

DropBack

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The Andy Hunt Edition



Pike Anglers' Club of Great Britain

The club for ALL pike anglers since 1977



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RO's Ramblings

So here we are, eventually, another edition of the region magazine. The last edition was in February 2007.

Where have the last 12 months gone?

Looking back over the past year, I have failed to achieve any of my goals or ambitions in relation to my fishing. This has all been due to pressures of work, even to the extent that I have missed my spring trip to Scotland for the first time in 23 years! This is not good.

I have made a promise to myself to never allow this to happen again and to this end I am negotiating to work compressed hours, so that I can work a 4 day week and have every Friday off. This has not proved to be as easily arranged as I had hoped, but I will not bore you with the details.

So, what of the coming year?

First and foremost is to arrange events for the region meetings, I have a few ideas (very few) and would appreciate any suggestions from you the members. In my previous ramblings I suggested we, the 'junta', could perhaps do with some help and mused that maybe we should form a committee and would anybody be interested in assisting. I have not heard anything. We could do with raising the profile of the region. This could be achieved by having a sort of PR person, perhaps just penning a few lines each quarter for Pike Lines. Maybe designing or utilising any posters available from the PAC to be displayed in local tackle shops. Something to think about, perhaps you could assist re this.

Following the success of the practical demonstration, by Tim Kelly (subsequently to be referred to as the 'Reel Doctor'), of multiplier maintenance. I will be looking to arrange similar events in relation to rod ring replacement and fly tying.

This edition of the magazine has completely exhausted our collection of articles, so once again I will be badgering people to get their creative juices flowing.

Our efforts on the trout lake have so far failed to produce the goods and I think the May lure evening will probably be the last, although I may attempt to keep our options open and just have a one-day event there in the late autumn and then perhaps once a year.

I am working on another venue, an exclusive carp fishery and will keep you informed of any developments.

My personal aims for this coming year are to get out fishing! I intend to continue my summer lure fishing and try some light luring, after perch and chub. In addition I have a few days booked on various trout waters around the country, something I am looking forward to, always a challenge and sociable.

I have visited a few old haunts and selected a couple to target later in the year. Somewhat worryingly, I also retrieved my bedchair and bivvy from the loft and sorted out my Delkims and sounder box! I will let you know if this madness progresses further.

I plan to have a week away with the boat in October, either in Scotland or the Lake District. I am currently researching venues and accommodation, a bit old to rough it for a week, nowadays.

That's all from me for this edition; hopefully we will be able to return to our twice yearly publication, when I am inundated with new articles!

Tight Lines

Dave



The Crayfish Pit

This a short article about a gravel pit which I lightly fished over some six years whilst the pit was maturing as a fishery. It covers the rise and fall of the pits emerging pike population and the effects human intervention had on them through my own angling observations. If anything it shows how transient a pike fishery can be.

When it comes to new waters it is not very often that a plan comes together in pike fishing. Most ventures come don't come to much in terms of quality fishing, which can be a little disheartening. If however you enjoy the act of searching, learning a little more about pike and you keep your expectations on an even keel then each new venture will bring its own rewards. Having said that I would very much like to catch a 30 pound pike and each year I spend a few days on known trout waters, just because unlike my local waters I can be certain they contain fish of this size. So my local expectations are set on 20 pound fish, though I believe under certain circumstances fish of 30 pounds can be present.

Each year I take time out for a wander around some new waters prospecting with a lure rod. The dream is of course to find a new water, with little or no other pike fishing. For a while I did have something close to this.

The pit such as it was, became know to me as the Crayfish pit for reasons which will be obvious later. It was originally dug as two pits, finally joined together as the last gravel machinery was removed leaving an 'L' shaped pit of about 13 acres. I'm not sure about how old the pit was at this stage but I guess at least eight years old judging from the trees growing in its margins. I left it a further five before I ventured onto the pit with a spinnerbait to prospect it. As far as I am aware the water had never been stocked; not that this has ever worried me as perch and pike seem to get into waters on their own. Even so I was pleasantly surprised to catch two perfectly conditioned if not scrawny two pound pike after a few hours trying. This in no way justified a serious follow up but I decided to keep an eye on the place and was back again about the same time next year with an almost repeat result. Encouraged a little, this time I had circumnavigated the lake hoping to learn a little more. My impression was that it was a very deep pit; most banks were very steep with no margins whatsoever, though there was shallower weedy water at the two ends of the pit. It was also gin clear with visibility down to 10 feet from the high banks. The far bank from the access point was completely wooded, unfishable and seemed especially deep. Almost predictably the fish I had caught all came from the shallow water.

The next year for some reason I didn't get to the pit and by the time I got there the year after things had changed. This time my spinnerbaits didn't pick up any little pike in the shallow areas of the previous years, so I changed to crankbaits and wandered further down the pit. Still no success, that is until I came across a submerged gravel bar, the only feature I could observe along the whole bank. At this point I had a pike of around eight pounds come short of the lure. This was just what I had been waiting for; a sign that the pit had matured to the point where there was potentially something worth fishing for. At this point I guess the pit was at about 12 years old.

I returned to the pit in November that year with a bag of dead baits and the usual plethora of rods associated with bank fishing. Setting up by the gravel bar I soaked some trout in the margins to defrost and was some what alarmed to see one being dragged away even before I'd set the first rod up. Alas not a pike, but some quick landing net work saw me face to face with the first signal crayfish I'd ever seen. It very soon became apparent the pit was alive with them, a bait fished on the bottom was intercepted in seconds, literally. Plumbing the gravel bar revealed a dream feature with a fantastic drop off on one side of it. About 20 minutes later I caught a pike of around seven pounds, which I could help thinking was the one that followed my lure some months previously. An hour later with no more takes coming I started to leap frog along the bank fishing a sink and draw rod in between the float fished baits.

Moving so quickly from such a feature might seem impatient on my behalf but I reasoned that with pike in the pit hadn't been caught before and in gin clear water, if the baits were anywhere near a pike a take would come quickly, as it had with the seven pounder. As it happened, it was the right thing to do and the sink and draw bait did the business producing two low double figure pike. Both takes came on the drop may be justifying my impatience. What I did like was that all the fish were fin perfect and of excellent proportions, beautifully marked as you would expect from a clear water pit.

Encouraged I was already planning my next trip; interestingly the last two fish came from a completely featureless area about 20 metres apart and about 70 metres from the 'dream feature' gravel bar leaving me wondering were to start on my next visit. Two weeks later I was back. This time I chose to start at the other end of the pit but to follow the tactics from last time and leap frog from the start. The wind was blowing right to left and offshore so the plan was to use a drifter on one rod whilst leapfrogging the other float rod, working the sink and draw rod in between. An hour into the session the drift float went under about 15 metres out having dragged round into the shore. The result was another pristine pike this time of about 14 pounds. (see pic overleaf)

Unfortunately by the end of the session I'd worked the entire bank, past the gravel bar and onto the shallow water at the other end of the pit without another take. Again the fish had come from a featureless area.

Whilst the results weren't fantastic it was interesting fishing with the bonus that I seemingly had the fishing to myself. On so many of my local pits, especially ones that are worth fishing, you are competing with other anglers and to be successful you need to take account of the affect that other angling pressure has on fish behaviour and fishing for pressured fish has long lost its appeal for me.

Besides I was enjoying the challenge of unravelling the pits secrets for what they were; a pit at least 12 years old, presumably un-stocked with fish, but obviously stocked with signal crayfish. In fact heaving with crayfish; an improvised trap albeit a large one produced over 150 of them when left over night. A pit which had previously only produced scrawny jacks a few years ago that had now produced three pristine doubles with little sign of the jacks. Despite the fact that there was a pair of grebes on the pit and regular sightings of cormorants it seemed fairly obviously the pike were predominately eating the crayfish.



14lb Crayfish Pike in Pristine Condition



The Fat 18lb Fish

On my final session fishing off the bank I managed a rather odd looking fish of just over 18 pounds, it was rather short and fat and as you can see from the photo it had a slight deformity where its head bent downwards. The reason this photo was taken with me crouched down, was due to the fact that the bank I was fishing runs parallel to a main road and just as I was preparing to take the photo three anglers were walking past, carrying off their bargains from a major tackle sale that was going on up the road.

The last thing I wanted was to be seen with a decent fish by other anglers. There was already evidence that there was some other pike fishing going on as there was discarded tackle packages

on the bank. The crayfish were also being caught as I'd found an improvised trap and several crayfish carcasses on the bank. The 18 pounder was once again caught leapfrogging and was the only take of the morning. In the afternoon I fished off the shallow bank where I had first caught the jacks and caught a fish of about five pounds, a much thinner fish but never the less well proportioned. This was only the second small fish I'd caught out of six since I'd started bait fishing the pit.

Now whilst I had been reasonably successful up to now I was fairly sure that the bigger fish I was picking up were feeding fish; actively on the move because they were basically caught randomly and away from any feature I could discern. What I wanted to find was where the pike lived and in this respect I felt I was only scratching the surface. On each session I had observed the grebes working in a small bay on the opposite side of the pit which was unfishable from the bank due to being heavily wooded, perhaps this was the area where the pike lived?

I had worked out that boat access was possible so the next session was spent afloat in my boat accompanied by my friend Neil.



Picture 3 Launching the Boat Pre Dawn

We obviously headed straight over to the bay, float trolling one rod each on the way. Whilst trolling along the overhanging trees as we entered the bay I picked up a fish of 11 pounds, seemingly justifying the effort of launching the boat. Within five minutes of returning this fish I had another take but as I was bringing this one to the boat Neil also hooked into a fish, which was obviously

bigger. With a mind on his fish I unhooked my fish which was about 15 pounds over the side of the boat just in time to see Neil get into trouble and finally have his fish come adrift on a sunken tree. However, not before I caught a glimpse of an estimated 20 pound fish in the clear water.

We fished the rest of the bay systematically with the fish finder revealing a nice plateau in the centre which had depths ranging from 8 to 15 feet, but no more fish. Never the less the fish caught and lost, plus the features were a strong indication that we had found at least one of the places the pike lived. With no more takes coming our way it was time to explore the rest of the pit. We picked up two very small pike in the shallows at the bottom end of the pit before turning and trolling up the road bank I had fished previously. We came to the gravel bar and the fish finder only emphasised the excellence of this feature, with the drop off at the end of the bar going from six to 16 feet of water, but again no fish. We trolled the whole road bank which was both featureless and fish less until we reached the top shallow end where we caught a number of small fish. By the middle of the afternoon we had covered the whole lake; much of it was around 18 feet deep with some areas down to 28 feet with a pretty flat bottom. To finish the day we returned to the bay and caught a further two doubles, this time from the plateau. As ever a boat and fish finder had revealed the secrets of the pit in double quick time. The three best features were the bay with the plateau and sunken tree, the gravel bar and the top shallows, with the only fish coming from the bay and top end shallows. It seemed that the bigger pike did indeed live in the bay as we had four doubles out of it plus a lost big fish. That session ended the seasons fishing on the pit on a bit of a high note and I felt I was beginning to get to grips with it.

Neil and I were back the next year but we only managed one trip during the Christmas break with a social afternoon fish. This time we got nothing from the bay, the gravel bar was as usual was barren but we had some fun fishing at the top end shallows with eight small fish to about nine pounds.

Perhaps my approach to this pit might seem casual but, I felt that we had probably caught or hooked most of the pike in the pit that first year so I had deliberately left it alone. I had however kept an eye on the place and on two occasions observed some rather dubious characters fishing off the road bank and from experience assumed the pike population was going to be on the decline.



Landing a Jack from the Top Shallows

It was not until January the next season this time on my own, that I ventured back out onto the pit again. The trip was as much as anything out of curiosity to see how the pike were getting on. I headed straight into the bay which had a gentle breeze blowing out of it. Setting up as the boat gently drifted I dropped the first bait over the side and started setting up the second rod. Within 30 seconds of the bait being in the water and long before the second rod was set up it was taken. Tightening down on the fish which had taken the bait just off the sunken tree, I was reminded of Neil's undoing two years previously. This time I knew of the trees existence so made no mistakes, even so with no anchor down it fairly pulled the boat around before I finally netted the fish which I felt sure was the one that had escaped Neil. In the bottom of the boat lay an obvious twenty, which on weighing hit the scales at 22.04. It is difficult to describe the pleasure that pike gave me. It was the culmination of many dead ends trying to find a new water with the objective of catching a gravel pit pike of over 20 pounds. It was made even better by the fact it was from a lake that I had seen being dug and first prospected five years ago. To me pike fishing is at its best when you are



The 22.04 Caught Within 30 Seconds

left to find your own waters. Putting the significance of this catch into prospective; since the cormorants hit the scene this was the first 20 I had caught from a local gravel pit for 15 years. Twenty pound gravel pit pike are quite rare fish these days in the south east.

The only downside of the day was that no other doubles were caught and the only other fish I caught were small fish from the shallows at either end of the pit. This left me wondering about the fate of the other fish we had caught two years ago. Obviously I was sufficiently enthused by the capture of the 20 to be back the next weekend, this time with Neil to see if we couldn't find the other

pike. The temperature had dropped since the previous week and our trolled baits came to nothing during the first hour. This did not unduly worry me as in these conditions fish often don't feed until later in the morning so we anchored up in the bay next to the plateau to await events. I had recently got the idea of using big bright lures to literally wake the pike up and so had a lure rod set up with a big orange spinnerbait. This was the perfect situation for such tactics and on about my twentieth cast with bubble trails left on the calm surface by the spinnerbait all around the boat I felt a distinctive bump on the rod, struck and missed. I followed up with a bait quickly cast to the spot, which resulted in an almost immediate take and a short fight later a distinctly coloured fish of 17 pounds was landed.

This fish momentarily raised our hopes that the fish from two years ago were still about but the rest of the day was uneventful with just small fish coming from the shallows at the ends of the pit once again. Perhaps the other pike had succumbed to bad angling or pot fishermen after all?

All was pretty much revealed in the last two trips to the pit. The next trip was with my friend Richard. This time the bay didn't produce any takes and it wasn't until we reached the gravel bar swim (it was too good a feature to ignore) that we had a take. I had high hopes since it was a long time since the bar had produced. This time it was Richards turn and a few metres out from the bank he landed what looked like a decent fish. As we were so close in we decided to go ashore to weigh the fish and stretch our legs. The distinctive marks gave it away as the 17 from a few weeks ago which was disappointing for me but still a nice result for Richard.



17lb and Distinctly Marked

Back in the boat again we dropped the baits in and set off again only for Richard to get another take almost immediately. A much shorter fight later and once more we were unhooking the 17 pounder. Two hours later, having covered all the usual areas without another take we were heading back to the launching spot and going over the gravel bar again when my float dived under. For the third time that morning we were looking at the now very distinctive 17 pounder.

This was obviously disappointing and left me wondering what had happened to the other large pike

we had previously encountered. With more evidence of bank fishing in the form of litter and fires I could only fear the worst.



The 17lb Fish on the First of Three Captures that Morning

My final trip on the pit came that same year, but in October of the following season. A friend of mine, Bruce, wanted to catch some crayfish so I thought it would be a good idea to put a trap out, have a mornings pike fishing on the boat then collect the trap at the end of the day and share out our catch of crayfish. The bay and the gravel bar were empty of fish, but the top end shallows had a few fish in residence as usual and we soon started to build up a reasonable catch of jacks. It was the first trip of the pike season and I was enjoying myself. I was even looking forward to eating some of the crayfish. Once again the pit had changed a little and for some reason the shallows were pretty devoid of weed for this time of year. This enabled the fish finder to show up a few more features previously hidden by thick weed, which kept my interest going. I wasn't even concerned about the lack of a doubles. I think we were giving it another 'last' circuit of the shallows when the float went under again and I was at last attached to something decent. After a fair struggle we boated a long thin fish with an over sized head, which we weighed in at 17 pounds. Despite this, it appeared to be in good condition, fin perfect and with plenty of colour to it. Could it be the 22 of the previous January?

The next 'little' change to the pit wasn't discovered until we came to the shore. As we pulled the crayfish trap in the impossible was revealed; it was empty! The fish we had baited the traps with were just as we had left them. I couldn't believe it. To make sure we cast out dead baits fished on the bottom whilst we packed the gear away. Not a crayfish to be found was the conclusion. Clearly the crayfish had been trapped and removed on a commercial scale which explained why the 17 pounder just landed was so thin. When I got home I checked the photos and my thoughts were confirmed, the 17 was indeed the 22 from back in January; just nine months ago. At his time of year I would have expected this fish to weigh around 19 pounds so it was clearly losing weight; its main source of food most likely being served up in a '**Prêt a Manger**' sandwich!

So six years after I'd first thrown out a spinnerbait to prospect what was in the pit it was time to draw it to a close. I had almost certainly had the best of it; the fun of finding a few fish in there, eventually fishing it seriously and finding a reasonable head of doubles, culminating in a low twenty. For all that, the icing on the cake was that I had the pit practically to myself, with absolutely no restrictions on how I fished it. Getting afloat completely opened it up and I've no doubt I would have struggled without it. You can never be certain, but I sure most of the bigger pike we caught in



The 22lb Fish down to 17lb and the last fish I caught from the Pit

the first serious years fishing succumbed to bad angling or the 'pot fishermen' who occasionally frequented the place. With good quality baits and the access afforded by the boat I find it hard to believe they could remain uncaught, especially with the repeat captures of the last two big fish continuing. Obviously if the pike and crayfish had been left alone the fishing would have continued to improve. However, as is so often the case, the intervention of others less informed or fishing for food brought another pike fishery to an early close.

As far as other species of fish were concerned I was only aware of perch and pike in the pit. I once found a dead perch of around 1.5 pounds speared by a cormorant. No doubt the perch also depended on the crayfish.

The pit is now under control of a local angling club and so is beginning a new stage of its development; no doubt the ubiquitous carp will feature heavily. Meanwhile I'm on the look out for another water that can offer similar challenges... three years on and a pit that I've been expecting to replace it is now being backfilled! As I said, as much as anything the fun is in the searching...and the searching...

*Andy Hunt 10th April 2008
Walton PAC*



Modern Pike Rigs an Essential Step towards Conservation?

Even the title modern pike rigs, is a bit of a misnomer since just about every rig you would ever need to use has already been invented. Even if it hasn't been invented yet, any useful new rig is likely to be either an adaptation of an old rig incorporating some new item of tackle or something so specialised that its application will be limited to the exception. Despite this, there is still room to look at rigs since they will always remain a discussion point, sometimes contentiously, simply because of personal preferences. It should come as no surprise that the following is based on my own personal preference, influenced in no small way by others. But I would urge all pike anglers to put preferences aside and adopt the principles of rig design set out here.

Looking back at the last 20 years, which is as far as I can remember, I would say the single biggest

innovation in pike angling has been the use of super braids. There is no doubt in my mind several hundred if not thousands of pike owe their lives to a DuPont chemist named Stephanie Kwolek. No other invention can have had such an impact on pike fishing in recent years. And I'm not being clever just Google 'who invented Kevlar'.



Putting jerk bait fishing aside when it comes to bait fishing the change from the standard 15lb mono has been a revelation. Now I will admit to missing the point when super braids first became available, I am no slouch when it comes to modern tackle and even in those early days I spotted the first braids when they appeared in my Bass Pro catalogue (pre internet days). At the time I was doing a bit of barbel fishing and also enjoying the odd bit of lure fishing so I sent off for a spool of 6lb braid as this was the same strain I was using at the time for Barbel and a spool of 20lb braid for lure fishing; reasoning that an extra 5lb whilst reducing the diameter was a good compromise. My logic such that it was, being that I had consistently found that the lower diameter the line the more bites I would get (Barbel fishing influence).

So naturally I looked at the new line from this point of view namely the advantages I would gain from an even lower diameter for the same breaking strain. I even remember approaching Neville Fickling at a conference and trying to start a smart arse conversation about the new braided lines before I had tried them out only to be cut short with a dismissive comment to the effect they would never catch on (yes it took years of counselling to get over the rejection). The fact of the matter was that once I got to try my new super braids Neville was nearly proved right, the 6lb line was impossible to tie, whatever knot I used the best knot strength I could achieve was 4lb so the 6lb never even got spooled up. The 20lb was better but on my first trip out to a local weir pool the third cast found me retrieving a limp line minus trace and lure. It happened again a few casts later. What was happening was that line was rubbing over some rocks whilst the lure was being retrieved through the fast water beyond and the braid was being cut through on the retrieve, such was the appalling abrasion resistance of it at the time. Worst still having figured this out the braid would continually bunch up around the multiplier spool and bed in causing repeated backlashes (I didn't know about putting mono on first then!). Suffice to say that was the last outing for that line. Still reeling from Neville's early dismissal I was forced to concede defeat and consigned my investment to the bin. Bring on the 15lb Big Game, and so it might have remained had I not allowed Phil Wakeford into my boat. His experience with braid was the opposite to mine having planned a trip to Ireland he purchased some braid for the trip but at short notice had to settle for 80lb breaking strain. Having used it to good success on the Ireland trip he continued to use it in this country with no evidence that the pike were put off by what is to those who have witnessed it, nothing much short of industrial strength washing line in appearance. Mind you I've since witnessed what Martin Godliman uses on his lure rods, suffice to say its yellow and wouldn't look out of place in a ships rigging.

However the benefits of using such high strength line were obvious, not least because I was doing a lot of float trolling at the time and snagging up is an occupational hazard. Further more using line of this strength ensured none of the earlier problems I had experienced occurred. Besides the pike really didn't seem to care about line diameter or visibility.

So what about rigs? Well actually it doesn't matter what type of rig you use; except they **all** must be based on the principle that the weakest point in the rig is the hook, the next weakest link should be your wire trace, followed by your uptrace with your reel line being the strongest link in the chain. Why? Basically in the name of pike welfare, the whole point is to eliminate the possibility of

snapping off and leaving a baited trace in the water for a pike to pick up and swallow. Making your weakest point your hook means if you hook a snag you should be able to bend the hooks out, if this isn't possible say because all three prongs are trapped in the corner of a tight tree branch then the trace should snap.

None of this would of course have been possible if we weren't able to use braid of 50lb and upwards. There is no real excuse for using braids of lower breaking strains than this for bait fishing now that they are available in such low diameters. It does however mean that you should throw away all those extra strong trebles; they have no place in modern bait fishing for pike. It would also be very helpful if the fishing tackle manufactures made some 40lb trace wire available, since the 28lb stuff currently available isn't always up to the job of straightening the popular brands of trebles.

One more refinement I would expect a modern pike rig to have is barbless trebles on all points of the hooks. With the advent of bait retainers or the more economic use of orange traffic tape there is no need to have a barb to retain the bait. If you think about it, once you've hooked a pike the last thing you want is your hooks to retain a firm hook hold in the bait. It is so easy for a pike to shake the hooks out when they are still attached to the bait, but practically impossible to shake out once the bait is detached. Think about the principles behind the dead bait casting clip. I am convinced that most pike anglers that try barbless then go back to barbed do so because they have a retaining barb on the bait and lose fish as a consequence. Having fished alongside friends who still use barbed hooks I can't say that I lose any more fish than they do, mostly it's down to confidence in your tackle.

So a modern pike rig for bait fishing has at least a 50lb main line, a lower breaking strain up trace and hook trace with hooks that should bend out before the trace or main line breaks, is equipped with completely barbless trebles and uses a bait retainer to stop the bait coming off whilst its fishing but ensures the bait is released easily once a pike is hooked. Simple isn't it.

PS - All the people referred to in this article are fictitious characters, probably.

Andy Hunt 8th April 2008.



Five 'Must Have' Lures.

Prompted by Dave's plaintive plea for stuff for 'Drop Back', I took pity on him when he challenged me to name "My Five Must Have Lures". The only condition I insisted on was being allowed to be as egocentric and opinionated as I could be, whilst trying to actually answer the question. I had absolutely no thoughts whatsoever about earning a badge like Tim's, (as if I could be tempted by such trivial baubles)!

It's not really a sensible exercise, because it is always going to be dependent on a lot of outside variables like, venue, weather, time of year etc... For the sake of nailing something down I'll imagine we are talking about fishing the Thames or the average gravel pit on a day when it's neither very hot nor cold.

So, in no particular order then...

Soft plastics.

There was a debate at the last meeting about 'life like lures'. By this I suppose I mean anything

usually in soft plastic, actually resembling a fish. Replicants, Castiacs and Storm Shads, and their like, come into this category. They definitely work fine and it's hard not to believe it's because they do actually look so much like fish. One can only speculate that's what the fish think when they see one going by.....maybe !!



I struggled with these for while until I shared a boat with a friend who caught a lot on them. When I clocked what he was doing, my results improved dramatically. Basically I learnt to retrieve them faster and not bother with any jerking.

The single hook Storm Shad types can be effective bumped along the bottom, if you can find anywhere with a clean bottom!!! Obviously not a Thames weir pool!

Spinnerbaits.

Another definite 'Must Have' lure. Most of mine are homemade and are biggish and heavy-ish compared with shop bought ones, between 1oz and 3oz, occasionally heavier. Andy Hunt calls them 'industrial'. There is a huge variety in blade arrangements, all of which have their applications, but you could probably get away with two or three most of the time. A Colorado blade, a willow leaf blade or a double blade in a lot of different configurations, all have an effect on speed and depth. All retrieves work fine; fast, slow, shallow, deep, mid water... I can never understand why nor how some people claim they can't catch with one. I reckon it would even be possible to train a chimp to use one!!!!



Crank baits.

These are lures I don't use that much, but they are a must for occasional casting as a variation, but more importantly for trolling where it's allowed.



Choose your favourite, even the horribly unimaginative, common-or-garden Super Shad Rap if you like. A deep-diver is sometimes useful, even on the Thames, but not to be included in a must have list.

I've got lots I have made myself that work fine, but one of my all time favourites is the Shallow Invader. It's a shallow-diver (duh) on the cast, yet usefully, a bit deeper on the troll. It has a great action and is half soft plastic, but still a crank bait.

Another crank bait I like that is fairly new to me is the Rapala Jointed X-Rap. It's a bit small for me at only five inches, (I normally prefer things over six inches). It has not only caught pike for me, but also perch and chub.

Jerkbait.

This is a big category and one in which it is more difficult to name just one. Top of the pick, however, is the Squirrely Burt. Yet another half soft plastic, but still a proper jerkbait. I have caught a lot fish on them. They require weighting and/or tuning, which is somewhat of a black art, in trying to get it right. This aspect is too



involved to go into here, suffice to say it should just float with its head down and usually needs a pause in between jerks. They troll well also, so can be a handy variation.



Of the other kind of jerkbaits, all mine are homemade wooden ones, but are more or less copies of things that can be bought, like Reef Hawgs and flippers. The one I have had most success with is a six inch homemade copy of a Cobbs. It is a slow-sinker and has a slightly more erratic action. I suppose I should include the ubiquitous Slider. I don't own one, but they are the Super Shad Rap of the jerk bait group. They are pretty reliable and require almost no input to work. They even wind straight in with some action.

See how carefully I avoided saying exactly which one I would have to take if I was restricted?

Spoons.

It is a bit hypocritical of me to put spoons in, since I don't use them that often these days. I used them a lot in the past and caught plenty on them, I just got out of the habit. I always mean to get one out and give it go, but end up distracting myself with something else. If ever I was genuinely compelled to take only five lures, then I would include one.



I can't believe Bulldawgs are not in here, as I would hate to leave home without one. But sometimes favourites are not always the best catchers. Some of my best and biggest fish have come on lures not in this list. How daft is that?



So, there we have it. I hope you noticed how I have cunningly avoided the basic remit and included a bit of choice in my five!

Martin Godliman

Dates for your diary

Meeting Dates 2008

Mon 12th May—Trophy Presentation Evening

No meetings in June, July and August

Mon 8th September—Monthly meeting

Sat 27th September—Piking 2008, Stoneleigh Showground

Mon 13th October—Monthly meeting

Mon 10th November—Monthly meeting

Mon 8th December—Monthly meeting