

Another disastrous outing – Grafham Water - Carr Cup 5th October 2021



As I lay straddled across the rear transom of the boat, knees buried in three inches of rainwater, reaching for the bits of drogue and line that I had contrived to get wrapped around the propeller, with my finger firmly attached to it by a rogue hook that some previous mishap had left dangling there, I reminded myself that we go fishing for pleasure. It's meant to be fun.

My finger had managed to become firmly hooked as I attempted to yank a piece of Fast Glass line off the prop, so I couldn't move my hand away and I was trapped staring down at the water. Luckily we were in the middle of nowhere with no chance of colliding into anything – for once – but something had to give, and a sharp downward movement resolved the problem, at the same time causing a deal of blood and a blue swollen finger. For the next couple of hours I wasn't able to figure of eight or tie knots very easily as the finger went numb, which was a nuisance because by this time in the early afternoon I'd had no action at all. Not even a hint of a pull.

And I didn't deserve one. By mid morning I was already dropping my line over my unfortunate partner Trevor's head, whacking myself on the back of the head a number of times, sticking the flies into my life jacket and catching them in the engine/net/rowlock etc, etc, changing lines, changing flies and generally getting nowhere.

A good idea on these waters is to go out with a plan based on recent information and advice. I had no idea. Our trip over to the North Shore simply proved that the wind was getting up and the water was coloured. After a dozen or so short drifts, the wind was getting up and I suggested we try the quieter south shore. First the Sailing Club, then the Seat, Gaynes, Plummer, A Buoy, the Dam, and various permutations of these.

Desperate for information and guidance I searched the horizon while my leader was gently drifting into the prop. I did just manage to bang the engine into neutral before losing the rod but that was the end of that line. I shouldn't have been using that line anyway as it was totally inappropriate, but then so were all the other lines I'd tried.

Then, an hour or so later a repeat performance with the drogue. I have never seen a drogue so contorted. As I attempted to pull it from the prop, Trevor holding up a rope and bits of shredded material asking if that's what I was looking for - which is when my battle with the prop began.

Eventually, having recovered at least to the point where I at least could make the boat move, we noticed that there was a collection of boats in the quieter water off the Sludge and as the cloud came over we had a few minutes of action resulting in the only fish of the day. Frustrating as we were surrounded by boats with smug looking anglers and bending rods. So unfair when we were having such a traumatic day. However, a kindly and sympathetic Ray Storer came to our rescue by lending us his spare drogue, telling us how to catch fish and explaining that daydreaming was the key, as his rod bent over yet again. Then the sun came out again and I just wanted to go home, or weep, or both.

I apologise to Trevor. I've only been doing this for thirty odd years and obviously have a lot to learn.

Chris McLeod