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Ayrshire

The Piercing

This incident happened a few years ago during a stormy day on Loch Fada while I was on one of my regular annual visits to The Angler's Retreat. It must put me in line for the heaviest 'catch' on record on South Uist.

Billy and David Peutherer were ghillying that week for three anglers who were salmon and sea trout fishing on the estate lochs. One of them, Olivier, was French and a guest of the other two. I think he was their business client. I am mainly a trout fisherman but one day Olivier very kindly invited me to join him for a day on Fada. I happily accepted. David was our ghillie.

Although the weather was stormy the conditions looked quite good and we were hopeful of getting a fish. However, after fishing for an hour or two during which we made no contact with any fish, and as far as I remember didn't see any either, I decided to try a big double as my tail fly. If memory serves me right it was a Teal Blue and Silver. If not that then it was something equally colourful. Everything went well to start with but, during one particularly heavy and unexpected gust of wind, I managed to accurately hook Olivier just above the eye with the fly. Fortunately he had very fleshy eyelids and no serious harm was done.

As I didn't want to remove the hook from such a delicate place while we were in the boat in stormy conditions, we offered Olivier the option of going ashore and being taken to a doctor to have the hook removed. He would have none of it as he said it would interfere with his fishing. My only option was to use an 'elastoplast' to tape his eye wide open until lunch time, when the situation could be re-assessed. Olivier fished on for the rest of the morning.

Fada is one of the lochs which has a fisherman's hut and, over lunch there, we met up with that well known ophthalmic surgeon Billy Felton. During his many years fishing and ghillying, Billy has probably seen just

about everything that can happen to a fisherman. He took one look at the hook before producing an old pair of pliers from one of his pockets. Then, very calmly, he held Olivier's head still, used the pliers to flatten the barbs, gripped the hook in the pliers and, with a very professional looking flick of his wrist, pulled out the double hook. Olivier didn't even flinch. The whole 'operation' took only a few seconds and allowed him to fish for the rest of the day, which he did with great determination but sadly no success. I don't think he ever came back to South Uist, but I am sure this wasn't because of the quality of the 'medical' treatment which he received.



Patient and Ophthalmic Surgeon seem on reasonably good terms after removal of double hook from eyelid.

One other thing happened in the hut. In Olivier's eyelid the fly looked like one of those piercings which some youngsters have in their noses, ears and other places, except that the hook was much more colourful than the gold of which they are usually made. On seeing it in his eyelid someone in the hut, I really can't remember who, said it looked so nice that Olivier should consider getting a matching one in his ear! Thinking about it now, I am surprised no-one asked him for the fly which Billy had removed, since it was the only one which caught anything that day.

Small Loch, Surprisingly Big Fish

The following year I was out fishing some of the lochs near Stoneybridge with Billy. One of them I had fished before and I knew Billy had also fished it several times. While we were there, I happened to mention a smaller loch just on the other side of the track used to access the area. It was narrow enough to be able to cast easily from one side to the other. Billy said that in

all his years on the island he had never fished it and suggested I give it a try. The next day was the last of my holiday so I decided to take his advice by fishing it and some other lochs.

I arrived back at The Angler's Retreat at tea time, woke Billy from his Saturday afternoon siesta and asked him to come out to the jeep to view my catch. You should have seen his face – there were three fish of 1lb 8ozs, 2lbs and a superb 4lbs 10ozs. I had caught the largest one in that little loch. It was a wonderful end to my holiday and proved the value of two pieces of advice for anyone fishing on South Uist: always take the Master's advice and always be willing to try some lochs you haven't fished before.

Robert's Favourite Uist Flies

DETACHED FOAM-BODIED DADDY

Hook Size 12 **Body** Black foam **Legs** 6 black, knotted pheasant tail fibres **Hackle** Greenwells (cock)

RED TAILED MUDDLER

Hook Size 10 **Body** Silver Lurex **Rib** Medium silver wire
Tail Red wool **Head** Spun brown deer hair