

Dropback

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RO's Lines

Well, that's another season over and done with. Or is it? Since the abolition of the close season on enclosed waters, we are all able to fish for all 12 months of the year. But I wonder how many of you are going to take advantage of this, or like me, are you going to spend most weekends doing all those little domestic chores that we have have been putting off for the past 9 months. I have fished just about every weekend for the past three months and the idea of lying in bed for two consecutive mornings sounds very appealing. That said, I am sure that before too long I will be out with the lure rods, particularly as the evenings stretch out. I am also eagerly anticipating our annual trip down to Slapton Lee, the weekend after Easter.

For many this past season has for many been a really hard one. The majority of us seem to have come to the monthly meetings with very little to report. Although it is always nice to hear of personal bests being achieved. Tony Stone caught his first '20' at Thorpe Park, Ron Parker caught his first '20' at Brooklands, a story you will have read about in Dropback No 11, and then went on to catch a real beaut' at 28lbs exactly from the same water. And just for good measure, I too caught the same fish just 30 minutes later, again a PB.

It has also been a season of extremes. Jeff Kennett caught well in excess of 300 fish whilst Chris Sims only managed to reach double figures thanks to a weekend in the Fens right at the end of the season. To be fair, Jeff has fished far more than Chris this season but perhaps the most telling factor is the number of times that Jeff fishes from a boat. Fishing mainly with Steve Aldridge, it has not been unusual for Jeff and his boat partner to catch ten, fifteen or even twenty plus fish in a single session. How often does that happen when fishing from the bank? Perhaps this is why I have heard that several of you are interested in buying a boat.

Finally a cautionary tale. I recently read a short article in the Sunday Independent, about a pike angler who is recovering from salmonella poisoning. His doctors believe that the cause of the poisoning was the man eating sandwiches after he had handled deadbaits that had been defrosted and refrozen after several blank sessions. To quote one Doc, "Baits such as sardines provide ideal conditions for salmonella to live and grow". I have always carried a pot of baby wipes in my rucksack and usually, but not always, wipe my hands before eating. But what of the rest of you??

Have a relaxing 'Close Season',

Neil



The Fens with Speedy & Co.

For the past three years Dave, Chris, Neil, Paul and myself have spent the last full weekend of the season fishing Fenland drains in Lincolnshire. We stay with Dave's Dad, Neville, at his bungalow in Parson Drove, a small village between Peterborough and Wisbech, where we are always made to feel very welcome.

This year we elected to meet at Chris' house near Uxbridge at 4-15 on the Friday afternoon. From there we would make our journey in Chris and Dave's cars. Knowing that the M25 on a Friday evening would be a car park we decided to travel north through Bushey to join the M1, with the intention of meeting the M25 at junction 21, travelling as far as junction 23 and then heading up the A1(M). In the event the M1 was as bad, if not, worse than the M25 and we ended up cutting across country to a point south of Hitchin, where we could join the A1 (M) at either junction 8 or 9.

I had given my mobile 'phone to Neil so that we could maintain contact between the cars during the journey. He informed us that they would join the A1(M) at junction 8 whilst Chris and I were heading for junction 9. We decided, therefore, that, as we would be joining further north that we would keep our speed down to a steady 60mph to give Dave a chance to catch up. What we hadn't allowed for was that "Speedy", who could give Michael Schumacher a run for his money, had managed to join the A1(M) before us and was past our junction before we got there.

So it was that we were sedately travelling north looking for Dave's car in the rear view mirror, whilst 'Speedy' was eating up the miles ahead of us at 85-90 mph. By the time that we realised what was happening, there were 10 miles between us. Eventually we managed to get back together and we concluded our journey without further incident. The journey had taken over four and a half hours.

Upon reaching Parson Drove we were greeted by Neville, unpacked our bags and, after a quick cup of tea, made our way to the local hostelry for a meal and a few sherbets. Neville joined us and a good evening and good food were enjoyed by all. On returning to the bungalow the conversation turned to malt whiskey and Neville produced a few samples for us to try, and very nice they were too. Chris decided to turn in a little before the rest of us, saying he was tired after a hard day's work and the long drive. In retrospect I think that he wanted to ensure he wanted to get to sleep before I did. He has experienced my snoring capabilities on several previous occasions. This time he got his own back and I had to lay awake for what seemed like hours but was, in all probability, only a few minutes, listening to him pumping out the zzzzzz's. He was still going strong at 5-30am when the alarm went off and Dave popped his head around the door to ensure that we were awake.

The drains that we fish are quite narrow, with steeply sloping banks and are only about 4 feet deep in the middle with a shallow shelf on both banks. They are, in the main, dead straight and it seems that no matter which direction the wind is blowing it gets channelled down the length of the drain. On the Saturday there was a light breeze blowing to begin with, which put a nice ripple on the surface. This, however, strengthened throughout the day and by early afternoon there were waves breaking over our floats. Fortunately the pike didn't seem to mind, as we all experienced runs throughout the day. We landed two or more fish each, most of them weighing between 3 and 5 lbs, with a few, perhaps, a little smaller. In total 15 fish were landed but almost as many were missed or lost. During the day we had several heavy showers, which made the banks even more slippery. Twice I ended up on my backside to the amusement of the others, with the result that my pristine Wychwood suit was caked in mud from the waist down.

When I later hosed it down at home, it produced enough soil to fill a flowerpot. If anyone has a spare 'pot' plant. I will be happy to grow to for you. One of the showers produced the most magnificent rainbow any of us had ever seen.

Saturday evening was again spent in the local hostelry, with a few more sherbets and another good meal. No trouble getting to sleep this night despite the sounds emitting from Chris in the other bed.

Sunday dawned and we all overslept. Was it the sherbet, or were we just tired? We made our way to a drain just outside the village. We had not fished this section before and the banks were even steeper than yesterday, real mountain goat territory. Neil, Paul and I sat near the top of the bank, only descending to the water to net the fish. I had given up trying to keep my suit clean, firstly, because of my inability to stay upright and secondly, because Paul kept throwing mud at me. The wind was nowhere near as strong as yesterday and we only had a few light showers to cope with, although it was colder. The pike were still feeding and again we all managed at least two pike. The average size in this drain was slightly larger than the previous day and Chris and Neil landed doubles of 12 lbs 8 ozs and 10 lbs 6 ozs respectively.



The first two runs of the day both resulted in bite offs through braided lines for Chris and Neil. Chris was fortunate to hook the same fish (the double) again later in the day and after prolonged, delicate surgery both sets of trebles were removed. Over the two days Chris had both the largest and most pike. Although relatively small the pike were in excellent condition and fought extremely hard.



The most unusual catch of the day came to one of my rods, in the form of a huge carrot, securely hooked on the top treble and weighing in at over a pound.

We finished fishing at 3-00 pm and returned to Neville's for tea and sandwiches before making our way home. We always go home with carrier bags full of fresh, locally grown vegetables, which we buy through Neville at a very reasonable price. Half a bag of spuds, cabbage, cauliflower, four carrots, six onions, three leeks, Brussels sprouts and all for just £2. The journey home was uneventful and took less than half the time of the journey on Friday.

To sum up, it was an excellent weekend, good food, good beer, good company and good fishing in waters that have produced several fish in excess of thirty pounds this year.

Ron Parker



A Potted History of the Walton on Thames Region Of The Pike Anglers Club of Great Britain and Ireland

The Walton on Thames Region has now been running since October 1983. Malcolm Green formed the region at the start of the winter pike season of that year, although Malcolm had been a member of the PAC for some years prior to this. In the beginning, the region consisted of only five friends, all avid pike anglers, who would meet once a month in a local pub and talk about piking.

At this time there was a Regional Organisers newsletter, which was circulated monthly, and Pikelines which was only distributed to the RO for him to circulate to the members of the region. The newsletter was called "Jacklets" and the Walton on Thames region was first mentioned in this publication in May 1984, and subsequently in issue 26 of Pikelines which was published in July 1984. Recruiting for the region was undertaken and posters were made up and distributed to all local tackle shops.

In September 1985, whilst on holiday, I was reintroduced to fishing, and on return to England, I took up fishing again. As a boy I had always been interested in pike fishing, and had served my apprenticeship under the guidance of Cecil White and his friends Jeff and Jim.

It became apparent after my first few piking trips that things had changed dramatically during my lay up and on one of my visits to Vortex Angling, Thames Ditton I saw a poster advertising the PAC which gave Malcolm Green's details. I contacted Malcolm and attended a number of the meetings. At this time they used to meet in the bar of the Old House at Home pub, Hershaw. The meetings were very informal and just consisted of a chat and a pint.

Malcolm and I hit it off right from the start and we became very good friends, he is Godfather to my son. We fished together all the time and he guided me along. We fished many different gravel pits and lakes in the south and eventually he invited me to fish with him in Scotland.

Whilst fishing we often discussed the PAC and the region and decided to try and make the meetings more formal. I volunteered to help Malc with the region and we set about finding a venue, where we could have a separate room. We eventually found a pub with a room, The Cannon, Molesey and this became the venue for our monthly meetings. The room was separate from the pub and was freezing cold in the winter. I am sure some of the older members will remember.

This was the start of the proper monthly meetings, and at one of these meetings it was decided, after a vote, that we would hold the meetings all year round except for August. In June 1986 Malcolm's wife gave birth to twins and there were some complications after the birth. As a result of this Malcolm was unable to devote as much time as he would like to the region, in fact he stopped fishing altogether.

I then became RO but felt that the position was a two-man job. After some arm twisting Trevor Nichols came forward to help me run the region. The region went from strength to strength and the meetings continued at The Cannon until the beginning of 1989 when the land upon which the hut was standing was sold off for redevelopment. On average about 25

members now attended the meetings. We had various guest speakers and slide shows, we arranged trips to different venues and we started to publish "Dropback".

The loss of the venue presented a problem in that many of the places that were available and suitable were far too expensive. We held two meetings in a very small room above the Bricklayers Arms, Hersham. This was just too small so we tried the back bar of The Crown, Shepperton but again this was too small.

In 1990 we moved to the District Arms, Ashford, where we had use of the function room at the rear, for a very reasonable rate. The meetings continued here until 1994 when there was a change of landlord. He decided to increase the rent for the room to an unrealistic price and once again we had to look for a new venue. When we left The District Arms, the total custom on a Monday night fell to about three. At some point in 1992 Trevor decided that he wanted to stand down and Neil Depledge took over as joint RO.

After much searching we found a new venue for the meetings, our best and most luxurious to date, and in 1994 we moved to the Plessey Sports and Social club in Addlestone. Unfortunately this venue will close after the March meeting and so once again we will have to look for a new venue.

The region has always been fairly active. There is hard core of about 17 members and each year we gain a few and lose a few. The experience in the region is diverse and we do not appear to suffer any cliques. All new members are welcomed and treated the same. Neil and I will continue to guide the region and arrange the monthly meetings, and the other entertainments throughout the year.

So there it is, a brief history of Region 15.

Dave Fish



A week in the life of a pike angler.

The February half term break is one that I usually spend at home, rather than dashing off to visit family and friends. This year I decided that I would fish on as many days as was possible and the first day, the Saturday, saw me embark on a week of fishing highs and lows.

Day 1: Like the rest of you December and January had seen me catch very little and I was more than happy to try something a little bit different. Jeff Kennett had invited me to have a day out on the Thames in his boat and so at the crack of dawn I helped him hitch up the trailer and we set off for the public slipway at Hampton. Our intention was to fish the Sunbury weir and alongside the boats moored on that stretch. Unfortunately the weir was pushing through and after about 30 minutes of fruitless casting we decided to explore the backwater. I have fished the car park area with some success and I know that some of you have fished the Feltham water but I had never seen the upper reaches of this stream or the top weir.

As we motored slowly up the creek we trolled spinnerbaits, and it was not long before Jeff had a take from a very lively and beautifully marked jack of about 4lbs. I was surprised at

the length of this stretch of water and equally surprised that this was the only fish we caught.

The top weir is only about 20 yds wide and the water below looked superb, this is also where the River Ash joins the Thames. I quickly set up a livebait rod and cast to the wall on the far side of the weir, my free roaming dace livebait working well against the gentle current. Leaving this to find me a pike, I, along with Jeff, turned my attention to casting lures both into the weir pool and up into the mouth of the Ash. Despite the mouth-watering appearance of the water we failed to even have a take over the next 45 minutes. So, at Jeff's suggestion we up anchored and started to troll livebaits under the overhanging branches of the bankside willow trees.

We had barely gone 50 yds when Jeff's float disappeared. After a short fight I unhooked a fish of about 8lbs in the water. Jeff then decided to act as boatman so that I could concentrate on getting my bait right under the overhanging trees. Over the next 30 to 40 minutes we made about 9 runs up and down the stretch and every time the float went under. In that magic period I boated six fish, lost one and missed one on strike. Like the first fish, they were all beautifully marked and in tiptop condition. In addition, Jeff had a couple of near misses on his lure rod. Sadly, we had now used up all of our bait fish, so we motored slowly back to the slip way putting our lures into all the likely looking spots along the way. I had a pike snap at my lure but nothing further was hooked.

Day 2: In my diary I had pencilled in a pike match with the Bath Road AC. As it was on a lake I had not fished before I decided to give it a go. However, when I telephoned for details I was told that the venue had been changed to the small lake, just off the M25 at junction 13, known as Kotan Park. This is an almost circular lake, about 100 - 120 yds in diameter. I have walked round it once before but I knew very little about it. I was only expecting two other pikers but when they hadn't arrived 20 mins after the agreed time I decided to choose a swim and wet my baits. There then followed a long blank session relieved only by the late arrival of my two fellow anglers and by the sound of a carp angler having a run. What a pity he was on the other side of the lake at the time. No one will ever know how big a fish moved his boilie over 20 yards.

Day 3: This was the one I had really been looking forward to. I had recently joined the Internet Angling Club and had also signed up to a mailing list for anglers. The IAC arrange trips to a range of venues and this one was a day's grayling fishing on a private stretch of the River Kennett. I had never seen a live grayling, let alone hooked one. That and the possibility of wild brown trout, rainbows and large roach and dace made this a day too good to miss. I was very excited as I set off down the M4 to meet up with the guys at the Theale service station. However, the fates or the Gods had other things in mind. I had not gone 1 mile when the nice lady on the radio announced that a tanker had overturned depositing several thousand gallons of cooking oil all over the west bound carriageway just past junction 10. This led to a slow moving diversion through Reading, a town that I am not too familiar with. I guess it should have come as no surprise when I arrived at J12 instead of J11. The service station is, of course, between J11 and J12 but in the wrong direction. So it was that I ended up 'phoning from Theale BR station to explain why I was over 30 mins late (much as I hate them, I said a little thank-you to the inventor of mobile phones).

We eventually met up just off J14 and headed out through Hungerford to the fishery. In fact, we were not really fishing the Kennett but a series of small backwaters that I can only assume were man made years ago for the wealthy landowner. We tackled up, consulted our fishery maps and headed off to do battle. I settled on a swim where two streams met and

formed an 'S' bend. Two trots through showed that I had over estimated the depth and so shallowed up a few inches. The very next run through my float buried and I struck into my first ever grayling. What I hadn't realised was just how hard these fish can fight in fast running water. On fairly light float tackle their sail like dorsal fin catches the current and makes them a very difficult proposition. It took the best part of 3-4 mins, and seemed a hell of a lot longer, before I slid the fish into the landing net. A beautiful Kennett grayling probably weighing a pound and a half, perhaps slightly more.

Unfortunately there was no one else within sight that I could ask to take my photo with this beautiful creature. So I laid it carefully on my net, positioned my rod and reel along side to give a scale and snapped away with my camera. Regrettably, this same situation occurred whenever I caught a worthwhile fish. I caught and photographed a rainbow of over 3lbs, a brownie of about 1lb 12ozs and a few other slightly smaller fish. (Honest I did catch them). But when I had the film developed all of these pics were out of focus, as I had got too close for my compact camera. So, the next time I go out on my own, I will take my SLR camera with me so that I can be certain that my photos will be sharply focused.

Meeting for a drink at the end of the day I discovered that everybody else had had similar success, although one chap had lost a rainbow estimated at over 6lbs. There was a second trip on the Wednesday and an 8lbs+ rainbow was landed (and returned).

Day 4: Wednesday arrived and I found myself, along with Paul Smith, on the banks of the Vicarage AC water at Brooklands. We arrived early and set out along the railway bank. We were expecting to be joined by Ron Parker later in the morning. By about 11 o'clock we had moved swims a couple of times and had not had a touch. We now found ourselves on the bank opposite to where we started and had been joined by Ron. A further move saw Ron and I fishing three swims apart with Paul a further two swims beyond me. At 2.25pm I had a run and was very pleased to see a nice double figure fish glide over the edge of the net. First blood to me at 14lbs 5ozs. Just twenty minutes later I just heard Ron shout that he had a fish on. I wandered along to help and quickly realised that Ron had hooked a biggy. Just how big didn't become clear for a couple of minutes and both of our jaws dropped as I netted a very big fish. Paul joined us and we set about unhooking her, a job that proved to be very easy as the hooks were now in the net rather than in her jaws. The scales slammed down to 28lbs exactly, more than 4.5lbs heavier than Ron's previous PB. She was 41" long with a girth of 22". An excited photo session followed and both Paul and I shook hands with Ron as the fish swam strongly away. What a fish!!



We all returned to our swims and at 3-15 I had a second run, which resulted in my landing a second double, this time a fish of 15lbs 8ozs. A very satisfying catch as it was my first fish to be caught on lamprey, a further bonus was that the lamprey was still on the hooks and so was immediately cast out to drip more blood into the lake. Barely another 20 mins had passed when the lamprey was gobbled up again. My

first words to Paul were that it looked like I had hooked a third double (the first time I had caught three 10lbs+ fish in a single session). The fish made one powerful run and then came in fairly quietly. To our astonishment we realised that it was the same fish that Ron had landed barely 50 minutes earlier. Again photos were taken and the big girl set off with a flourish - soaking me as she made a powerful surge for the middle of the lake.

Amazingly, Ron and I had banked over 85lbs of fish in just one hour and 10 mins. In addition, I had missed a fish on strike, Paul had lost a fish and whilst I was helping Ron with the '28' I had what was probably a lucky escape, when a fish picked up my bait but the braid stuck in the clip and didn't register a drop back. Luckily for all concerned the fish dropped the bait.



Day 5: A non-fishing friend of mine has a son who is fishing mad. Sadly, because of his dad's strange habits Gavin does not get the chance to fish very often. So, whenever I go to visit I always take Gavin out for the day. We usually fish a lake near to his home but as a treat I thought that a day in a boat at Bury Hill would be a nice change. We were both fishing what I call 'one and one'. In other words, one specimen rod (for pike and zander) and one rod for maggot drowning. After an hour I had my first bite and netted a skimmer bream of about a pound. Over the next thirty minutes I landed three more, each slightly bigger than the one before, with the biggest being about 3 lbs. Gavin managed a 6" perch which took his maggot when he wasn't looking. Whilst I think I could have caught more bream, I felt it was time to move. After all what's the point of being in a boat and not moving, particularly when we wanted to catch something with teeth. To cut a long story short we met up with one boat that had caught a pike but despite several changes of position and using deadbaits and lures neither of us caught, nor did we hear or see anyone else catch.

Day 6: Finally, I was to end the week by joining the Region on the banks and waters of Ardingly Reservoir. As I had been away for 3 days I wasn't too sure as to who was fishing. After a short wait I was joined first by Cec and Jason and then by Dave Field and John Archer. These four paid their fees and set off, Cec and Jason for the far end of the reservoir whilst Dave and John went afloat in a hired boat. A further 20mins passed before the arrival of Ron and Chris, who were going to fish from Chris's new boat. We hung around chatting for a while and it started to dawn on me that no one else was coming. So it looked like I was going to fish on my own (Balls up No 1). Balls up No 2 followed shortly after when I realised that I had left my livebait pump at home and trout are not really suited to being carried a fair distance in a bucket. Balls up No 3, I had also forgotten my livebait net, so throughout the day I had to keep swapping them between the bucket and my landing net to keep them alive. I eventually settled in a swim at the end of the bank opposite the clubhouse. Oh shit, Balls up No 4, my buzz bars are miles away in the boot of my car, so the rods were propped up in the bank side reeds. The trout livebaits were huge and I assumed that when my float disappeared a few minutes later, that the trout had found sound weed and had dived deep. However, after a few seconds I decided to check it out and was delighted to find a pike of about 4-5 lbs attached. Balls up No 5, it came off about 5 yards from the net (but at least I

got the livebait back). By now the wind had started to get up and what had been a mirror like surface was now looking very different. After another hour or so I decided to move further along and after a long walk set up in the middle of the 'willows'. I sat it out here until about 2-30pm and then decided to call it a day. So ended an amazing week. Four personal bests, two species I had never aught before and three brain numbing, boring, bloody awful days. It's what fishing's all about.

Neil Depledge

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Bought a Boat? - Now for the Extras

In the last issue I wrote about what to look for when buying a boat. I am now going to move on and look at the other items that you will need. If you were lucky, some may have come with your boat package. Some of these items are essential and some just make life afloat a lot easier.

Towing

Before I get onto that lets take a quick look at the "Art of Towing", and believe me it is an art. I would suggest that you have a practice before you negotiate a slipway.

Find a nice quiet trading estate on a Sunday afternoon and just try reversing in a straight line to start, not easy is it? Once you have mastered this, get some cones or some pallets and lay them out and try reversing between them, keep them well spaced to start with, then as you get more confident narrow them down. Now is the time to make the mistakes, not on a busy slipway on a sunny Sunday when there is a queue to use the slip and a crowd watching you. Remember that most slipways are narrow and obviously, all of them slope. Additionally, most of the ones on the Thames have a bend in and either high walls on either side or a drop on one side straight into the river.

A few tips move as slowly as possible (gives more time for corrections), if you get it wrong pull right forward and start again. Get your boat partner to guide you back (often you cannot see the boat due to the slope on the slipway), if there are high walls on either side of the slipway, (like at the Thames slip at Weybridge), remember to watch the front of your vehicle. If you cannot get it in, (a frequent problem with some) unhitch it and do it by hand, if you do this put a rope through the hitch on the trailer and either round the tow ball or the rear towing eye. You can then control the trailers decent and avoid losing the whole lot in the drink; this is essential if there is snow or ice on the ground. Practise makes perfect when it comes to towing, don't rush it, and always ensure your boat is tied down properly.

The best ties are the self-locking ones, when pulled tight they automatically lock, these should have come with the boat/trailer package, but can be bought at most chandlers or car accessory shops.

Essentials

Life jacket or Floatation suit. I have both of these; the floatation suit is an inshore suit and is

one of the very early "Mainstream"suits. The lining is removable and can be replaced with a thermal lining for bank fishing. The suit is very warm. I understand that "Mainstream" still makes the inshore floatation suit, but it now comes with a fixed lining and retails for about £150.

The life jacket I use is a "Crewsaver" fully automatic. This means it has a remote-arming device that will inflate the jacket should it become immersed in water. This is instantaneous, and achieved with a compressed air cartridge. These life jackets are sized on a weight-supporting basis, ensure you get the right one for your weight.

The "Crewsaver" auto jacket retails for about £130, there is a cheaper manual version, you pull a cord to inflate it, and a blow up version also. "Fox" also produce an a very similar life jacket, the only difference being that the "Fox" one is green when all folded up and the "Crewsaver" is red. The "Fox" life jacket retails for about £100. If you are thinking of buying a "Crewsaver" it might benefit you to talk to Trevor Nicholls. It is always better to buy a life jacket as opposed to a buoyancy aid, the difference is that the life jacket will turn you face up in the water, (handy if you are unconscious), the buoyancy aid just keeps you afloat, face down or up. These items may seem expensive, but what value do you put on your life, and once purchased if looked after will probably last a lifetime. Please don't adopt the attitude that you won't fall in, nobody ever intends too, and that once could cost you your life.

Anchors, Mudweights and Ropes

There are many different designs of anchor, I have tried a few, but have settled on the fold up grappling hook type, mainly because it is easy to stow when in the boat. The guide for anchor weight is based on one pound of weight for each foot in length of boat, 16lbs for 16 feet. I attach my anchor, upside down, with a weak link attaching the 12 feet of galvanised chain to the top of the anchor. If the anchor becomes snagged I can pull until the weak link (a cable tie) breaks, then retrieve the anchor. The length of chain is attached to prevent the rope pulling directly at the anchor and so keeping the spikes at the correct ngle to gain purchase.

I have seen home made grappling anchors filled with lead and then tied direct to the rope. These are not as effective as any anchor attached to a chain and then the rope, because the angle of pull on the rope will be wrong, and will constantly pull the anchor free.

An anchor is essential on any large deep water, in strong wind or flow, at most other times you will be able to "anchor up" using just two mudweights. Mudweights, you will always need at least one. The basic principle for these to work is that they have a large flat surface area that "sucks" the bottom and are fairly heavy. I have seen numerous home made designs over the years, lengths of large bore conduit filled with concrete (they fall over) and are no good. Old paint tins filled with concrete, these do work, but eventually the tin rusts and can be dangerous. I have seen breezeblocks used, car cylinder heads, sacks of rocks and numerous other items.

One thing I have learnt is not to make them too heavy, I recall using a 56lb potato weight on Loch Lomond. When we tried to lift it, firstly the rope cut into your hands, so we had to wrap the rope round a piece of wood and when you pulled to lift it, the transom almost went under water. I would like to see Mr Gustafson lifting his two 60lb weights. I now use a 28lb potato weight and I also have two concrete mudweights that were moulded in plastic

buckets. You can stick carpet on the underside of the weights, if you wish, to protect your boat.

Rope

You can buy "anchor" rope at most chandlers. Ask, don't just buy the stuff on the racks, anchor rope has a rough finish and is a lot cheaper than that pretty stuff on the racks.

The important thing is to make sure it is not too thin, otherwise it will cut your hands when you try to retrieve the anchors/mudweight, but don't get it so thick that you could moor the QE2, about 10mm is right. Get a dark colour (black) if you can. The length of the rope depends upon its use, for the mud weights a length of about 20 feet should be more than adequate. The mudweight only goes straight down. The anchor rope should be three times the depth of the water, but be realistic. My anchor rope is 100 feet long. The reason for this is that the anchor is let out until it holds, in a blow this can be quite a distance, ask anyone who has fished the Scottish lochs, plus you may have to anchor in deep water in an emergency.

The other item that it is handy to have is quick release shackles. These are attached to the ends of the rope and the weights/anchor are attached to these. You can get sprung snap types or screw types the choice is yours.

One last thing, there are now various types of self-locking cleat available. These items are a godsend and take all the fiddling out of securing the ropes on the boat. I have got the sprung clip type fitted. I have also seen the "snake clip" used and the bow gate type all are effective and particularly good if you are fishing alone.

Dave Fish

Region 15 Monthly meeting dates

Reminder: As from the 20th April, all of our meetings will be at the Bagster House Club, in Walton Lane, Shepperton. Walton Lane is one way and you approach it from the Walton Bridge end.

May - No meeting

June 8th

July 13th

August - No meeting

September 14th

October 12th

November 9th

December 14th

Dates for your diary

June 27/28 PAC Summer Getogether - Bluebell Lakes, Northants

September 26 Piking '98 - UMIST, Manchester