

Issue 2 June 1990

DROPBACK DBOBBACK

Pike
Anglers'
Club
of
Great Britain



WALTON-ON-THAMES
REGION 15

INTRODUCTION

I am very pleased to write this, the introduction to the second regional Newsletter - DROPBACK.

The 89/90 season was a difficult one, low summer levels, excessive weed growth and several weeks of flooding on the river at a productive time.

I finished the season with 23 Pike, only 4 of them doubles with the largest at 121b 6oz from Wraysbury II. I was very disappointed with these results until, after some reflection I put them into perspective.

For starters I am basically a pleasure angler; family commitments confine most outings to Sunday mornings. I don't fish solely for Pike; I am equally at home trotting a stick float and maggot for dace. I think most of you will agree that our local waters are not well known for their abundance of 20 pounders.

I am never going to set the angling world alight (except to stuff a rocket up the arse of the committee members responsible for such feeble replies to our letters) so, upon reflection I am satisfied. It's a hobby and to quote Dave Fish "it's for pleasure, not an endurance test".

In addition to actually catching fish I've met some interesting people and made, I hope, long term friendships. I've been treated to some excellent cuisine both on and off the bank for which I am eternally grateful.

In my own small way I feel I've done a little bit to promote Pike angling and protect species which is easily abused in seemingly safe and committed hands.

The close season is supposed to be a time for recharging ones batteries, for me it's a time for float making and designing hideous and ineffective lures.

I look forward to the new season but there is much work to be done on the promotion of Pike welfare. The antics of so called 'Pike anglers' at Broadlands has proved that what is needed in many of our fisheries is some Ardingly style Pike welfare rules - Keep up the good work.

Trevor Nicholls

WHY DO I BOTHER?

I regard myself as a specimen hunter for Pike. I put in as many hours as I can per week and endure some of the harshest weather conditions England can muster, but still those big fish elude me. But do they elude my brother? NO! I take him for an afternoon's fishing in the Royal Parks and he lands a 7 7lb 12 oz Pike! Why do I bother? Everyone says he was just lucky. This really made me look at the question of luck! How much does luck have to do with catching a big fish? Can you differentiate between luck and skill? I think you can to the extent of whether you catch or not, but not to the size of the fish actually caught. Skill plays a large part in the location of fish, and presentation of bait, but luck has a lot to do with the size of the fish that actually takes the bait.

At the April meeting Dave Fish and Malcolm Green touched on the subject, Dave insisted that whenever he had a 'run' on the waters he fished, the adrenalin started pumping and that little voice in the back of his mind kept saying

"Today's The Day Its A Twenty" only to find a micro pike on the bank with a big appetite. Malcolm then argued that choice of waters fished, and past knowledge of fish caught in that water can indicate whether large fish are present, ie. Top of the predatory fish she in one water may be mid to low doubles, and a high percentage of smaller fish, whereas a place like Llanddegfedd holds a good head of high thirties and forties, and a low percentage of smaller fish.

It all boils down to 'What are we after in Pike fishing?' A high number of fish caught but low poundages or a low number of fish caught but much higher poundages? I personally feel you've got to combine the two. Too often good Pike anglers feel the frustration of failure after putting endless hours into a water that hasn't produced that 'Big fish', then being totally disillusioned with their methods and techniques. When in actual fact the venues chosen by these 'Big Fish Hunters' have more water to cove and less fish to catch. It's bound to lake lime, it's a case of trial and error, but during this quest for a monster they actually lose what fishing is all about CATCHING FISH. The exhilarating moment when your float disappears, or the heart thundering thud as your rod is nearly pulled from your hands spinning or sink 'n' drawing. I think the excitement of fishing, is why I go fishing, when I lose this, and look upon a few jack's as 'secondary' to blanking all season and pulling out a large Pike which probably wont fight for as long anyway. Then I won't bother, because my brother was LUCKY ANYWAY!!

Michael Sharp

MY FAVOURITE LURE AND IN PRAISE OF PLUGS, SPINNERS AND WOBBLED DEAD BAITS

My favourite lure is the one that is catching fish for me! I do not persevere with any lure for more than a dozen or so casts in any one spot unless I get a take or a follow, after that it is time to rethink and try another lure or move on. The first lure might be a small plug or spinner imitating as closely as possible the fodder fish in the swim, say a 2" Rapala or a Mepps. Next I would try a larger lure maybe a 4 1/2" Bomber Long A minnow in rainbow trout finish. The retrieve is erratic, working the lure like a puppet trying to imitate the antics of a small fish.

When retrieving I can feel how the lure is working, there is an optimum retrieve rate for each lure and I can feel when it is right, slow as possible commensurate with good vibration and not snagging is usually correct. The reason for a small lure first is less disturbance when they splash down, the more violently actioned and larger lures are used last as I believe large lures are sometimes too obviously false and put the fish off.

Having tried the naturals, depending on the depth of the swim I might then try some of the gimmick lures like the Heddon's Crazy Crawler or Fred Arbogast's Jitter Bug. These are particularly good in shallow water or where weed grows close to the surface in the summer. If in deep water I try deep runners like Bill Norman's Deep Runner or Gude Brods Bump 'n' Grind, taking care to try and avoid getting snagged. If snagged up I find the Hound dog lure retriever works quite well (Trevor Moss's Tackle Shop) although, at £8.00 I wonder about a lure, retriever! In amongst the snags and deep down I find the Blue Fox Big Bass Spinner bait with its upturned single hook very good, its fairly snag free, catches fish and a £3.25 it does not break the bank.

Don't fall into the trap of mechanically casting the same lure selected at random instead, read the water, take note of nature signposts, such as grebes or cormorants feeding, arrive at a logical choice of lure I suit the prevalent conditions and use all available cover. Don't let the fish see you. Cast carefully beyond where you think you fish is lying and craftily work your lure into position to

induce a take otherwise you may well catch nothing and possibly write off what is to me one of the most fascinating and successful of all fishing methods.

To all ye of little faith in lures, do try mobile fishing with a wobbled dead bait especially in the colder months. To me it beats the hell out of sitting behind 2 static dead bails, the rods on rests and Optonics all day! Also, there are all too many moves afoot to discourage or ban live baiting. Lure fishing and wobbled dead bails offer a very viable alternative. You don't have to cart that bloody great bucket full of water about either. The recent catches at Llanddegfedd and a glance through Fred Buller's Doomsday Book of Mammoth Pike prove conclusively that lures and mobile dead baits catch big fish, not just jacks. Also, you will learn far more about the waters you fish by spinning round them, far, far more than you could learn in a month of Sundays staggering to the nearest available swim under the weight of a bivvy and all that gubbins. Time enough for the bivvy, if that is your preference, when you have located that previously undiscovered hot spot or massive pike. However my personal preference will always be for a box or two full of tasty looking plugs and spinners, the fish like them too. Who knows what is following your lure as you retrieve!!!

John Keating

WRAYSBURY II FISH-IN

Sunday morning, the day of the Wraysbury II fish-in had arrived. The previous Saturday afternoon had seen Mick and me motor over to Wraysbury to purchase the day tickets for Sunday and to 'check-out' the pit. Neither of us had ever fished a Gravel Pit before yet alone come across water this size!

Taking in my first view of the Pit from the "School Bay", I felt both excited and daunted by it. A water this large has got to have BIG Pike in it a voice in my head said, then another voice in my head said "Yeah but where the hell do you start?" Eventually a few promising swims were located, although none of them really screamed 'PIKE' at me.

The Heinz 'banger and beans' were poured into my jumbo flask and placed in the seat box. Ready at last. Gear all loaded in the car, I motored off in the dark to collect Mick. If he's not ready I'll kill him I thought, as I raced to this house. Oh no, here we go, no lights on in his house. After five minutes of door-bell ringing the hall light came on and Mick's brother opened the door, Mick hadn't come home, probably still round his girlfriend's house! Cursing all the way, I arrived at Wraysbury in what seemed like 5 minutes, but I'm sure it must have been more like 25 (my car won't quite go that fast!) Not much later

Dave Fish arrived, and after hearing my story about why my would-be fishing partner hadn't turned up, roared, "Ah he's on the Nest!!!"

I still hadn't decided on which swim to fish as I walked off to the left of the Car Park. After looking again at a couple of the swims I fancied the previous day, none of them felt right so I decided to head off for the point swim. I was to fish from the left hand side with a channel running between my bank and a nearby island. The channel turned out to be about 8ft deep in the centre and heavily weeded, a fair bit of it on the surface from the margins to about 5-6ft of water. The channel itself was probably only 20 yards wide, but opened out nicely into a bay and then onto a vast amount of open-water leading eventually to the station bank.

I quickly set a rod up and started plumbing the depths. The water in front of me and to the left shelved rapidly to 10ft and then again to about thirteen feet some 20 yards out into the bay. I decided to present a sunken paternostered smelt at the mouth of the Channel away from the surface

weed on the far bank but over quite dense bottom weed. The bait was fished at about 4ft off the bottom, keeping it above the bottom weed. With my second rod, I decided to do a bit of 'spinning'. After a couple of hours despite trying the buzzers, higs, and a couple of spoons nothing had occurred at all and I / decided to change to deadbaits on my second rod as well. This was going to be float' legered half Herring. I prefer mackerel but they hadn't any left by the time I managed to get to the fish market on Saturday. I started off with the tail half injecting it with Sardine Oil, which spilled out of the open end of the bait and ended up being smeared all over the bait. I cast it out, the bait, tackle and float hit the water and promptly disappeared. Shit, set the depth wrong. I retrieved the bait 'Sink and Draw' style and as the bait was coming over the ledge I noticed a Pike of about 81bs following it. I tried jiggling the bait about but she just sat there, stuck two fins up at me, flicked her tail, and made a casual departure.

I attempted to repeat the performance but as usual nothing occurred. The float was eventually set at the correct depth and then recast every one and a half hours or so to various positions in the swim.

At about 12.00pm, feeling severely bloated from two large mug fulls of bangers and beans, I was thinking to myself, "Oh well you are never going to get a run at this time of day," I'll have to wait until dusk before they start feeding again. Just then my float lay flat, then slid a foot across the surface waved at me as it cocked again and disappeared. Shit! I've got a run! I scrambled down the steep bank landing on the ledge next to my rods in eight inches of water; fortunately I had placed my landing net to the left of the rods. The fish was taking line at a steady pace, so I closed the bale arm on the reel and tightened down to the fish before setting the hooks with a firm strike. Almost immediately the fish made a run to the left, forcing me to backwind. I managed to turn it and carefully played it towards the bank.

The moment of truth came as I pumped her over the shelf and got my first look at her. She looked a lot bigger at the first sight than she actually turned out to be. The net by now was already in the water waiting to do the business, but she had other ideas and powered off over the shelf. I soon managed to turn her though, and played her over the shelf again. This time though, I got it right and safely netted her. Quickly unhooked, I placed her in the carp sack and tied it to a rod rest positioned in the shade of a tree over the shelf. Time to find a 'David Bailey' and get some pics, fortunately I found Dave and Barry fishing not too far away and Dave came round and did the honours. After weighing (11lb 6oz) and a couple of quick photos, she was back in the water again and powering off into the depths once more.

Finally, thanks Dave and Trevor for organising and running the fish-ins, they have been good fun and I look forward to taking part again next season.

Paul O'Rourke

June 1990

LUCKY THIRTEEN

Following a ten year break 'October 1988' saw me on the KENNETT fishing purely for the fun of it but when a small roach I was retrieving got 'chomped' at the net my thoughts turned to Pike. After only a few minutes the float above my free roaming gudgeon 'Live Bait' shot under and following a brief but hectic struggle I slid the net under my first river double - 11 ozs!

That was it, the Pike bug had got me and I spent the following week emptying tackle shops of Pike gear and reading Rickards and Webbs' 'Fishing for Big Pike' from cover to cover. My aim? To catch a Pike I couldn't hold in one hand!

Numerous blanks at Shepperton, Chertsey, Linear and Wraysbury 2 followed and it soon became obvious that if I was to succeed I would need to call in the 'experts'. So I joined the PAC. Eventually I tracked down Trevor Nicholls, joint R.O., who it turned out lived less than two minutes away, which at the time I thought was a bonus. I know better now - there is never any food in the house! I first met Trev at a fish-in at the Hampton TWA Works, was introduced to everyone present (who blanked) and talked into revising my target to a real double ie 10lb +. Soon I was fishing regularly with Trev, Dave Fish and Reg Pearce who through- out the following months guided me through the maze of rigs, gave demonstrations of handling and generally offered a substantial amount of both advice and encouragement. Result? Nothing! I even spent a morning at Addlestone watching all three catch whilst I blanked on identical methods 20 yards away.

After 12 successive blanks I was not exactly looking forward to my 'unlucky'13th trip out which was to be a midweek visit to Ardingly but went along anyway as my cousin who was to accompany me had already got the licences and booked the day off. On arrival we followed our usual routine of setting up and casting out before a day spent fiddling with bite alarms to check that they actually worked. After two hours or so we decided to move but as I was retrieving my first bait the buzzer sounded on my second rod - something that hadn't happened before. Somewhat startled I picked it up and could see line coming off the spool! There then followed a 'brief but hectic struggle before I found myself walking towards the grass bank with a Pike in the landing net that looked colossal. It went 11lb 6, my first decent Pike, my first double and I couldn't lift it with one hand. I'd done it. Or rather we'd done it as without the perseverance of Trev, Dave and Reg I'd probably still be blanking.

The morals? First and foremost if you're' struggling ASK. I am sure you will find as I did that other PAC members will rally round and help.

Secondly don't get superstitious and last but not least - don't let Trevor Nicholls within 100 yards of your larder.

As a postscript I should comment briefly on my 89/90 season. 14 fish, 12 more than last year using the same methods and once again the last fish of the season saw my only double – 10lb 5oz.

Anon

WIRE TRACES

Now some of you may know, depending on your experience. Pike have quite an impressive set of very sharp teeth. Those teeth and indeed the whole jaw area had developed over the centuries to, efficiently I might add, hold and crush the prey until it is turned and swallowed.

Now, during this 'holding' of the prey with, hopefully your set of hooks in, this set of very sharp teeth are covering at some point, your trace attached to the hooks. Those hooks have now got to be pulled into the Pikes jaw. This very action must at some lime drag your trace across some of those teeth.

Which brings me to the point, of this little piece there is only one material for making Pike or Zander traces and that is 'WIRE'. The wire should be stranded in 151b plus breaking strain - not

nylon coated, and in any dark colour. I can't for the life of me see any reason for using any other material for traces, as they can all be cut, frayed and crushed by the Pikes' teeth, which eventually leads to the trace parting leaving a set of hooks in the Pike, - which can't be good for the Pike - Can it?

Now, any of you reading this, who are using alternative trace material can argue that wire is too thick and not very supple, I urge you to try different brands of wire, until you find one, that suits you. Personally, I've found 'Marlin Steel', Pikestrand' and 'P.D.Q.', although this last wire can be a bit thick above 15lb breaking strain, thinner than or as thick as my main line of 1 lb or 15lb breaking strain.

I've deliberately not mentioned the dreaded 'Drennan' trace wire as I had it part on me when I first used it and discarded it to a watery grave and I have not bought any since. Any trace material must be discarded immediately if found to be suspect. For what is the point of waiting for a run from a Pike only to have the trace part, and lose the fish, leaving it to possibly die for who know where the hooks are when you strike?

One last point in favour of wire all of the country's leading Pike Anglers use it - and they can't be wrong, can they?

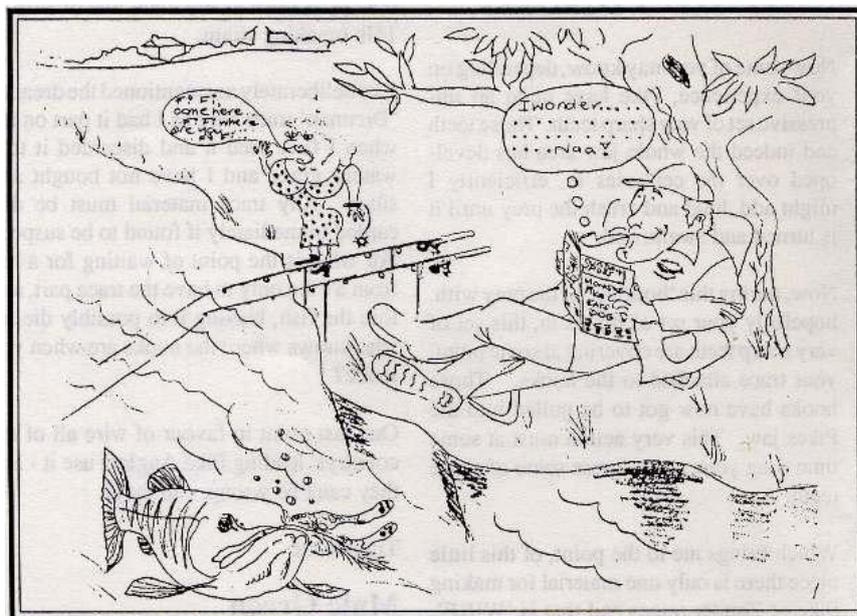
Tight lines

Malc Green

Trophy Winners 1989/90 Season

Most Meritorious – Paul Johnson – 23lbs 11ozs – Richmond Park

Biggest fish at a Fish-In – Paul O'Rourke – 11lbs 6oz – Wraysbury II



WIERWOOD 90

It was Malc Green, whom I have fished with on many occasions both ashore and afloat that invited me to fish with him at Wierwood at the PAC Pike trial. I readily accepted.

The dates were arranged for Wednesday and Thursday 21st/22nd February 1990, and duly arrived. Malc picked me up at 5.30 am and we set off for darkest Sussex, fishing was due to start at 7.00 am. On arrival, we loaded all our gear into the allotted boat and collected an electric Trolling Motor and battery from the garage. The weather was overcast and windy, there were a few others waiting to go out, but not all the boats were taken. We collected our trout live baits and set off on the 400 plus acres of water.

We headed for the far end away from the dam, near the nature reserve. Malc was adamant that we would fish from the boat, as we had already paid for it. We fished various methods, live, dead baits and lures. After an hour no runs, so we moved to deeper water (24 foot). I had a run on free roving live bait, on hitting it there was little resistance and I landed a Pike of 1 1/2lbs, which was unhooked in the water and released. I later found out all fish were to be retained. We then moved again to an area we had watched them electro fish in the morning (they had taken a number of fish to double figures).

Malc had a run almost immediately on a drifted livebait, which resulted in a jack of about 2lbs. I had a follow on a spinner (trout). We moved to shallow water again, 3-4 feet. Almost immediately I had a run on paternostered livebait, which resulted in a jack of about 2lbs. Malc then had a dropped run on drifted livebait. Moved again, no action. Moved again, no action (plenty of tea and sausages though, Trevor). Moved again, no action. It was now starting to get dark and we finally decided to return, we were last in and late. (They were thinking about sending the rescue launch out to look for us.) After a chat with the other pikers and more tea we set off home.

THURSDAY

I collected Malc at 5.30am and we set off. It was really windy and raining when we arrived at the reservoir, 3 foot waves!! We discovered yesterday that you were not allowed to take a battery only the engine, so Malc bought his heavy duty battery from his caravan, which was fully charged!! We set off after almost everybody else had given up trying to get out, we were not doing well and being blown down towards the dam. Malc is on the motor and I am on the oars, with Malc shouting "ROW YOU.... I DON'T WANT TO END UP IN THE DAM" so much for the fully charged battery! After much drama we managed to get back to the bank, on testing the battery its flat! So we removed the battery from Malc's Jeep, it takes two of us to carry it and makes the boat look like its sinking. We finally set off yet again; nobody else is out only us idiots. We head towards the far end (nature reserve) it's really blowing and pouring with rain, but we push on. An hour here, and hour there - nothing (I know what a cork in a washing machine feels like). Then a fish of about 21bs to Malc. We move again nothing. The rain has stopped and wind drops. Finally the sun came out. It turned into a nice day. There were no fish caught, but I enjoyed my visit.

We returned the boat early, so that we didn't get told off again. A pleasant two days. I will return but in November having seen the fish returns in the lodge.

Dave Fish