

## Susan & Paul Sissons – SPS Flyfishing

Susan and Paul had travelled down from Chesterfield and spent the day looking around Cambridge. Bit small but historic was their opinion. I wondered if they had looked at the Cam? When I first went to work in the Sheffield area in the early 1960's, the rivers were devoid of fish and I think some were close to being inflammable! The Cam on the other hand was a real river which flowed and occasionally flooded. There was an abundance of streamer weed and both of the main weir pools in Cambridge were as often as not in full flow. The roach fishing was fantastic. This has all changed and the flow has been reduced to a level that suits punting which goes a long way to explaining why nobody in authority is particularly bothered. Still, the carp fishing is good so I understand. The Don on the other hand has improved out of all recognition. The debris has been removed and the water quality improved to a level that grayling now abound. I must pay a visit.

Susan and Paul are both in full time employment but are trying to build up an instruction/guiding business. They earned star rating in that they managed to get their projector working without our help! Paul was well known to some members of the club through competition fishing on Grafham and Rutland. He also has an interest in promoting Bloke and Beulah rods. He had an interesting example of the latter in the form of a 4-piece 9ft #5 rod, which he reckoned was ideal for fishing small streams. Sue only started fly fishing in 1996 but in 1998 entered the English Ladies Fly Fishing contest at Bewl and qualified to fish for England in 1999 and soon became Captain of the team and has fished every year since. This has earned her 11 caps covering both still waters and rivers. She is unique in winning the Loch style championships 2 years running and only narrowly missed a hat trick when she finished 2<sup>nd</sup> in 2001.

Sue kicked off talking about her experiences in June 2005 fishing Lough Mask in Co. Mayo. Most people realise that this particular lake is notorious for jagged rocks, some of which lurk just below the surface. It is essential that novice anglers hire a knowledgeable ghillie. They are the only guys with boats in any case! Mickey Bewick was their guru. He advised the use of buzzers in the calm conditions which prevailed at the time. However, match day proved to be all together different with significant waves out in the main body of water. Dry flies were out. Traditional wet flies were in. The message was that you had to be versatile for success and the team did in fact win with the assistance of Ellmo the mascot. These wild brownies from Mask have a striking appearance with a heavily spotted golden body. I did not realise that locals could tell where the fish had come from just by the appearance of the fish – quite impressive considering that Mask occupies 22000 acres (c.f. Grafham ~1500 acres). I was interested to hear that the Irish have their version of the Blob – the Octopus – a lime green creation designed to draw fish to the surface where they might just take a more traditional offering such as a Fiery Brown (see report at [www.elfa.org.uk](http://www.elfa.org.uk) and look under Home International 2005).

Sue has also fished the San as part of the European Fly Fishers championships in June 2005. Paul was the team manager. The San, which means quick – was living up to its name. When the hydroelectric plant starts up the water level can rise 18" in 10 minutes. Not much fun if you happen to be on the far bank which could be 100 yards away. However, some of the Continental anglers were prepared to swim to their chosen area. The water was dirty but still fishable providing you had flies with a

4mm tungsten bead and a double layer of lead wire on the shank! The trick is to seek the runs where there was a perceivable difference in flow rate. I liked the idea of carrying a spare rod strapped to your side in case it was necessary to change tactics. The lake session was carried out on the lake above the dam. If you drew the river at Lesko (see Lucas article only on the Invicta web page for a map) then 2 anglers caught 5 fish between them and the remaining 17 blanked. We are talking here about the cream of Europe's river fishermen/women. The lake session was carried out on the Myczkowce Lake above the dam. Paul described this as the fastest flowing lake he had ever seen! One angler caught 5 fish, 9 caught 1 apiece and the remaining 9 had nothing. In fairness, the fishing improved a little for the later sessions. It is worth looking at the results (search Google with "FIPS-Mouche" and also look at the report at [www.elfa.org.uk](http://www.elfa.org.uk) under European Championship 2005) before visiting so that potentially productive areas can be identified in advance. A guide is pretty useful. If you happen to pick a bad time to visit then the area is quite interesting as a tourist destination. When Sue and Paul visited 3 months later in September 2005, when the fish are more highly coloured, they were catching 60-70 fish a day on dry flies.

We then switched to the Ladies Home International, 2006, on Llyn Brenig. Here we learned a few more tricks of the trade. Most anglers are now aware that many competition anglers change their flies from the ones initially on the cast. On this occasion the team was supplied with Bloke caps which I think were quite a distinctive reddish colour. As soon as fish were caught then the hats were changed to a different colour. The day proved to be a super flat calm. A Booby on the end of the cast supporting an array of Cormorants was the weapon of choice. The Booby dressing was truly vivid featuring fluo green foam, a peachy body and white hair. The idea, as in Ireland, was to bring the fish up from the depths and hopefully leading the fish to the more appetising food on the droppers. Another fly of interest was the Woolfta which incorporated purple eyes, a yellow micro-fritz body and pink wing and tail – see the photo in [www.celticflycraft.co.uk](http://www.celticflycraft.co.uk).

We finished off with some shots of fishing for Yellow Fin Tuna and Sailfish in Kenya, and catching Baltic Salmon in Sweden.

I purchased the DVD featuring Paul fishing the Don. Whoops! Push the centre button to release the DVD from the case! Although he caught a few bits of scrap iron, fish, albeit on the small size, came thick and fast. I have found in the past from my limited experience of river fishing, that it was difficult to appreciate that long casting was unnecessary. The film certainly shows that fish were virtually under the rod top. The river was quite heavily wooded. Hence although a 9ft rod was used in the film, a 7-8 foot #3-4 rod would probably have been more suited. Nevertheless the rod used, a Vision Extreme TE, had a nice middle-to-tip action. I think he might now prefer a Beulah. Casting and striking was almost entirely done with the rod nearly parallel to the water. Good idea for me to practice this on Grafham in quiet periods perhaps? It was claimed that fish remained more passive during unhooking if they are held upside down – meaning horizontal with the dorsal fin on the underside. The film also covers fly tying and various knots. An excellent introduction for a beginner at only £6.

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