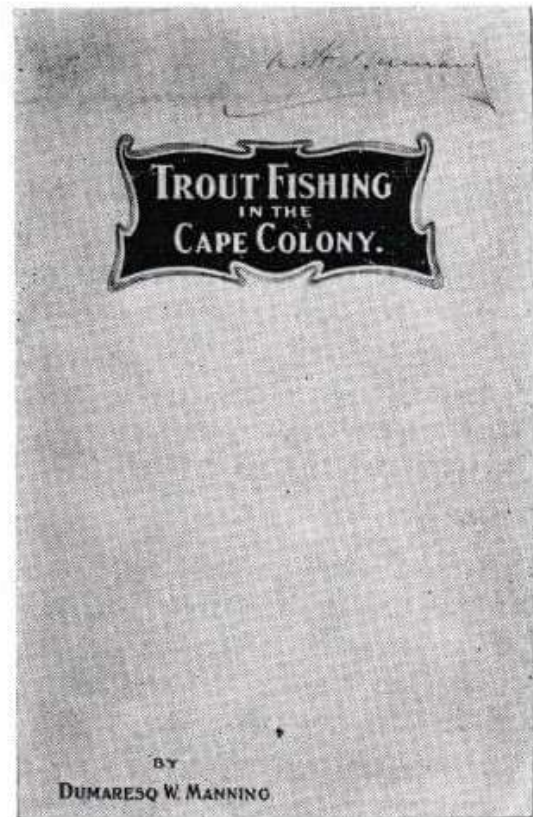


# THE NINE EARLIEST SOUTH AFRICAN BOOKS ON TROUT FISHING

By FRANK R. BRADLOW

(Photos: F. R. Bradlow)



IT is said that there are over 2 000 books devoted to trout fishing in the English language. Add to this books on other aspects of freshwater fishing and the number must be colossal. "The number and excellence of the books devoted to the exposition of Angling are so great that no other sport can compare with it in these respects," writes Dr. James Robb in his book *Notable Angling Literature* (Herbert Jenkins Ltd., London N/D).

In surveying some notable South African books dealing with trout fishing I make no attempt to deal with the whole range of South African writing on this subject. This brief survey is not intended to be exhaustive; it is merely a guide for those who are interested. It is time that a full bibliography of this fascinating subject of trout fishing in South Africa was compiled, and perhaps this brief article will stimulate some ardent bibliographer-angler to undertake the task.

The nine early books described in this article do not deal solely with trout fishing: indeed the third book, *The Sea Fisheries of the Cape Colony*, has only one chapter on trout, but as far as I can ascertain, these nine are the earliest books—as distinct from articles in magazines, journals and newspapers—in which trout fishing in South Africa is mentioned. All the books I discuss are dealt with chronologically.

In surveying these books I have used the same method for each one, and this method requires a little explanation. I give, for each book, first the title-page in full. "Slanted" strokes after a word in this quoting of the title-page mean the end of a line; thus *Trout Fishing|in the Cape Colony|by|Dumaresq W. Manning| . . .* etc. would appear on the title-page in the book as follows:—

Trout Fishing  
In the Cape Colony  
by  
Dumaresq W. Manning

and so on.

The words "publishers imprint", or "emblem", in the midst of this wording of the title-page indicate that the publisher's little device or some other emblem occurs on the page between the two lines indicated.

Thereafter I provide some technical information about the number of pages, illustrations and maps, and a brief description of the binding. This is to enable any reader who already possesses some of the books to identify them, and to help those who may wish to collect them.

**I. Trout Fishing in the Cape Colony by Dumaresq W. Manning.**

The title-page of this book reads as follows: *Trout Fishing in the Cape Colony* by Dumaresq W. Manning, J.P., F.R.G.S. Cape Civil Service Issued with the approval of the Government of the Cape of Good Hope Printed and Published by the Argus Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd. Cape Town 1908.

This book has 97 pages, with an appendix of 33 pages. There are 39 photographic illustrations, 5 line sketches in the appendix, and a folding "map of South Africa showing the distribution of Trout in the Cape Colony, the rivers proclaimed open for fishing and lines of railway open for travel". Finally there is one magnificent lithographic plate in colour. There would seem to be little doubt that this is the first book on trout-fishing to be published in South Africa and the early date, 1908, comes as a surprise.

Judged by today's standards, this little book is lavishly produced despite the fact that it is a "paper-back". What modern books contain 39 photographic illustrations of a good quality, a coloured stone lithograph of exceptional quality, and a very large folding map?

In his preface Mr. Manning writes "the object of the author is, however, primarily to bring into prominence the fact that acclimatization in the Cape Colony is an accomplished fact, to encourage angling and induce co-operation between riparian owners and Angling Associations in the preservation of trout, and to supplement the information contained in the illustrated manuals and guide books intended otherwise to instruct the visitor".

The last part of this long sentence seems to indicate that certain manuals and guide books pre-dated *Trout Fishing in the Cape Colony*, but despite a diligent search I have not been successful in finding them.

The frontispiece is one of which any modern book could well be proud. It was specially printed by Werner and Winter in Frankfurt, Germany, and is a delicate tinted stone lithograph of superb quality showing *Salmo Fario* (the brown trout) being a reproduction of a painting of a trout taken in a "Trek Net", at Muizenberg, False Bay and showing the changing livery as a result of migration to the sea from the river in which it was bred. In view of subsequent controversy about sea-going trout, this frontispiece is of considerable interest.

Opposite the frontispiece is a photograph of a brown trout, 26½ inches in length, weighing 6 lb., which was "caught with artificial fly in Hex River on October 7th, 1907, by R. P. M. Myburgh Esq. Worcester. C.C." Those were the days indeed!

Another feature of Manning's book is the large folding map, which measures 86 cm by 48 cm (35 in. by 18½ in.). This large well-printed map clearly shows the distribution of trout in South Africa, including such unlikely places as Clanwilliam, Laingsburg, Prince Alfred and Aberdeen among others. In fact the distribution would appear to have been wider in the Eastern and Western Cape than it is today judging from this map.

The contents are full and interesting, and chapters include "the early history of trout acclimatization South Africa", "fishing results", "municipal reservoirs" (the Woodhead and Hely-Hutchinson on Table Mountain), "the Western Province", "the Eastern Province", and the "Transkeian Territories", as well as chapters on "indigenous fish" and "rods and tackle". The appendices deal with such matters as "how to obtain fishing", permits, trout breeding and stocking, legislation, and the rules and regulations of the Worcester Angling Club.

It is a book that makes fascinating reading and leaves the reader with a feeling that we are missing a good deal today.

This book is exceptionally rare. Very few copies appear to have survived—it is not built for robust handling. The Society's copy is in particularly good condition—much better than the copy in the South African Library, and I hope it will be well guarded.

Sidney Mendelsohn, the bibliographer, apparently did not consider the book worthy of mention in his great *South African Bibliography*.

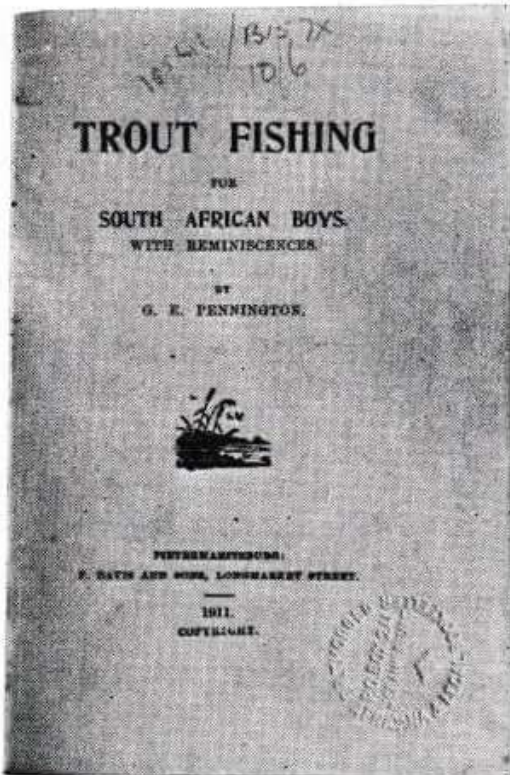
Mr. Manning intended to publish another book entitled *The Golden Rivers of the Western Province, Union of South Africa and How to Fish for Trout in Them*. This was to be published by Maskew Miller Limited, and an attractive brochure with an order form was issued. A.C.H. tells me, however, that Mr. Manning, whom he knew well, was never able to raise sufficient subsidies. I wonder whether the manuscript survives.

## 2. Trout Fishing for South African Boys, with Reminiscences by G. E. Pennington.

The full title of this very small book (size 15,5 cm by 10,5 cm)—the second trout-fishing book to be published in South Africa—reads as follows: *Trout Fishing/for South African Boys/with Reminiscences/by/G. E. Pennington/vignette of lake/Pietermaritzburg:/P. Davis and Sons, Longmarket Street/1911/copyright.*

The book consists of 167 pages, with advertisements by Ford Bros. of Maritzburg on the verso of the title-page, and on the verso of page 167. It has two plates: one a line-drawing of flies and the other a line-drawing showing knots, casts, and tackles. There are also six very small but rather attractive vignettes at the end of some of the chapters. The end papers are decorated with a small green flower. The binding is boards with brown cloth, both the spine and cover being simply labelled "Trout Fishing".

In the first advertisement, Ford Bros. advise that "the special Mounted Casts and Specially Dressed Flies as recommended by Canon Pennington are kept in stock by us, having been carefully made by an English firm of the highest reputation". This tells us at least what the author's occupation was! In his preface the worthy canon tells us "this book is an attempt to give our youth a better chance of coming to the top in the cleanest sport we have . . ."



Canon G. E. Pennington's book written in Natal in 1911.

There are eleven short chapters dealing with such subjects as "rod reel line and net", "the cast", "flies", "throwing", which Rev. Pennington tells us is "a North of England term for casting the line and flies on the water", "a day out", "men you will meet", "memories", "night fishing", "minnow", and, of all things, "worm". Obviously the canon was no purist.

This, too, is a very rare book, and the copy I possess is the only one of which I know. There is no copy in the Society's library.

### 3. The Sea Fisheries of The Cape Colony by W. Wardlaw Thompson.

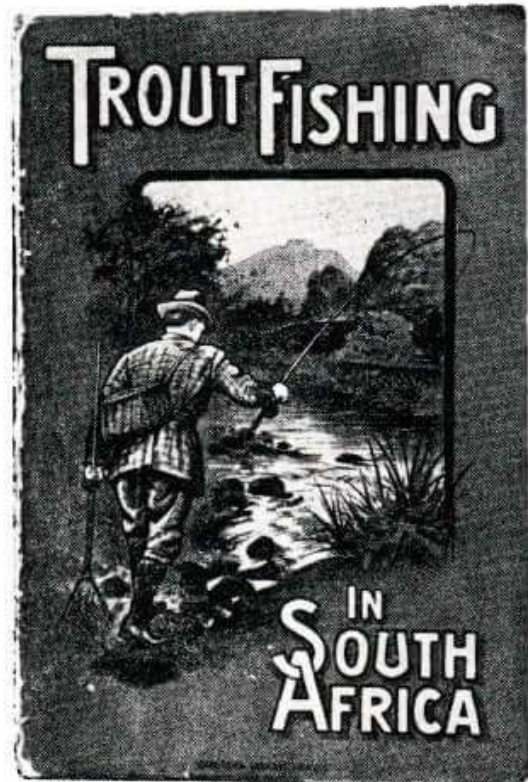
The title-page of this book reads as follows: *The/Sea Fisheries of/The Cape Colony/from van Riebeeck's Days/to the Eve of the Union/With a chapter on Trout and Other/Freshwater Fishes/by W. Wardlaw Thompson, F.Z.S./Publishers Imprint/T. Maskew Miller/Cape Town & Pretoria/1913.*

This octavo book consists of three pages of preliminaries with 163 pages of text including five appendices and an index. There are no illustrations.

Although the book deals mainly with commercial sea-fishing, one of the seven chapters, entitled "Trout and other Freshwater Fishes", qualifies it to be considered the third book published in South Africa dealing with trout fishing.

The chapter on trout is prefaced by the quotation, "Here and there a lusty trout", from Tennyson—perhaps an indication of Mr. Thompson's belief that trout were not plentiful enough to justify a full book.

**The South African Railway Trout Fishing Guide.  
Published in 1916.**



This chapter of 19 pages deals with the acclimatization of trout, attempts to introduce salmon, and historical records of freshwater fish taken from the journals of the early travellers. This book is not rare. In fact it is frequently seen. It is bound in boards with green cloth.

**4. Official Illustrated Guide to Trout Fishing in South Africa.**

The title-page of this—the fourth book to be published on South African trout-fishing—reads as follows: *South African Railways|Official Illustrated Guide|to|TROUT FISHING|in|SOUTH AFRICA|square design|Issued by the General Manager|South African Railways|triangle|No effort has been spared to vouch for the accuracy of the information|contained in this pamphlet, but the administration cannot be held|responsible for loss or inconvenience which may result from any errors|unwittingly made. Any readers discovering inaccuracies in the information contained herein are requested to report same to the|Manager, Publicity Department, South African Railways and Harbours|Johannesburg|triangle upside down|Publicity Department|South African Railways|Johannesburg|September 1916—W. W. Hoy|General Manager.*

This is a paper-back book with an excellent illustration of an angler in a Norfolk suit with a wicker creel and a wading net, casting into a mountain stream on the covers. The paper covers are dark green and both front and back covers have the same wording and illustration. There are 124 pages of text and 6 pages of advertisements.

The book is well illustrated with 55 pages of photographic illustrations, many of them of mouth-watering "bags" of trout, including a 4½ lb. rainbow from the "Smalleblaar" and a 3½ lb. and a 4 lb. fish—both rainbows—from the Dwars, Ceres, as well as many other fish from other rivers.

The introduction commences with the statement that "South Africa at the present time affords the most perfect trout fishing within easy access of all anglers". It is an excellent guide book, giving the names of all good fishing spots in each province as well as a map for each of the four provinces, and a chart showing the name of the town, the hotel accommodation and cost, the distance of the hotel from the station, and of the river from the station, and of course the names of the rivers as well as "whom to apply to for permission to fish" and the season, which for the Worcester district was 1st October to 15th January and again 1st April to 31st May. The three rivers for the Worcester district were the Hex, "Smalleblaar" and Arundel, and the distance from Worcester station was given as five miles to the Hex, and twelve miles to the other two!

Thousands of copies of this elaborate guide book must have been distributed to promote travel on the S.A.R.—that is if we are to judge by the number of copies that survive.

Incidentally, a much smaller book with the same title, written by S. A. Hey, containing only 48 pages and 30 illustrations, was published by the South African Railways in 1925, but it will be dealt with separately.

### Books after 1916.

These were probably the only—and certainly the most important—books published before 1916, but after a gap of four years the real period of trout-book publishing began in 1920. The first of these books was published in England.

#### 5. *The Trout are Rising in England and South Africa* by B. Bennion.

This octavo book, the fifth South African trout fishing book, has a title-page reading as follows: *THE TROUT ARE RISING|IN ENGLAND AND SOUTH AFRICA|A book for slippered Ease|by B. Bennion ("B.B." of the "Field")|with an introductory letter|by H. T. Sheringham and with|fifteen illustrations|London: John Lane, The Bodley Head|New York: John Lane Company. MCMXX (1920).*

This was the most ambitious of all trout books relating to South Africa published up to this date. It has 292 pages including the index, 15 photographic illustrations, of which four are of South Africa, including a nondescript picture described as "The Hex River, near Worcester—a *Transvaal* stream" (italics mine, F.R.B.). Six of the 24 chapters deal specifically with South Africa, but references to incidents in South Africa are sprinkled liberally about the other chapters.

Despite the wrong caption for the photograph of the Hex, Bennion, like other early writers, has lavish praise for the Hex River. The book is bound in boards with blue cloth. It is by no means rare.

## 6. Trout and Angling in South Africa by Arthur H. Reid.

This book, the sixth trout-fishing book dealing with South Africa, and probably the fifth to be printed and published in this country, has a fairly simple title-page as follows: *Trout & Angling/in South Africa/by/Arthur H. Reid/publishers imprint/The Speciality Press of S.A. Ltd./Johannesburg, Cape Town/1921.*

Written in rather pedantic Victorian prose, this book was to arouse the ire of the famous "Kingfisher", Fred Bowker, because of Reid's suggestion that the Eerste River rainbows were anadromous, and that many had "been to the sea or estuary and it is well known that many have been taken by the fishermen's nets in False Bay and offered for sale in Somerset Strand" (p. 72).

In his opening chapter, Reid, in ponderous prose, writes, "May I therefore premise by assuring the reader that I desire to abstain from all dogmatic propositions and to offer every apology to those experienced anglers who may disagree with my opinions". Fred Bowker was certainly one of those who disagreed, as we shall see. The book consists of 101 pages in all, plus preliminaries, and has 21 photographic illustrations and two line drawings. The 51 chapters are short, mainly instructional and descriptive, with some thoughts on "anglers one meets", "overgrown streams", "wind and weather" and other subjects.

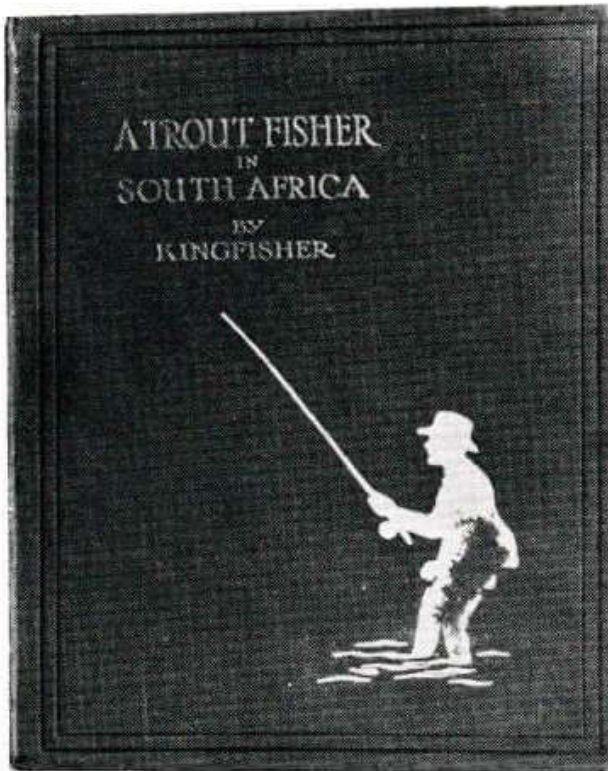
Despite its pedantic style it must have been of assistance to beginners and other anglers. Incidentally, this book, too, is excessively rare, and the only two copies I know of are the one I own and the one owned by A.C.H.

It is bound in boards with brown cloth and has a leaping trout die-stamped on the cover.

## 7. A Trout Fisher in South Africa by Kingfisher.

The seventh book on South African trout fishing was, in some respects, prompted by, and a riposte to, Reid's book, *Trout and Angling in South Africa*. The title-page reads as follows: *A Trout Fisher/in South Africa/by/Kingfisher/emblem/F. W. Flowers & Co./P.O. Box 1065, Cape Town/1922.*

Apart from the usual preliminaries there are 125 pages, plus six pages of "pencilled outlines", and two pages of index. Two of the pages with pencilled outlines are folding pages. There are also nine photographic plates. The book is an unusual size of octavo format. It is covered in boards with blue cloth, the title being die-stamped in gilt. A figure of an angler die-stamped in white is also shown on the cover. In his preface, Bowker, who preferred the anonymity of "Kingfisher", remarks that "I venture to give my opinion on some points, which I have formed only after very careful study and personal observation without allowing my decisions to be swayed by any opinions expressed by others". And the main point on which Bowker will not allow his "decisions to be swayed by any opinions expressed by others" is the question of whether the Eerste River rainbows are sea-going.



Fred Bowker's book, 1922, under the nom de plume of "Kingfisher". Actually, his choice of a title for the book was too wide, as it was confined almost entirely to the Eerste River in its unspoilt period.

In a long, involved fourth chapter he examines the whole question of rainbows and migration, quite clearly referring to Reid's assumptions (as well as Manning's) but not alluding to either by name. With some questionable logic he proves that rainbows in the Eerste River *do not* go to sea; at least he proves it to his own satisfaction but not necessarily to the reader's.

This book is not at all rare. Many copies exist and it can be bought quite cheaply, even today, on the Parade.

#### 8. **The Angler in South Africa by B. Bennion.**

Shortly after 'Kingfisher's' book appeared, Bennion's book on South African trout fishing, and the eighth South African book, was published in Johannesburg in Christmas 1923. The title-page reads as follows: *The Angler in South Africa* | by | B. Bennion | B.B. of "The Field" and "The Fishing Gazette", London: | "The Star" and "The South African Motorist", Johannesburg | No more I'm wishing—old-fashioned fishing. | And just a day on Nature's heart. | Dr. Henry van Dyke ("Little Rivers") | Johannesburg: | Hortors Limited | London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Keat & Co. Ltd. | Christmas 1923.

This uncontroversial book, also in octavo format, contains 190 pages including a folding appendix and index. Most of the 21 chapters are concerned with coarse fishing in South Africa, and there are four chapters on sea-fishing. The book is profusely illustrated with 34 photographic illustrations. Nevertheless it is a badly produced book.



not comparing with its South African produced predecessors—even the “paper-backs”—in typography, design and quality of paper. Even the binding boards are mere cardboard with a quarter-bound cloth spine.

This is by no means a rare book. I possess two copies, one of which is a presentation copy by the author, and I have seen several other copies in libraries and private collections.

### 9. Trout Fishing in South Africa by S. A. Hey.

This booklet has already been mentioned when I discussed the *South African Railways Illustrated Guide* (Number 4). It is a slender, paper-backed little guide also issued by the South African Railways. The title-page reads as follows: *Trout Fishing/in/South Africa/by/S. A. Hey/emblem/1925/Issued by authority of the General Manager, South African/Railways and Harbours, Johannesburg/W. W. Hoy—General Manager.*

As has already been said, it contains only 48 pages and is far less ambitious than its 1916 predecessor in format, production, appearance and information. It is relatively profusely illustrated, 38 photographs being mingled with text, and also shown on separate pages. The art work on the brown paper cover is of a similar scene to that of its predecessor except that three attractive looking trout feature on the bottom of the picture. The inside front cover has a railway map of South Africa, and the inside back cover has an advertisement inserted by the Publicity Department of the S.A.R. & H. The outside back cover has a line drawing of trout equipment, taken from the pages of its 1916 predecessor.

The information, too, has changed. The rivers in the Worcester area are now “Smalleblaar, Hollesluit, Jan du Toits” *Sic transit gloria mundi!*

This booklet is fairly common and is often found. There must have been a very large printing.

### Conclusion.

This completes my survey of the first nine books—as far as I am aware—dealing with South African trout fishing. It does not, as has been said, include all angling books such as those dealing *solely* with sea-fishing, but would appear to be fairly comprehensive as far as trout books during the period prior to 1926 is concerned. The post-1925 literature which I will deal with in my next article is much more profuse, and on the whole much more easily obtainable. It must not be forgotten that some of these nine books were regarded in their time as *ephemera*, and more were thrown away than preserved.

Collecting, and searching for, these nine books can give any angler a lot of pleasure. Finding one of the rarer ones is almost equivalent to landing a 5 lb. trout. Reading them is still more pleasure. Here one will find an indication of what trout fishing in South Africa was like in times gone by. One will also find much to study; ichthyology, entomology, river management, stocking, breeding, descriptions of our countryside before motor cars and pollution started on their destructive tasks. All these books provide a splendid introduction to that sub-culture which is in the world of the angler. They are excellent species of *Bibliotheca Salmo Piscatoria Africana*.