

The Future Of Sea Fishing Is Child's Play!

Prospects are looking good for sea angling thanks to a teacher in Cornwall who runs weekly fishing lessons! **Roger Mortimore** travelled down to meet him and his lucky pupils and offer some of his own expertise.

Oh how I wish I'd been taught sea angling when I was at school; it would have been far more fun than double maths! Well John Brooks, a teacher at Helston Community College in Cornwall and a qualified Level 2 coach, came up with the idea of after-school angling lessons for his pupils.

It's not just a case of heading out to fish, though, because John has developed a programme in which the children must learn a range of skills, then prove that they have attained a certain standard. For 30 hours'

attendance, during which time they will have developed certain skills and attained the required standard, each pupil is presented with a bronze award. Three of the pupils – Tommy James, Victoria Padgeth and Kayley Bowley – have actually gained their silver awards following 65 hours' attendance and are on their way to earning gold awards for 100 hours. A wonderful touch with these awards is that when the pupils have reached the required standard, they graduate from the Children's University Cornwall, so they wear mortar boards and gowns when they receive their certificates.



Helston Community College's sea angling lessons are very popular.

John and his wife Ros both achieved their coaching qualifications through Dreamstore, a charity that supports and promotes activities that benefit education, social inclusion and conservation through angling.

John explained just how it works: "The angling school offers coaching in a wide range of angling methods and associated skills, such as knot tying, rig making, etiquette, conservation and how to prepare and cook their catch. We've now had more than 40 children involved in the scheme and, as the word has got out, many more are keen to get involved."

As a former UK and European Individual and World Team Casting Champion, I was invited down to help some of these star pupils improve their casting skills.

My first session involved meeting everybody on a football pitch to make sure that they had the right equipment, then giving them a few tips on how to cast further, including the best way to hold the rod and reel and where to aim when they're casting. Their efforts were very impressive, with half of the group casting almost the full length of the football pitch.

A Trip To The Beach

Once we'd finished covering the basics on the grass, it was time to head to the beach, so we all boarded the college minibus and

set off for a small beach beside Newlyn Harbour. On board the bus, silver-award winners Tommy, Victoria and Kayley were joined by Bethany Brown, Clare Newman, Jake Day, Lucy Austen, Matt Pascoe and Perran Muldoon.

There was plenty of room on the beach so they could continue to practise their new casting skills. While some pupils were rigged up with sets of mackerel feathers, a couple opted for float rigs and others preferred to fish worm baits on the bottom.

Apart from John, Ros and myself, we had two other helpers: Jason Brown, the father of Bethany, and Bill Padgeth, the grandfather of silver-award winner Victoria.

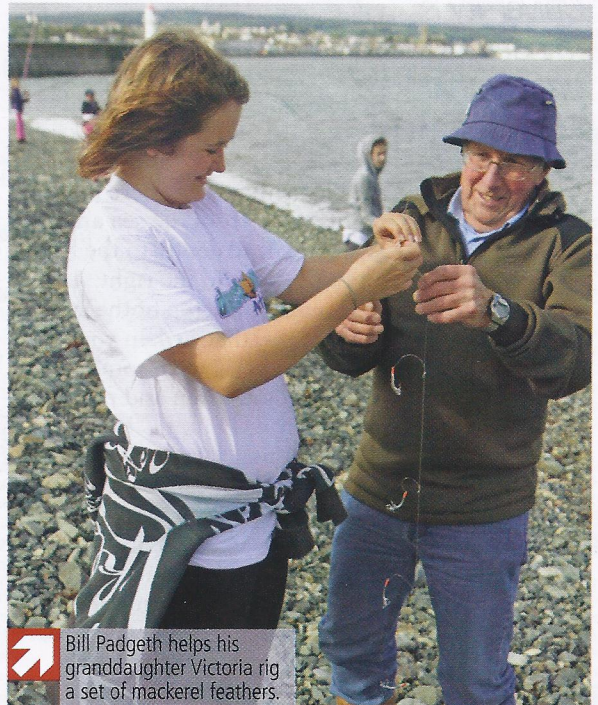
One popular aspect of these outings is a short break for fish and chips or sausage and chips, and after our beach supper John told me: "Ros and I couldn't manage to do all this without the help from others; Bill and Jason are always along to assist and we've been extremely fortunate in the help and support we've received from the children's parents. We're also very lucky because the 'angling school' is generously supported by several local companies, including Wave Chieftain tackle shop, The Tackle Box in Falmouth, Newtown Angling Centre in Penzance, plus we've had rods and reels from WSB Tackle that are funded by Dreamstore."

I must say that I was very

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impressed by the way that the trips are organised. There's a headcount before setting off with all the names logged in a register and they're all checked again before leaving the fishing venue so that nobody is left behind. While we had one or two wise guys in the group on the day that I was there, they were all extremely well behaved, polite and attentive and I hear that some of the tips I gave have been passed on to other pupils who couldn't join us on that particular evening.

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Bill Padgeth helps his granddaughter Victoria rig a set of mackerel feathers.

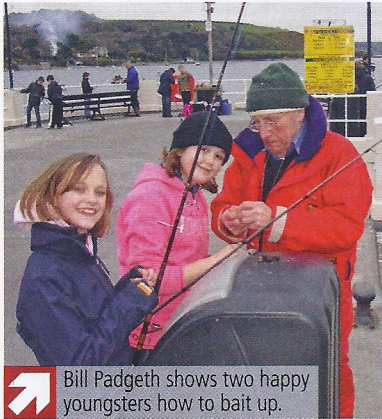


Roger Mortimore gives Victoria Padgeth a few tips during the casting lesson.



Roger presents Bethany Brown with a WSB Attura spinning rod and reel for her dedication and improvement in her casting skills.





Bill Padgeth shows two happy youngsters how to bait up.



The silver awards for Tommy James, Victoria Padgeth and Kayley Bowley are presented at the Children's University Cornwall.

The Children's University is a national project that recognises what young people achieve in high-quality, out-of-hours learning activities.

and are so keen to absorb every piece of information that they can... and they pick it up quickly. During our session on the beach I did a demonstration pendulum cast for them... just for the 'wow' factor. Half an hour later, young Bethany said that she wanted to try the pendulum cast. So I knelt down and showed her a very simple fishing cast where the rod points away from the sea and you swing the lead gently to the left and then back to the right. As the lead reaches the top of the swing to the right, that's when you make the cast. I wish some adult anglers could listen and pick it up as quickly as Bethany did!

While I was there I decided that it was an ideal opportunity to test a WSB Attura spinning rod and rear-drag spinning reel loaded with 10lb mono. During a discussion with Marcus Holloway, the managing director of WSB, I asked if he'd be kind enough to allow me to present the rod and reel to the star pupil, and he

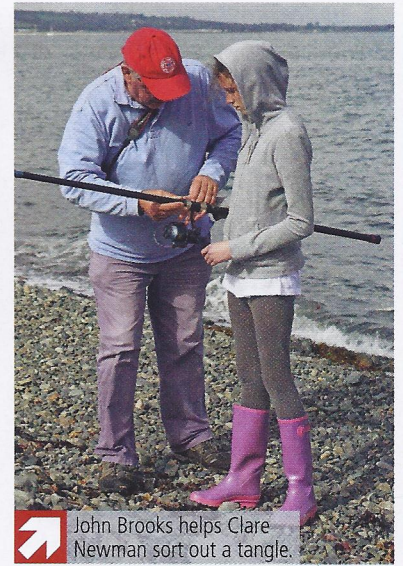
generously agreed.

John, Bill and I unanimously agreed that the star pupil of the day was young Bethany. She'd listened intently to our instructions, showed great promise with her casting skills and fished her heart out that evening.

Although none of us caught a fish during the session, Bethany has since christened her new tackle with a few mackerel. Her father Jason is quite jealous of her new kit but she's given him very clear instructions that he is NOT to touch her new rod and reel!

A Big Surprise!

Just before we boarded the minibus for the trip back to Helston, John had a special treat for everyone when he unwrapped a parcel that was tucked away at the back of the bus – an Olympic torch. We all had the chance to pose with it and the smiles on the children's faces said it all. It was



John Brooks helps Clare Newman sort out a tangle.

a fantastic opportunity because not many people manage to get their hands on an official Olympic torch!

It was such an enjoyable session that I've promised to visit again to see how they've progressed and I'm sure that by the time I return, some of the pupils will have been back to university to collect their gold awards.

The Children's University is a national project that recognises the achievements of young people who take part in high-quality, out-of-hours learning activities.

The Children's University Cornwall offers opportunities for the children's achievements to be recognised and for them to be rewarded for the hours that they've spent learning and fishing, often on cold, dark evenings in the middle of winter. **tsf**



Roger with his group of star pupils (from L to R): Bethany Brown, Victoria Padgeth, Matt Pascoe, Kayley Bowley, Lucy Austen, Perran Muldoon, Tommy James, Jake Day and Clare Newman.