

## Gone Fishing

Luck is not the same for everybody. What might be good luck for you might be a minor inconvenience for someone else. What for you is a long run of bad luck might be someone else's respite from an extended period of something worse.

Let me give you an example.

Steve's local pub had a fishing club and two or three times a year they had a weekend away. Ostensibly, the weekends away were for the purposes of fishing, but in reality very little fishing was done. This was fortunate, because Steve had neither the skill nor the inclination when it came to fishing.

Steve had gone fishing twice.

On his first attempt to become the compleat angler he had caught a sheep, a duck, two oaks and an elm. Also much to the delight of the other fishermen, he had hooked a water-skier who had been trying to disrupt their days sport.

The second occasion was a fishing match. The fish were biting and everyone was "bagging up apart from Steve, who dangled his line for several hours without a bite. One of the officials came over.

"How come you've caught nowt?" he asked.

"Dunno."

"What bait are you using?"

"Bait?"

"Surely you're not just using a bare hook?"

"Hook?"

One particular weekend, they had gone river fishing in Boston, Lancashire.

Fortunately, the river was brackish and the added salt had meant there couldn't possibly be any fish in there.

This meant that the day had to spent in the pub.

Next door to the pub was a bookmakers and to help wile away the afternoon, the fishermen spent their time drinking and making fifty pence bets on the afternoons racing.

One bloke, Billy, bet on eight races, apparently picking horses at random. He won on every single one. Steve on the other hand studied the form carefully, bet largely on favourites and not had a single winner. On the ninth and last race, Steve decided to be on the same horse as Billy. Just to be on the safe side, he edged his bets and went for fifty pence each way.

The group watched the race intently wondering if Billy could keep up his run of form. As they came onto the final furlong, Billy's horse, Lucky Lad was neck and neck with another horse, Samson's Delight. They stayed that way until winning post, so it went to a photo finish. They waited with baited breath for the result.

It was Samson's Delight by slightly less than a nose.

"Oh, unlucky there, Bill," said everyone apart from Steve who found one loss after eight wins in one afternoon a particularly fine run of luck.

They then found out that Steve had taken a place bet.

"You lucky beggar," was the general sentiment. Steve tried to point out that one second place in an afternoons betting wasn't particularly lucky.

None of this had any importance, because the serious drinking was about to start.

When picking a pub to stop in for these fishing visits, the primary concern was how long the pub would keep serving its residents. A secondary consideration was whether they could get food at three am when the munchies set in.

Tales of Good and Bad Luck  
Gone Fishing

The place they used in Boston was the Red Lion run by Old Stan. Stan's wife, Sandra, had left him a couple of years ago. Since then Stan had been sober for a total of eighteen minutes and fourteen seconds. Because of this, people always assumed Sandra had left him because of his drink problem. The reality, however, was that he'd hardly touched a drop while Sandra was around, and in fact she'd left him for no other reason than she was bored.

Old Stan stayed up while ever there was someone to drink with. In the fisherman he had found many a willing partner. Also, fortunately for the fishermen, the only time Old Stan ate was three o'clock in the morning. There was a twenty-four hour Chinese takeaway in Boston as well as an all night Indian. Both were used to three am phone calls from the Red Lion. On this occasion, they opted for the Chinese menu.

Orders were taken and rung through to Kim's Kitchen and forty-five minutes later, Kim himself delivered it to the door.

The order however was not perfect. Steve's chicken chow mein was missing. For some reason, the assembled throng found this immensely amusing and in their drunken state, nobody thought to offer Steve some of theirs. In fact, they found great hilarity in taunting Steve by rubbing their bellies and making Yum-yum-yum noises. Steve had to settle for three packets of pork scratchings that were just past their sell by date. Steve decided to bed early.

For once, this seemed to have paid off, because the following morning, the others all had stinking hangovers. Steve happily tucked into a huge fried breakfast while watching the others get by with just a couple of buckets of black coffee.

At this time, Steve was catching the train into work. On the Monday after the weekend away he found himself sitting opposite one of his ex-neighbours. Elizabeth Monday had moved away when her parents had made a lottery win of over two million pounds.

Steve knew that Elisabeth's parents were insistent that the money would not change them, and after buying a new house and new cars they had carefully invested the rest. They also didn't want their daughter to grow up "spoilt", so had insisted that she take a part job. Steve knew she worked in a travel agents in the centre of town because she'd got him a good deal on his last holiday, so it was a surprise to see her on the train.

"Oh yes," said Liz. "They do this thing at the travel agents, a sort of employee reward system. Every month they have a raffle for a really good holiday. Every employee gets a ticket for each day in the week they work. I work Thursdays and Saturdays so I get two tickets. If you work all week, you get seven, the extras being a bonus. It's a national company and every employee from top to bottom gets tickets. In the summer, it's a really good prize. This year it's six weeks all expenses paid in Australia and the far east. You get paid leave to go as well. It's great."

Steve could feel it coming but he asked anyway.

"So why are you on the train?"

"I won!"

"That was lucky."

"Yes, it's even more lucky when you think about it. I only had two goes and everyone else seven."

Although he didn't show it, this somehow unnerved Steve and the feeling of unease continued well into the evening. He decided that he couldn't be bothered to cook and that he'd go to the pub for tea instead. Besides, he wanted to see if his fishing companions were over their hangovers.

Tales of Good and Bad Luck  
Gone Fishing

When he arrived at the pub, he was surprised to find none of the fishermen were there. He was particularly surprised by Billy's absence. He was a gallon a night man and he liked to get off to an early start.

As he walked to the bar, Mick, the landlord, started to pour his usual pint of Guinness.

"You were lucky," said Mick.

"How do you mean."

"Well, your dinner didn't turn up on Saturday night."

"So? What's so lucky about that?"

"The others got food poisoning."

So there it is.

Lucky for Elizabeth Monday is that your parents win two million pounds on the national lottery and then you win a six weeks all expenses paid holiday in Australia and the far east.

Lucky for Steven Smith is that a meal that you would have really liked to eat doesn't turn up and you narrowly avoid food poisoning.