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Billy & the Mobile Phone

I believe it is widely known that Mr Felton is very careful with his money. I wouldn't say tight, but careful.

This story is aged by the fact that it dates back to when mobiles were very rare and expensive. The only places in South Uist where a signal was available were at the car park at Loch East Bee and the bottom of the track after Grogarry House. The phones resembled half bricks and had a very limited stand-by time but amazing street cred.

Billy was not convinced about the value of having one because of the limited use, plus the cost of the calls. He thought it was mental to pay 25/30p per minute plus £15 per month to do something which could be easily accomplished for no cost on his landline after he had finished his duties for the day.

As matters progressed, mobile coverage began to spread over the island but he steadfastly refused to buy a mobile phone purely because of the cost. Apparently, my phone was rubbish as one of his guests could receive a signal in the part of East Bee known as Shell whereas my phone lost the signal after you left the main part of the loch. I was apparently wasting my money and I should buy an identical phone to this particular guest.

Eventually, Billy bought Marion a pay-as-you-go phone because it was cheap. This was not the smartest thing he has ever accomplished. The pay-as-you-go phone needs to be charged after the requisite phone time has been used. One problem for William was that there was nowhere on the island to top up your phone at that time. He then evolved a complex operation where one of his guests would take the phone to the mainland, have it charged and sent back by mail. He was unconvinced that the spent phone was valueless despite many hours of argument.

The big day came when we were fishing Fada and he announced that he was getting a 'proper' phone which didn't need to be topped up and this

phone had amazing coverage especially in South Uist, so the salesman had guaranteed. Furthermore, his phone was much better and cheaper than my phone as he didn't have to pay any line rental for six months and the calls were only ten pence a minute. The calls would be debited to his business bank account.

I said, 'You have given them your bank account number?'

'Yes, of course – how else would they collect their money?' Billy replied.

'You do know that they will contact your bank for a reference?'

'No, but I have an excellent relationship with the bank and the bank manager, so that will present no problem.'

'H'mm, how do you feel about the £30 opinion fee the bank will charge?' I asked him.

A pregnant silence followed by a stream of oaths then, 'They can't do that – I haven't told the bank they can.'

'You should look at the small print. Ask Jonathan.' Jonathan, my son, told him that at the end of the day he would be £30 down. Another silence



James Paterson in his prime.

and then another stream of oaths – 'Can I borrow your phone?' he says.

'That'll be £30 to use it then,' I cheerfully replied.

More curses as I gave him the phone which he couldn't work. As regular punters know, Fada is in a hollow and the mobile phone coverage is not that good. So back to the boat station at maximum speed. Much leaping out of the boat and scurrying to the top of the bank

where he eventually gets through to the Bank of Scotland.

Back he comes, 'Right, you pair of bas****s, the bank tells me that under normal circumstances, they would charge £30 but on the basis that I am such a good customer, any fee would be waived. Satisfied are we?'

'Actually, we thought that as (a) we have saved you £30 for something you don't really want and (b) we have wasted the best part of an hour of our fishing time whilst you farted about with the Bank of Scotland, you wouldn't make a charge for ghillying for us today!' we said.

The reply is unprintable.

James' Favourite Uist Flies

HEAVY PETER

Hook Size 10 or 12 low water salmon doubles which have 'a bit of length' **Tail** Fiery red (scarlet ibis or plain cheap hen hackles dyed bright red) **Body** Either gold or silver holographic tinsel wrapped over with gold or silver wire to protect the tinsel – use holographic because it seems to give better flash than the normal flat tinsel **Head** Two hen hackles for softness, wound two or three times; black head cement

The Heavy Peter originated from a fly called the Wee Peter which was first tied by a solicitor from Skye. In designing it he pirated an Orkney fly called The Priest, which proves that there are no new flies, only thousands of variations on a theme. The fly is basically a Bloody Butcher tied with a head hackle rather than a wing, fished on the point. If you prefer a single hook, tie flattened lead wire onto the shank to weight the book and take it down. That's why this is called the Heavy Peter rather than the Wee Peter.

BILLY BONDS

Hook Partridge GRS12ST – grey Shadow Emerger/Nymph, sizes 10 and 12 (probably size 10 for salmon and sea trout, size 12 for brown trout) **Tail** A bunch of claret pulled from a hen cape. **Body** Blue or even pink holographic tinsel protected by silver wire; the hackle is made of three feathers, either two blue and one claret or two claret and one blue, tied bumble style to achieve a mix of colours down the shank and tied off with the silver wire to secure it. **Head** Two blue or claret cock cape feathers; black cement

Very appropriately – since Billy Felton is a West Ham supporter – this fly is named after an all-action midfielder who played professional football for West Ham United and was idolised by their fans. The fly is tied in the team's colours of claret and blue, and is fished on the bob. The reasons for the specific choice of book are a) it doesn't rust and b) the book has an upturned eye which holds the fly in the correct alignment as it is retrieved across the water.