

## Mr Bean goes fishing....

### Or how to avoid catching fish on a day when it's almost impossible not to - Draycote Reservoir 6th August 2023...

The psychology of a partnership on a fly fishing boat is fascinating. The dynamic between the two anglers is critical to their success as was demonstrated in boat number 45 on the Carr Cup day yesterday.

A like-minded, intelligent, sympathetic, experienced, sensible, knowledgeable, relaxed, easy going partner makes a huge difference – and that's exactly the opposite of what Sue Potts had in boat 45. Poor Sue. She should have won the day with the quality of the three fish she weighed in, but sadly didn't manage the full bag of eight mainly because of the antics of her hopelessly unhelpful partner.

The day started well enough. Fish showing, fish nudging the foam (what used to be carefully crafted dries of feather and fur, but now comprise a cushion's worth of synthetic floating material) and even getting a bit of a tweak. The first drift was encouraging enough and the second produced a couple of fish - the smallest of the day to me and a lump for Sue. Another drift and another fish and we were jogging along nicely with a couple apiece. Then the problems started.

Despite the distraction of my almost hourly need for the baler (which, incidentally, we used to bale out water, it works well for that) Sue played one that took her around the back of the boat and eventually came off, but she recovered from this to land her third. Nothing was happening at the other end.

My brain has blotted out the exact sequence of events but I do remember the wind strengthening and the temperature dropping, while that bloody bit of blue plastic rope on the front of the boat started to play its part. How many flies get caught in that? Hundreds. Mr Coulam or someone needs to be punished for allowing that material anywhere near a boat. But that apart, flies were getting caught in everything – 'Yes, I always fish barbless these days. Oh, how come I can't get the fly out of the drogue rope'. And when at last it comes out, it then snags the drogue - twice - by which time we're at the end of the drift and I have stuff all over the place which tangles even more as we motor away. This scene was repeated a number of times, my frustration level not helped by Sue quietly and calmly hooking, playing and landing another fish, one of which escaped after netting and actually swam around inside the boat. I did manage to catch that one!

The next sequence of events in no way reflects on Sue's fishing, but is interesting to relate. Orange bodied daddies seemed to be popular with the (Sue's) fish, but Sue's was getting tatty and she didn't have another. Don't worry, I have plenty I said. At which point a fish grabbed her's, ripping off the whole leader - along with tatty daddy. New leader time. No problem and it was soon flying out with a fresh, perfect, unused daddy on the top dropper. Four cast later and Sue noticed that the leader had disappeared; strange? But never mind and out goes another newly tied leader and daddy, which promptly also disappeared. Now, it's almost impossible to believe that that would ever happen again, but it did. Next cast. So Sue in three casts has lost nine flies and about a mile of fluorocarbon.

'Thanks for the flies Chris, here's your box back'. It somehow slid into the pond inside our boat, opened out and dry flies went everywhere. I couldn't kneel to collect them as they swilled around because of the depth of water, so I started baling hoping not to throw too many flies into the lake. I cast my line out the back hoping I might 'mousetrap' a fish while baling (fat chance), fiddled with the drogue and made sure we were drifting correctly. While I was scrabbling around, Sue caught another fish. Very unkind I thought, but thoroughly well deserved given her calm, unflappable demeanour.

Having abandoned the search for flies and reduced the internal water level to reasonable depth I picked up my rod which promptly snapped in half. Sue might have caught another fish at this point - I was too distraught to notice. Or maybe it was while I completely re-tackled trying to get the line, leader and flies on to the spare rod with the least amount of fuss. Needless to say, all were stuck in ropes, seat, waterproof etc etc and it took hours! It doesn't help that every time I needed to sort out my line, leader, flies etc, I was also in urgent need of the baler - sometimes when I was also in urgent need of baling water. It was all very confusing. I put it down to tea, stress and old age. I have my own baler, and at one point I lost it - it was right in front of me. Worrying.

So Sue was on five and I hadn't had - or deserved - a pull for about four hours. At that point we should have stopped and thought about what to do. The cooler wind had moved through ninety degrees, the rain was thoroughly unpleasant and we'd both managed to wrap leader material and lines around ourselves like some weir maypole, with wind blown flies catching every possible snag, including that bloody bit of plastic rope. The boat was full of water, everything was wet. Elsewhere though dozens were caught but, by that stage, I'd lost the will to live, let alone think how to catch anything. So apologies to Sue for my pathetic attempts to be a good partner. I hope I can redeem myself at some point.

***Chris McLeod***