

Fishing

It's the greatest, pastime, sport or passion

Martin Trench fishing



Fishing it's the greatest, pastime, sport or passion in fact I reckon it's a bit of all three, but most important it's all about having fun. At 71 I have lots of fun and it's great being a pensioner, I can fish seven days a week, sometimes I do. Even the Government put money in my bank account each week. It's called a pension. I get a cut price rod licence, which I don't agree with, neither do I agree with reduced licence fees for any section of anglers. I had several years in a wheelchair, but I still purchased my rod licences.

Some thoughts and experiences from angler, writer and broadcaster Martin James

I have fished in Scotland for wild brown trout on the lochs of Ross-shire. Coarse and game fished at dozens of venues in England and Wales, sea fished the Cumbrian, Fylde and North Wales coastline for bass and mullet. I just love all types of fishing except trolling. Then I would rather watch the grass grow, than go trolling. Coarse fishing is my first choice, I still enjoy fishing for gudgeon with light float

barbel died on the River Ribble because some idiots insisted on putting barbel in keep nets. Many of us stopped fishing the river in the horrendous conditions. There are times when we just have to stop fishing. Also make sure you use wet hands when unhooking or touching fish. Many of the new anglers to barbel fishing tell me how difficult they are to catch". Not true. No more than any other fish, a lot easier than

eggs, I packed up. Tony said "What's the problem Mart" I told him what had happened and said "I'm not fishing any more". Within five minutes we agreed to return home back to Lancashire.

Neither of us wanted to fish for barbel under these conditions, other anglers catching fish suffered the same experience. Did they pack up? No. I find it strange that anglers who profess to be naturalists and care about the aquatic and wildlife continue to catch fish ejecting spawn from the vent. No doubt I have hooked fish with milt or eggs, but if spawn is coming from the vent I pack up. Hunters, wildfowlers, game shooters all recognise a close season for their quarry, Why not anglers?

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Why should those in full time work, who can only fish perhaps once every two weeks subsidise we pensioners and others who don't do a full weeks work? It's not right, but that's the system, I even get a free bus pass, today I can catch the bus to the Rivers Ribble, Calder or Aire at no cost, so saving on petrol cost. Through my daughter working for an airline I get to fly fish many tropical waters, no airline costs, just my accommodation. This year

tackle. On its day it's just as exciting as catching other freshwater fish. Yes being a pensioner is great fun.

Let's Take More Care Of Our Fish

There has certainly been a big growth in barbel fishing over the past ten years, but many of our fish are suffering through bad angling practise. A couple of years ago we had a long dry summer, low flow rates, low oxygen levels, high water temperature. Quite a few

most. If you want a tough fish to catch, try catching big tench 8lbs plus from Tweitfield lake Carnforth near Lancaster.

What does worry me is the attitude of many anglers who will still target fish when they have milt or eggs coming from the vent. I well remember fishing the River Teme with Tony Farquason of Southport, I caught a barbel about six pounds, with milt coming from the vent. Next cast another barbel a female fish dropping

Cormorants and Mink

Meet a group of anglers at a club meeting, on the river bank, in a pub or tackle shop and you can bet your bottom dollar that the subject of cormorant predation will crop up and moan about nothing being done. The answer is don't sit on your backside, do something positive. Approach your club committee, better still get yourself elected to the

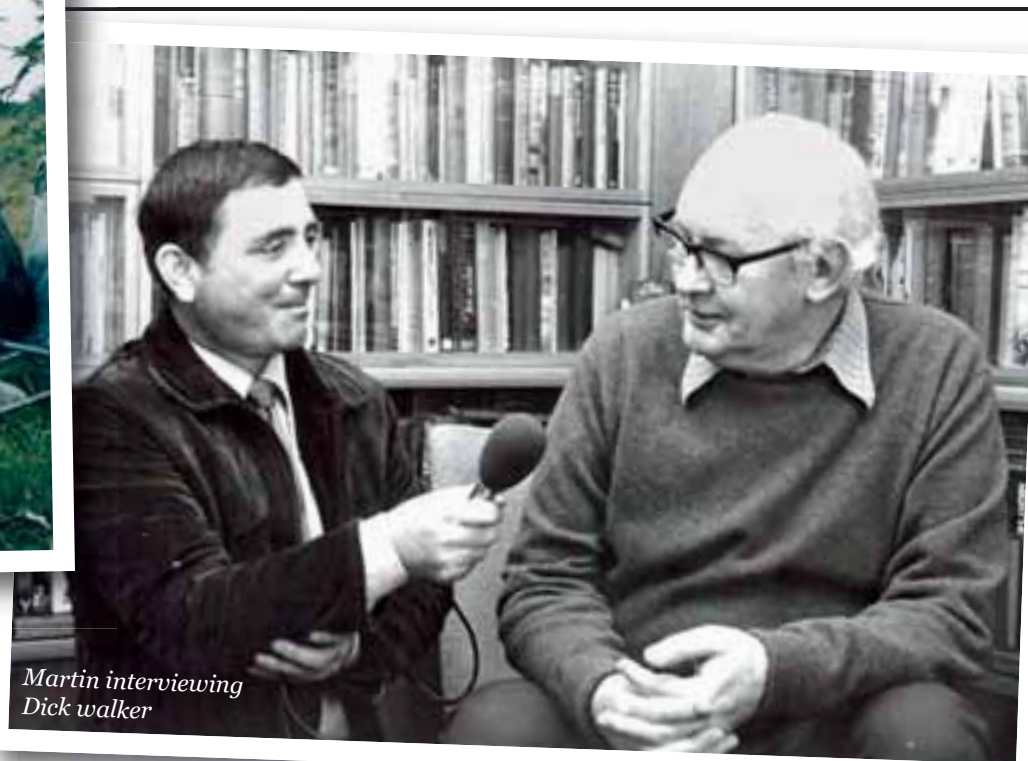


MARTIN JAMES

MARTIN'S AT THE WATERS EDGE PROGRAMME CAN BE HEARD ON BBC RADIO LANCASHIRE EVERY THURSDAY AT 7:30PM, OR YOU CAN LISTEN TO THE PROGRAMME ON THE INTERNET WITH THE LISTEN AGAIN FEATURE AT WWW.BBC.CO.UK/LANCASHIRE/FEATURES/INSIDE_SPORT/FISHING/INDEX.SHTML

committee. Check who owns the riverside property, if the club doesn't encourage them to approach the owner for permission to shoot. Then apply to the Wildlife Management and Licensing dept of Natural England for a licence to shoot cormorants. I have a licence for my stretch of the River Ribble which helps keep the cormorants off.

Mink are another problem, on my stretch of water some 2 miles double bank fishing, I have trapped and killed 59 mink in about twenty months. Having purchased your traps, bait them with a chunk of rabbit, fish or chicken. Then place it in an area where you have seen these killers. Fish big and small are killed by mink. You must inspect traps every twenty four hours. If every club had a couple of members working a few traps you would soon see a decrease in the numbers of mink. Mink can travel over several kilometres during the night.



Martin interviewing Dick walker

Litter and Behaviour

Why do so many people leave litter? Yet everyone tells me they don't. Do the gnomes visit at night and leave the litter? Of course not, it's the majority who leave litter, it might be cigarette butts, chocolate or sweet wrappers, its still litter. I had a problem on my water I set out to catch the culprits; three people were caught and chucked off the fishery. Having paid £350-00 the message quickly got around I haven't had a problem since. Then I do have a strong bailiff team.

Lonsdale AC had a litter problem in the 1980's, as club President I was asked what we should do. I said "Let's close the water" It was agreed. That weekend the water was closed. It quickly got tidied up. End of problem. One day the late Tony Jones and I watched a member trying to bury some litter in the waters edge, after struggling for some time he dumped it over a hedge. We dumped him from the club.

How many times have you been fishing, then someone starts fishing just feet away and immediately chucks in lots of feed and

making a nuisance of themselves? Then we have those who insist on dumping human excrement on the banks of our lakes and rivers. Lighting fires, parking in front of farm gates, leaving gates open so cattle and sheep get on the highway. In fact I reckon some try to break every rule in the club book and generally try to be Mr Nasty. Angling doesn't need these idiots.

The King and His Prince's Have Gone

Back in May I reckon angling lost the last of its great masters, first we lost The King – Richard Stuart Walker and the Prince's, Peter Stone and Fred J (James) Taylor. All of us owe a great debt of gratitude to them all. They have given so much, far more than any of us realise. Without these great anglers and writers we wouldn't be fishing like we do today. Thankfully all these great men left behind a long list of books and articles for us to learn from. I feel honoured to have spent time with all three anglers, recording their thoughts on angling for a mass audience. Through Walker's writing I become a better angler and

naturalist, he made me a better person. In Stillwater Angling he gave us the Five Rules if you followed them you caught big fish by design and not by luck.

Back in the 1950's Richard affectionately called Dick had me write a feature on Catching Big Bream for the national press. I kept that feature until it virtually went to dust. Peter Stone showed me many things including catching fish through the ice; Fred J explained many things to me about shooting, ferreting, including the art of cooking in the open. He popularised the lift method and the use of dead bait fishing for pike and much much more. When you met these gentlemen for the first time, they captivated you in a way very few people could. When meeting them on the first occasion you stood in awe calling them Sir. You took in every word that was spoken. It was the gospel. In fact many of my generations become the disciples of Walker even to wearing a trilby hat, I still do. Thought its tough today to try and purchase a good trilby. I believe it's beholding on all of us to point the younger generation to the

written words of Stone, Taylor and Walker. Long Live the King

Why not go and fish the harbours and estuaries?

If you haven't fished for mullet, I suggest you go out this month or next summer and give it a try. These fish can and will break your heart, other times they are quite easy. The tackle is quite simple, basically I use the same tackle today as I used as a ten year old back in the late 1940's when I went fishing with my grandfather. In those days it was a cane rod with a lancewood tip, today's its carbon or glass with a soft action. Centre pin or fixed spool reel with 4lb line a cork on quill float with a hook size between 8's and 12's depending on the size of bait being used. My number one bait is bread in various forms. Forget all that nonsense about mullet having soft mouths that's

an old wife's tale which has been passed down by generations it's not true.

When I fish for these magnificent fish I spend quite some time feeding in crumbed bread and cooked rice, as I get the fishes attention I cut right back on the feed just putting in a tiny amount in the hope of getting them competing. Once this happens I flick in pieces of flake the size

of the main school, so I make sure they get the odd piece of flake. When I feel the bigger fish will take a hook bait, I cast towards the bigger fish, dropping some crumbed bread among the main school. It can get very exasperating. You will have lots of fish milling around, even putting their lips to the bait. Then they back off, there are times you want to pull your hair out. You

leaves looking for grubs, some minutes later a large grub was found and quickly swallowed. All this taking place two feet in front of my eyes. We see the Kingfishers, not often seen by most people. We are privileged to be anglers.

A Winters Day on the Kennet

The Kennet starts life in Avebury Wiltshire, in the

“Hopefully my chosen river will be bank high, foam flecked and highly coloured. No doubt a fish will be waiting for a chunk of crust, sausage meat paste or lobworms. No time to sit in doors moaning about the rough weather and the bank high rivers, these are the times when fish can be caught”

of my planned hook bait. Within thirty minutes you should have fishing chasing those bigger food items. You will notice the bigger fish stay on the outside of

can have forty or more fish around, but after three hours trying, you can go off home fishless. Other days you can get a hook up on the first cast.

The Time to be on the River

October is when I get excited with the thought of fishing our rivers for the next few months, I love sitting in doors hearing the wind shrieking like a demented demon, as rain hammers the window pains. Trees are probably bending, shaking and shedding their leaves. Hopefully my chosen river will be bank high, foam flecked and highly coloured with a temperature about 50 degrees fare height. No doubt a fish will be waiting for a chunk of crust, sausage meat paste or lobworms. No time to sit in doors moaning about the rough weather and the bank high rivers, these are the times when fish can be caught. At the waterside you will see a variety of bird life; the species seen will depend in what part of the UK you live. Last winter I was trying to catch a chub, in front of me were some old dead nettles, a Goldfinch was opening up all the curled

same area of prehistoric temple to the sun; flowing though the most delightful Wiltshire countryside. Taking in the town of Marlborough then on through the Savernake Forest, Ramsbury and Littlecote, then onto Hungerford where rod for trout fishing could cost £5000-00 a season. It's in Berkshire around Newbury where this lovely chalk stream changes to clay, and really does become a coarse fishing river. Best described as a Crabtree river.

Bernard Venables certainly captured its many moods in his magnificent paintings. I often get a call from Will Carter one of my friends living in Berkshire to say “The Kennet is high and coloured”. Thankfully I can go off fishing when ever I like. I usually have a supply of extra thick sliced bread; cheese paste and sausage meat. Kate makes sure a few meals are in the freezer hotpots and cottage pies, ensuring dinner for a few days. Having checked the latest traffic reports, I plan a suitable route. Often I am on the river bank in about five hours, if Mike Osborne is driving it's usually three



B.B.in
his study

and a half hours. I have taken many anglers as my guest to the Kennet for a few days so they can experience this delightful river. Brendan Ince, John Williams, Ewan Turner, Paul Watson, Mark Hyde, David Miller, Anthony Morris and many more. Several guests have caught a personal best fish on their visit.

On this trip I arrived at 11-30m after a good night's sleep I headed off to Brimpton Mill on the Kennet where a Wasing syndicate ticket for the river will cost just £250-00 far cheaper than most golf clubs or Premier Soccer clubs season tickets. You don't have to be a millionaire, to have a millionaire life style. It's a fishery where all the bailiffs are friendly and helpful; members are more than willing to offer you advice and help. It's one of the nicest rivers in England although it isn't as nice today as when I first visited the water back in 1947 with my granddad. Today it's rather urbanised in places, though on the Wasing Estate you can imagine you have gone back in time. The Brimpton stretch has three disabled fishing platforms in top swims.

The Magic of Weir Pools

Planning to fish the weir pool; I walked upstream between willows, alders and brambles the noise increasing, as I got closer to the pool. Millions of gallons of creamy, foaming spray lashed water crashed down fifteen feet into the pool. The sound is awesome, wagtails often landing on some piece of rubbish in the water, which often flows in all directions; there is camp sheathing, rotting piles and two carriers which flow in from the left hand bank.

Weir pools are not for the faint hearted or those with a nervous disposition. They can be quite a frightening experience, especially in the

darkness. Sixty feet back from the waters edge on the right hand bank stands an old mill house; I would like to have lived there with its history and character. Further back is the big house. It's interesting to note that the Wasing Estate has been in the family since 1760. If it wasn't for estate owners having an interest in field sports, many of these estates would probably be up market housing or industrial estates.

Tackle and Baits Keep It Simple

I use soft action Avon rod, matched with a centre pin reel, I use these reels not as a fashion item but because I find them most efficient. I have fifty yards of 12lb line and I attach a size 4 6 or 8 barbless hook depending on the bait. At no time have I felt my gear wasn't up to the job. Once hooked I want the fish quickly in the net. My choice of bait today is bread crust or flake, sausage meat, and lobworms. The first two baits have accounted for a lot of big chub and barbel. Without a shadow of a doubt, crust or flake is my number one choice. I started using bread back in the late 1940's, the days of bamboo rods, with a bored bullet stopped four to fifteen inches from the hook by a split shot, depending on the water temperature and bait. I don't see any reason to change. Today its LG shot on the line, between two and fifteen inches from the hook.

Setting down my bait bag and tackle, I checked the water temperature 49 degrees F conditions couldn't be better, looking at the water flow I decided I would need five LG shot pinched on the line six inches from the hook. Bait was a big bit of crust, making a long cast up the pool the bait dropped into the creamy, boiling white water. I held the rod high; within minutes I had my first fish, minutes later it



*A young
Chris Yates*

was off. Rebaiting I cast to the same area, ten minutes later the line tightened over my finger I struck, then felt a dead weight for about two seconds. Suddenly the tip was savagely pulled down, the reel screeched. After a give and take struggle my first barbel about 6lbs was netted. In the next hour or so I had four more barbel averaging five pounds. Then all went quiet, I couldn't buy a bite.

After a fishless hour, It was time for a bait change, with a lot of colour in the water I decided on sausage meat, taking off one of the LG's I moved the other LG's a foot up the line. Baiting with a pigeon egg size lump of meat I cast into the white water. As the bait slowly moved around I could feel something plucking the bait, Signal crayfish. After a slow steady pull, I hooked into a good fish which didn't hang about as it charged down

the pool; I had to take line in quickly. Cramping on the pressure I soon had the fish in the quieter water, where it slogged away under the rod tip, occasionally a few feet of line got taken but was quickly recovered, then the fish was netted.

"Could this be a double I thought" It weighed 10-10-0, I punched the air with delight. A fine rain was falling but I didn't care. I had another Kennet double; time to head for the car for a fresh brew and some food. Lunch break over it was back to the pool. The sausage meat bait got pestered by crayfish, which were ripping the bait off the hook in minutes. Changing to bread I caught two more barbel about five pounds apiece.

I baited with a big chunk of flake thinking it would rise and fall like a free offering, and hopefully last a bit longer from the attention of the crayfish. Within

seconds a good fish was hooked, after a few anxious moments I had a good barbel weighing 10-2-0. A fishless two hours followed. Time to try other swims, before leaving I baited the pool with lots of mashed bread. In the next hour and a half I fished several swims with crust taking 4 nice chub between three and a half and four pounds. I was also able to help a member from Hartford Cambridgeshire to catch a few fish. He had been bite less all day, I suggested he use bread. He said "I don't have any" I gave him a loaf then showed him my tackle set up. Ten minutes later he had his first chub a nice fish around 4lbs, I went back to my car for some hot food a fresh brew then made my way back to the pool.

Baiting with crust I had a good pull, hooking into a good fish which stayed on the bottom, I had to cramp

on the pressure and drag the fish slowly down the pool. Occasionally having to give line, a few seconds I got the line back plus a bit more.

"Back on the river next day I had more barbel, chub and a nice mirror carp. As a full member of the Wasing Fisheries Syndicate you get to fish several lakes, several miles of the rivers Kennet and the Enborne"

I had visions of a very big fish, perhaps fifteen pounds. Some minutes later the fish was netted. The scales said 10-6-0 how lucky can you get three doubles in a session. I still had four or five hours in the darkness. In the fading light I decided on another mug of tea.

Returning to the pool I again bait with crust catching several more barbel, what amazed me was the average size of the fish, probably no more than

three pounds they were like peas in a pod. About seven O'clock I felt the line tighten over my finger, striking hard I connected with a heavy,

powerful fish. I didn't feel it was a barbel, was it a big chub. After a few heart stopping moments I pulled a good fish over the net. Switching on my head lamp, I could see I had a big out of season brown trout.

Another member watching said "I've never seen such a big brown trout I would like to hook that on a fly" It was quickly weighed at 5-8-0 and released. Hopefully a fly fisher will catch it next summer. What

amazed us was later in the evening that fish was caught again on a chunk of crust. It had been a great session. Meanwhile the

Hartford angler fishing on in the darkness caught two barbel and five good chub. Back on the river next day I had more barbel, chub and a nice mirror carp. As a full member of the Wasing Fisheries Syndicate you get to fish several lakes, several miles of the rivers Kennet and the Enborne, for further details telephone 01189-714281 or write Fisheries Manager Wasing Estate Office Wasing Berkshire RG7 4NG.

Severnside Bed & Breakfast



Located in a quiet hamlet and set in 4 acres with a 1/4 mile of river frontage on the River Severn you will find Severnside bed and breakfast.

Ideally situated for the Barbel Society's waters, Beauchamp Court, Callow End on the Severn (5 minutes drive) and Bransford Court on the River Teme (less than 15 minutes drive). For fly-fishermen there are several pools nearby all within a half hour's drive. If you don't fancy driving why not just get up and fish from our private stretch of riverbank on the Severn (small additional charge).

Our rooms, one twin and two doubles (can be booked as single rooms), are all en-suite with Digital Freeview television, well appointed hospitality tray with Malvern water, radio/alarm and WiFi access. A full and hearty English breakfast awaits you and an early breakfast can be arranged for you early rising fishermen!

With advance notice we can provide a packed lunch and flask. A bait fridge and space to store all your fishing equipment is provided. For those chilly winter evenings after a long day, or night fishing we have a guest lounge with a welcoming log-burner for you to while away your time and think about the catch of your next 'big one'!

Jane Hadley-Roberts
Severnside Bed & Breakfast
Clevelode, Nr Malvern,
Worcestershire, WR13 6PD
Tel: +44 (0) 1684 311894
E-Mail: info@severn-side.co.uk
Website: www.severn-side.co.uk

