



THE MIKE WARD INTERVIEW

**Paul Whitehouse and Bob Mortimer COMEDY LEGENDS**

**BOB Mortimer is suggesting I should maybe lose a stone.**

He's too kind. He's saying it in response to my own claim that I need to lose two.

"Well, you'd be f\*\*ing slim if you lost two, Mike," he insists.

Paul Whitehouse agrees – even when I tell them both I tip the scales at 16stone-plus.

"You don't look it," says Bob.

"No, that's cruiserweight," Paul assures me.

Which makes me feel a whole lot better.

But why on earth are we having this conversation, me and two of Britain's best-loved comedians?

Well, because you know how hard it can be to get a doctor's appointment? I figured they'd be the next best thing.

Just kidding.

It is actually because health scares were the trigger for a fine new TV series this pair have made – Mortimer And Whitehouse: Gone Fishing, starting on Wednesday on BBC Two. A show that's both funny and poignant.

Both guys, you see, have had major heart problems. Paul, who turned 60 in May, had stents fitted a while back. Bob, a year younger, needed a triple bypass in 2015.

"And fishing became a way of us responding to our heart disease, counteracting the stress," Paul explains.

"After I had my op," Bob tells me, "I was just sat at home doing nothing, watching telly, feeling quite vulnerable."

"The whole experience had scared the s\*\*t out of me."

"It was Paul who teased me out. He didn't force me, but he wouldn't let me

say no. 'Shall we go fishing?', he kept saying. 'Come on, let's go fishing.'"

So they did. Not initially for a TV series, just for the sheer joy of it.

"We went down to the river," Paul recalls, "and we became like two kids. You get lost in this magical world. That's such a rare thing these days, to find something that stops you thinking about anything else."

"I'd never quite known what 'living in the moment' means," admits Bob. "But if you're sat on a riverbank watching a float, and three hours drift by without you realising, you feel like it must be good, this kind of meditation."

Not that all this health talk dominates the show.

"Hopefully we do it in a fairly unpretentious, lightly-said way," says Paul, "rather than laddling it on."

Comedy-wise, there's no script.

It's just two blokes, mates for years, enjoying each other's company, making each other (and us) laugh, but never forcing the issue.

"We have not got an established comedy relationship," Bob points out. "This is just how we are as friends."

Also, some of the show's scenery is stunning.

"That was something we were keen to showcase," says Paul. "This is England looking beautiful."

But also on these trips, he admits, "there's the lure of the pub and food. That's another element."

"It's a BIG element," Bob chips in. "Fishing can be exhausting. You feel you've earned your pint."

"Yeah," Paul agrees, "and the pie."

Talking of food, that's Bob's job at each of their stops.

While Paul leads the way angling-wise (first stop: Norfolk, fishing for tench), Bob prepares their meals. Which of

PAUNCH LINE: Comic mates Paul and Bob go fishing and become hooked on a new healthy(ish) diet after their heart scares. Left, with our Mike



**Hook, line and banter!**



course they have to be extra-careful about these days.

Having said that, I notice Bob fries himself an egg in episode one. "Well, eggs are OK," he assures me.

Yeah, but fried, Bob? "Exactly!" Paul butts in. "You tell him, Mike! I keep on his case but, you know, I'm not his mum or dad."

To be fair, Bob has made some pretty big changes to his diet since the op. He's also quit the fags.

"I was a big smoker," he confesses.

"I'd smoked since I was 12." "Me too," admits Paul, who packed them in some years back.

Menu-wise, Bob certainly likes to experiment now.

He says: "On the show I cook things like a pizza with a cauliflower base instead of carbs."

"I also make stuff with chestnuts and dates."

"Yes," confirms Paul. "In every episode there is something reasonably heart healthy." Hmm, that's an

interesting label to give it, guys. "Reasonably" heart-healthy! What next, an M&S "Reasonably Heart-Healthy" range?

"Yeah!" Bob cries, not only inspired by this suggestion but seemingly keen to promote such a product. "That's the advert, Paul!"

And Paul agrees. "Yes!" he exclaims. "That's it, that's the one we want: the Reasonably Heart-Healthy range. We just want an advert out of this!"

● **Mortimer And Whitehouse: Gone Fishing starts on Wednesday on BBC Two at 10pm.**

**BOB'S FAVES**

SONG: Why (Annie Lennox)  
TV SHOW: The American Office  
FILM: A Room For Romeo Brass  
ACTOR: Jeff Bridges  
COMEDIAN: Matt Berry  
SPORTS STAR: Adama Traoré, Middlesbrough  
FOOD: Potato  
DRINK: Pale Ale  
HOLIDAY DESTINATION: Palm Springs  
CITY: Derby  
FISH: Barbel

**PAUL'S FAVES**

SONG: Gimme Shelter (Rolling Stones)  
TV SHOW: Match Of The Day  
FILM: Life Of Brian  
ACTOR: Michael Caine  
COMEDIAN: Peter Cook  
SPORTS STAR: Harry Kane  
FOOD: Pie  
DRINK: Wine  
HOLIDAY DESTINATION: Iceland  
CITY: London  
FISH: Trout



BOB: Barbel



PAUL: Trout

Pictures: TIM MERRY