.G.