

Mick Loate's NATURE DIARY

JUNE 16 heralded the glorious first day of a new coarse fishing season. Anglers up and down the country cast lines, baits and lures into pond, mere, canal and flowing watercourse. Oh those sweet memories over the years.

Uprising excitement, silver dawn, dewy freshness and sun-blessed tranquillity. The day would always hold optimism, an expectancy of bright kingfisher and demoiselle, sweet overture of blackcap and whitethroat, white cushions of aromatic elderflower. Mother Nature never once failed to deliver. While the river flowed placidly by and if one was in tune with the milieu, there was a chance of silver, red or golden fishes. Alone a thousand beautiful absorptions ran through the mind. That first day could be so magical.

A likeminded minority oppose the relaxing of a close season. March 16 until June 16 should be a time for coarse fish

to spawn and recover from the stress of that process. However, many anglers and businessmen with interests in the tackle trade have campaigned for a 12-month season in which to gain maximum exploitation of waters with little, if any regard for the reparation and well being of spawning fish. In the stillwater department they have been successful.

Maybe I take it too seriously but the portrayal of angling on television and video has been largely appalling. Macho men concerned more with ego, bravado and trophies, a need to portray themselves catching bigger specimens than anyone else. It puts a shameful face on angling. Surely the entire ethic of a day's coarse fishing is to isolate oneself on a favourite stretch of river, sense tranquility and witness all that nature offers. At such times the world seems a wonderful place. Sadly, many anglers appear to have lost the plot. Dissatisfied

with 20 pound carp, they want fish in the 40 bracket. Personally I have no desire to fish competitively, that always seemed an abuse of the quarry. Neither do I subscribe to all the modern contraptions manufactured to make the catching of fish easier. Whatever happened to Mr Crabtree?

As a kid from the streets of South London I sought open spaces, country retreats with their rivers and streams. Often alone, save for a hard work roadster bicycle I journeyed into Kent and East Sussex. There I found beautiful landscapes, intimate streams and the larger watercourse of the upper Medway. Utterly beguiled, fishing was saviour from an otherwise dull existence.

A day by the river was something pondered over a period of time. Optimism always ran riot, the realities sometimes less rewarding, yet again and again I was lured back often to the same loca-

tions. It was an exciting time of discovery, learning about the countryside and river environment of birds, wildflowers, animals and fishes that were all part of the day. I remember seeing my first kingfisher along a heavily wooded backwater. On that same day I extracted my first pike, a jack little over a pound. It was lovingly admired before being carefully returned to the water. Another day I recall with clarity was fishing the tail of a wooded island about two miles downstream of Tonbridge. On that point grew the most resplendent orchid I have ever found. Somewhere in the copse behind me a nightingale sung, they were not uncommon along the Medway valley all those years ago. But the most exciting sighting was of a family of stoats, dog and bitch fore and aft with five kittens between. They passed in a line, half a rod's length from where I nes-

tled. Each one held the tail of the one in front across its jaws, I don't remember catching anything much that day, it didn't really matter. As far as I was concerned my immediate microcosm was the best place on earth, little else seemed of consequence.

Most of Devon's rivers hold few coarse fish being largely populated by game species, brown, sea trout and salmon. The small threads of bright water running off the moor unite with other streams and rapidly metamorphose into majestic rivers like the Teign and Dart. Moorland water is acidic and therefore lacking the insect life of chalkstreams such as Hampshire's Test, Itchen and Avon. Due to their high alkalinity and rich insect life there is little requirement for trout populating such waters to become anadromous. By contrast, the sparse ephemera of acidic waters dictate that a good percentage of

brown trout migrate for more bounteous feeding at sea. This migration is undertaken in the fish's second or third year when its tan, gold and vermilion livery is replaced by a silvery hue. At this stage in the trout's life it is known as a smolt. They will spend anything from a matter of days to a year at sea before returning (usually to the exact gravels of their own genesis), to spawn. Odd as it may seem, both brown and sea trout are anatomically identical being one and the same species, *Salmo trutta*.

Enormous divides and opinions exist within the spectrum of angling. It seems a shame we can't all be a cooperative celebrating the parallels encompassed by our sport. Whatever, at the end of the day all fishermen should be channelling at least as much back into the preservation of fish and the well being of the environment than we ever take out.

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OFFICES AT: PLYMOUTH AND BRISTOL

Toad team comes to Daisy's aid

THE Toad Hall Cottages running team completed the Plymouth Half-Marathon in slightly wet and wild conditions raising over £1,600 for charity.

The money will be split between The Devon Air Ambulance and the Daisy Palmer Trust.

With a mix of experience and training, the plucky runners took on the challenging 13.1 mile course around

Plymouth alongside some 5,000 other runners and all ran in respectable times despite some rain and the inevitable hills.

The Daisy Palmer Trust raises money for eight-year-old Daisy, from Essex, who suffers from a rare and debilitating illness known as Chronic Intestine Pseudo-Obstruction which means she cannot eat anything orally and is fully reliant on being fed intravenously directly via her heart, spending up to 18 hours a day attached to a feeding machine.

Daisy and her family

have been holidaying in a Toad Hall Cottage, near Salcombe, for years with doctors consistently amazed at the improvement a few weeks in the Devon air makes to her overall condition.

Daisy's dad Damon Palmer said: 'We are all overwhelmed by the Toad Hall staff's amazing gesture of fundraising for Daisy.'

'We get a lot of wonderful support from our local community and Daisy's school.'

'But to receive that same level from afar like this, is truly humbling.'



Contributed

The Toad Hall Cottages running team

'It makes us feel accepted as part of the local community where we love to holiday too, which is a lovely feeling.'

'So thanks to the staff of Toad Hall and all those that dug deep to sponsor them.'

Caroline Creer, fundraising director for Devon Air Ambulance Trust, said: 'Well done to the whole team from Toad Hall Cottages and

I hope they had a fantastic time.'

'We really appreciate their efforts and thank everyone involved for the fantastic sum that was raised.'

The Toad Hall Team thanked everyone who sponsored the team and

also the fantastic supporters and race volunteers who plied them with water, jelly beans and jaffa cakes along the route.

For more information visit www.daisy.palmertrust.co.uk and www.daat.org

HEMMINGS HOLIDAYS

Coach Holidays 2012

23 June	8 Days	Waterways of Scotland	£515
24 June	6 Days	Splendour of the English Lakes and Dales	£310
1 July	7 Days	Northumbria's Rugged Coast	£440
1 July	6 Days	Bournemouth and Exbury Gardens	£320
8 July	5 Days	The Pennine Explorer	£255
9 July	5 Days	Blackpool and the Lakes	£225
15 July	7 Days	Isle of Man	£460
27 July	4 Days	Torquay - English Riviera	£210
28 July	8 Days	Isle of Wight	£435
29 July	6 Days	Derbyshire Dales and the Peak District	£299
3 Aug	3 Days	Althorp House and the Cotswolds	£149
5 Aug	5 Days	Pennines and the Edinburgh Tattoo	£380
5 Aug	11 Days	Berlin and Poland	£845
6 Aug	5 Days	Llandudno and Mount Snowdon	£245
11 Aug	3 Days	Mystery Weekend	£130

London Theatre Breaks

21 July	2 Days	Mamma Mia or Ghost	£175
19 Sept	2 Days	Wizard of Oz - London	£150
10 Nov	2 Days	War Horse - London	£180

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Christian comment

THE long running Leveson enquiry grinds on.

What really happened? Who is speaking the truth? Who can we trust? Where can we go for accurate information? Who should represent us and lead us? The Bible cannot fill in the details for Lord Leveson but it can begin to answer the other questions. How?

The most commonly used word throughout the Bible for a leader is a word that can simply be translated 'older.'

But it doesn't just mean chronologically older, for the implica-

tion is much wider, implying 'older and wiser,' more mature, more experienced, people who are trustworthy and reliable and who know how to live their lives.

Oddly, in the requirements for these people, there is no mention of background, education, social class, who they associate with (which political party or church denomination), oratorical skills (TV electoral sound bites or pulpit preaching ability), wealth, skills, etc. Instead they are to be people who have a good reputation

locally, who have sound, stable family lives and have brought up their children well, and who can bring a little gentle correction where people have gone astray.

These are the people we can turn to for guidance in our own lives or in our communities, who can speak out for us or give us the direction we need. It leaves us with a question: what would our political scene or our churches look like if we consistently had people of this calibre and integrity to lead us?

Rolf Burnie



I just had my tooth replaced in one visit!

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