



From the greens to the streams

ROGER RANCE

ROGER RANCE WAS BORN IN WATFORD HERTFORDSHIRE JANUARY 1940 AND NOW LIVES IN SUTTON COURTENAY (ON THAMES), VIA KINGS LANGLEY (ON CANAL).

MARRIED TO SHIRLEY, THEY HAVE A SON SIMON, TWO GRANDCHILDREN, PLUS MORSE, A GOLDEN RETRIEVER.

ROGER LEFT REGULATED EDUCATION IN 1955 TO WORK IN HIS FATHER'S TURF CONTRACTING BUSINESS FOR FIFTEEN YEARS, BEFORE BRANCHING OUT ON HIS OWN IN COMPETITION.

HE SUPPLIED WEMBLEY WITH TURF AFTER THE SCOTTISH FANS DUG IT UP, WHITE CITY, WIMBLEDON DOG TRACK, ALSO SUPPLYING LONDON COUNCILS, LANDSCAPE GARDENERS, AND THE PUBLIC.

HAVING RETIRED FROM THE TURF IN 1991, ROGER MOVED TO OXFORDSHIRE, WHERE HE JOINED A WHOLESALE FRESH PRODUCE COMPANY AND RETIRED AGAIN IN 2002 HAVING SOLD THE BUSINESS,

GOLF WAS HIS MAIN SPORT UNTIL HIS LATE TWENTIES, WHEN HE TOOK UP FISHING BECOMING CHAIRMAN OF NIAIDES A.C. UNTIL 1998. HE RETURNED TO GOLF BECOMING CLUB CAPTAIN AT MAGNOLIA PARK GOLF CLUB IN 2004.

HE HAS SINCE RETURNED TO FISHING.

I was introduced to fishing by Jim McKeown a fellow golfer. I used to play golf on a Sunday morning and then go to find where Jim and the club match was, generally on the Thames, a London Anglers' Association water.

Jim used to make a rod up for me and I would fish the last two hours of the match.

Nicely hooked, the following season I joined Niaides, the club had its own water, a mile and a half of the River Thames, an excellent chub stretch.

So, I bought rods and tackle, and with an E.A. licence in my wallet sailed forth onto uncharted waters.

Jim was a very good angler, and an even better tutor. I had now started fishing for species like roach and chub rather than just chucking a line out.

At the first A.G.M., I was voted on to the committee as Chairman, even more uncharted water, though now not as calm.

I remained Chairman for twenty years, so I couldn't have been too bad.

During this time Jim suggested we give a whirl to an L.A.A. water, a short stretch of the River Lea below Kings Weir.

He had something of a Machiavellian smile, so we collected all the gear, chucked it in my Yankee 4x4 Jeep, (very handy on wet turf fields), picked up Gerry West the club secretary, and

headed for the Hertfordshire border.

Westie was an avid barbel man, as was Jim, they put me in a swim just above a large weed bed which had a narrow channel on the far side.

They saw me set up, advising me on slightly heavier line than I would normally use, (just in case you get caught in the weeds, 'snigger') and suggested luncheon meat directly on the hook, then they wandered off to nearby swims. You will all have guessed by now what was going to happen, and so did

they. They kept sauntering back every now and then, flask out, nice drop of coffee, balance cup on knee, this can guarantee a bite, and the rod flew off, I grabbed it, then the weed bed erupted Westie shouted 'He's got one on'.

Jim came at the trot, and they both sat down to watch and be entertained. 'You know you're into a barbel' they said, now rolling about laughing, 'come on bring it in its most likely a gudgeon'. 'Come on Rancie stop messing about'. All the usual stuff, then they got serious. "Take it steady WE don't want to lose it".

I shall never forget that fish, *my* first barbel, not big at 5lb, but I was now more hooked than the fish. I used to call myself a general angler, but now I have a penchant for barbel.

I have since sought barbel on various British waters, all the usual ones, the Lea, Kennet, Severn and the Thames (a very underrated fishery).

Also in Spain and France, (stories later God willing), but my one true love is the Hampshire Avon.

Westie introduced me to

the Avon, after he returned from a week in Bournemouth with his wife Patricia, and convinced her that a day on the Avon on the way home would be an excellent way to finish the week.

Well he hit the river big time, it just so happened he had an old tin of luncheon

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meat, it was called Emblem or Ensign something like that, and was almost liquid it was so old.

Westie reckoned the barbel were climbing the rod for it, he landed six or seven and lost a couple.

Two days later saw Westie, Ted Scully and me hacking down to the Avon, we arrived at Week Farm just before dawn.

There was a mist hanging over the water meadows to about chest high, and one car in the car park. Westie always the pessimist cried 'I bet he's in my swim'

After a long walk the withy bushes came into view through the mist, and sadly

Westie was right, as we got to about 10 yards away, the guys rod bowed over.

As we watched the fight, I really felt for my old mate, worse was to come, the fish weighed in at 11lb 4oz, and Westie was the witness.

I fished a lot with Westie we had some great times, I

have many memories, which are hopefully, further stories. Sadly, he is no longer with us, and he never landed a double.

This year fishing a stretch of the Avon that Westie and I used to fish, I had two magnificent fish.

I arrived at Bisterne just about dawn paid my dues at the gamekeeper's house, it was raining quite heavily. I tackled up and cast my luncheon meat just over a length of streamer weed.

The rain soon stopped and it turned into a very pleasant day.

40 minutes into the day, off it went, the rod went over, bucking in my hand, a

furious fight ensued, which saw me chasing 60 yards downstream to save dragging the fish through the heavy weed and loosing it.

When I first saw the fish, I knew it was good, there were three other hooks in the fish, and one with a length of heavy line attached you

could have towed a car with it.

I 'phoned Paul the gamekeeper who rushed up to be a witness of my personal best fish of 14lb 10z.

The rest of the day was a mixture of euphoria for my catch, and sadness that Westie wasn't there to see it, he would have been well chuffed for me.

In my mind I dedicated that fish to my mate Westie, who had set me on the path to barbel righteousness.

It was a warm day and it was passing quietly, coffee, sarnies, feeding a tame pheasant sweet corn, but no more bites.

Later into the afternoon I decided on a change of bait to a hair rigged double SonuBaits Monster Crab and Mussel S-Pellet, and fished it over a gravel strip towards the far bank.

Again, a clonking bite and this time it was hold on and be gentle. I couldn't get downstream, as there was a guy in the neighbouring swim.

Gradually I gained line, and my "neighbour" helped me to net it, yet another monster of 15lb 2oz!

Weighed on two sets of scales and witnessed, by now my very best mate from the next swim, Will Freeman of Bransgore.

Two personal bests in one day, and a brace totalling 29lb 3oz!

I now know I can walk on water.

