

# A Fish Called Mavis

Twas the summer of 2002 and I remember it as if it was only yesterday . . .



The electric blue flash of that aptly named bird, the Kingfisher, the gin clear water of the Loddon complete with its perfect gravel bottom. The bright blue sky full of Simpson's clouds, and only being disturbed by the ozone ripping flight of Concorde.

Three intrepid anglers with a textbook-viewing platform (a bridge) standing, Heron like, watching a shoal of barbel, 20 strong, clearing maggots off the bottom like piscatorial Dysons. We identified the heaviest fish, the prettiest fish and most important, the BOSS fish. She is the third largest of the group but is definitely the boss. She has a distinct deformity, this being a very large left pectoral fin and a very small right one. We are against naming fish, however this particular one has a defined attitude that reminds me of an old neighbour of mine called Mavis and so the name stuck. (*Was your neighbour bossy or did she have odd pectorals? Ed.*)

Let me tell you about my new friend Mavis (fish not neighbour). She would be first to the freebies even when the bait dropper is still spewing out hemp and maggots, taking food that is directly in front of this alien object. Even when

the dropper is taken out, refilled and put back Mavis is straight on the case and gets first pick of the scoff. The other fish seem to hang back when she is in full scoffing mode as if they are afraid to get between her and the food. She has a unique style that deserves admiration and respect. When the freebies are introduced several fish investigate almost immediately, however Big M is always allowed through, she approaches from the same area and flashes several times on her way through the group. Is the flashing the barbel's method of warning other fish of her entry into the food zone or simply an involuntary reflex when feeding? The

smaller fish move away to the rear of the swim and don't return until the biggies have finished. Any that are slow in moving are encouraged out by Big M chasing them. She then tucks in with gusto.

So with all this information filed away the *three fishcateers* had to decide who had first crack at the shoal. PR won the race. Whilst BV and I were thinking of a fair method to pick the lucky angler, PR was like a rat up a drainpipe and slipped into the swim with gay abandon, sticking up his two fingered Agincourt archer gesture at the two mugs in the process. GOOD, because St. Andrew was not on his side, he did catch a small one but

Big M had the last laugh this particular day. (Saint Andrew is the patron saint of angling for those who are in the dark). So, what to do next? Well, my intrepid colleagues have to work Monday to Friday and I don't, HA HA. I have many more opportunities to fish than they do and so off I went down to the river once more. Once again I was faced with crystal clear water and a bright blue sky.

Having recently fished with Mr. Crouch, I adopted his method of fishing with maggots, ergo an open-ended feeder filled with crumb and maggots and a small hook with maggot hook bait. So this was gently placed into the Loddon after waiting for an hour from the end of my bait dropping routine. It worked with Fred's fish and so it will work for Mavis. Yeah right! The only thing I did was to convert cash into fish food, not even a twitch. Where were the fish? Had they spooked from the feeder? Who knows, I shall ask St. Andrew when I next see him.

So back to the vantage point and more cash to fish food was placed in the swim, and there she was! Mavis was bullying the small ones away from the stream of maggots and doing her impression of a Dyson upright vacuum



Dave Johnson with little helper Liam Read  
Top: Mavis. Note large/small pectoral

cleaner. Then suddenly, a voice from the far bank, "Can yer see 'em mate?" I turned and looked to the intruder, NO POLAROIDS ON! "NO" says I. "Not a thing mate, saw some decent chub upstream easily 5lbers". Well dear reader what do you expect "Over here mate, come and fill your boots". I think not, what would you do in my place? "I don't mind a decent chub", says intruder "where are they?"

"150 yards upstream by the fallen willow" says Pinocchio "you cant miss them, they were taking my gentles off the top", Well friends, off he shot, dragging his match fishing box behind him. "Good luck", said Pinocchio, full of benevolence.

"Right back to Mavis" said DJ to himself and there she was, GONE! "Oh bother" said DJ "There's always another day" or words to that effect, although the exact wording is

a bit fuzzy.

And so there was another day of observation and frustration, watch, bait, leave alone for an hour and fish and then BLANK. What to do?

Let's go back to watching again. Bait in and fish come through the Gate, Mavis gets first pick. Mavis is full and swims away. Others now feed and Rat-up-a-drainpipe catches small fish.

Let's change our method... Long hooklength, small Raptor tied on silkworm loaded with maggots. Back lead on line. Terminal gear placed into swim prior to bait dropper. Several bait droppers placed in swim BEHIND backlead to allow freebies to drift down stream over hook bait. Open flask of builders - strength tea and watch for the electric blue flash of the local Kingfisher. The time was 4.10pm. Hark, what's that ratchet type noise? It's the centrepin flying into action of

course. The Hexograph bent into battle curve and the steady plodding action of my fish indicated that she was large, even with the Polaroid's I couldn't see her yet but I had the feeling that this battle was won. Several minutes later she was in the shallows at my feet ready for the net and I could see the stunted pectoral on her right flank. I was ecstatic. After many days, nay weeks of watching, planning and failure, the target fish was in the net at my feet. Did I call the other two piscateers? You bet I did. Mavis weighed in at 10-6lbs. Photographs were taken and she swam away no worse for her time on the bank.

This fish represents an angling success for me second to none, she is 4lbs lighter than my PB but I gained more satisfaction from

the planning and execution of my ideas and the actual capture of Mavis than any of my other catches. She came out again 10 days later and weighed in at 11-2lbs, this weight was confirmed on two sets of scales, but I am happy with 10-6 as my weight for her.

I learned quite a bit from this experience and know now not to just stick with the tried and tested methods that do catch fish in most cases, fish will always amaze me and I will always get great pleasure from putting them on the bank.

**Dave Johnson**

