

macilwaine-guy-2019-03-19.mp4

Guy Macilwaine [00:00:10] Yeah, look, I've fished all my life, from as young as I can remember. But ideally, my grandfather, who was very keen on his fly fishing. Up in Nyanga, the Eastern Highlands, and he was my inspiration, I imagine. To get going. Especially on the fly fishing side of things. And I would say, because I've been, farming all my life. We've always had fishing on our doorstep. You know, local lakes, dams, or you'd like to call them. So yeah that, started I suppose, basically from my grandfather.

Guy Macilwaine [00:01:01] Yeah back, back in the early days, I think, the population of fish, or let's put it this way, the, the pressure putting on any fishing body of water, near the river, or whatever, was less. Obviously, less fishermen in those days, more fish. Now it's the other way around. There's a lot of fishermen, and we're getting less fish. For whatever reason.

James Thull [00:01:32] So more pressure in general?

Guy Macilwaine [00:01:34] Yeah. More pressure on the fishing. I think, yeah, there's just more people now, yeah. I go back, and I relayed stories. You know, we caught... Fish a lot easier, and bigger fish, when I was a kid, than we do it now. We actually have to, you know, have to work for your fish now. And it's, there's more to it.

Guy Macilwaine [00:02:02] Yeah, sure. My grandfather was, uh.

James Thull [00:02:07] And what was his name?

Guy Macilwaine [00:02:08] Major Herbert Macilwane. He's known, he's known, for anybody that comes up to Nyanga, as Major Mac. Um, anyway he, he was an Army, retired Army, major. Came out from England to, to Rhodesia in those days, and, um, later on in life, at the age of 60, he ventured up to Nyanga Highlands. And in those days, there was only a, literally a track to get up there. There was nothing, there wasn't a tree in sight, and it reminded him, reminded him of, the Kenmare District in, in Ireland. Very sparse and, you know, open, sort of dotted terrain. And he just had this incredible vision to, to build lakes. He built the Tropic Hotel. Which is going, is very successful, and it's a popular tourist attraction, and he built, I'd say, about, four lakes up, up at Nyanga, and somehow managed to find the over, to stock them with trout, and it's just, it's just been from there, on. He, obviously, was a very keen fly fisherman himself. And being up in, you know, they settled up there at Tropic, and he started up this exclusive fishing club. Which was, on the Gairezi River, which is, it's a beautiful, beautiful piece of water. Some say it's the best in Africa, or southern Africa. And stocked the river, and, yeah. It's just a wonderful place to live. And, you know, I'm very, what's the word? Very proud, very proud of my grandfather, it was an incredible vision that he had. Unfortunately, you haven't been able to get up there, but you will see, you know, what he did.

Guy Macilwaine [00:04:38] It's more of a hobby, than anything else. Because I've, I'm Semi-retired now. I was farming most of my life, tobacco farming, moved up to Nyanga, being my roots, where my grandfather was. And, in the time I've been there, been adventuring through the national parks, to, you know, to places, um, not too many people know about. And I, and I've sussed out these places. It's all four wheel drive type terrain, and I've decided just to share my knowledge with people who wants to, want to go fishing on those rivers. The moment, it's all feral trout. It's, national parks haven't been stuck in those waters for, over 50 years now. So whatever trout that are caught in those river, are

feral and, yeah. It's a great adventure. And I, yeah, I enjoy doing that, I enjoy taking people to places that they wouldn't normally know about, or see.

James Thull [00:05:49] That's wonderful. So some of the trout you're catching are ancestors of the fish your grandfather stocked?

Guy Macilwaine [00:05:57] Yeah, possibly. Yeah, absolutely, yeah. My grandfather didn't, he, he didn't have much to do with national parks. You mustn't get me wrong, my national, my. National Parks which was, you know, obviously government run back then, in the Rhodesia days. They obviously, also imported over, and the likes. So he wasn't involved in national parks, as such, but he was more Gairezi, Tropic, Masai Mara. That's.

Guy Macilwaine [00:06:31] Well that's the Gairezi River, yeah.

James Thull [00:06:32] Okay.

Guy Macilwaine [00:06:32] He, I suppose rather like me, he searched the area, and found this incredible river. And stocked it with fish and, started up this exclusive club. Called the Gairezi Fishing Club. And, he restricted it then, to 20 members, or thereabout. But since then, it has, we've increased the membership, up to 100, now. We're restricted to a hundred members only. And we stock the river, extensively. And it is, yeah, it's a very sort of prestige club, if you know what I mean. Anybody in Zimbabwe, would dearly like to become a member. The, the waiting list is quite long. Yeah. And it's been very successful. Yeah.

Guy Macilwaine [00:07:48] Yeah, um, the Gairezi, the Gairezi River is staked out. It's part of the government lands. And the Gairezi Valley has the local inhabitants. So how we've managed to keep our fishing, is by introducing this, what we called Campfires Project. So the idea being is, we have our membership. And we help the community with, yeah, we supply them with the maize seed, and fertilizer, and the likes. So it's a sort of situation where we where both profit from, from the income that the Gairezi brings in. You know, we have cottages there now. So half, half of that income goes back into the community. And it's working very well. And we've had various campfire situations in Zimbabwe, and the hunting areas as well, on the similar grounds. But they've all fallen by the wayside. And, I believe, the Campfires, the project we have in the Gairezi, is the only one that is still surviving, in Zimbabwe.

Guy Macilwaine [00:09:19] It's a no brainer. It's just being, being out in the wild, yeah, being out in the open. Yeah I know, there's... Yeah, that's it, really. You know, it's not about catching the fish, it's just about doing it, and being out in the wild. You know, in the national parks, it's such a beautiful area. You could go for days, and not see a soul. You'll be there, all on your own, just enjoying the flora and fauna. I'm also quite keen on birds and that sort of thing. So yeah. Just being outdoors. That's, that's the main thing, you know.

Guy Macilwaine [00:10:01] Yeah, look, I think we're all always concerned. You know, always concerned that, it's, it's definitely deteriorated, over the years, and we, well, we try and get back what we take out. You know what I mean? So we, we are, trying to get involved with national parks, and try and get the rivers back to what they used to be, get them stocked again, get them fishable. Because a lot of the rivers have been clogged up with this, this wattle that was introduced many years ago. Which is a, which is a weed really, it's soaked up a lot of our rivers, you know. There's the rivers in national parks, it's

just absolutely impossible to fish, you know. So that's, that's what I'm also involved in is, is trying to help out with that.

Guy Macilwaine [00:11:06] Uh, been thinking about it all day, um. The, one, I've had a few, but only, the one that did give me a bit of a fright, was on the Zambezi River. We were drifting down. And we noticed this hippo popping up and down, about 100 meters down below us. And I thought I understood hippos and, you know, I've seen, seen hippos do that all the time. But we were drifting down towards this guy, and he was move, he was standing his ground. And that's when I started to get worried. Fortunately, I was with, a good friend of mine in a reliable boat, that's going to start with a engine, first time. And we had these two guests with us, from Britain, who had never been to Africa, and had never been fishing. So we were concerned for them, more than ourselves. We didn't want to frighten them. And I sort of looked across to my friend. And I said "Are you, are you keeping?" I didn't say anything but I, and I pointed towards the hippo. And he says. "Yeah." and I said, "Well, maybe you should just get in the driver's seat, just you know, and we'll just see what happens." And this, this hippo just stood his ground. Anyway, he went under. When we got about 20 or 30 yards, or meters shall I say, from him, he went underwater, and we thought "Well okay, he's gone." And about five seconds later, we saw this bar wave coming straight towards us. So, fortunately, as I said, my friend was in this driver's seat. He kickstarted the motor. And drove out, and this hippo come up and whacked us underneath, you know, the boat dropped, and all the rest of it. But it was quite a scary situation. I don't know what the two, two guests from England felt, felt about it, but I think they we a bit shaken. But it was, it was good fun, yeah.