

“DROWNING MAGGOTS” WITH KEITH MOTT.

Fishing in the Cotswold.

The month of August 2006 saw ten of us drive down the M4 Motorway, for a week's family holiday in the Cotswold. Our family is getting bigger and bigger and with the recent arrival of baby Sophia, we now have four grand children, in the form of Sasha, Katie and Ryan. My wife, Betty and I, normal have a week away in the summer with all the kids, staying in a caravan and try to fly away some where abroad to get some winter sun on our own, after Christmas. The family is getting so big now; we had to have two caravans this year! All the elder grand children love the pigeons and always hand feed my young birds on the loft floor, when they come over at the weekends. The eldest is Sasha, aged six, and she is a natural with animals and she has a wonderful repour with the pigeons, just like her mother had when she was a youngster. My daughter, Caroline, was my pigeon partner when she was a girl and judged on her own at many shows, including a couple times at the R.P.R.A. Southern Region Show. She was a great judge and a wonderful handler of pigeons, but my son, Mark, was never interested in pigeons. Mark has followed in his ol' man's foot steps and is a first class carpenter / joiner by trade, and has always been very keen on football and fishing. When he was ten years old, he caught a 10lb. Pike and unhooked it, and returned it by him self. I've got an old photo of him holding the Pike and it was nearly as long as him!

Where we stayed on holiday in South Cerney near Cirencester, it is well known for being a 'Mecca' of coarse fishing, with it's hundreds of premier quality fisheries. We are pretty keen on a bit of angling and normally set a side a couple days of the holiday for drowning a few maggots. At that time the Cotswold fishing was 'off form' and we didn't do much, being very disappointed with what we had a go at. We are members of the Woking & District Angling Association and on the weekend of our return from holiday we decided to have a go at one of our local club lakes at Send, to offset the disappointment of the holiday fishing. Just picture the situation, it's mid-day on Sunday, I've left it to late to get bate, as the three local tackle shops close at 12 o'clock and I've promised Betty that I would take her fishing! I wasn't to keen on going in the end, with no real bate, but I promised, so off we went down the A3, armed with two tins of sweet corn and about three handfuls of ground bait, which was about two years old. Being a very good fishery, there were a lot of anglers there enjoying the sunny weather and their Sunday afternoon sport, but we managed to get two swims side by side and mine was 60% covered in water lilies. A really hard swim to work, that's why on one was on it when we arrived on site! Second cast and I had a 2lb. Tench on the bank and I started to think to my self, 'this is not all bad'. About an hour after we arrived, the young lad on the next swim packed up, because he hadn't caught much and he gave me his left over maggots, so the bait situation improved a little bit. It just goes to show you, a bad swim, very little bait and it turned out to be the best five hours fishing I've had in a long time! I finished up catching seven Crucian Carp, loads of Perch (biggest 1lb.), loads of good Roach (including two at 1lb), a 1lb. Bream and two nice Tench (2lb. and 1lb.). Not bad for an ol' boy with a bit of string and a safety pin! They say, 'when it's your day, it's your day', and it was my day, I couldn't do anything wrong. The swim I was on, was very high on the bank and had to return the bigger fish by using the landing net. I returned one of the 1lb. Roach using the net and when I pulled it back out of the water it had a Crucian Carp in it. I just couldn't go wrong! Betty caught some nice Crucian Carp, Bream and Tench, but apart from our wonderful haul, not much else came out of the lake that afternoon. Fishing is very much like pigeon racing, it is a waiting game which needs a lot of patience. Some times fancier send pigeon to races and are not confident of getting success, and then win the race. Angling can be very much the same!

The 'Royalty' Fisheries at Christchurch.

While on holiday in the wonderful county of Hampshire, we have fished the famous Royalty Fisheries on the River Avon at Christchurch several times and have enjoyed some good sport there through the years. The Royalty is very hard to fish with its thick weed beds and fast current, but when you catch, you catch big time! It holds specimen fish of most the of species, but is famous for it's massive Barbel, which is the quarry of most of the angler who buy a day ticket at Davis Tackle Shop, sited at the entrance to the fishery. The Hampshire Avon was regarded as one of the country's best coarse fisheries and in its heyday this clear, fast flowing river held many British records. The Royalty has several famous Barbel swims, including 'the pipes', 'waters meet' and of course 'the parlour pool', which the lad used to pay an arm and leg to fish. The parlour pool was right next to the pumping station at the top of the fishery and on summers evening we used to stand on the bridge next to the station, and watch massive double figure Barbel below us, basking in the sunshine. The theory was

that the warm water from the station attracted the big fish in to the swim. The parlour pool swim had some very big Carp residing in it too!

My brother, Phil, owned a holiday caravan at New Milton, about a five miles drive from the Royalty and he was always on the bank there drowning maggots, but caught some brilliant fish. In the 1980's he caught a wonderful 3lb. 11oz. Roach on the Royalty and at that time wasn't too far away from the British record. In fact the British record Roach at that time was caught just up the road on the River Stour! The Roach was Phil's only fish of the day, fishing the lower reaches of the Royalty, but was more than happy to sacrifice further sport for such a specimen. He told me, 'the water was fairly high, but not in flood. I put a few feeders full of maggots and casters down the swim and then switched to a straight leger. I had a good pull on the quiver tip, using double caster hooked top and tail, and I thought it was a nice Chub. When it came to the surface my mate was ready with the landing net and we couldn't believe what we were looking at. It was a magic fish and we didn't want to put it back! Phil was using 6lb line straight through to a size 12 hook. On other fishing trips to the Avon he has caught some big Bream, Chub and Barbel. My wife, Betty, has hooked some nice Chub at Christchurch and on one occasion she was reeling in a nice Dace, and it was taken by a big Salmon, but in spite of all her good efforts to play it, the Salmon got off.

My favourite angler is the great John Wilson of Norwich and back in the early 1990's I have spent many happy hours watching his wonderful old fishing T.V. show, 'Go Fishing'. John still makes a few programmes for Cable Channels, but the old original 'Go Fishing' is the best! He filmed one of the programmes on the Avon at the Royalty and if I remember correctly, they closed down the fishery for a week, so he had the place to himself to film. He caught some nice Barbel trotting down in the fast running water and featured the 'waters meet' swim, where he waded out to the middle of the river to fish. I hope my readers have enjoyed our look back at the Royalty Fisheries. From recent reports the fishing isn't what it used to be there and I'm told that since they stopped using the pumping station at the top of the fishery, the parlour pool has weeded over and is un-fishable. It's very sad to hear these adverse reports on such a wonderful fishery!

"Drowning Maggots" with the family.

I've mentioned in a previous 'Drowning Maggots' article that angling has been a great hobby for all our family, especially when the kids were young, as it was something we could all go out and do together at the weekends. On packing up my pigeons, because of the dreaded 'pigeon fanciers lung', in the mid 1990's, we hit the bank every weekend and enjoyed some great success fishing our local River Wey, and local club lakes. If I'm honest, I have to confess that my wife, Betty, is the 'ace' fisher person in the Mott family and has shown many an angler we have met on the river bank how to catch good fish on none productive days. Fishing is like pigeon racing, or any other sport come to that, you get good days and you get bad. Betty always seemed to pull some thing out of the bag! I can recall an evening session on our favourite stretch of the River Wey at Jacobs Wells, called the Swift, and no one was catching a thing. It was as dead as a door knocker! There were many anglers sitting on the bank for several hours, with thousands of pound worth of poles and equipment around them, and they never got a bite. Betty had her beloved Centre Pin reel set up and she trotted down small pieces of sprat, on a 2lb bottom and size 18 hook, and landed several big Chub. On another occasion, I can remember her landing a 10lb Mirror Carp on a 3lb bottom and a size 16 hook, which took her a good while to land it, but she did! She always likes to fish away on her own in a little quiet place on the fishery and hates having fish out of the water for photos and looking at. If she had her way she wouldn't bother with photos and would release them back, straight out of the landing net. She had been fishing long before she met me 40 years ago, as she went with her late dad, Alf North, when she was a youngster. Alf flew pigeons for many years in the old Chessington and Surbiton clubs, so she knew what to expect when she married me!

My daughter, Caroline, was always a pigeon fancier and never an angler. I remember when she was a kid, I would put a maggot on her hook for her and that would last the whole session if it stayed on. Half a dozen maggots would last her all day! She used to catch little Roach and Rudd, and at the end of the session she would only have the stretch skin of the maggot hanging on the hook. She has been interested in pigeons all her life, being introduced to them when only a little baby and as a toddler she carried them around under her arm. She was my pigeon partner when she was a young girl and won a first with her good mealy hen at the big R.P. Capital Show in London, many years ago. Caz is a good judge of a pigeon and has judged many shows, including twice at the R.P.R.A. Southern Region Show. Mark, my son, is the complete opposite to his sister and is an angler, never a pigeon man, although he has convoyed the London & South East Classic Club birds

with me a couple of times. He really enjoys the work and the travel with the pigeon transporter and will probably be my full time assistant in the 2008 season. He has been a very good angler from a very young age and I can remember when he was ten years of age he caught a 10lb Pike, which was nearly as long as him. His mum took him fishing, as I was working and he landed, unhooked and returned the big Pike on his own. When he was very young, he used to sit on his fishing box ledgering for Chub and hooked some beautiful fish, but lost them at the landing net. That little boy got so frustrated with that, he just sat on his big box and cried! Mark has caught some very nice fish through the years, including double figure Carp and Pike, and some big Chub and Tench. He has been a keen angler all his life and has met many of our present day fishing champions including, Bob Nudd MBE, Tom Pickering, Jan Porter, Clive Branson and the great Ivan Marks

In May 2004 Mark went to Cancun in Mexico for a holiday and fished for game fish in the Caribbean. He fished with his friend, Chris, and three other anglers off a boat, ten miles of the coast of Mexico. They fished dead bait and lures static off the side of the boat and trawled, with the best fish of the day being a 100lb Marlin. Mark bagged up with many quality fish, including three Barracuda to 20lb, three Yellow Finned Jacks to 25lb, three Red Jacks and five big Tuna. Mark has always had a big rivalry with his dad over the years, comparing who catches the biggest fish, but I can't compete with Barracuda and Yellow Finned Jacks! I've probably had the slightly bigger English course fish, but my best catches have been quality, but not world beaters and as I have stated previously, I enjoy sitting on the bank, catch good fish is a bonus. I have had double figured Carp and Pike, 4lb Tench and probably my best fish was my 5lb 9oz Chub caught on the River Mole.

Fly Fishing in Pembrokeshire.

When you boil it down, I think it is fair to say that I'm 100% coarse fisherman, who loves the rivers and lakes in the English country side. I've never been sea fishing, but did try fly fishing for Rainbow in Wales a few years ago and really enjoyed the experience. We had a week's holiday in Pembrokeshire, South Wales, and stayed at my good mate Peter Taylor's, daughter's pub, The Harbour Inn at Solva. Jimmy Jones was a premier pigeon fancier in the Haverfordwest Club and it was pre-arranged that we would fly fish his private trout lake on the Thursday morning. With us being novices with the fly rod, we had a short practice session on the lake, on the Monday evening and Jim's son, Charlie, gave us some tuition with the casting. The short practice session was very successful and produced five 1lb Rainbow Trout. The lake held a good head of Rainbow and Brown Trout, with the biggest being a double figured Brownie caught by one of Jim's sons.

The weather on the Thursday was brilliant and full of anticipation for a great days fishing, Betty and I arrived at Jim's country home nice and early on the arranged day. When we turned in to the car park it was full, as most of Jim's family were there, as were several pigeon fanciers from Fishguard and Haverfordwest, who were there for the barbecue, to be held on the bank of the lake. The fishing was brilliant, with us catching about 50 Rainbow Trout up to 4lb and the first 15 caught went on to the barbecue with the chicken legs and burgers. The experience of catching the fish and eating them a few minutes later was a bit strange. It turned in to a bit of a pigeon fancier's 'do' on the bank. It was a great day!

Jimmy Jones raced pigeons in partnership with his son Charlie and, although he had been in pigeons all his life, Jimmy had only been racing in the Haverfordwest Club for about five years. The Joneses raced on the natural system and enjoyed all races, short and long distance. The partners flew the Ponderosa / Janssens obtained from their good friend John Davies of Fishguard and they won from any distance. The weekend before our visit, Jimmy and Charlie had a good race from Newport (86 miles) when they recorded 1st, 2nd and 4th club with their young birds.

After a brilliant day's fishing at the Joneses lake in Haverfordwest, Jimmy presented the fly rod and reel to me as a gift, and that bit of tackle is still in my kit today. About a year after our visit I was told that some poison from a local farm had penetrated the lake and all the fish had been killed. I sincerely hope Jim and his wonderful family have sorted out the problem and the lake is back to its former glory!

Fishing in France.

I have been a racing pigeon convoyer for the London & South East Classic Club for eight years and make regular visits to France liberating the birds in the summer months. One of our race points in mid France is Tours, a 290 miles fly back to London for the pigeons, and they are released on a road which runs between

two beautiful lakes. Other Angling pigeon conveyers kept telling me how good the fishing was there and although I had visited the Tours site four times, I had never taken my fishing rods and tackle box. This season my son, Mark, was my assistant for the Tours Classic and he is a very keen angler, so we took two rods and only some basic tackle because of the lack of space on the pigeon transporter. I mustered up some bait to take to France in the form of fish oil pellets, crab bollies, luncheon meat, sweet corn and a bait box full of dry lake ground bait, as I was told the main quarry at Tours were Catfish. All that nice bait and Mark caught all his fish on French bread, which we had purchased for our own consumption. The two lakes are mostly used for wind surfing and sailing boats, but I was told by a local angler that these waters contained a good head of King Carp. It was a very hot and sunny day in May, and there was not much action until the sun started to go down, and then the bites came thick and fast. Mark had a very enjoyable few hours on the bank and caught a Carp and five Catfish. The 2lb Carp was strange, in fact I've never seen one like it before and wondered if it was a French species or a Hybrid of some sort. The beautiful fish was marked just like a Common Carp, but looked like Crucian Carp, being saucer shaped and flat and had no spike at the front of its Dorsal Fin.

On our second day at the lakes we couldn't fish as we had to concentrate on liberating 1,890 London bound racing pigeons, but there were a few local French anglers on the bank catching well. One old guy was set up near our transporter and was fishing both lakes at the same time, with six rods out. He is a well know character locally and takes every thing he catches home and puts it in the freezer. We saw him catch a lot of Catfish and a nice 8lb Common Carp. The two lakes at Tours has a big head of Water Fowl and several strange Ota type creatures, which are about 36ins long, and pop up in your swim next to the float from time to time. On the racing pigeon front, about 12,000 birds were liberated between the lakes at Tours that day and we all enjoyed a great days racing.

Katie's first pike.

Our four grand children sleep over at our home in Claygate most weekends and they all have their own interests. Sasha, the oldest, spends most of her time in the pigeon loft, Ryan playing games on his X Box, Katie likes fishing with her dad, Mark, and the youngest, Sophia; well she just spends most of her time getting on your nerves. Not really, she is the next pigeon fancier! Saturday 17th September turn out to be a very special day for our nine year old grand daughter, Katie, which kicked off at our local fishing tackle shop in Hinchley Wood. The shop has only recently opened and on that Saturday John Wilson, the world's number one angler and television personality was making an appearance to meet the local fishermen and mark the opening of the new shop. John Wilson was Mark's boyhood hero, as we use to watch all his 'Go Fishing' TV programmes in the 1980's, so he thought he would take Katie along to the new shop met the angling supremo. They had a chat John and then had their photo taken with him, and while in the shop, Mark, purchased two packs of dead bates with the intention of going Pike fishing in the afternoon. They invited me along, so the three of us made off to a Pike 'hotspot' at the drains on the River Wey at Old Woking for Katie's first Pike fishing session. It was a nice warm sunny day and as I've said on many occasions, 'you can't beat sitting by a river in the country side on a summer's day. If you catch a fish it is a bonus'. Mark's first cast in to the river produced a 3lb 'jack' Pike, even before I had even put bait on the hook! A while later Katie had a Pike take the Roach dead bait on her rod and she struck into it, starting a tug of war. It nearly pulled her over, but she hung on for dear life to that rod handle and played it to the bank, where her dad netted it. The fight produced her first ever Pike, a 7lb cracker! A great day for our Kate!

Massive Carp Fun In France.

Here's a bit of news for the big fish anglers! My daughter, Caroline, has a friend named Matt Wickens, who is a very keen angler and last October he and a few friends went to France for a long weekend Carp fishing. The lads went to a day ticket water called 'Dream Lakes' and what a dream time they had! Matt caught a 70lb, yes a 70lb Common Carp and broke the lake record. He caught the monster on a bollie and after a twenty minute fight landed it with a big landing net. Normally massive fish like that fight for a lot long than that and the angler has to go in the water when the fish is played out, to land it in his arms. Matt is a fencer by trade and told me his party had several massive fish on the bank, and he caught a 52lb Carp in the same session. Fantastic sport! Matt has been in contact with the fishery manager since his return home and he was told his record Common Carp was caught again two weeks later, but having spurned was 2lb lighter, so he still holds the Lake record. I've included a photo of Matt in the water returning his wonderful record breaker! The Carp on the continent are generally much bigger than those in the UK, because they are grown on with special feeding.

One of the best Carp fishermen I know is pigeon fancier, Peter Sharman of Old Woking. I've know Peter, through our common interest of pigeon racing, for many years and although he is first class fancier, he is also a brilliant Angler. Years ago he came close to a sea fishing record with his 4lb 2oz Whitting and in recent years has caught some very big Carp, with his heaviest being a fantastic 33lb 4oz. Mirror from a Surrey lake. Peter says, he is very lucky to have a very under standing wife, as he has know lots of dedicated Carp fisher men finish up in the divorce courts! Carp fishing can get a hold on you and can become obsessive to the degree that you want to spend every minute in a 'bivy' tent on the bank of a lake, waiting for big Carp to pull your string. He used to fish every weekend, from Friday night through to Sunday evening and then again one night during the week, going straight to work next morning from the lake! He did this for five years and tells me he caught eleven fish one year and twelve the next, that's how hard big Carp fishing is. He says in those days he was nutty! An old friend of Peter's was the 27lb 8oz. Mirror Carp named 'Girty', who resided in a lake near his home in Old Woking and he caught this whopper four times, but she has since died of old age. (All the fishing photos can be found in the Website 'ALBUM')

TEXT & PHOTOS BY KEITH MOTT.