

January 1995 - Issue 8



**WALTON-ON-THAMES
REGION 15**

**RO
David Fish**

**RO
Neil Depledge**

Introduction

Another year has gone by and as I look back there is little to tell. My fishing time has been seriously curtailed due to family commitments. Although I had some good fish from Loch Lomond in May there was very little else.

The region has once again continued with about the same number of members. Each year we lose some and gain some, but we have put ourselves about as usual. We supported both the Foster an Angler matches and I think most people know the name of the Walton on Thames region. Robbie 'the badge' Woodford is toying with idea of a 'Region 15 ON TOUR' T - shirt. We have had a few more fish-ins this year, which Neil has scribbled about elsewhere.

As no doubt everybody is aware, we have changed venues yet again and our new home is very good, central heating plus the bonus of cheap beer, a vast improvement on before and probably our best so far. Let's hope this will be a long arrangement. We have had a few varied speakers this year, all well attended. We also tried the tackle sale idea which was not so successful.

What for the future? There are a few ideas in the pipeline, we are contemplating a monthly raffle (Robbie's brainchild to get more cash into the club's funds). In addition to the regular fish-ins, a trip to Slapton Ley in Devon is being arranged for early in April and as usual the hardy boys will be off to Scotland in May. If you want to know more about these, talk to the idiot standing at the front each month.

We will also be attending the Foster an Angler matches. A day at Old Bury Hill after Zander has been muted. If you have any ideas or suggestions please let us know.

Other things that happened this year behind the scenes. We helped with a couple of pike teach-ins, we are currently helping fight a proposed pike cull on the Basingstoke canal. We have done some major work on the Foster an Angler mini-bus. A special thank-you to Rob Allen, Big John, Neil Depledge and Steve Fitzwater for their help in this.

I think that's all from me, tight lines for '95.

Dave Fish

Andy's Angle

Since Neil has so rashly encouraged contributions to Drop back I have been tempted to offer this article in the hope that it may be acceptable for publication and be of some interest to the readership.

I would like to start by saying how much I have enjoyed belonging to the Walton on Thames branch of the PAC over the last two seasons and appreciate the efforts of people like Dave and Neil who, through hard work, make the whole thing possible. Being a member of Region 15 has meant that I have fished waters that I would have never cast a line to and given me the opportunity to meet other folk blighted with the same affliction as I.

My name is Andy Longfellow and at 42 years of age I have been a keen pike angler for about 11 years and am a little ashamed to admit that I am still in search of my first 20. Mind you, I've been very close in my time with a cracking fish of 19lb13ozs which, incidentally was followed into the

net by a jack - it doesn't count when it's two fish, does it? During this same session I was approached by a part time piker and I naively reported my success. He quickly assembled his tackle, jumped into the swim next to me and promptly landed a 21, asking me to unhook it as he wasn't prepared to handle it. I think there's a moral in there somewhere for me.

My first introduction to pike fishing was at Horton's Kingsmead fishery in the good old days when it was run as a trout farm and, the ultimate luxury of "livies" available for sale on site. It was a condition of the day ticket that all pike be surrendered to the Kingsmead management and we were obliged to sacrifice some singles when in sight of the farm shop but damn me if the big ones didn't wriggle their way back into the water after having been photographed and weighed - it was surprising how clumsy we got when we tried.

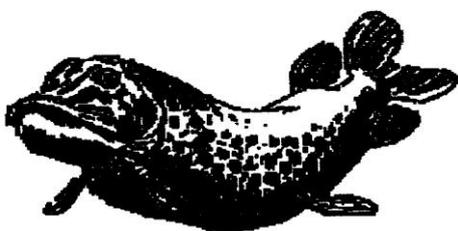


Methods I employed on this weed-free gravel pit were usually float paternostered livebaits. I discovered the delights of hotspots and the pleasures of lure fishing - the best lure here, I found, was a 28 gram silver Abu Toby.

Nothing lasts forever, does it? Eventually the trout farm went bust after one too many raids by our "friends" in the A.L.F., they were slashing the nets on the trout pens under the cover of darkness and unwittingly releasing the trout into the waiting jaws of old Esox - pretty smart eh? Anyway the fishery eventually came under the control of Leisure Sport and subsequently got hammered - I've returned since but it will never excite me as it used to and I think that, like so many things in life, there's really no going back.

The wilderness years followed as I tried my luck on Stockers Lake in Hertfordshire with little to show for it. Much later I discovered that the water was a little out of balance with large shoals of perch fry, loads of jacks and a few doubles, a situation which is being addressed as I write this. My best at the pit was an 18 which I caught twice on suspended smelt within a few weeks from the same spot on this 80 acre pit.

I have never really enjoyed fishing shoulder to shoulder with other anglers and, as a result, tend not to fish the circuit waters. I was a member of Kingsmoor Anglers for a little while and fished a small pit at Colnbrook - the least said about that diversion the better. Rescue was at hand, however, and I

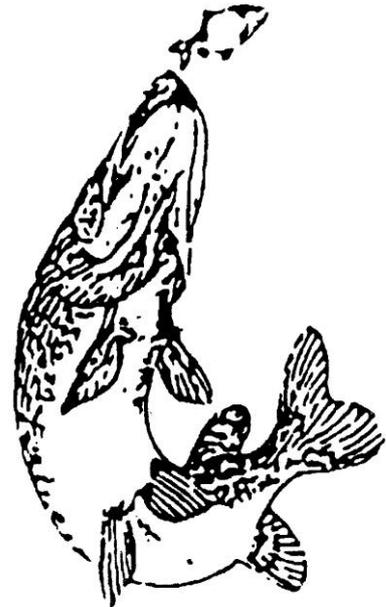


was introduced to a great fishery in Oxfordshire by Pete Miles, RO for Greenford. By watching Pete carefully, I was able to gain confidence in fishing in very thick weed and was surprised to learn over the two seasons that I fished it that there were few productive areas. The water was, however, crystal clear and it was possible to stalk fish. Part of the fun here was being teased with blistering runs from voracious still

water chub, who think nothing of clearing off with a free lined sardine. Deep joy!!

After two winters of thrashing up and down the M40 I decided to call it a day and spend some time on Gerrards Cross and District's other waters in the Colne Valley. I was never really happy at the Denham Lake (pit 3) but had many a pleasant day at Broadwater - surely the biggest pit in the valley. Despite its size, it didn't take me long to find feeding areas other than the ones that got a regular hammering. There is a great deal of satisfaction for me in finding a good spot on my own without dropping in to the nearest hotspot that everyone knows. Having said that, of course, that may well have contributed to the fact that I'm still in search for the "big two-oh". Will the penny ever drop, I wonder?

I must admit I also enjoy pursuing that other large freshwater species (quick look over the shoulder) - Carp, especially in Holland. I believe that my carp fishing experience has helped me in recent years, particularly in terms of location. I now plumb a swim much more thoroughly than I used to and as a result my catch rate has certainly improved - I wish the bloody weights would though! I am fortunate enough to be a member of an outstanding carp water in Hertfordshire and to date have only considered summer carp sessions there, but following an exceptionally lean spell on my regular pike waters recently, out of sheer desperation, I decided to try for pike. This water is super-hard for carp but over the last two seasons I have become aware of some pike hotspots and thought I'd give them a bash. I arrived early one Sunday afternoon while a strong northerly blew straight down the lake. My first idea was to check a spot where a stream enters the fishery and just by some decaying weeds. Right under my feet I could just make out an elongated shape just below the surface. Was this a collapsed reed stem? No, collapsed reed stems don't have gently oscillating tiger striped dorsals do they?



I scampered off to the car to get my gear and quickly rigged up a free lined smelt and lowered it into the water at my feet. In fact the pike, which I estimated at 4-5 lbs, was so tight to the bank that I was about two metres away from the edge but could still see what was going on. There was only about six inches of trace in the water as I dangled the bait in front of its beak. I had an immediate take but because I hadn't thought things through I now had a pike with my bait in it's gob but due to the short length of line between rod tip and trace, coupled with the rod pointed in a downward direction, conspired to prevent me setting the hooks effectively.

Anyway she soon rolled off leaving me with a semi-shagged smelt and an erratic heartbeat. What a prat!! I felt really disappointed but as the surface settled I was amazed to discover I could still see her, back on station. Having had a dress rehearsal and actually learning from what had just gone wrong I promptly got myself sorted out and eventually persuaded her to join me on the bank. It was, at that time, my best fish of the season at 13lb 4 oz with a nice fat belly. That was a great result for me and I then went on to set up at a point I'd intended to fish from the start and by drifting some trout deadbaits across a shallow featureless bay in about 4-5 ft of water, I managed to knock out two other fish of 7lb 10oz and 8lb 9oz respectively. I was quite excited with that happy afternoon and will definitely invest some more time down there. After all, maybe my pike fishing experiences may yield some benefit in my carp fishing endeavours!

See you on the bankside!

The Fox Nitec One-Piece Suite

This is the first purpose made one-piece suit I've ever owned, so I can't compare it to others. It looks much the same as the others and it costs about the same, £85. However, having owned one for the winter I can say that I've put it through its paces and it works! It keeps you dry and it's very warm. I've even worn it on my motor bike and if it can handle pouring rain at 70 mph all day, then it will not let you down when fishing.

The zip and velcro flap keep the elements out, so do the adjustable cuffs. The hand warmer pockets do just that. The hood is a little on the small side but keeps the wind off your lugholes.

Only two disadvantages really. One is the noise it makes when you move and two, it will make you sweat like a pig if you go for even a short walk. So the easy answer to gripes 1 and 2 is - put it on and sit down still!!

It's fully machine washable, even smelt oil washes out of it. Handy tip No 1, turn the suit inside out when washing it. If you don't, the machine will not be able to spin out the water, result - a soaking wet suit that weighs 60lb and pours water over the floor (Ask Robbie Woodford!).

All in all, a bit of kit that does what it's supposed to. However it remains to be seen how long it lasts.

Paul Johnson

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Fish-Ins 1994/95 A personal view by Neil Depledge

Since I joined the PAC about 5 years ago I have enjoyed fishing on a variety of waters, many of which I would not have fished if I were not a Region 15 member. This season, so far, we have had seven Fish-Ins plus two longer trips to fish in competitions supporting the Foster an Angler charity.

We started the new season with a visit, on Sun 11 September, to the New Road Pit, near Shepperton. Eight of us fished but the only success of the day was a fish of 12lbs 2ozs which fell to its namesake Dave.

On Sunday 25th September, six of us visited Haliford Mere at Shepperton. This water has changed considerably since last year due to major in-fill work, but it is still a water capable of producing big pike I had a fish of 11lbs 10ozs on a popped up red sardine. This was a very gentle bite resulting only in the rod tip twitching. Earlier I had had a I similar bite which resulted in my reeling in a sardine which had been bitten in half (presumably by an eel). So I only half heartedly wound down into the fish but was soon delighted as the fish not only broke the surface but cleared the water by about a foot.

The fish of the day fell to another angler, who along with his partner only fished the successful swim because we were in the swims they wanted, and wasn't he happy as a fish of over 20lbs glided into his net.



Steve Aldridge was also successful with a jack of about 5lbs on a lure, as well as three perch, all around the pound mark, also on lures.

Sunday 9th October saw 10 of us fishing the Pike Pairs Championship on the Hobhole Drain in Lincolnshire. The whole weekend is a tale in itself and I hope someone will put pen to paper and record the weekend's events. On the fish front, however, Bill was shown the way home by his non-fishing brother-in-law who landed a pike of about 3.5lbs. Not a big fish but a veritable monster compared to the tiny 1.5lbs fish landed by Ian Goodchild and the even smaller 10ozs, (yes that's right 10ozs) hauled in after a 25 second fight by Rob Allen. I bet some of you didn't realise pike could be that small! The day was a tremendous success for the charity with over £3500 being raised.

Theale Lagoon on Sunday 16 October is better ignored as 7 blanks say it all. This once magnificent water is now a pale shadow of its former self and is probably best forgotten until we hear of things improving.

The weekend of 29-30 October had been pencilled in as our weekend trip to the carp society's water "Chimneys" in Northamptonshire. However, as this clashed with the John Foster Memorial match at Manea in Cambridgeshire we had to change our plans. Twelve of us travelled up in two minibuses although Big John was unable to fish due to a severe injury to his hand, so young Paul Smith acted as his right arm and bank runner. Robbie Woodford caught a 5lbs fish to take second place in his section. The match was won by a fish of 24lbs 5ozs caught in the first hour and there was a second 20lbs+ fish late in the match. About £1600 was raised on the day with further monies from sponsorships to be added.

Two weeks later, on Sunday 13th November, I led a bemused group of anglers on a bit of a mystery tour. The new Frimley bypass confused the hell out of me and we spent half an hour driving round trying to find Coleford Lake at Mychett, only to find that none of the locals called it by that name and so at first were unable to help. When we eventually found it I realised that if we had taken the previous exit on the bypass we would virtually have driven into the lake.

The lake looked a picture and despite the driving wind I think we were all fairly confident of catching. Indeed within an hour of setting up Nigel Hampton had a fish take his bait on the drop and after a short fight landed a new personal best at 15lbs 12ozs. But sadly that was it at our end of the lake. At the other end Paul Fry had landed a fish of about 5 Lbs and Robbie had the misfortune to hook and land a seagull.

Sunday 27th November and we were off to Ardingly Reservoir in Sussex. Dave and Robbie fished from a boat and Dave was rewarded with a new lure caught PB of 10 Lbs. The remaining 6 of us headed for the far end of the water. I fished on my own near the mill inlet and the others further along on the Balcombe Arm. Unfortunately I was beaten to the swim I had been advised to try, so set up just across the other side of a small bay. Between 7-30 and midday, the angler fishing the inlet swim landed seven doubles from 10lbs 8ozs to 17bs 4ozs plus a I smaller fish and he lost another, plus a couple of missed runs. All this time I hadn't had a touch and my baits were only yards away from his. As he started to pack away I moved into his swim and almost immediately had a run on dead bait which I missed. Changing to a trout livebait, I was soon into a fish which weighed in at 10.5lbs. This was followed two hours later by a second fish of 8 Lbs plus. So, by the end of the day 8 doubles and two smaller fish totalling over 100lbs had been landed. Personally I've not seen anything like this before and whilst I wish I had caught more of them, it was a pleasure to see so many fit and healthy pike in one session. Meeting up with the others in the car park I found out that Maurice Parslow (Big John's brother in law) had landed his first ever pike, a fish of 8lbs 8ozs.

Sunday 11th December and there we all were, squelching through the mud at New Road Pit. Most people followed the text book and fished the river and motorway banks as the wind had been blowing constantly into that corner. Young Paul and myself, however, made the hike round to the wooded point, Paul attempted to go swimming but thought better of it at the last moment. He then discovered that he had lost the buzzer bar off Dave's rod pod and of course it had dropped off just inside the gate so it was some time before he actually started fishing. Just after 8 o'clock I had a gentle take on a green Kwik-fish and soon landed a lively fish of 8lbs 6ozs (my best on a lure).

A little later we saw Robbie strike at a running fish but sadly he missed it. I decided that as we were getting nowhere on deads, I would stroll round to where Trev and Robbie were, say hello and get a few small roach out of the river. As an after thought I took my lure rod and a couple of lures with me and as I rounded the top corner hooked into a small but very lively jack of 6lbs 8ozs. This somehow managed to shed the hooks in the net and then roll over and over so that I had to cut the hooks out, so badly were they caught in the mesh. By the time I got to Trev and Robbie they were just moving to another swim. The Ash was charging through and was unfishable so I abandoned all thoughts of livebait. On my way back I had a third fish, the smallest so far, of just over 4lbs. This fish came from the top bank next to the pile of barley straw bales dumped earlier in the season.

As Paul and I left, we discovered that both Trev and Robbie had also been successful. Their second move of the day found them covering the bottom corner and both had fish shortly after setting up, much to the annoyance of the angler who had fished in the adjacent swim all day with nothing to show for it. Trev had the larger fish at 11lbs and Robbie the smaller at 5lbs.

Sunday 8th January should have seen us welcoming the New Year by the side of the Thames at Laleham, but heavy rains put paid to that, so we returned to old faithful, New Road. Whether New Year's resolutions were at work or what I don't know, but most of the anglers seemed to be either new faces or members who haven't been to a fish-in for ages. Dave Ouseley was the star. He landed a fish of 13lbs 14ozs from close to the top corner and shortly after had all of us calling him names as the sound of his alarm drifted across the lake indicating a second fish. This one, however, had black feathers instead of scales and an interesting fight developed as the cormorant kited left and right in an attempt to shed the hooks. Sadly (luckily for the birds sake) the line parted just as the bird was nearing the net and a sad looking bird swam off before flying away from the lake, hopefully never to be seen again. Somehow I doubt it. The other Dave (Fish) was also a star when at 1 o'clock he served up plates of piping hot "chicken a la king" with rice. This really is a civilised way to go fishing. Unfortunately for Dave, due to a problem with his reel he had earlier lost a fish estimated to be nearer 20lbs than 10. Just to rub things in, as the day drew to a close Dave 0 did land a second fish, weighing in at just over 8lbs.

Sunday 22nd Jan was the best and worst all rolled into one. An amazing 14 anglers turned up and eight hours later 28 rods had still not bent to the weight of a pike. The weather forecast was lousy but until about 11-00am it was a very pleasant January morning, then it started to rain and that was it for the rest of the day. Intelligence sources had told us that there were catfish in the water as well as large pike. When the bailiffs came round they confirmed this, or rather they confirmed that several years ago someone had put TWO cats in the water. They have been hooked but never landed. Sightings estimate one, or both, to be in excess of 20lbs.

The bailiffs also told us we were wasting our time on dead baits and suggested that since Farlowes was just down the lane we might want to get some live trout. By the end of the day we were all wondering whether they had shares in the trout business, as despite frantic mini surges the trout remained as undamaged as the deads. (Although two dead baits proved irresistible to the lakes coot population and both Big John and Paul Smith had screaming runs).

The trip to Papercourt on Sunday 5th Feb was eagerly awaited as we have heard of big fish coming from this water. Ten of us met in the car park and Dave distributed the day tickets. This is a large water and soon we were well spread out along two of its banks although, since none of us had fished it before, it was a bit hit or miss as this is a virtually featureless pit.

Within an hour, however, a shout came up and Bill's mate (sorry, I don't know his name) had landed a fish of 16+lbs. Bill seems to be very good at taking people fishing and blanking whilst his guests catch, Malcolm landed a small jack of about 3lbs and it was whilst this was being unhooked that possibly the most disturbing event of my fishing life took place.

There was a piercing scream from a woman down the bank and, as we ran towards her, I realised that one of her four dogs had picked up my dead bait, complete with hooks, which was lying on the bank (Being a caring piker I had taken my baits out of the water whilst I was wandering up the bank with a lure rod). Consequently, this stupid Labrador type dog had swallowed a sardine with a VB double and a size 2 single (thank goodness I wasn't using two size 6 trebles); although to be fair it was probably the woman who was stupid for not keeping her dogs under control. To cut a long and harrowing story short, she eventually got the dog to a vet and the matter was dealt with. This does, however, raise the point of who was to blame and what to do in the future. The woman, who was middle aged, was trying to control four medium to large sized dogs, only two of which were on leads. One of the dogs had already picked up a dead bait from Bill and they were running around all over the place. My swim was several yards from the main path and several feet below the level of the path, so I didn't give it another thought when I left my two baits lying on the bank at the side of my rods.

As a result of this I will, in future, either remove my baits from the hooks or cover them with something to prevent dogs or other creatures from getting at them.

Anyway, enough doom and gloom and back to the fishing. In the mid afternoon I lost a small fish which I never saw and Malcolm landed his second pike of the day with a lively fish of about 8lbs. An hour so later and I had a worrying sense of déjà vu, when another woman ran up the bank shouting. This time though it was good news as 'a man' needed a hand with a big fish! This 'man' turned out to be Andy Longfellow who had just netted a fish which he was convinced would go 20. It was a beautiful, pale coloured, deep bellied fish which pulled the Avons round to 21lbs 12ozs. Not only was it Andy's first 20 but it rounded off a week that had already seen three other big doubles come to his net. The reason I put 'man' in quotes is that Andy was fishing a swim that had been occupied by another angler for most of the day but he had gone home shortly before Andy moved into the swim. (I hope he never finds out!!)

There are still another two fish-ins before the end of the season (at Leisure Sports' Chertsey Lake and Vicarage AC's Burghwood Park Lake, so if I haven't bored you rigid or put you off in any way, why don't you give it a go?



Salmo Trutta, his mate the Chironomid and me!

I don't know about you but I'm glad the 93/94 season ended, the close season arrived just in the nick of time for me and saved me from jacking it all in and becoming a train spotter!(Brown Stay-Press trousers, bri-nylon shirt and orange cagoule, lovely, lovely). Having said that I now faced three

months off, bloody hell! If there's one thing worse than too much fishing it's no fishing!! 93 days of cleaning your gear, 2232 hours of dreaming about fish. Oh God, Platform 3 here I come! The answer is simple FLY FISHING.

Alright, alright, why is it that everybody bursts out laughing when I announce that I am taking up fly fishing? That and comments like "Stocking up on dead baits then?" and "You'll look a right prat in tweeds and a deerstalker!" Still, never mind, after three weeks reading up on the subject (learning everything but understanding nothing) and putting together the basic gear for about £75, I'm ready to make a fool of myself. I really need a lot of help. Enter Trevor Nichols.

Here's a man who knows the difference between a gold ribbed hares ear and a booby. He knows that when trout are "smutting", they are doing nothing illegal! Here's a chap who can actually cast properly (I tried it in the garden, what a mess; the kids are still laughing about it!). A date is set, preparations are made, advice is taken and we're off.

After a pleasant drive through the Surrey countryside, Trevor, his father and I arrived at a trout fishery called "Hazel Cope", near Cranleigh. The sun was out, it was warm with a gentle breeze and I could see fish moving about on the surface of one of the two small lakes.

Now picture this, it's half past eight in the morning, it's Wednesday and it's the close season. You were probably on your way to work, stuck in a traffic jam and dreaming of June 16th. I was watching Trevor show me how to cast, he flicks out my line onto the water where it floats, the fly sinks. He shows me how to retrieve the fly, then hands me the rod and I have a go at retrieving, I slowly bring the orange gold head fly towards me. BANG! the line tightens up, my bendy rod flies round and starts jiggging about all over the place, I'm in!! Bloody Hell, I'm in, on my first cast and I've hooked some kind of monster. What you've got to remember is that I had fly rod in one hand, the line in the other and fly rods are so soft that you can feel every last move that your trout makes. If you can imagine a 6lbs summer condition, river run jack pike, caught on a 10ft pole you get a good idea of what it's like to catch a 1 1/2lbs rainbow trout on a fly. It's incredible. By the time I'd landed my first trout and Trev had taken my photo, you should just have got to work, now it's my turn to laugh!! (I'm not wearing tweed).



"Beginners luck", you cry and I agree, but I don't care. I went on to catch another three during the day under my own steam; I lose two or three others. I also caught various fences, bushes, the ground and even myself! In the backside!! Good job the fly was barbless. My best fish was about 2 to 2 1/2lbs and gave me a right hiding, it even took line off of me and you should have seen it jump. Trevor had 4 fish of between 1 – 1 1/2lbs as well. Unfortunately Trev's Dad blanked but not for lack of trying. During the day I had to keep resting my aching arm, but Trev's Dad kept going, talk about persistence.

On the subject of trying hard, there was this chap fishing the same lake as me, whom after blanking for a couple of hours decided to move on to another swim. So Trev and I moved into his old swim and you've guessed it, Trev catches one. The poor sod didn't look too happy at all and to rub salt into the wound, we did this three times. The last time he gave me such a look, he looked as if he wanted to throw himself in!!

Anyway all good things come to an end. We packed up at about half past three and I was totally exhausted! Just to fill you in on some of the facts: - It cost us £8 each for the day on a catch and release ticket (all our fish lived to fight another day). The water is stocked with both Rainbow and British Brown trout and it's also stocked with land locked salmon. We met the chap who last year caught the biggest salmon in the fishery at 34lbs!! Think about it, a 34lb salmon on a trout fly rod.

So to finish off, if you think fly fishing is only lure fishing with a dodgy cast, you're wrong. The care and attention given to the making of and choice of and the use of a fly make us lure fishing for pike look like kids!! The understanding of water and the insect life in it is a skill that these chaps mastered long before we pikers could even say 'thermocline', let alone understand it. Despite all this "high art", it is a refreshing way to catch fish. If you think that it is restricted to trout and salmon then think again. There's a fly imitation of every living thing in the rivers and lakes, from bloodworm (think about that) to fish and frogs. Chub and dace can be caught on the fly, pike and perch are total suckers for them.



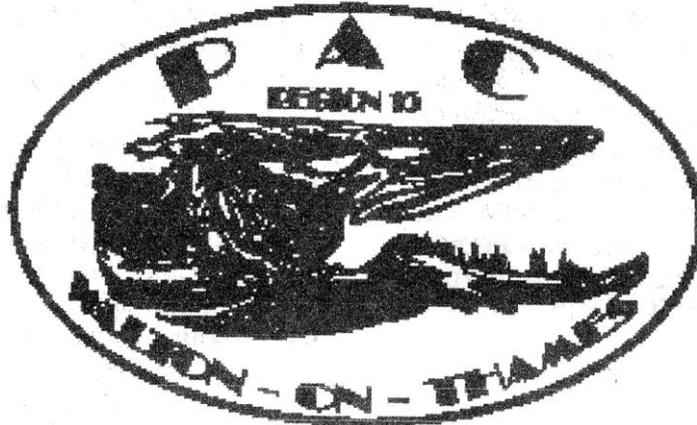
So come the opening of the course season after a close season fishing the fly for trout I might go in search of pike and perch as well. So if you are sick of the close season and the thought of a Type 46 locomotive with Pullman coaches makes you gag, don't despair, try fishing with a size 14 Dog Nobbler on a braided leader with a weight forward AFTM 8 weight, floating line coupled with an AFTM 7 to 8, 9ft 6in soft action carbon rod with a rimfly 80 regular reel and 100m of black streak backing and relax.

See me for details or Trev for help.

Honestly, it's easy and deerstalkers are very comfortable.

Paul Johnson (11.4.94)

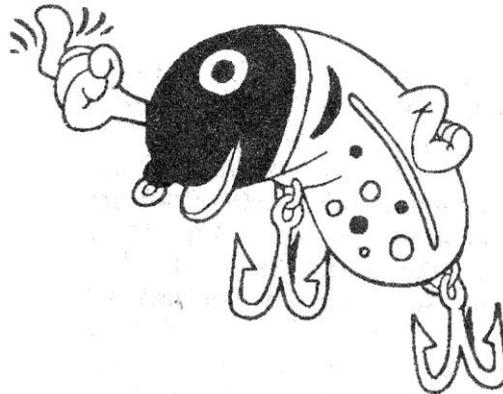
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