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# TIPPING POINT

Had a good fishing trip? You can do more than say thank you, writes Simon Cooper



**R**ECENTLY I FELL INTO CONVERSATION with the concierge of a five-star hotel. It is no ordinary five-star hotel; it is the sort favoured by the ultra wealthy. The guests are not the sort of people you see in celebrity magazines. These are the sort of people that own the celebrity magazines. How are things, I asked, more by way of passing the time than any genuine enquiry. Bad came the reply. I felt compelled to ask why.

There was a time when the concierge desk of a major hotel was a franchise; the head concierge paid the hotel for the right to employ bellhops, car valets and porters who in turn paid him. "Watch this couple," said my concierge pal by way of illustration as a well-heeled pair glided through the lobby and on to the street just as their Uber arrived. "See," he said with a long sigh, "a few years ago I'd have hailed them a taxi and they'd have dropped me a few quid. Do that a dozen times an hour over a ten-hour shift and it soon adds up." I guess it does. Or did. It seems the by-product of the cashless society is less cash for some. I did enquire as to the "voluntary" 17% service charge the hotel levied. Didn't his team get a share? This was met with much rolling of many eyes.

I am a great believer in the economic theory of "trickle-down" though I find the earthy realism of its predecessor "the horse-and-sparrow" more vivid as it propounds the principle that if you feed the horse enough oats, some will pass through to the road for the sparrows. It is definitely a sparrow's life for me and my fishing business, our fortunes ebb and flow with the state of the national economy. But back to tipping.

To my mind it is a real shame the gratuity is falling out of fashion both by virtue of habit and carrying less ready cash. In my early days it was very common to find a tenner slipped between the pages of the catch record book by way of a thank you to the keeper. Was

it a lot of money in aggregate over a season? Probably not but the psychological fillip provided by such thoughtfulness was probably worth ten times the value on the face of the note.

In game shooting, tipping is still very much the ritual of the day. You tip your loader. You tip the head keeper as he hands you your brace at the end of the day. Would you dare not? But these are formal affairs, as are fishing parties in say Russia or guided days here in Britain, where peer pressure dictates that a gratuity is factored into the cost. You come prepared with cash and if you don't know the score, someone will give you a guide to what sum is acceptable and what is not.

However, most fishing is less organised. You may or may not see the keeper. There might not be an easy way to get the cash to him or, very occasionally, her. This might be your one and only ever visit to the fishery. What's the incentive to play nice? The answer to that lies in the Bible, Matthew 7:12, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."

Don't get carried away with the notion that the passing of money is awkward, embarrassing or demeaning. All those are simply excuses not to do it. Over the years I have received tips, given tips and watched others receive tips. Yes, sometimes the physical act requires a bit of contortion, but ultimately your show of gratitude will be long appreciated.

Is this a plea for a revival of tipping? I think it is. After all, it will soon be the season of goodwill. ■

*Simon Cooper is managing director of Fishing Breaks (fishingbreaks.co.uk) the leading chalkstream fishing specialists. He is author of Life of a Chalkstream and The Otters' Tale.*