

# *Dropback*

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**Pike Anglers' Club of Great Britain**

The club for ALL pike anglers since 1977



<http://www.waltonpac.org.uk>

## RO's Lines

Well I am surprised to be writing this. I had just decided to scrap DropBack due to lack of support, when a number of articles appear. Perhaps we will give it another go. I would like to thank all our contributors for this issue. So then here is my bit, yet again.

Is it really 2006! I find it hard to believe another year has gone by. I had many plans for 2005. Things started well, getting a few trips in on the river. But come July it all went wrong for me and due to work commitments I did not fish again until October. I had made the decision to try a few new things this year and those that I have tried so far have proved successful, turning up a few bonus fish when the going was tough. Also my lure fishing results have improved, just by trying something different. I have not managed to purposely catch a zander on a lure yet, only accidentally on a Bulldawg!

The south has again suffered a very dry spring, summer and autumn. Water levels on all the still waters are down and the rivers have very little flow. The Thames is still so clear you can see down about 4 feet. Add to this the mild weather and relatively high water temperature, makes the fishing hard. They are still there but scattered further a field. Perhaps again it is time to try something new. Maybe not.

At the last Thorpe Park fish-in, it was almost comical. There were three well equipped, ultra modern pike anglers, rod pods, stainless steel rod rests, carbons, bait runners, electronic indicators, reclining chairs and god knows what else. In the middle of them was Cec White, 72 years young, steel rod rest (circa 1960), fibreglass rod, centrepin reel loaded with Dacron, a float (circa 1950) a wire trace with a large barbless single hook, Effgeco Pakaseat (antique) and brown paper bag with sarnies. Add to this a fibreglass spinning rod and Penn multiplier (circa 1960) which Cec then uses to spin over his deadbait, 'to draw the fish in'. How did they all fare? Cec had a 17, within about 30 minutes of starting and another of 12 about an hour before the end. The modern specimen hunters all blanked! Perhaps we all need to revue our fishing methods!

2006 will be all change for me. I will be changing jobs and have a few other plans. Some of these are fishing wise. Hopefully the new job will give me a little more freedom.

We all need to think ahead a little, I need ideas for the 'next season' which for us starts in September. What are we going to do to keep us entertained at the meetings? Ideas to me.

I was asked about cloth badges for the region, an enquiry with art work has been submitted, I await the quotes.

My wish for 2006 is that the region continues to grow, that more people get involved, whether it be with giving talks, writing articles, arranging trips to fishing venues, whatever. I just want people involved. A bit of multi ..... *something!*

May your string be pulled.

*Dave*



## Local Venues to Pike Fish—Part 2.

### Still waters.

If you have ever looked at an ordnance survey map of the area around Shepperton and back along the river valley towards Reading you will realise there are hundreds of lakes, gravel pits and reservoirs. Most of the reservoirs are closed to anglers, unfortunately. This was not always the case, many around Shepperton/Staines used to be on the London Anglers Association ticket, but as years went by the L.A.A gave up the leases on the various reservoirs, mainly due to the lack of use

by members. Oh, how different that would be know! As a boy I remember the huge cased pike on the wall of the fish and chip shop in the Broadway Staines. Both caught from the Staines reservoirs, alas they are now dry. Enough of the old days.

**Penny Lane lake, Walton Bridge Rd, Shepperton.** For years a Leisure Sport/RMC water, now available on a day ticket, tickets available from Ashford Angling (Staines Road West, Ashford, Middlesex, near Black Dog pub). Has a number of resident fish, to low 20's. But when the Thames is in flood this lake can be outstanding. The fish move in from the river and the pike follow the food. Catch it on the right day and you will have a 'red letter day'.

**Bugle Lake, Halliford Rd, Halliford** (behind the Tickled Trout pub) was on a local working mans club ticket but now appears to be something to do with Solar Tackle (carp). A beautiful lake that has produced pike to low 20's.

**Halliford Mere, Church Rd, Shepperton.** A put & take trout fishery, but allows coarse fishing. In the past has produced fish to 24lbs (witnessed by me) and a few other 20's (some to members of our region). Still available on a day ticket.

**Ferris Meadow, Ferry Lane, Shepperton.** Was under the control of Goldsworth Park Tackle (well something like that!) Previously controlled by Halliford Mere (when we had privileged access). Has produced pike to 28lbs confirmed, but rumours of larger fish. Secret venue of the 'Tench Fishers' and also the 'Perch Fishers'. Has produced exceptional fish in both species. Now, under the control of Bath Road PS..

**New Road Pit, New Road, Shepperton.** Controlling club – Addlestone Angling Society. A very mature gravel pit, produced pike to 32lbs (witnessed by me, 1972). More renowned for its huge tench, then suffered a fish kill and was stocked with crap, sorry, carp. Has produced many large carp to over 35lbs. Lots of eels, not many silver fish, but good to me over the years. Numerous pike to 26¼lbs, good few 20's.

**Sheep Walk Pits, Sheep Walk, Shepperton.** Controlled by Feltham Piscatorial Society, but available on day ticket, again from Ashford Angling or on the bank. The road lake is the 'match' lake. Loads of silver fish (prey) were a few pike, but the club sec hates pike. Has been seen kicking them along the ground, from one lake to the next. There is a second lake, next to the motorway, bank fishing is restricted due to a bird sanctuary, but this is more of a specimen lake, big carp, tench and pike. I have had fish to low 20's, other members have also.

On the opposite side of the road is a fairly new lake. Don't know much about it, but have seen a number of people fishing it. It's free, as far as I know.

**Ellis Water and The Lagoon, Littleton Lane, Shepperton.** Entrance where the sailing club is, opposite the gravel works. This is private and on the Civil Service ticket. The 2 lakes are separated from the FPS lakes by just a narrow path in some places. Again a big fish water, lots of big carp, tench and bream. Used to be loads of silver fish, but the sailing club over did the weed killer and the cormorants moved in. One year there were two, the next 30! The lagoon has produced fish to low 20's for me and many others, some region members. Last year had a number of enquiries about a 38 that was allegedly caught on a livebait, by an angler from Kent. Four enquiries all from different unconnected people, strange! Have not been able to throw any light on the matter.

**Taywood North and South Lakes, Littleton Lane, Shepperton.** Behind the gravel workings, each side of the motorway. Private fishing controlled by Taywood Angling Society. The south lake, also used by windsurfers and next to the permanent traveller site (can be a problem), is renowned for its carp and tench. But also contains big pike. The north lake is accessed from the Laleham Reach, this is also used by the barefoot water-ski club. A very different lake to the south, good head of silver fish and plenty of large specimens including pike to low 20's.

**Kingsmoor AS lakes. Junction 13 M25 and Moor Lane Staines.** Private fishing. The lakes around the junction 13 of the M25 used to make up the old Yeoveney complex, where Pete

Springate caught the first ever brace of 30lb carp. There is a lake by the construction camp, this has silver fish, few bigger carp, tench and some pike. Kingsmoor also have a small lake in Moor Lane Staines, this is a very secure fishery, contains specimen tench, carp, pike and catfish to 40 lbs.

The other lake, used to be swan sanctuary, good head of fish, including pike. Long narrow lake next to A30. Hand landed, unhooked and weighed a 28 ½ for a complete idiot here on a Sunday morning whilst at work (full uniform), caught on a float fished sprat under a bung. Thought to be under the control of Gerrards Cross & Uxbridge AS. The other side of the M25 is the disabled water-ski lake, contains fish, but very deep. Bit of an unknown quantity and not sure about the fishing rights.

**Wraysbury Road, Staines, Middx.** There are a series of lakes on the right as you go out of Staines, these are fairly new, but often have anglers on them. Bit of an unknown quantity.

There are also 2 lakes on the left, these belong to the Three Valleys Water Co, renowned for there carp. Difficult to get a permit, unless you are in the 'know'.

**Fox Pool (infamous) Staines Road, Wraysbury, Berks.** Once famous for its legendary carp. Then a managed pike fishery, by PAC. Not sure what the score is now, think it maybe back on the RMC ticket.

**Wraysbury 1 & 2, Staines Road Wraysbury, Berks.** World renowned for there carp. Used to be on day tickets, but now on RMC permit. Lake 2 has produced lots of big pike, more so in the days of the trout pens. A haunt of Eddie Turner and many other famous pike anglers in the early 80's. Still produces fish, witnessed three 20's to a 'noddy' on a 'Stoney and friends' charity fish-in. Personally have had fish to 25.

Lake 1, even more infamous for its carp. Has been a struggle to me, best fish 14. But present when others have had fish in excess of 25. Not much new information on either lake with regard to pike. More information would be available from RMC.

**Kingsbury, Stanwell Road, Horton Berks.** Again a famous venue, loads of specimen fish including big pike. Have seen two 30's landed from there. A bit out of touch, now. Was always a struggle for me.

**Horton and the Church Lake, Stanwell Road, Horton, Berks .** If you have never heard of these two lakes and there fish, you must have been living on Mars for the past few years. RMC's premier syndicate lakes. Huge specimens of carp, tench, catfish and pike ( I think).

**Twynersh Fishery, Thorpe Road, Chertsey, Surrey.** A day ticket fishery, now divided into several lakes, originally was only two. Has produced many good pike in the past, including a 28¼ to one of our region members, from the lake next to the Staines Road and M3.

**Chertsey Lake, Thorpe Road, Chertsey, Surrey.** On the RMC ticket, I was once a bailiff there. Good all round fishery. Plenty of pike to mid 20's. Connects to Thorpe Park via a channel under the motorway.

**Thorpe Ski Lake, Mill House Lane, Thorpe Green, Surrey.** Day ticket fishery. Is actually part of the Thorpe Park complex, has produced pike to 30+.

**Longside Lake, Green Road, Thorpe Green, Surrey.** Think this is now free, used to be the windsurf lake, you can see it from the M25. Difficult to get too, but worth used to be worth the effort. A good friend had a brace of 29's from here, just after a big thaw!

This is not a complete list! These are but a few of the lakes in a relatively short distance from the regions base. To be honest there is a life times angling available here. Good hunting and just remember, I may know a little more than I have told here!

*Dave Fish*

## **Estate Lake**

There is a lake set in the beautiful grounds of a public school only 20 minutes away from my house. However this lake, all 30 or so acres of it, is not accessible to all and sundry. Some call it dead man shoes because until someone dies you cannot get a ticket.

Since I moved to this area, some 5 years ago, I started to visit my local pub (as you do), it was there I met Big Ron. Now Big Ron is a season ticket holder of this lake and has been for some years, and after many Friday nights talking about fishing he offered me a chance to go piking on the lake as a guest. As guest tickets are very limited, naturally I jumped at the chance.

Plans were made, although he said "just turn up, if they're having it, they're having it". The allotted day came and Big Ron picked me up on the Friday morning - the weather was overcast with rain to follow. After the short drive we arrived at the lake, tackling up in the early morning mist was a joy as a pike rolled only 3 meters from where I was setting up. Both rods were cast out, one baited with half mackerel, the other with a smelt, both fished hard on the bottom.

Ron was first away with a pike of about 8lbs, quickly followed by another of 10lbs. The weather forecast was right for once, and the heavens opened, the brollies went up to protect us from the incoming storm. Yes you've guessed it, as the rain was coming down stair rods my mackerel rod was away, and after a brief fight I was netting my first Estate Lake fish, a low double. This was a very long fish with a large head, anyway the rain cleared and the fish continued to come. Although nothing large great sport was had, both having 4 or 5 fish each, Ron having the largest at around the 15lb mark.

I mentioned to Ron these fish should be bigger as they were so long and lean, "Ahh" he said that will be the Cormorants. It seems these birds, about 1 dozen of them, reside here and have managed to decimate many of the food fish in the lake (Oh to be protected). These birds, having watched them myself on this lake, work as a team to eat and eat and eat!!

Anyway, I am on the waiting list and if I am lucky enough to get a ticket, I will fish this lake hard as I think there could be a few surprises lurking below.

Since that session the Club, in their wisdom, have decided to have a pike cull and in the Spring of this year over 60 small Jacks were taken out. Big Ron was far from happy as he sees them for his fish in the winter sport however, this Autumn he has caught plenty of fish that seem to be fatter and obviously heavier, although no 20's yet! Any thoughts on this culling?

## *Eugene*



## **Ernie's moment.**

We had been invited to a river fishing trip with the local angling club, once there, not being matchmen we were left pretty much to our own devices, and so we fetched up on a nice stretch of camp sheeted bank downstream of the match.

Four hours and a few small jack later Barry suggested we retire to a pub called the Pike and Perch, visible above the privet hedge and no more than half a mile distant, climbing a handy stile we found ourselves in a large field.

The path went straight across the field to a stile on the opposite side, apart from a dense thicket at its centre the field appeared totally empty, we started off at a steady ambling pace chatting as we went on passing the thicket we stopped as a loud snort followed by the thud of a hoof striking earth.

We stopped and looked left, lying by the thicket was a cow and calf while standing facing us was a very large brown bull, in a menacing stance he stamped once again, we then proceeded to back away

towards the intended stile which we eventually attained with some relief.

Christ, look at this! Bob exclaimed and we looked, across the field a large white panama hat was mounting the stile, we knew that underneath was eighty-two year old Ernie the clubs oldest honorary member, we proceeded to frantically wave him away as he moved forward giving us a friendly wave.

Meanwhile the bull pawed the ground and stared fixedly at a point where the thicket and path intersected, we heard the snort as did Ernie who stopped looked ..... and then it happened with his box and rods slung across his back the panama firmly stuck to his head the octogenarian was off, he covered forty yards in about ten seconds then topped it off by clearing the five foot hedge, at this point he disappeared from view.

Leaving our gear we took off at the double along the hedge line and found Ernie face down in the grass gear still firmly in place, hesitantly we rolled him over then helped him to his feet, where standing he kept repeating in a quavering voice.

! 'Cor, what a big bastard'!

*Cec White*



## **Lake Nasser Safaris, Doug Davison**

Lake Nasser fishing safaris are definitely not for 'big girl's blouses'. I arrived at this conclusion after a third day's ration of arm-wrenching trolling and precipitous shore fishing from boulders the size of London buses. If you're a cross between Schwarzenegger and a mountain goat you'll be fine.

Nor are they for those of us who insist on 5 star luxuries on our jaunts abroad. You'll spend your time living, fishing and sleeping 'al fresco' on your two or three man fishing boat.

Apart from the hours of darkness you can also banish thoughts about leisure! Every morning at 4.30am we were dragged out of our alcoholic comas by Assam, captain of the supply boat and the most unpopular man in Egypt, bearing hot coffee. (As Assam also had the unenviable task of asking us to sign our bar bills every morning someone was taking bets on how soon we'd hear that time-honoured greeting, "f\*\*k off Assam"). We were then able to fish until dark with breaks for just breakfast and lunch. This went on for nearly seven days!

Lest I convince you that a Lake Nasser safari is some kind of dangerous and gruelling ordeal let me put matters straight. Tim Baily, the owner and manager of African Angler, has got this holiday absolutely right. He's tailored it for active male anglers who want to catch big fish and it works. He gets ladies too but they're definitely not frills and lace types. The open air environment for sleeping and eating is perfect. The post-fishing camaraderie can be amazing and hilarious. Add impressive and peaceful Egyptian dawns and sunsets to the equation and it all adds up to a unique but demanding experience.



Despite previous statements you don't need to fish every day, go rock fishing or get plastered, but I can almost guarantee that you'd want to. You can choose to troll or fish from the rocks at any time or not fish at all some days (very rare). The safari idea is that you fly to Egypt, join the boats

on Lake Nasser and go for it. That's the last you'll see of civilization, apart from a few Nile cruise ships, for the duration of your fishing trip. The isolation is marvellous. Lake Nasser is 130 miles long and its' hot spots can be widespread. Relaxing during the long trips between marks reserves enough stamina to last the course.

After a 2 hour drive from Aswan we were at the lakeside preparing to leave. I had chosen the John Wilson safari because my piking armoury doesn't include big trolling multipliers, powerful through-action uptide rods or 10-12" lures. John supplies all of this as well as a very comprehensive briefing on tackle, knots and methods. We had three 2 man fishing boats serviced by a supply boat. Six anglers, including John and Tim Baily, turned out to be the perfect number. The supply boat houses the guides, waiters and cooks as well as serving as a restaurant and pub.

During the evening meals we'd discuss the next day's fishing plans which, depending on the level of inebriation, may or may not make sense the next morning. At the end of my first evening meal I discovered a unique Egyptian innovation, the 'arse over tit' mooring rope. Our boats would moor 'nose on' to fairly narrow sandy beaches and the evening return trip to our beds sometimes resembled a very slow and inept 15 yards hurdle.

Despite wild optimism and much effort the first days' trolling produced nothing for our boat. No fish were showing on the fish finder but lessons were learnt. I learnt just how much pressure a trolled 10" Reef Digger could put on my arms and Russell lures are nearly as strong. I'd thought a 7" Super Shad Rap was a real puller. I couldn't see how I would feel a strike on these big lures, a thought that would subsequently be proved extremely stupid. Returning to the boat for lunch we discovered that John had landed a 70 – 80lb Nile Perch from the rocks and his partner had taken a 20.

Day 2 re-taught me a further elementary lesson. Don't put your thumb on the line unless you like the smell of burning flesh! The circumstances surrounding this brought bitter disappointment and a big dent for my confidence. After landing a couple of tiger fish in the 7 – 8lb bracket we moved to a new mark and I changed to a Super Shad Rap in firetiger. Suddenly my arms were almost ripped out of their sockets with such force that my earlier question to our skipper Rambo, "do we need to strike?", proved naïve in the extreme. All I could do was hang on.

After a savage initial run I was gutted when the line mysteriously parted. 35lb mono should be well up to the job. However spirits were raised, only to be dashed again twenty minutes later when an action replay occurred. Line was examined. Reel and rod were examined. I got the blame! A dis-chuffed Rambo made me swear on everything holy not to try to strike (I hadn't). Rambo's a really nice guy but he definitely doesn't like losing fish. The mildly unpleasant aftermath of these losses was serious self doubt. "is it me?" was never far from my mind.

Only a couple of small perch were landed that day so we decided to sail south towards Sudan to fish marks that get less pressure. This proved wise. Next day, during the mid morning session, I changed to a 7" Buchertail Depthraider in firetiger. Suddenly another mind numbing strike jerked me out of my seat. It turned out to be a 92lb perch and this time I stayed connected. 20 minutes and 3 or 4 heart stopping tail walks later (yes, a 92lb fish tail walking!) it was in the boat.

Lifting 92lb isn't difficult but when it's solid muscle, angry and covered in slime it's a whole different story. Pics were taken after Rambo and Del lifted it on to my knee while I was sitting



8 lbs Tiger fish

down. I was elated. This was the reason I had come to Lake Nasser, my biggest fish ever, and it was everything I had anticipated.

About half an hour later I was even happier when a 65lb specimen gave a repeat performance, head shaking in mid-air and all.

Have you ever had the feeling that things are going so well you're about to step in something extremely unpleasant? Well, it happened! By 10pm that evening, after two bottles of wine and some beers, I managed to attach my lower leg to a treble from a Reef Digger (4/0 if not bigger). It was in and out again right past the barb. Everybody was quite calm (inebriated) about this and the company surgeon, who bore an amazing resemblance to Rambo, appeared with a pair of bolt cutters. The major operation that followed was a complete success.



A 65 lbs Nile Perch



Playing a 65 lbs Perch

I can't remember a thing. I found all this out because Simon, a fellow Safari member and dentist by trade (used to inflicting pain!) was so concerned he decided to film it. It was bloody sore the next morning and having watched the repeat I'm not surprised.

The following days were hard fished but strikes were few and far between. Informed opinion was that the fishing on this trip did not reach the usual high standards. We'd caught four perch over 50lb and ten or so others of 25 to 30lbs plus some tiger fish. I certainly couldn't

complain with a 'best ever' that was the safari's biggest, a 65 and a 30. Was this natural skill or was it just luck? I fear it was the latter. The right lure in the right place at the right time. The first was given to me by John Wilson and the second two were courtesy of our very knowledgeable guide, Rambo.

Words are inadequate when I try to describe this holiday. The landscape, the sheer size of Lake Nasser, the isolation and the camaraderie were superlative. The excellent management by African Angler brought it all together. If you would like to know more just go to [www.african-angler.co.uk](http://www.african-angler.co.uk)

Having waxed lyrical at length I've now got my feet back on the ground. This was just a holiday. A short-term experience. After two years of fairly serious piking I still haven't landed a 'twenty'. That's my real focus.



## **USA Bassin' - Tim Kelly**

I had been bass fishing a couple of times previously on other trips to the States, but this time my friend Luke had some new toys that needed christening....

I have known Luke for quite a few years, we originally met via an enquiry he made on the internet about possible fishing opportunities while he was over here on work. I met up with him and took him out for the day and we've been repeating it ever since! Last summer (2004) we went to stay with him for a week in Philadelphia and the toured round New England.

While we were there he and I had a great fun morning wading on the Schukill river for smallmouth bass. Fabulous fun, once we'd discovered what they wanted the fish came one after the other. Nothing big, but good 1/2 to 3/4lb fish and great fun on the light spinning gear we were using. We also fished in one of his fishing clubs tournaments. Unfortunately they'd sprayed the lake for weeds before we got there and the fishing was right off with decaying brown slimy weeds everywhere. I did get a chain pickerel though, which was very pretty along with a couple of rock bass. My partner, Dale had a couple of small largemouths but certainly nothing to get over excited about. Great fun though whizzing around in their bass boats. 40mph is considered slow, and most of the guys seemed to be bragging about doing 60mph in their boats!

So, back to the story. Luke had been promising that he was going to get himself a bass boat and truck when he moved into his new house, and in the spring of 2005 he achieved his goal with a very cool Tracker Avalanche and Nissan Titan.

Now these things are serious fishing machines. The whole boat is deck apart from the seating area in the middle. The deck itself has loads of storage boxes, rod lockers and livewells built into them so the whole boat becomes your tackle box while you are fishing from them. Luke also opted for a 150hp motor to power the 18ft boat. This propelled the rocket ship to an - extraordinary to us - 60mph and it was just as well it has a 30 gallon fuel tank as we soon burnt through it! Being a tightwad Luke had opted for the single console model, which gave the driver some protection from 60mph wind and water. His passenger wasn't so lucky, believe me flies hitting you in the face when you're doing 60 are no pleasure!



Part of the real pleasure of this trip for me was the whole adventure. We were going to be fishing a 2 day tournament with a half day practise session beforehand. I flew out there on the Thursday and on Friday morning we headed off on a road trip of about 6 hours from Philadelphia to Connecticut where we were going to fish. It was May and everything was set for a great weekend. On the journey we met up with a few of the other guys fishing at various points along the road and ended up with a convoy of 3 boats and rigs, just like some Vim Venders film! The truck was magnificent and we rolled

along chatting and admiring the vastness of America. Even in relatively populated New England there is still a vastness and emptiness that you never experience over here and I love it!

Eventually we pulled into a small town beside Candlewood lake and found our motel. After quickly sorting out the rooms and dumping the cover off the boat we headed out to the lake for a

practise session to try to find some fish for the competition tomorrow.

Luke hadn't had the boat very long at this time and had only been out in it twice before. He hadn't managed any bass in it yet either, so the boat was virginal and in need of a severe christening. There's a superstition in America which I'd never heard of over here about bananas being unlucky in boats. Apparently they attract the "Skunk Monkey" and the last thing you want in a fishing boat is the skunk monkey!

As is only natural the other guys were suitably envious of Luke's new toy and rather than admit it they chose to take the micky about the skunk

monkey living aboard the boat as it hadn't had any fish in it yet. We were both very keen to kick the SM right out of the boat of course but kept finding bananas secreted in the lockers which the other guys had managed to hide there when we weren't looking. Very funny!



We blasted off from the slipway to a spot which looked as if it should be good on the map and started fishing. We could see other boats every now and then and some of the other guys in the club had obviously arrived much earlier and had been fishing most of the day. We drifted into one bay and I had a huge smallmouth on a spinnerbait. We didn't weight it (as Luke was having a minor tantrum at the other end of the boat trying to get one of his rods out of the rod locker which had decided to entangle itself with all the

other rods in there! The upshot was about 7 pieces of rod being flung as far as he could manage into the lake!!) I didn't like to disturb him and slipped it back. A couple of casts later I had a hit from a similar sized largemouth! He was speechless. I was pleased to have christened the boat and ejected the skunk monkey, but until Luke calmed down from the rod incident I didn't like to say too much! The afternoon went on and eventually we found some more fish. Luke got a couple and I got a couple so when we went back to the dock we felt reasonably confident about what we had been doing. Reports from the other guys were similar, most had had a few fish and some of the guys who had arrived earlier in the day said that the fishing was even better in the morning.

The first evening was spent getting all our tackle re-tied and set for the following day. Also there was a particularly good bottle of Oban which I bought at Heathrow that was getting supped and it seemed to draw fellow competitors from all over the motel.

The first morning of the competition saw people bolting a quick Danish and coffee for breakfast and getting trucks and boats hitched up for the short drive to the launch ramp. Luke and I were on semi guard duties as there seemed to be people hanging around the boat who happened to be carrying their "breakfast" bananas with them and we didn't wish to find any more bananas in the lockers! The banana smugglers had to satisfy themselves by surreptitiously rubbing their "breakfast" on the boat! The launch ramps seemed superb to me. Wide enough for 2 boats to be put in or out at the same time and with a colossal carpark behind it to accommodate all the trucks and trailers. They seemed to complain about it because the water was a bit shallow, but it seemed like boat launch heaven to me.

Typically the fishing was much harder during the competition. The weather seemed similar and

although there were a few more boats on the water as it was a Saturday it didn't seem like very different conditions to me. We tried the spots which had done well for us during practise and while we picked up odd fish it was a struggle. We ended up pitching senkos under the docks during the heat of the day. This seemed like the best percentage approach and was a great fun way to fish. Short light spinning rods, reels with 10lb mono, a size 2 hook and a 5" senko hooked through the middle. Pitch the bait in right against the piles supporting the boat docks or as far up under them as possible and let the senko sink on a slack line. Watch the line on the surface as the bait sinks and if the line twitches or stops hit it. We ended day one with Luke having 5 fish (a limit bag) and me having 3. None of them were particularly big, mainly in the 1-2lb class, but it was good to see we hadn't been entirely outfished. A couple of boats both had limits but had struggled to find any better quality fish. I think at the end of day 1 Luke was lying 5<sup>th</sup> and I was somewhere down in 10<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup>. Day 2 we went for a change of tactics. It was a bit of a gamble as we had only fished one area for a very short amount of time and the other area we targeted was unknown to us. Both had seen very little fishing pressure from what we could tell, and that was either because they were considered crap areas or that people had just found fish on the practise day and stayed where they found them.



Fortune is supposed to favour the brave, but in this case it seemed to kick the stupid. We wasted most of the morning for one small bass and a sub-legal, so we went back to one of our better spots from the previous days. It was a real struggle and although Luke managed a limit of 5 again I could only get one to stick all day. Back at the dock for the weigh in there was a lot of faking and strutting going on as always, but the weigh in proved that it had been a tough day for everyone. Bags were down and the "lunker" prize for the whole 2 day competition was at least a pound lighter than either of the 2 I'd put back on the practise day. It was interesting the way the fish were kept in the livewell of the boat, brought out into the car park on the trailered boats and weighed in in the car park. They certainly seem like tough fish and can handle the abuse as well as a good carp livebait! After weighing they are carried back to the lake in bags and put back in the lake at the ramp. I expect the bay where the boats launch would be a good area on Sunday evenings and Mondays!

In all it was a superb weekend. Luke came third overall and I slipped to something like 15<sup>th</sup>. I think Luke even won about \$50 for his third which repaid our entrance fee! It was a real eye opener to see how well equipped the average American angler is as far as boats and trucks are concerned. Most of the guys were from very blue collar backgrounds yet could still afford to have a boat and truck as well as a family and all the other little things we accumulate through life. A really fun bunch of guys to spend the weekend with and the journey back to Philly was another grand road trip. I think I could enjoy being American!

## **Dates for your diary**

### **Meeting Dates 2006**

Sunday 12th February—Thorpe Park fish-in

Monday 13th February—Monthly meeting - Speaker TBC

Sunday 5th March—Thorpe Park fish-in

Monday 13th March—Monthly meeting - General meeting

Monday 10th April—Monthly meeting - General Monday

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