

DropBack

Issue 24 - Sep 2010



Pike Anglers' Club of Great Britain

The club for ALL pike anglers since 1977



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

RO's Lines

I have recently been making comparisons in my life. A sort of now and then. I used to fish in my teens up until about the age of 15. Things were simple then, you could fish all most anywhere without rules, a licence or other restrictions. I then moved on to other things and after passing my driving test, got into cars in a big way. Working my way through various types of modified cars, again with few restrictions on what you could do.

Nowadays things are different, there are bans being imposed on our fishing from all quarters. Natural England have now shown there true intentions, with there intention to ban livebaiting; this will only be the beginning. Old Bury Hill have banned treble hooks and a number of waters in the Nottingham area have been lost to angling due to conservation organisations. It is time to stand together and battle these issues. Unfortunately anglers always appear to be apathetic when it comes to these issues.

I have rekindled my interest in cars and the hot rod scene and it is apparent that the 'petrolheads' always band together and form a formidable fighting force to defend their interests. Something we anglers must do! If we fail to meet the coming challenges, our sport/hobby will be under serious threat. We must rise up and band together to take on these challenges.

Mostly this will cost you nothing financially, just a bit of time. Sign the petitions. Write to your MP. Voice your opinions at angling club AGM's. Be polite and make sure you have information to back up your challenges.

There are enough restrictions on our daily private lives, without restrictions on your leisure pastimes!

It is time to stand up and be counted! Don't leave it to someone else!

Thanks to 'Geordie' Geoff and his fellow Tyneside PAC members for contributing several articles to this edition of DropBack.

Tight Lines

Dave



A Piker is Born

I remember quite clearly the first time I saw a pike. I was 12 years old and had been maggot-drowning for a year or so catching roach, rudd, perch and carp. At that time carp were the focus of my fishing dreams, my personal best was an eight and a half pounder and I yearned to catch a double. A twenty was an indescribable monster, and the idea of doing battle with such a leviathan beside some septic pool whilst bathed in the gentle glow of a summer dawn appeared to me to be the very pinnacle of fishing.

I was checking out an old estate lake with my Dad which was behind a farm shop. Very few people seemed to fish it as the fact that you could buy a day ticket from the shop wasn't exactly well

advertised, and I had been 'reliably' informed by a friend that there was thirty-pounder in there.

It was an afternoon in mid-October and the weather was overcast and warm, with the smell of wood-smoke riffing through the air. As we reached the lake, climbing over the little wood and wire fence, we came across three anglers. It was clear to me straight away that here was something I had never seen before. These guys were fishing with big floats – I had caught fish smaller than the floats they were using. They also appeared to be moving around rather erratically. I was about to point this out but thought better of it as these anglers clearly knew what they were doing, after all, their tackle looked a lot more expensive than mine. One was also using a rod rigged with a waggler to catch roach which were promptly put into a keepnet, so I figured that there must be something special about the big floats.

We asked them what they were fishing for. "Pike", they said, "had a few but only jacks so far."

"Ah", I replied, trying to look like I understood. I was sure I had seen something about pike in one of the fishing books my Mum had bought me for my birthday but had rapidly passed it by to look up the sections on how to catch carp. Suddenly one of the big floats I was looking at starting moving rather faster than it had been a moment before, and come to think of it I was pretty sure I had seen a large shadow move in the water under it as well. It started to snake across the surface of the water before being dragged under by some unseen force, reminding me rather of the scene in 'Jaws' where the shark pulls the barrels under the water leaving only ominous silence behind.

I turned around to see the angler to my left wind down and strike, his rod bending over into the sort of curve I had only ever seen a couple of times before. Soon the pike, a jack of about 5lbs or so, was in the net and was being unhooked. Asking the guy what he had caught it on he told me all about 'live baiting' and explained why his friend was fishing for the roach. As I looked at the pike's cavernous, blunt mouth studded with translucent teeth and the shredded flank of the roach live bait hanging limply on the outside of its mouth, I was captivated. It looked like an underwater tiger, its olive sides laced with gold, pearl and emerald. Was there really such a primeval predator lurking in every lake and river in the country? Did they grow as big as carp? Could I catch one? If I went and brought my carp gear down they said they would lend me some stuff and show me how.

I didn't want to be a carp angler anymore. Carp don't drag whole live fish under the water before swallowing them down whole, nor do they prowl menacingly around islands and weed beds, or lurk malevolently behind rotting branches. They certainly don't have teeth. Sadly my Dad had other ideas and wanted to go home and collapse in front of the telly and no amount of pleading was to dissuade him from this. Still, I was inspired, and that evening I hungrily scoured all the fishing books I owned trying to glean all the information I could about pike.

Two weeks later I was back at the lake. It was deserted now, as I hoped it would be, and I had persuaded my Dad and my sister to come along and fish as well as I planned on pilfering anything they caught to use as livebait. I had bought myself some traces, floats and other bits from the local tackle shop as well as some spinning traces and a Shakespeare 'Big S'. I had de-barbed the hooks on the little plug as well as making the traces semi-barbless.

It was a perfect autumn morning; the air was fresh and crisp and the warmth of the still surprisingly strong autumn sun made me take my coat off. The trees surrounding the lake were starting to shed their summer clothes, and as I stood by the shimmering water in the liquid light of the early morning I felt lost in a world of golds, reds and ochres. I took the Big-S off the keeper ring, undid the bail-arm and cast the plug along by a weed bed to my right. I had only cranked the

handle a few times before the rod tugged round hard. I instinctively struck and the surface splintered, shards of water flying everywhere. I gasped – this felt big, way bigger than when I hooked that big carp!

Suddenly the rod sprung back and the line went limp. I just stood there, looking gormlessly at the lifeless rod tip. I felt empty, as though some part of my very being had suddenly been wrenched out of me. It's funny that even today I remember the loss of that fish more keenly than most of the fish I've actually landed. I couldn't bring myself to cast again for the rest of the day I felt so awful and, given the failure of my Dad and sister to catch anything either, we abandoned the day and trudged home at lunchtime. I did work out what went wrong though, the squiggle of tortured nylon at the end of line giving away the fact that it was a badly-tied blood knot. I have always used a grinner knot for all of my fishing ever since.

It was the following summer before I fished the lake again. As well as the Drennan pike floats I had bought previously I had made a couple of my own from table-tennis balls with old biro inserts super-glued through the middle, and made up my own traces from scratch as well. I went along with a couple of friends and, armed with our usual float tackle, we set about catching some roach. The weather was slightly muggy and overcast, with a gentle westerly wind and, judging by the rate at which the keepnet was filling up with roach and perch, the fish were on the feed.

I tackled up my rod with a simple free-rover rig – a table-tennis ball float I had painted orange on the top and black on the bottom, a drilled bullet for weight, a couple of beads and a 20lb wire trace with a single size 8 semi-barbless treble crimped on the end. I took a roach out of the keepnet and inserted the treble under the dorsal fin before casting back near the same weed bed where I had lost that pike in the autumn. I sat back on the bank to watch the float as it started lazily chugging about. I couldn't have felt tenser than if I was watching a group of carp mooching around under a lump of bread crust; something, something, must be bound to happen. It did. Barely two or three minutes later the float bobbed under sharply. Then again. My heart started pounding. Again it went under, but this time it didn't come up. I undid the bail arm to start to endure that seemingly eternal, yet magical, moment between the beginning of a run and first contact. Four or five seconds later I wound down and struck hard, feeling the water at the end of my line solidify into a twisting, brawling pike. Like an angry serpent it leapt from the water shaking its head, trying to throw the steel from its mouth, before diving down deep and heading towards the weed bed. This time, however, I was ready, and walked to the left while exerting maximum side-strain. The pike boiled about ten feet from the weed bed, its last violent attempt to stay in its element thwarted as I turned it towards me. I picked up the landing net, sunk the mesh and the fish came wallowing over the drawstring.

My first pike! I looked down at it in the net for a moment, the fearsome freshwater tiger tamed for a short while, its fins churning like a submarine stoking its engines. I lifted the net from the water and placed the fish on the unhooking mat before removing the single treble from the pike's scissors. It wasn't particularly big, about four or five pounds, but it was perfectly formed. And it was mine. A quick photo and I slipped the pike back, watching it shoot off into the depths.

We fished for the rest of the day and caught about six or seven fish between us, all about the same size. I went on to fish the lake quite a lot that summer, each time taking maybe two or three jacks, usually on little roach. Once the summer ended I was soon packed off to boarding school and didn't have any opportunities to chase pike anymore. Instead I found myself becoming addicted to trying to catch trout on little bits of fur and feather and, apart from the occasional dalliance with pike on guided trips of the Broads and the Thames, the addiction was to be an

almost exclusive one for over ten years. Ironically, it was the quest for one of the most valued prizes in UK trout fishing – truly wild fish – that led me back to coarse fishing and back, once more, to the pike.



Loch Fishing in Scotland

When you think about fishing in Scotland the big, well known, lochs immediately spring to mind, Loch Awe, Loch Ken etc, but you can get some really good sport, fishing the individual, often unnamed, lochs and lochans that are scattered across Scotland.

You do not need a fishing permit to fish for pike in Scotland but you do need the landowner's permission.

I have just returned from the West Highlands of Scotland after staying on a 1200 acre livestock farm that has its own lochan and, I must say, as well as the benefit of having the fishing all to yourself the quality of fishing is outstanding.



The lochan is not renowned for monster pike, the largest caught this year was 12lbs, last year just under 16lbs, however on most sessions this year at least twelve pike were landed and the fight that these pike put up was incredible. The pike seem super fit and lean and, even non double figure fish, do not give up easily and seem to take an age to land. Repeated tail walking is not an uncommon site.

There are no restrictions on what dead bait you can use. I used a range of Herring, Lamprey, Sprats, Sardines as well as a plug, all caught fish. The use of Van der Heim red colorant worked well this year.

The lochan can be highly sensitive to weed. Some years clear, some years heavy. These heavy weed years seem to coincide with nitrates in the water due to the use of fertilisers on the hills surrounding the lochan. During a heavy year the use of an extra long Fox stem and popped up bait is essential. The lochan also has an incredible range of depths ranging from 4 feet to approx 20 feet and covers about 8 acres.

For many years a pair of swans came to breed at the lochan. By the time I arrived they already had anything up to eight



cygnets, all would cruise around the lochan in flotilla formation. It was quite poignant that each day the cygnets would become less and less until at the end of the week often just the Cob and Pen remained. Although I never saw a cygnet being taken the farmer informed me that he regularly saw a swirl in the water and another cygnet would be gone. Despite this they returned year after year.

I have been going to Scotland in April for more years than I care to remember and nine times out of ten the weather has been fine (in fact some years it has been too good) and on top of the great fishing the scenery is amazing. It stays light until nine in the evening and the good news is the Pub is still open when you roll up about 10 and stays open until you want to leave.

All in all I would recommend Scotland for a pike trip and my message is clear. When thinking pike fishing in Scotland think small!

Graham Smith



Reflections of the Castle

I first visited the reed-fringed shores of Castle Loch as an enthusiastic teenager over 30 years ago. Having served my time catching roach and dace on the north east rivers I was first drawn to Castle Loch in pursuit of its monster bream. In those days bream were not as widespread as they are today.

It was generally accepted that to catch specimen bream one should head south to the Cheshire meres or southern gravel pits. The quality of the Castle's inhabitants was demonstrated on my first visit. Not by the capture of a monster, but by the unfortunate discovery of two huge bream corpses. I was in awe at the size of these fish. They truly were 'dust bin lids'. A conversation with the then bailiff Paddy indicated that the fish had suffocated in keepnets as part of a two-ton haul. I enjoyed some early success with fish to 8lbs, but the double always eluded me. The best pegs, were the filter beds and Castle.

The anglers who enjoyed most success were using long handled throwing sticks to deposit huge beds of bait at range. The groundbait was mainly brown crumb with corn, chopped worm and caster. These days this method is 'the norm' as most anglers fish for bream at range using carp tackle. Then however, it was quite specialised as we used Mitchell reels on fibreglass ledger rods with butt indicators.

These were great times and still hold happy memories of all nighters with Tilley lamps. Things change however, and as my interest in bream waned I decided to concentrate my efforts on the roach and dace of the river Tweed.

Horncliffe produced some large bags of dace but it was Coldstream and it's huge roach, which captured my imagination. I enjoyed my time on the Tweed and was rewarded with several fish in excess of 2lb. It was while grayling fishing the Tweed, that I met some anglers who wanted my catch for dead-baits for the pike at Lochmaben. We talked about Castle. I was interested. My return was imminent but my quarry had changed, I was now in pursuit of predators.

Robert was now the bailiff at lakeside cottage, that apart nothing seemed to have changed. The

loch's reputation for pike was as big as it had been for bream. There were unconfirmed reports of a thirty, backed by several twenties. My first encounter with one of these leviathans was back in 1986, December 6th to be precise. The reason that the date was so significant was that Castle did not normally produce after October because it is relatively shallow. The majority of Tyneside piker's switch their attention to other venues when the temperatures drop and the frost sets in. I fished the disabled anglers swim on the Dalton Road. The reed beds were not as extensive then. My banksticks were in the gravel to the left of the railing. I was able to cast my trout dead bait into the bay behind the island. Dawn was just breaking as the drop off indicator signalled a run. I wound down and struck. I met with stern resistance. For the first time in my life I was hooked to something, over which I had no control.

The fight seemed to last an eternity. Every time I made ground, the fish would respond with another unstoppable run. Eventually the fish surfaced. My friend Clive, with whom I regularly fished, first saw it's size, 'Christ, it's not going to fit in the landing net'. Neither of us had a specimen net, we only had large pan nets, on adjustable green alloy Harlex poles. Clive extended both poles to reach the water from the platform. The plan was to net the head in one net and then scoop the tail and whatever else would fit into the other.

After some anxious moments the fish was restrained in both nets. I put the rod into the rests and opened the bail arm on the reel. After three, we lifted the nets simultaneously. Both of the aluminium handles bent under the load. We laid the fish onto the unhooking mat. We marvelled at its size and beauty. It was a fine perfect specimen in immaculate condition. I can't give a weight, as our scales were inadequate. I did however, accurately measure the fishes length against the landing net handle. I was 43" long. According to Mona's scale, in the Doomsday Book of Mammoth Pike that put the fish at approx. 25lb.

I will never know the weight, but I will never forget the experience. I was once more under the spell of Castle Loch. The piking at this time was second to none. Unfortunately the loch became a victim of its own success, its reputation attracted more and more anglers, who bivvied up in the best areas for long periods. The pike were heavily pressurised and suffered as a result.

I moved away from the circus to fish other Scottish lochs and the Lake District. A few years later Bill Breckel took over as bailiff and started to repair the damage done by the guys with beachcasters and mackerel flappers. As we know pike thrive on neglect. As the fishing deteriorated the angling pressure reduced, as the pressure reduced the angling improved. The process was about to start again.

The P.A.C. appreciated the efforts that Bill put into improving the fishery and elected to moor our club boat at Castle. We shared more happy memories and personal bests.

The loch's reputation as a quality mixed fishery was growing. Whilst 90% of its anglers still targeted the pike and bream, the balance, new of its untapped potential. Carp, tench, roach, perch and eels all grow to specimen size in its rich waters. However, we moved into another period of uncertainty when Bill relocated to the Isle of Man.

The Angling lease was up for grabs. Rumours of syndicates and private fisheries abounded. Fortunately for us the Castle faithful, Martin and Bruce took up the lease. These guys are right for the loch, they have taken over where Bill left off. They are keen anglers and conservationists. Given our support they will further develop Castle into a first class fishery.

Here's hoping for another 30 years of Castle memories.

John Barker
Tyneside P.A.C.



Fishing Partners

I first met Andy McIntosh in about 1985 in the galley on HMS Sheffield, when we were both working at Swan Hunters Neptune Yard in Walker. I had first noticed him walking aimlessly around the Walker Naval Yard a few years previous but had never spoken to him. The reason I had noticed him and that he stood out, was that he had an uncanny likeness to a kid that I had gone to school with. I was a Joiner and working mates with a lad who was into sea fishing at the time, which I also did a bit.

This sparky with curly hair who was working next to us overheard us talking about fishing and at bait times joined in the conversations. I had been into carp fishing for the last two years and was fishing the Big Waters and Marden Quarry with a reasonable amount of success and got chatting to the sparky. Mac had obviously heard about carp fishing and had wanted to get into it. He asked lots of questions and I talked in a foreign language to him about hair rigs and boilies. Mac said "I know all about boilies, par boiled potatoes, Dick Walker had used them at Redmire".

When explained what boilies were and told him that Dick Walker had died the previous year he looked devastated. Carp fishing had moved on a bit since he had last taken an interest in articles in the Angling Times and he was eager to give it a bash. I took pity on the poor lad and offered to take him carp fishing at Marden Quarry. I had had a few carp out of the Quarry in the past seasons up to about 10lbs and this wasn't a bad sized fish from there at that time. Most visits to the water resulted in a couple of carp in the 5-7lb bracket so he would at least catch or see some carp caught. I can't exactly remember what Mac caught but he did catch and I suppose he was hooked from then. We must have looked a right pair, I was using Magno Alarms (which I have still got somewhere) with yellow washing up liquid bottle tops as indicators on welding rod monkey climbers. Mac had been into fishing when he was a kid, hence the green Egeeco seat box, which has made an appearance on numerous excursions and photos.

During our trips to Marden Quarry we talked about pike fishing, which neither of us had done but wanted to get into. We had both thrown a few lures around with no success and had read various magazine articles on "How to Pike Fish" and had to have a go. I think our first trip could have been to Bolam Lake, I'm not too sure but I don't think we had anything. The tactics we used in those early days are not much different to those we use now although they are a lot more refined now. We dead baited with trout, sardines and Dace on free running ledger rigs. The rods were North Westerns with other oddly matched rods coupled with Mitchell 300 reels with Optonics and home made drop off buzzers.

We both used to read the fishing column in the Sunday Sun and coming up was the ACA Pike Qualifying match to be held Alemoor Loch near Hawick. We had to have a go and see what this pike fishing lark was all about. It was on this match in 1986 that we first met Paul Clay. He was looking for like-minded anglers to start up a region of the PAC in the Tyneside area. I think it was here that we also met John Barker, Kenny Wharton and Steve Foo (Mac might have know Steve

from the gym they used to go to).

Our "partnership" has taken us on many adventures over the years which was usually in my car as Mac had a beige Morris Marina (I read an article recently in which the DVLA stated that there were only 250 of the "mothers" left on the planet and two of them happen to be in my mother-in-laws street!!) which wasn't too reliable or was that Mac. When we heard about Kenny Wharton's 27lbber from Loch Foot, we just had to have some of the action and off we headed on the early morning starts. This was in the days before we had bivies to overnight in, in the winters.

I was driving in my car as usual and had to pick up Mac at his mams house at 4am, and as usual I had to bang on the door and wake up the rest of the neighbourhood before he got up. His poor old Dad used to the door with his dressing gown on "come in son he'll be down in a minute". Mac arrives down stairs in a different world and begins to assemble his gear and pack bags. His Dad puts the kettle on to fill his flask and asks "have you got everything son", "aye, aye" Mac answers.

He puts the flask and his sandwiches in his red, square flight bag Circa 1970 with a knackered zip. I put his gear in the car and ask if he is ready "Hang on I need a shite". An hour has nearly passed since I first gave him a knock (I could have had an extra hour in a nice warm bed) and off we go heading for Loch Foot. First time on I think it's a club trip with Paul Clay, John Barker, Steve Foo, Ken Wharton, Adam Goldsmith and Bruce Trench. We all fish the pump house bank on the long walk and a few fish low singles are caught. On the way home we go to the café on the outskirts of Dumfries, which over the years has become a regular stop off point until the by-pass was opened.

Every weekend throughout the winter we tried to fish somewhere as the new found piking bug has bitten and on our travels we bump into various "fishing friends". I don't miss the early morning starts as I have never been an early morning person and prefer to get there the night before, bieve up and chuck out the rods out and have a lie in. I think Mac would prefer this but would probably not admit to it.

Enough of my ramblings and when I get round to it I will tell some other stories like when Mac turned up at Marden Quarry and opened up his boilie bag straight out of the freezer without looking and finds frozen rhubarb chunks, topped by Adam Goldwater opening his dead bait bag at Loch Foot and finding frozen Brussel Sprouts. Or the time we went through a massive puddle in Mac's Marina on the way to Yetham Loch, when a fountain of water came up through the gear stick gator and soaked us both, and when we got there I fell in before I even started!

Piker's Fashions

In this issue Geoff delves into the Tyneside PAC archive library, and brings to light various trends that, over the years could get some of our brethren a visit from the "Fashion Police". In extreme cases this could end with a life sentence and never being able to set foot on the bank again. Some of these "accessories", though somewhat dated still appear on the banks to the disdain of the general public. If you recognise any of these, please report them immediately for the sake of our sport.

Flat Caps

Here Tommy sports a flat cap of the County variety (cira late 1980`s.) at the popular urban venue of Killingworth Lake, which has been sneered at by many and was once home to some decent sized pike and numerous shopping trolleys. This style of traditional head wear has been worn by thousands of men in the North East for centuries from Whippet racers to pitmen and shipyard

workers. Lately this has been modernised from its Harris Tweed/check patterns with new materials such as waxed cotton, fleece and dare I mention it Burbury! The flat cap is still popular today, look out for it at North East football matches and other country pursuit events.



Baseball Caps



Originally with its roots coming from an American influence it is now acknowledged by many as one of the icons of the 20th century, but is seen by the purist to be the scourge of modern society and is responsible for all of its failings. Here Martin wears a Lowe Alpine "Cap" in black on Kielder Water in search of that ever elusive pike. The "Cap" was popularised in the mid 1980s under the "Boy" logo by bands such as Frankie Goes To Hollywood, Bronski Beat and The Pet Shop Boys,

it is still to be seen out and about on the banks today as well as the pub in its various guises. People who should definitely not wear a baseball caps include public figures such as William Hague and Arthur Scargill.

Moustaches

Here Geoff sports a "Tash" on the banks of Bassenthwaite Lake in the late eighties, which had just recently superseded his "Mullet". The tash was popular for many in the 70s to late 80s and is still embarrassingly possessed by current members of the Tyneside PAC. Today the "Tash" is still standard issue to all members of the Parachute Regiment and to fading "Porn Stars". Keep an eye out for it in early eighties TV dramas such as "Shoestring" and "Only Fools & Horses" along with the white terry toweling socks.



Bobble Hats

Once the only head gear to be worn by anglers and stereo typed by all in sitcoms and cartoons, especially the nobby at the end of the pier. Variations of designs to the "bobble" have come and gone but its primary function is to keep you warm, however much of a c...t you may look in it. The bobble hat without the bobble has recently been revived by celebs including Becks and the Edge of U2. Here Andrew wears a traditional bobble hat on Killy lake of a wool and nylon mix. This is complemented by the matching black, white & blue with red piping to the edges. It has the NUFC logo to the front with Glasgow Rangers to the back. Once considered "cool" and worn by the foot soldiers of the Toon Army, again popular in the mid eighties.



Dalkeith Deer Stalker

The distinctive Harris Tweed Deer Stalker once exclusively worn by the gentry and game anglers, it is now finding its way through the "Back Door" to the lower classes of the pike fishing fraternity. Made popular by iconic angling figures of yesteryear such as Buller and Walker and recent wannabees Young Nev. Here Bill wears the traditional tweed, complemented with military type pullover on the banks of Semmer water in early spring. This classical hat has lasted the test of time and is now available to the modern angler and Chavs in Burbury and Union Jack designs.



IT MUST BE A CONFIDENCE THING

It is strange how confidence or lack of it can affect how you fish, the methods you employ, the venue you choose or even if you set off to go fishing at all. Confidence or is it perception seems to me to be an important element in our angling activities. Sometimes the lack of confidence we have or perceive is probably not based on reason or reality yet even as level headed persons (well almost in my case) we are still potentially adversely affected by it. And so it is with me, my particular problem is lure fishing.

As I am not really a fan of boat fishing I am clearly at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to lure fishing or so it seems. Having said that, I look forward to Dave's annual 16th June invitation to join him afloat, which I have done for the last two years. These have been as far as I can recall my only lure fishing sorties afloat ever. What I should do is stop them now as I have a 100% record catching two pike last year and one this year. Nothing big only jacks, but here comes the confidence thing – none of these fish have come from what I call normal lure fishing on the river. All came from trolling a lure. In reality of course the company of a good friend and the thought of a good breakfast or lunch following a 4am start are reason enough to go out on an early summers morning.

I really do know that people catch fish on lures from the bank, notwithstanding that some of the articles and photographs in the magazines are out to promote this lure or that rod etc but such is my lack of confidence in the method that I only do a handful of hours a year lure fishing and I can almost remember every capture of pike on lures over the whole of my fishing life. That number is probably less than 20 pike over about 30 years!

I really have tried to address this lack of confidence I have been to two Lure Angler Society conferences over the years. One was about 8 years ago in Reading as I recall and another really disappointing event in Uxbridge about 3 years ago. I got a few new lures as you do but nothing sustainable in my lure fishing exploits followed.

I have had a look through the magazines for bank fishing lure articles but these days I flick through the pages of Pike & Predators before I buy them usually only to find that the magazine should be called boat fishing for pike and predators such is the lack of any bank fishing articles these days. I understand why of course and the magazine presumably reflects the current trends in pike fishing and that often centres around boat fishing and trolling, usually on large expanses of water which interests me very little.

I did have a day out with Dave last year and we lure fished the Wey Navigation canal. A definite confidence booster I thought. Well for several hours we walked and fished and walked and fished and – you've guessed it not a single take. As I said I can remember most of my lure caught pike. My most productive (!!) period seemed to be on the Thames during the traditional closed season when we got a licence and said we were salmon fishing. There was no separate salmon licence in those days so you can tell it was long ago. A good day was probably three fish and the lures almost certainly a Shakespeare Big S or Abu Hi Lo. I probably didn't do any lure fishing for about 10 years and in recent years I've had a handful of fish on spinner baits and a perch on something I recall as being a Slug O or something similarly phallic.

I know that my lack of confidence has no real substance and I guess I just need to do more of it (I need the exercise) but after a few minutes the old doubts creep in, am I fishing the right lure, am I fishing it properly, is it at the right depth, what about the speed of retrieve – oh give up lets do something else. I have all the gear and lures to do it so maybe I need to do just that. Looking at the amount of cheapo lure packets I see discarded around the banks of the Thames someone is doing it although these manoeuvres probably entail a black bin liner at dusk I fear.

Having said all of that something has started to spark an interest in both lure and boat fishing and that is some of the programmes and articles on the cod fishing off Norway. Not a million miles away, no motoring for miles to an offshore mark as most of the fish are caught close in on the deep water fjords as far as I can tell. It has a certain appeal. I don't travel much – well not for fishing anyway and I rarely travel outside of Surrey to be honest for my fishing, but those cod have a certain appeal.

Well there you have it, Dave asked me to write something. I bet he wished I hadn't bothered now. Maybe my feelings about lure fishing are how the masses felt when pike anglers started using dead baits all those years ago, maybe it's just a confidence thing.

Trevor J Nichols