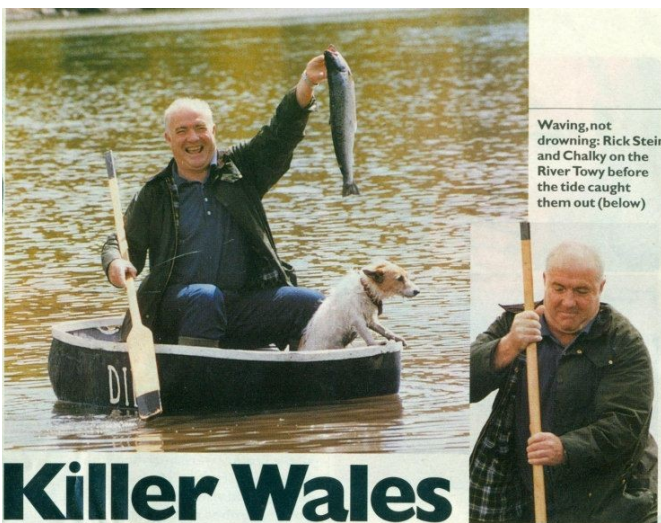


LIFE AND CULTURE

The Modern
They are a proud group of fishermen who value their heritage and tradition.

There is a museum full of photographs and memorabilia which is at present within the Quayside Centre by the river in Carmarthen.



Waving, not drowning: Rick Stein and Chalky on the River Towy before the tide caught them out (below)

Killer Wales

Top seafood chef Rick Stein nearly ended up sleeping with the fishes...

By TERRY PAYNE

Rick Stein found himself in deep water while filming his *Food Heroes* series (weekdays UK Food).

On location in South Wales, the TV chef was trapped by the incoming tide on a small flooded island in the middle of the River Towy, along with RT writer Christopher Middleton, Stein's dog Chalky and a local river guide. "The water started creeping over our ankles, but

within minutes it was up to our waists and rising," says Middleton.

The boat that was meant to pick them up had had engine failure, and the stranded men found themselves in the middle of fast-flowing currents, clinging to each other for support. "We considered swimming, but it was too dangerous," recalls Middleton. "Our river guide Raymond, who's got 50 years' experience, was clearly getting very worried."

"There's never been a fatality on the Towy in living memory," says

Raymond. "I seriously thought we were going to be the first."

By the time the rescue boat finally reached the stricken visitors, they were clinging to a tiny, 3ft-wide coracle in which they'd piled all their belongings, plus Chalky the dog.

"I was never that bothered about the situation," maintained Stein, after the rescue. "Most of the time I was on my mobile phone, discussing ingredients for the dish I was going to be cooking that afternoon."

SEA TROUT SWIMS IN

In west Wales, food lovers await the arrival of the first migratory sewin - or sea trout - with as much excitement as the first asparagus, hailed as a sign that spring is on the way. But for Scott Davis, Welsh artisan fish curer and chef, the appearance of this delicately flavoured pink-fleshed fish also signals the start of a busy season of smoking and curing.

Scott (pictured centre), who also makes pâtés and terrines in his kitchen near Carmarthen, smokes the sea trout lightly over Welsh oak from nearby Talley. The smoked sea trout is one of his bestsellers. "I love it with freshly baked soda bread, beetroot and horseradish," he says. "Sewin has an amazing dense texture and is slightly less fatty than salmon."

The sewin are caught from basket-style coracles that float down the Welsh tidal rivers from the start of March or April, when the fishing season begins. The coracle fishermen work in pairs, suspending a net between them.

Numbers of fishermen and trout caught are strictly controlled, with each fish being tagged so that it can be traced to a specific river. Many of the fishermen



who catch sea trout for Scott belong to families, including Scott's own, who have been using coracles since the 18th century. Sewin caught in coracles are so special that the fishermen of west Wales are applying to gain PGI (protected geographical indication) status, expected to be granted this year.

Scott sells his produce online, through delis and stores, including Fortnum & Mason. You can also buy directly from cnwd.bigcartel.com.

