

*Issue 3 December 1990*

# DROPBACK DBOBBACK

Pike  
Anglers'  
Club  
of  
Great Britain



WALTON-ON-THAMES  
REGION 15

## **Introduction**

Well we have made it to issue 3! The last few months have proved frustrating for the region, what with the demise of our room at the Cannon and then the unsuitability of the room at the Crown. But there is always light at the end of the tunnel (unless some bugger blows the candle out), and the room at the District Arms I think is ideal, and cheap, and will hopefully be our meeting place for the foreseeable future. Despite these few minor problems the region is going from strength to strength, and the attendance at the monthly meetings appears to be ever increasing.

As I write this piece we are just approaching Christmas, and it's hard to believe another year is coming to an end. So what does 1991 have in store for us, a major hangover for starters? The annual Xmas Do is scheduled for the 5th January, the organisation of which is coming together nicely.

We are in the process of arranging guest speakers for future meetings, Micky Bowles of Pike and Eel fame. Alistair Nicholson if he safely returns from fishing the Amazon; anyone else I can get to commit themselves.

What of the fishing over the last months. As most of you know 4 of us went to Lomond in May and with some success, of which you read more elsewhere in this issue. The summer again was a scorcher and personally I struggled, although I know some of you had successes.

The region Fish-Ins have also not produced many fish of note. Although Bill Croft managed a 4lb eel on a sardine, and then at a Pike cull/match on the R Mole, managed a 14lb pike (Bill this could be your year).

Now all that remains for this piece for Trevor and me to wish you a Happy Christmas and tight lines for the New Year, and thank you all for your support over the last 12 months.

*David Fish*

## **OF HELL, WEED AND OTHER IRRITATIONS!**

Being a newcomer to the PAC and after winning the shield for the regions "Most Meritorious Pike" and more importantly not being an egoistic big carp man prone to secrets, I feel an explanation is long over due. So what follows is a brief(?) description of the water and of the capture of the 23lb 11oz Pike that won me the trophy.

Think of every thing you hate to come across whilst fishing and you'll find it in abundance here!

### **THE WATER**

In the middle of Richmond Park are two lakes called the Pen Pond (To be exact one is a lake and the other is a pond!) The larger one is roughly rectangle in shape and about 200m x 600m in size. Its approx 4-5ft in depth throughout, has bare banks apart from the Southern end which is fenced off and full of rhododendron bushes and reeds. Fishing is not allowed in this area. In the middle of the lake is a small island. This island is the only feature on the lake and is home to hundreds of Ducks, Swans and Geese.

The other Lake (Pond!) is the same shape as the larger only it's a third of the size, 3-4ft in depth, with a smaller island in the middle, a sunken tree in the SW corner and has access to all of its bare banks. You can sum up both waters and their fishing in one word ..... HELL!!

*Think of everything you hate to come across whilst fishing and you'll find it here in abundance.*

## **WIND**

Even in the summer this place can have its own resident hurricane and it always blows from the south. In the winter 2-3ft waves are the norm!

## **WEED**

Due to the water normally being gin clear coupled with the pathetic depth, the place is almost permanently clogged. In fact for the past couple of years the Ducks have taken to walking on the water!

## **PEOPLE**

If you like solitude whilst fishing then don't bother with this place!! In the summer there are thousands of people picnicking, walking, shouting, throwing stones, balls and sticks into the water, so they can impress their friends on how well their dogs can't swim and finally .....

## **THE BIRDS**

I can handle the Swans, Geese, Cormorants, Grebes and a multitude of ducks that eat every kind of bait put out for other species offish, but I can't handle the gulls. Any form of live or dead bait is fair game to these things. They will sneak up to them or blatantly dive bomb them, I've got photos to prove it.

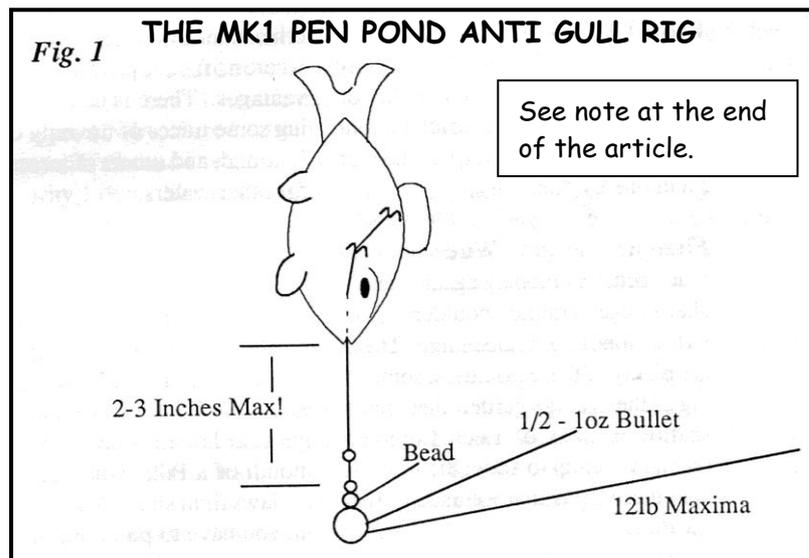
Add to all of this the fact that there is no night fishing, no fishing for Pike before October 1st and you are only allowed ONE ROD, and all these rules are enforced by the Parks Constabulary you are almost ready to commit suicide. Maybe the fact that all the horses, dogs and bloody great herds of deer from miles around, will take great delight in bundling into the water as soon as you start to fish, will finally push you over the edge.

So why have I fished this place on and off (mainly off) for the past 18 years. Maybe its the 35lb Mirror Carp I've seen over the years, swanning around the large lake without a care in the world, A carp of that size, basking in the sun only 10ft away is a hell of a sight for a ten year old boy, and its one that kept coming back! (It's never been caught to this day) Or maybe it because for a couple of years I have used the place to test out new Pike baits and only caught jacks, and the in my first year of joining the PAC I've caught Pike to 18lbs 9oz and 1/2 hour later 11lb 8oz, or maybe it the 10lb mug fish I've caught on six separate occasions, each time using different method or bait. Or maybe it's because I used to always fish the larger lake (dismissing the pond as unfishable) and after talking to an old fella who was walking by, he told me of his distant youth and his fishing exploits in the pond, I decided to give this pond a go and I've never looked back.

## **THE FISH**

The swim is on the east bank in the middle and facing the small island. Its the only place that is clear of weed. So why, I hear you ask, have I fished and miracle of miracles, you can see the bottom in later summer. It is only 2-3ft deep. On this particular day (6 Feb 1990) the water was coloured up to a green, muddy soup. The resident hurricane was going full tilt and waves of about 1-2ft were rolling by up from left to right, it was raining horizontally, all the ducks and so on had got their heads down but the No 1 Squadron of dive bombing gulls were still on patrol.

After losing so many deadbaits to these "Stuka" Gulls in the past I'd come up with a rig to beat them. (Fig. 1) It's nothing special, but it gets the bait down as low as possible and presents the smallest profile to the Gulls. This rig coupled with a big roach or Rudd deadbait stumps most of the Gulls (but not the herring gulls!!) I had this rig on an 11ft 3lb T/C rod and cast it about 2/3rds of the way out toward the island. On the other (yes I know you're allowed only one rod, but I was counting on the hurricane keeping the law in his hut next to the fire) I had a simple legered smelt that I had dyed orange with food colouring, and injected with herring oil. The bait was hard on the bottom and about ½ way out left of the island.



By 10am nothing had happened, when up walked the old boy I mentioned earlier – (don't worry this is not going to be one of those daft ghost stories you read in David Halls Specialist Fishing!) He took shelter under the broly and I gave him a cup of coffee. We talked again of fishing exploits on that pond 30-40 years ago. It turned out his best pike was about 8lb but he had seen pike of 30lb caught here. Things were looking up! He left for home about 11am. At 11.30am after the rain had stopped but the wind increased, my home made back bite alarm burst into life, I could hardly hear it and I was only 10ft away! It was the left hand rod with the smelt. I instantly scanned the water for Gulls .... No Gulls! Bloody hell, a bite! Line was pouring off the spool and half way out of the waters surface boiled and a huge pike tail waved at me.

The next couple of seconds are still blur to me, before I knew where I was I had struck and the soft actioned carp rod bent double with the line singing in the wind. Fishing cliché followed fishing cliché for the next half an hour or so. The fish pulled me half way round the pond and then back again. To top it all I had attracted an audience of about 10-12 passers by (Why do people go for walks in a hurricane in February???) I finally got the fish safely to the net with as much showmanship as I could "OoooohErrrrrr!" Went my audience "Bloody hell!" went I. It was huge! (to me). Unhooking was simple; the top size 8 Drennan extra strong treble had been "trashed" with all its points bent inwards. The bottom hook had one point missing; the other two were bent in slightly. The hooks and the trace fell out in the net. After a quick search of its jaws and mouth for hooks and other traces it was weighed in at 24lb 11oz. I settled for 23lb 11oz allowing for the wet landing net I had weighed it in! After I had conned this chap with a beautiful wench on his arm to take a couple of photos, the fish was returned, it powered off as soon as I had placed it back in the water. From landing to returning took about 4 mins, something I am quite proud of!

And so here ends an epic tale.

To finish off with and to be fair to this water, it is first and foremost a Bird Sanctuary. So if you do give it a go please take care of the birds, yes even the bloody "V1" Gulls. You will need a permit to fish this water and it will cost you £7.50p a year (Oh the expense of it!!!)

Remember the park is patrolled 1 the Police, if you haven't got one you will be done! Finally this is near virgin water, hardly anyone fish it (Can't think why!!) To find another angler on the water is classed as crowded!

If you want further info on this water (there is more!) - see me, Keith, Paul O'Rourke or Mick and they can tell you how bad it is as well! Be lucky!

Note: (Anti Gull Rig) The trace is passed through the gills and out of the mouth. The bait is injected with air to make it stand on its head and to look like a feeding fish. Groundbait can be added to attract other feeding fish around it.

Don't use any form of float as the gulls seem to know what this means

Because of the short length of the trace you've got to strike IMMEDIATELY.

Paul Johnson

## **DID YOU READ IT?**

*Below are two articles, taken from a magazine 11 years old. Do you think things have changed?*

### **PIKE FACTS**

Readers have raised a number of points arising from my articles about Pike fishing, and I will try to answer them one by one.

**First**, trace length. Wire stands up much better to rubbing against rough, sharp-edged granite boulders than nylon monofilament or braided line. There are plenty of these boulders; some as big as the average garden shed in the shallower areas of Loch Lomond, that is, water up to about 8ft deep. It is in these areas that we usually fish for Pike.

Since I don't want wire above the float, there is a practical limit to how long the trace-wire can be, but it seems to me to be sensible to go to that limit, or near to it; and that means a wire trace about 5ft long. I can see no advantage in making it any shorter.

Of course, I fish for pike in waters other than Loch Lomond, but none where a 5ft trace produces any disadvantages. There is no point in making some traces of use only on Loch Lomond and others of lesser length for other waters.

### **CATCHES**

**Next**, hook attachment. I like all my tackle to be as neat and efficient as possible. Eyed trebles have enormous eyes; why, I don't know. Now, imagine your hook inside the hard, bony mouth of a pike, who has clamped his jaws tight shut. To stick the hook in, you have to pull it through those jaws, against which that clumsy great hook-eye will jam. Consequently, I prefer taper-shank trebles, securely whipped to stranded wire. Sure, this whipping is time-consuming, but it doesn't consume fishing time, because I do it mostly in winter evenings. Now I tell you, loud and clear, that the man who takes no pride in his tackle standards; whose attitude is "near enough is good enough" will never be as successful as he who is willing to go to extra trouble. The only wires I know that can be twisted up at all successfully are nylon covered stranded wire, which is thick, clumsy and not as strong as it looks, and single-strand Alasticum. Both types of wire, if used twisted, require eyed hooks and I've already explained why I don't like those. But in any case, single-strand wire is treacherous.

## **EXHAUSTION**

If it kinks and it often does, it takes only a modest jerk to break it. Yes I know lots of Pike, including some big ones, have been caught on it. How many has it lost?

**Next**, livebaits. Not being a fish, I don't know whether or not a live fish suffers in the process of having hooks stuck into various parts of its body, or while it is slowly dying of exhaustion. I do know that livebaiting puts a strong weapon into the hands of the anti-angling politicians and the RSPCA. Consequently, I've given it up. I don't notice my catches of Pike falling off because I don't use livebait. As regards the attractiveness of different deadbaits, I am in no doubt whatever that dead Trout, Grayling and Pike are much more attractive than Roach, Dace, Carp, Chub or Perch. Time after time I've fished, and watched my friends fish with dead Roach, Dace, or other fish of that sort, for hours and hours without a run, but when the baits have been replaced by Trout, Grayling or small Pike, there's been a run within five minutes. It has happened far too often to be mere coincidence.

Not only are these baits preferred by Pike; they're all firm-fleshed, tough skinned fish that will stand a lot of casting; they often catch more than one Pike, and they don't get chewed off the tackle by eels, as Herring and Mackerel often are. Herrings and mackerel are equally attractive, but less durable, especially Herrings which break up all too easily. Equally attractive, that is except on waters where large numbers of pike have been caught on Herrings or Mackerel and returned alive. Even pike can learn!

Now for Pike conservation. There is a very considerable difference between returning, say a 20lb Pike and returning a 20lb Carp. The 20lb Pike will, in the next 12 months, eat about a hundredweight of other fish, and he is big enough to eat fish up to 4lbs or more in weight. He will actually prefer fish over 2lbs. That's all very fine, if you're one of these modern Pike anglers who care nothing about, anyone's sport except his own, and has no interest in catching big Roach, Rudd, Dace, Perch and Chub. The 20lb carp will eat no other fish. You can safely put him back without any loss of sport in the water where he lives.

Oh, says the Pike angler, if there are no Pike in a water, the other fish will become too numerous and won't grow. I would certainly not advocate a policy of exterminating Pike, as desirable for most coarse-fish waters; but there are some, specially the smaller ones, where Pike do more harm than good. If you believe in natural balance, and most anglers seem to, then you must agree that as many Pike should be removed as their natural predators would have taken, had they not been exterminated by man. It may also be worth considering that these natural predators used to confine their attentions to Pike of modest size.

## **LURE FISHING FOR PIKE**

Lure fishing must rate as the most sporting method of catching Pike and if the fish you are likely to catch are small, you can fish with very light tackle and get the best possible fight. A basic selection of lure, would include a bar spinner, a plain spoon, and, if the water you fish in shallow or weedy, a floating plug that will work just below the surface. The lures are attached to the end of your line via a wire trace about eighteen inches long, which usually terminates in a link swivel so that lure; can be changed quickly. If you have a lot of ground to cover - and it is usually best to keep on the move, you can travel very light. You can carry a few spare lures and traces in a box in one pocket, your unhooking tools in another pocket, and a landing net under your arm or slung over your shoulder on a cord. Thus equipped, you can cover every likely looking lie on your fishery in a day. It is of course, very bad manners to cast Pike lures into the swims of anglers seeking other species.

# **BANKSIDE COOKING WITH THOMMO AND SMIFFY**

To cook like us you will need 2 primus stoves and lots of billies.

## **Chilli Con Carni**

You will need:-

1 tin of Wilson's Chilli Con Carni.

Directions; empty tin contents into a billy and heat gently, stirring occasionally. Serve on a bed of rice.

## **Baked beans with Sausages**

You will need:-

1 tin of Heinz Baked Beans with Sausages

Directions; empty tin contents into a billy and stir gently while heating. High in fibre.

## **Uncle Ben's 3 minute rice**

You will need:-

1 tin of Uncle Ben's 3 min rice

Directions ; Pour 1/2 cup of water into a billy. Bring to boil and add contents of tin. Cook for three minutes

*and for dessert*

## **Rice Pudding**

You will need:-

1 tin of "Ambrosia" creamed rice pudding.

Directions; empty tin contents into a billy (preferably not one used for beans). Heat gently, stirring often. Can be eaten cold.

## **Thommo and Smiffy's Full English Breakfast**

You will need:-

1lb Sausages, 1/2 Doz large eggs, 2lb Mushrooms, 1 large tin of Heinz Baked Beans, 1 tin tomatoes (peeled), 10 Rashers of best back bacon(smoked or un-smoked), bread and butter.

Directions; cook sausages until nicely browned all over then put on low heat. Fry mushrooms gently in butter and then transfer to sausages pan to keep warm. Heat baked beans as in "baked beans with sausages" above. Similarly, heat tomatoes. Fry

bacon whilst continuing to occasionally heat beans and tomatoes. Transfer cooked bacon to sausage and mushroom pan. Fry eggs whilst continuing to heat beans and tomatoes. Do not over-cook eggs; they are best when there is still some white jelly stuff still on top of the yoke.

Serve when no-one else is around. (Especially Trevor)

It is great fun to cook on the bank side and even funnier when there is an angler opposite who is cold and hungry. Always try to cook upwind of someone who is foodless and keep wafting the sausage pan into the oncoming breeze. If you run out of food just heat the cooking oil, he' ll love the smell.

## **A BEAUTIFUL KILLER**

A steely look as the predator glides by  
a lone solitary hunter, no mercy for fry  
A splash in a frenzy, of snapping white jaws  
A deadly attack the shoal is no more.

The Pike like a tiger, it's beauty, its strength  
Has an emerald green colouring, dappled spots down its length  
But great jaws clamp shut, hiding beneath  
Row upon row of dagger like teeth.

A hunter alert, no fish is ignored  
Her camouflage beckons, the quarry is lured  
Accelerating forward with a whip of her tail  
Leaving silver, bronze splinters in a glittering trail.

The gentle pulsation of the pike's gills disguises  
The athletic agility of the hunter in hiding  
Hitting a roach, shaking her head  
The flared gills portray the pike's real intent.

*MICHAEL SHARP*

## **A WEEK ON LOCH LOMOND**

On May 12th 1990, Malc Green, Paul O'Rourke, Dave Fish and Dave Phillips took a week off work and ventured to Scotland for a week's Pike fishing on Loch Lomond. This is an account of the events of that week, by Paul O'Rourke and Dave Phillips.

### **Saturday 12th May 1990**

Malcolm, Dave, Paul and I started our Weeks fishing on Lomond. We left Males place at 5.00am and arrived at Loch at 4.15pm. After loading the boats at BALMAHA we motored around to CROM MHAN BAY. After setting up camp, we decided to get a couple of hours fishing in. This resulted in two dropped runs to Dave and one Pike of 191b 13oz to yours truly. At approximately 9.30pm we retired, to many welcome pints for all.

### **Sunday 13th May 1990**

The next day arrived too soon, we were up about 4.00am for an early start, with boats already loaded the previous night and all feeling slightly the worst for wear. Malcolm and Dave went to fish a bay just up from the bivvy s and had two fish of around 21b and 51b. Paul and I mucked around getting stuck on sandbanks.

Dave and I fished the bank for the most of the day and evening while Malc and Dave F, went off in the boat for the afternoon and then fished on the bank for the evening. No runs came during the evening and night time was pretty much the same except for a couple of baits being shredded by eels.

### **Monday 14th May 1990**

The four of us rose at 4.00am minus the hangovers of the previous day. There had been a clear sky during the night and the air was cold and damp. We were soon out in the boats fishing again. This time we decided to fish the drop-off. After a couple of hours had passed we moved further down and promptly anchored up, in one of the trolling lanes at the ENDRICK MOUTH. Baits were cast off all areas of the boat. After about 20 minutes, we were approached and verbally by a Salmon Angler who told us to get out of the trolling lane or he would get the bailiffs on us. The plan had been to move into the mouth of the Endrick and fish the Endrick Bank, but because of the amount of Salmon anglers we made our way to ROSS PRIORY, trolling with spoons and plugs along the way. Once again, nothing occurred and we found ourselves at EAST PORTNELLAN - passing Malc and Dave.

We eventually anchored up at a nice 'Pikey' looking area. We had an island to our left and open deeper water to the right and paternostered lures were placed at various points off the boat covering both the deep and shallower water. At about 3.30pm one of my float legered Roach dead baits was away. On hitting into the fish, it powered off, taking one of my other lines with it. It was played out while Dave reeled in the other rods and made a space for the unhooking. The fish finally turned out and was netted by Dave. It was another beautifully marked fish. Upon weighing she went 151b, - a new personal best for me. We then tried to sort out the mess! It soon became clear just how lucky I was to land the fish.

The line that had been trailed around, had tangled on both the anchor chain and livebait cage. We had planned to move about and fish some other areas of East Portnellan, but the wind suddenly got up and we decided to get out and pull the boat so as not to risk damaging the outboard. After paddling away for a while the water started to get deeper. I kept going, thinking it should become shallower soon. It didn't. I got wet! Much to the amusement of Malc and the two Daves. We then tidied up the boats ready for the next morning and went to the pub for some food.

### **Tuesday 15th May 1990**

After a good night's sleep, we rose at about 8.00am except Malcolm, who let his presence be known at about 10.00am. It rained for a few hours in the morning and then turned over-cast and windy. All four of us fished from the bank until about 2.00pm when Dave, Malc and Paul went to replenish food supplies. I stayed and looked after the gear. When they returned, Dave and Malc went out in the boat.

### **Wednesday 16th May 1990**

We spent today, fishing from the boats and Paul managed to catch three Pike off the Drop Off before 7.15am biggest going 10lbs. I had my very first doubled figure Pike on a trolled line, which went 14lb 8oz to Creek Chub Pike, from the Drop Off as well. Malc and Dave blanked! It was raining hard at times in the morning, turning brighter in the afternoon.

### **Thursday 17th May 1990**

Today, Malc and Dave went across to the other side of the Loch to ROSS DHV BANK, Paul and I messed around on the Drop Off, as I had to get some fuel for the 'seagull' at 10.00am. Paul and I blanked all day, after everything had gone wrong. Malcolm had a right result with fish going 20lb 3oz to Herring, and another at 11lb.

### **Friday 18th May 1990**

Today we all went across to the bay, where Malc had had his twenty, which takes about 20-30 minutes to get to. Malc and Dave blanked. Paul managed 4 fish to 14lb 3oz, I had two jacks. Nothing fell to Paul and my baits for the rest of the day. Even though we tried different areas.

### **Saturday 19th May 1990**

Last day. Paul and I decided to fish the RIVER ENDRICK. This resulted in three jacks, all to livebaits. Well, as most of you are aware, all four arrived home safely and looking forward to venturing again to Loch Lomond (possibly next year).

*Dave Phillips/Paul O'Rourke*

## **HE WHO LAUGHS LAST - LAUGHS AND LAUGHS AND LAUGHS ....**

Although this is a true story, it did happen a few years back; to be precise December 3rd 1975. Around this time I was living in Walton-On-Thames and only(-) years old! I also had long hair,(in fashion at that time) and ate, drank, slept and lived for fishing. In fact, you would have called me a 'Specimen Hunter', you could tell this quite easily because everything I wore or used was painted or dyed a greenish/brown, and still is. My main friend and companion then and now lived in Nottingham. To save him any embarrassment I shall keep his name out of this (like Hell. So the story begins when my friend 'MIKE BENWELL' arrives at my doorstep, as normal without any notice, for a few days.

After feeding and watering plus making sleeping arrangements our chat soon turned to fish and fishing. It also happened to be one of my rare days off and I intended to walk around a local water I was checking out and baiting up for a pike session. The water, was Shepperton pits, a 'Leisure Sport' water - just over the 'Walton-On-Thames' bridge.

I had 10 sprats, a swim pre-baited and already checked out. This afternoon instead of baiting up and having a look around to check out the swim for depths, more bars and features or snags (we) or I would give it a go for a few hours.

So there we were, after loading Mikes car with my two 'Bruce and Walkers', Mitchell 410s loaded with 8lb carp line, a snap tackle for both rods; - which I kept ready made up for free-lining. Also put in was all the normals, a net, a tackle box, buzzers, a flask and not one but two camera's. I always carried two, a Polaroid fc instant picture (just in case) which had only two prints left and a small instamatic cheapie (I was not rich then either!) After a quick change into my 'greens', we were on our way. We soon arrived at the water but day light was fading fast, we already had the car lights on as v entered the car park. We were soon set up, with both rods cast out into the darkness.

Of course my friend had no tackle or license, so he wasn't fishing - the right hand rod of the two was mine! We sat and talked and after about three cigarettes, my adapted green buzzers(Herons) suddenly light up and come to life Buzzzzz, my silver paper indicator between the first and second eyes of the rod, danced up and down and crinkled in the cold night air. Line was being pulled very slowly from my reel. I calmly picked up the rod, closed the bail arm and nothing, everything had stopped.

Then suddenly the quiet of the night was broken by a voice "SHIT"! With my heart in my mouth and pounding, I tightened up the line and somewhere out in about 10 feet of water, I could feel ..... nothing. Nothing except my deadbait being moved along the clean gravel bottom. I suppose I had pulled the bait for three or four feet this way before (I admitted to myself) I'd had blown it! Oh well, I said, might come back. Mike who was unusually quiet at this time, remained silent (guess he's feeling sorry for me.) So I thought. I left the bait in this position and quickly re-set the buzzer and silver paper. One fag later, Buzzzzz, again the silver paper danced and crinkled as line was pulled from the reel. Again I bent over the rod, again all went quiet I carried on, and lifted the rod up. 'SHIT'! I, echoed around the pit. I tightened up on the line and hand-lined for another six or

seven feet, just in case the fish was still on, but no, all I could feel was my dead bait on the gravel. I re-set the rod, buzzer and silver paper and turned to Mike, "What the fuck's going on?"

Mike sat and still said nothing, as a consolation prize he offered me one of my own coffees from my flask. I accepted, with open hands (it was bloody freezing). I was now getting cold, my hands were frozen and I was beginning to hate this fishing lark, I even sounded quite convincing! Having just got re-seated on the ground there was this familiar sound -Buzzz. I dropped my coffee, jumped up and like a bolt of lightning, suddenly saw it! A bloody branch, tugging at my line and as the silver paper danced and crinkled to the tug of Mikes branch pulling my line .... bastard! He laughed that type of laugh which said "TOOK YOUR TIME TO WORK THAT ONE OUT BROWNING!" I threatened to throw him in then and there but he was a guest, so I didn't, but I did warn him, if he tried it again, **I would!**

I sat myself down and after what seemed ages in re-setting my rod, the bait remained still on the gravel, but probably twenty feet nearer to me by now. Plus, I was soaking wet and steaming! The hot coffee I had dropped into my lap. By now, I had definitely gone off FISHING, PIKE AND MIKE and not necessarily in that order. Then blow me, I'd only just got comfortable and forgiving when .....BUZZZZ..... the silver paper danced and crinkled. That was it, I was mad(er). I had, had enough. I got up, picked Mike up to throw him in. His shouting went in one ear and out the other, until I heard "It's not me, it's a fish!" I then thought, - hang on, he's gripping me like mad and its still going - buzzz, the papers still dancing, SHIT!

I dropped Mike like a hot stone, picked up my rod and felt my line. It was streaking off the spool and going like a train. After about twenty seconds it stopped, I waited, timed and slowly pulled the line tight... and felt... a bloody good fish. Quickly, I closed the bail arm, tightened further and WHACK!! It was like striking into a log. The rod arched over and bent and bent and bent. The corks creaked and opened at the joints. The fish stayed put then slowly pulled and pulled. I started to backwind, to the sound of Mike shouting "What breaking strain did you say you had on?" and "Any snags?" You know the sort of usual help and questions you get when you have a big fish on and you have already realised you have slightly under estimated the line strength plus the size of the fish in the water. After all, I had asked everyone I had met who had all said the same "If you ever, ever see a fish, not alone, - caught one, its only a jack pike mate!

Well, this was no jack, my Bruce and Walkers were well bent over now doing overtime. After a while the Pike tilted to my right heading straight for the trees on my bank. So for about seven minutes, I held my rod tip under the water to avoid my line getting caught in the snags and tree. I managed to coax him back into open water! I've just thought something. It's amazing, when people talk about losing a fish they say "Her" - "I've just lost her, the bitch or "she snagged me up!" or "she bit through the bloody trace!" when you are fishing a big fish, you say "Him". "He took 50 yards of line, before tail-walking" or "He took off at amazing speed!" Then when you land it, it's back to "her" again!!) Anyway, I'm digressing a little. After a hard and coaxing fight with my 8lb, twenty minutes later Mike slipped the net under her first time! (See it's her now!)

Mike, had not dared do anything else but net her first time. Using both hands he lifted, only just then both the net and fish came up the bank. We didn't need any light, to see a bloody great big fish in front of us. She was soon placed on a large wet carp sack. On measuring her she was 42" long, with a girth of 22.5" However, her stomach wasn't very solid and on weighing her by the car headlights she was 21.75 lbs of beautiful fish, with not a blemish or fin out of place. We just sat and looked at her quietly, until the cold night air was broken by Mike shouting "Yeahhh!" His excitement for me catching such a fish was too much for him to contain any longer. We sacked the fish and then danced on the white frosted banks for over five minutes. I'm sure that had there been

any houses nearby the people in them would have sent the men in white coats for us, after hearing all my shouts of shit and then seeing us dancing, funny lot us anglers!

Anyway I haven't quite finished (Sorry) the photos were taken. The remaining two Polaroids were bugged. In the first one Mike took picture of its head and teeth and the second one, he didn't get all the 42" in. ie. He missed its head and tail off! So with abated breath and warning from me, Mike used the instamatic. Using the car head light; he took one - two when SHIT! end of the film and yes, you've guessed right, one was no head or tail. The memory is still there, plus I had the last laugh. Without Mike, I wouldn't of sunk 'n' drawn my deadbait! An well, who knows what would have happened if I hadn't carried that out.

Finally, one other comment, my wife was brought down to see the fish. She was very impressed and for the first time, I could see a twinkle in her eyes as she understood a little about why I spent days and days, studying or looking at a swim or water and then fishing for days or weeks, for one fish. It all made a little sense for a day anyway!

Until next time

*Bob Browning*