

Dropback

October 1997 - Issue 11



Joint RO
Dave Fish

Joint RO
Neil Depledge

RO's lines

Last year, even allowing for poor weather conditions, the fish-ins were very poorly attended. So it would seem that many of you are not really bothered about them. So, this year we are cutting back on the number of fish-ins, however, we are making an effort to choose venues that are a little bit special. For example, we have already booked the Aldermaston Mill stretch of the R Kennett in early October. Further details can be found on the back page.

Another aspect of our fishing year that may need some clarification are the weekend and week long trips that some of us take part in. The week long trip to Scotland is open to everyone (except teachers, who can't take time off when they like, like you lucky buggers). However, the April weekend to Slapton Ley and the March weekend to the Fens have limited numbers. Slapton Ley by the number of boats available and the Fens by floor space at Dave's Dad's house. I should point out that all of these trips were originally started by individual anglers and not by the Region. So, if you want to fish somewhere different, why don't you have a go at organising a trip? We are currently investigating the possibility of a trip to Wales or the West Country but as yet I have no details.

Back in May, Dave and I went to the RO's working dinner in Manchester. This was the first PAC event to be hosted by the new committee from Region 53, Glasgow and West of Scotland. Those of you who were at the June meeting will have heard a more detailed report but I would like to remind you all of one key point. The new committee would like to put the onus of increasing the PAC membership on the shoulders of the existing membership. There are approximately 1600 members at present and the target is for all of us to recruit just one new member. So, whenever you are out, take the opportunity to talk to fellow pike anglers, particularly those who do not look confident or are using questionable methods, and encourage them to attend a regional meeting and join the PAC. The more members the PAC has and the better educated they are in handling pike, then the better the future for both pike and pikers.

Congratulations go to Ian Goodchild captor of this years 'Most meritorious fish' with a 21lb 10oz beauty from the Sheepwalk pit and to Andy Nichols for the biggest pike at a fish-in with a 16lb 12oz from New Road Pit.

Tight Lines

Neil

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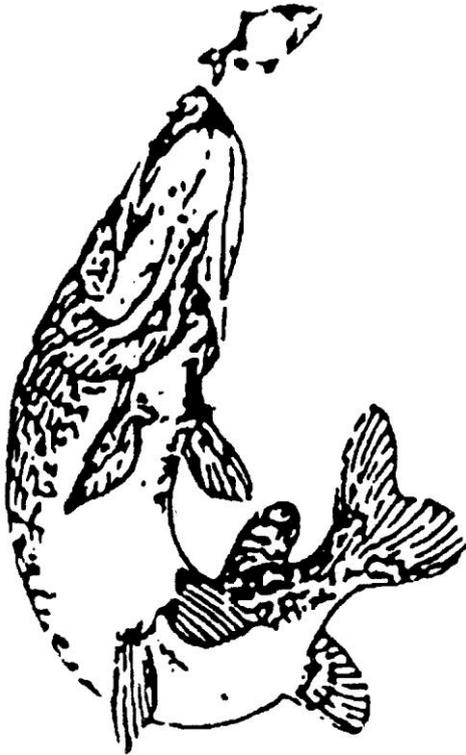
The Glow Session

I was very fortunate earlier this season to get a ticket to one of this country's top ten waters. I had heard lots of rumours about the pike in this water and I was, therefore, very keen to have a go for the pike.

Due to the bad weather and other sporting commitments, I had not been able to put in any time at the venue. However, patience is a virtue and at long last I had my first weekend session. Sadly, I lost two good fish, but thanks to Steve's article in the last issue of DropBack, I used a spinnerbait to land a small jack. So the weekend wasn't a complete loss and it gave me some hope for the following weekend session.

The arrangement was to meet Bob and Kevin at the lake on Saturday morning. Bob was carp fishing and had been there since the day before. We arrived at the lake at about 7 am and set out to find the others. They were fishing the arm of the lake and Bob had saved me the swim next to him. Kevin had set up opposite, having arrived just before us.

Bob had not seen any action so far. I started to set up when Bob handed me some new pike floats that he had made as he was keen for me to try them out. I cast out a legered dead roach, with plenty of Glow Bait on it, on my right hand rod. I then set up my second rod with the new float and a joey mackerel also covered with plenty of Glow Bait.



I was setting up my bivvie when, out of the corner of my eye, I noticed the left hand rod tip knock. I tuned to top. I picked up the rod, slowly wound down and felt the thud of a pike. I shouted to Bob that I was in helped me land a fish of about 8lbs - not a bad start to the session.

I re-baited, cast out and continued to set up my bivvie. Kevin still had no action so I suggested that he try joey mackerel and Glow Bait. He took my advice and within 15 minutes we heard him shout "I'm in!" I netted the fish for Kevin, a nice pike of about 11lbs. Kevin then put Glow Bait on both rods as it seemed to be doing the trick.

I had been pulling in a lot of weed on my baits, so I decided to pop them up off the bottom. After a communal chat with tea and coffee in Bob's swim, we heard the sound of a bite alarm. I ran back to my swim to see my right hand rod screaming off. I hit it straight away and soon landed a fish of about 10lbs on a popped up roach. The pop up baits looked like a good idea. Not long after this I heard Kev shout again, he had another good fish on. I netted the fish and shouted to

Bob, he said that it looked like a twenty. We weighed the fish and to our surprise it was only 17lbs 14ozs - the fish really should have been a twenty!! Kev was well pleased, a new personal best. By this stage he was well and truly convinced about using Glow Bait.

Kev recast and had another fish virtually straight away, about 7lbs. Shortly after this I had another fish of about 8lbs. Not bad, 6 fish by 12-30 pm!! Bob had still had no luck with the carp. The afternoon passed with no more fish although Kev missed a run.

Thinking that the fish would start to feed again towards dusk, we prepared for a long wait, but to our surprise there was no more action. We all gathered together, swapped fishy stories, stuffed our faces and drank several bottles of port. We all returned to our bivvies to get some sleep as we had been told by other pike anglers that the pike here did not seem to feed at night.

However, a pretty sleepless night followed due to the high winds making the alarms keep beeping off. I got up early in the morning and reeled in my baits. I put on plenty of Glow Bait, checked the pop ups and recast. I put the kettle on and went to check on the others. Kev was packing up to go home as he had had no action throughout the night. Once again we all gathered round to drink tea and coffee when yet again an alarm sounded.

Again I ran back to my rods and saw my right hand rod was away. I wound down and struck into the fish, shouted the others and soon netted a fish of about 10lbs. As I looked at the fish I noticed

that the hooks had dropped out in the net. I returned the fish re-baited and went back to finish my coffee. I had just picked up my cup when my alarm sounded again. This time it was my left hand rod and a fish of about 8lbs. Tracey had been trying to catch a fish but with no success so I suggested that she try a popped up roach with plenty of Glow Bait. She did this and within 10 minutes she had landed a 10lbs 8ozs pike. She recast and clipped up, barely had she turned away and a second fish was on, this time about 7lbs. I caught one more fish of about 8lbs.

So all in all a good weekend session was had. Fourteen pike were landed and two others lost. I am positive that these fish were caught thanks to the Glow Bait. I don't think we would have landed so many fish without it and I am now a converted Glow Bait angler. I am sure the lads down the lake will come up with a few more nicknames for me (Tracey suggested GoGlow), but if it puts fish on the bank all the better.

We packed up about midday and I popped over to Broadwater to see how Chris, Ron and Neil were doing. They had had neither fish nor runs so I was glad. Here's to more Glowing sessions!!



Anthony Goucher

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NOT THE WRONG TROUSERS BUT EVERY THING ELSE

Recently I was invited to partake in a days fishing with Jeff Kennett in his newly acquired boat. I have known Jeff for a few years now but this was the first time I had actually fished solely with him. Due to my family commitments I was unable to get over to Jeff's until just after 9am. We soon had all the gear loaded and the boat hitched up and off we set. The plan was to fish Molesey weir, so I suggested we could launch from the slipway at Hurst Park. I had never previously used this slipway but it was clearly visible from the other side of the river. We found it easy enough, and unhooked the trailer and walked it towards the river. This was due to Jeff's present lack of skill in reversing the trailer, not an easy task but one he will master in time. Having loaded all the gear into the boat and untied it, I walked down to the river where the slipway went into the water. Only there wasn't a slipway, it just went to the waters edge and dropped straight in. You could not launch any boat, other than a model one, from here. So we unloaded the boat and re-secured it.

We then drove to Thames Ditton and started again. Jeff had launched here before so we knew this would be OK. Once again we unhooked the boat and manhandled it down to the waters edge; it is just a sandy beach here. The most difficult part was getting around all the cars which were parked all over the place, these belong to the island dwelling residents. Jeff then had to find somewhere to

park the car, we managed to find somewhere to chain the trailer up, but the car was a different matter, Jeff returned about 10 minutes later having parked the car miles away.

Off we set in the boat up river to the weir. Jeff uses an electric outboard on his boat, a Minn Kota 55EX. We soon arrived at the weir and I suggested we fish the back weir first. Jeff looked confused and upon explaining he admitted he didn't know there was a back weir. We motored round to the back weir and dropped anchor. I grabbed my rod and passed Jeff his. Mine was all set up and just needed a lure attaching and I was ready. Jeff's needed setting up, I said, "Jeff, where's the reel for this?" looking all around the boat. I could not see a reel anywhere. Guess what, you're right, it was back in the boot of the car. After some discussion we motored back and got the reel and returned. One good thing came out of this, we were able to bring the car up and park near to where we had launched. Jeff was now concerned that the battery would run out, so I explained that this would not be a problem, as that was why you carried oars.

We returned to the weir pool at the back weir. There was a large, QE2 size, cabin cruiser anchored in the front weir pool with two people fishing from it.

We could now start fishing. I was looking forward to this as it would give me the opportunity to observe Jeff at close hand and see what he did differently to me.

I did not really know what to expect, but he was doing exactly what I was. If I recall we had one pike each from the pool on spinnerbaits. We then dropped back down to the other pool, drifting down with what little flow there was. This is a technique that Paul, my usual boat partner, and I have developed to good effect. Although on this occasion it failed completely.

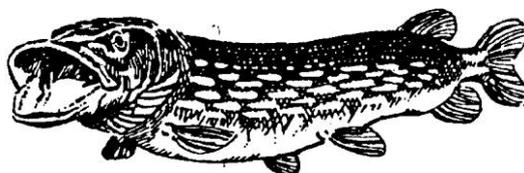
On arrival at the lower pool we again anchored up, using one mud weight only, anchors in a weir pool just get snagged. We set about thrashing the water to a foam, but without much success. Then Jeff started to pick up the odd fish further out, away from the weir sill.

The tables were then turned and it was Jeff's turn to have a giggle, I managed to snag up, and when this occurs I up anchor and normally find that if you get above or behind where you are snagged it comes free. On this occasion the lure was only in about 18 inches of water and Jeff found it very amusing that I pulled the boat over the lure by hanging over the side of the boat and walking with my hands on the bottom. I got the lure back.

We re-anchored and Jeff managed another fish, then the skies blackened and it started to rain. We took shelter under an over hanging willow, and just as we did the heavens opened and it poured down. It did not last long and we moved back out to the pool again, we had a few more casts but no fish. The sky then blackened again so we called it a day. We motored back with no problems and returned home to Jeff's. I then managed to go home with his fishing keys.

An enjoyable but somewhat disastrous day.

Dave Fish



Lure collecting

When you fish with lures, collecting is a foregone conclusion. With so many plugs, spoons and spinners on the market, the choice for the collector is endless. Collectors can also find the older lure in some tackle shops and at car boot sales. Old lures in good condition, in or out of their original box, can be worth money. An original wooden Creek Chub Pikey, in its box, can be worth £20 or more.

A good book to give a rough idea on what to look for is 'Old fishing lures and tackle No.4' by Carl F Luckey. It has 600 pages of antique lures and multipliers, and, although quite expensive at £22, makes interesting reading

Old catalogues can also be a good source of information on things such as the size and colour of lures and a rough idea of how old lures are. When looking around for lures you can come across some very odd looking designs. So it's best when you have a few to catalogue them in some way so that you have a list for insurance or in case anything happens to your collection.

Old lures also look good put into show cases and displayed on the wall. They take up less space than having them lying around in tackle boxes and it stops the wife moaning.

Jason Fowler

A wife's account of lure collecting

Lures are great for collecting if your husband is a mad angler, just as mine is. The mad angler will always get up early on a Sunday morning for those car boot sales, not for us but for him to go 'old lure hunting'.

Then come the books. Of the great lure books, the one that springs to mind is 'Old fishing lures' by Carl F Luckey. However, there is one problem, try getting your husband out of the toilet when he has this book in his hands.

Catalogues are great for finding out about new lures and plugs, but just watch your angler when someone says that they are going abroad. They don't say, "Have a nice holiday", they turn up with a list for them to bring back more lures.

Tackle shops are good for buying all your lures but wives be warned. Take along your packed lunch; you could be in for a long wait and an overdraft.

Apart from all of this, the best bit about collecting lures is when you wave your angler out of the door so he can go and try them out down at the river and you get a peaceful day. Until, of course, they walk in the door and tell you all about the one that got away.

Mrs Fowler

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CC's day

That day dawned fair for the lure match at the Scrotum AC complex. Seated outside the offices, one Jim Mullen, alias 'CC', (as will be explained later). On the table in front of him was that well read

Tory white paper, the 'Sunday Sport', carrying a story, whereby a sex-maniac had raped ten women in a launderette and then escaped, headlined 'Nut screws Washers and Bolts', but I digress.

Jim, aka CC, has a passion for the Crazy Crawler. About 5 years earlier upon his discovery of the Crawler, he had bought every colour and type at considerable cost and had since used them to considerable success. However, he was down to his last one, his new order had not materialised and he was a worried man.

Match instructions were read, ending with the fact that beyond the white posts was out of bounds, this area being a nudist colony. Amid remarks and laughter fishing commenced.

Four hours later Jim arrived at a small headland, fishless but still not willing to sacrifice his remaining Crazy. Seating himself by a tree, he poured himself a coffee and took a swig. "Hello", said a feminine voice. Jim jumped up as from behind the tree emerged a naked nymph, nay a vision, all pink and white, topped by a mass of shining hair. "Hello", was all he could gurgle, his eyes fixed on her two white, pink tipped orbs. Raising his eyes he found himself staring into hers, as her fingers touched his cheeks, then gently wandered down to his neck and onto his John Wilson Wayfarer Waistcoat (commercial break). Her pink tongue flicked over her moist lips and she whispered huskily, "Let me see your Crazy Crawler". He gulped! She stood up and between her thumb and forefinger dangled his last Crazy. With a laugh she turned and skipped into the undergrowth, a flurry of buttocks and legs.

At which point Jim awoke, his heart hammering. As he slowly regained his composure, he thought, "Bloody antis, but what a way to lose my last Crazy!"

Cec White

Improve your photography (1)

Hello DropBack readers,

By the time you read this you may already have seen my (rather nervous) photo talk and slide show at the July meeting, which aimed at helping some of you improve your picture taking of those prize catches.

I thought it might be a good idea if I also went a stage further and wrote a column for DropBack, covering the basic problems that I spoke about in July. I will try not to make the articles too long and boring, by covering one subject at a time and where possible including hints and tips.

In this issue I am covering flash photography, if you have any questions about the article, or suggestions for future issues speak up. Happy snapping.... *Barren Stone*

Flash

Flash is marvellous invention, making possible clear photos of events that might otherwise have become hazy memories. However, some built in flashes can be feeble, if your flash pictures are disappointing read on.

The picture taking situations requiring flash, that we pike anglers find ourselves in, usually occur during the hours of darkness or low light, ie dusk, dawn or heavy/dark cloud. These lowlight conditions combined with other factors are the biggest cause of flash and over and under exposure.

Flash overexposure simply means too much light, whether artificial or combined with ambient, has reached your film, resulting in a too bright, washed out image with no highlight detail. WHY?

Well, usually three main reasons can be the cause, whether individually or combined, they are metering, distance to subject and framing. Camera meters or flash unit sensors generally take an average reading from the whole picture area, so if you have your subject in the wrong position or depth within the frame, allowing too much dark background to be seen, your meter or sensor will be fooled. It will cause your flash to put out too much light, up to its full power sometimes, trying to light this predominantly black or dark scene.. Your poor subject in the foreground of this scene gets a big burst of flash in his or her face, result OVEREXPOSURE.

Outdoor scenes at night are unlikely to be very successful unless you are shooting your subject close up, move in close and fill the frame, cut out as much of the background as possible.

When you move close to take a flash photograph, you still have a small risk, especially with compacts, of overexposure, where the subject is bleached out. This is due to the darkness of the overall scene. To help combat this problem you could try a trick that the professionals use, softening the light source. You do this by covering the flash with a translucent material such as tracing paper or a handkerchief. This not only softens, but spreads the light giving a much more acceptable result. If you do this, you must take care not to cover the meter or flash sensors. For the sceptics among you consider this, next time you see a group of paparazzi on the news clicking away at the rich and famous, look at their flashguns, in most cases you will see some form of diffuser attachment, there must be something in it.

Low power built-in flash units on most compact and some SLR cameras, work best at a distance of 3-10 ft (1-3m) from the subject. Any nearer and the subject will be bleached out, further away and the subject will be dark (underexposed).

A basic rule is to keep all parts of the subject roughly the same distance from the camera, holding a fish out in front at arms length will result in uneven lighting. The flash may not have enough power to light both near and distant parts of the same shot; it may also affect the focusing.

Let's now consider flash *underexposure*.

In simple terms flash underexposure means not enough light has reached the film. This causes dark images with no shadow detail. WHY?

Well, there could be several main reasons, the most common being as follows:

The flash may have failed to fire; you usually know when this has happened, because your mate or subject will tell you. Won't he!! I know people who take great pleasure in telling me. But what possible causes could there be for this? BUGGER! I forgot to switch it on. YEAH, I've done it, while your mate was getting his fish ready, you're responsible for getting the camera out and ready, and in your haste you forget to switch it on, resulting in the fish being out of the water for longer than necessary. Slow down, prepare in advance, especially at night. Enough said. Luckily these days most built in flash units are fully automatic and don't need to be switching on, known in the trade as idiot proof! If you use a separate flash on an SLR, it can sometimes move in the hotshoe. It will only have to move a millimetre or two for the contact to be broken and the flash won't fire.

Okay, let's say you switched your flash on, or it popped up automatically, and it fired, but your print was dark.

The flash may not be charged fully, what is not known by a lot of amateur photographers, is on many flashguns the flash ready light will come on when the unit is only 50-70% charged, if you shoot straight away, the obvious consequence will be underexposure. Whenever possible allow an extra 5-10 seconds before firing, this will allow the unit to come to full power.

The flash may have been obstructed, easily done these days, with cameras getting smaller and smaller. All too often I will see someone taking a photograph without regard to where all their digits are. They can usually be found covering all the vital parts of the camera, sensor window, flash or lens. Peak caps are another good one, you raise the camera to your eye, up pops the flash, cunningly obscured by the peak you fire the camera, result UNDEREXPOSURE,

The subject may be too far away from the camera, usually the result of inexperience this one, remember earlier I talked about the effective operational distance of most small flash units being 3-10 ft. Well the upper limit of 10ft is OK if there a certain amount of ambient light, and not the full darkness of night. A good tip to remember is if using an automatic flash in darkness outdoors, compensate by halving the maximum flash to subject distance that your manual recommends. However, if there is some general ambient lighting, such as you get just after sunset or just before dawn, you can normally trust the auto exposure system on your camera to get it right.

REMEMBER, move in close, fill the frame with the subject, cutting out as much background as possible, and you will avoid a lot of problems.

Separate flashgun (SLR users)

Are there batteries inside? 'PLONKER'

ANGLES OF TIME

The call, I felt the call
It had reached that time again
A time of patience and endurance
Of excitement and disdain.
I was about to separate my person
From life's drudgery and pain,
I collected everything I needed
From the cupboard in the hall.
Once I'd moved the broom aside
The Hoover and football,
"Who the heck owns all these shoes
And piles of coats and tins of paint
Upon my cherished treasure?"
To mumbles in the kitchen -
Of "Oh!! You're the only Saint!"
At last, at last I retrieved my gear
Then I set upon my way,

To waves goodbye and cheery wishes
 "Do have a lovely day".
 I reached that place, my Shangri-La
 As secret as Pandora,
 With all my laden baggage
 Resembling an intrepid explorer.
 Carefully now before I sit
 I check no dog has done his bit,

 Upon the lush green grass
 In case I get all plastered upon my Khyber Pass.
 The water is still, a mist is rising
 Just the time I start surmising,
 A record catch, a carp or pike
 "Oi!! Minds my rods with that mountain bike!"
 Tackled now the ledger line
 Two floats are bobbing in the brine,
 Coffee now from steaming flask
 As I bait the spot where fish might bask
 I reached out for my sandwich tin.
 Pulled the lid then peering in
 I hollered words that weren't the best,
 Two shoe brushes, polish tins and holey vest
 Then, as died the echo of my call
 Flashback-: shoes, coats, tins and my sandwiches
 Were inside that cupboard in the hall,
 Time drifted by then came the many passing boats
 "Oi!! Watch my line and mind my floats!"
 White capped skippers, bikini clad girls
 The wind was blowing through their curls,
 They didn't seem to mind or care
 Just giving me a snooty stare.
 Water lapped across the bank
 Then came some delinquents who love a prank,
 Chucking bread for ducks and geese
 Destroying the tranquillity and my peace.
 "Go on clear off!!" "Go up the way!"
 "Get stuffed old man !" I hear one say
 The day is over, my tackle stowed
 A broken rod where some twit had rowed,
 No record catch, no world acclaim
 But a back that's aching and my leg is lame.
 Back home I manage a cheery grin
 "Sit down love, I'll bring your 'din"
 Potatoes sat in dried gravy rings
 On the tele the fat lady sings
 "Did you have a pleasant day?"
 "Yes" I struggled what to say, "One of the best"
 "Oh yeah! By the way, Bill.....
 Have you seen my shoe brushes, polish and holey vest?"

25/08/97

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THE CARP SESSION.

After a disappointing trip to Scotland in May where I only managed to catch five fish in a week, although as some of you may be aware, one of them was a huge Perch of 41bs 2oz, on a Trout live bait. Unfortunately, as Dave keeps reminding me, I did not get a photo, which I now regret. So I hope that one of the others has written an article about that trip, as I felt that the following account would make a more interesting read.

I was really looking forward to the start of the new season, and had booked off the opening week. I had arranged back in March with my cousins to start the season off on the Cons, which happens to be one of the top ten carp waters in England. The plans where a bit patchy. I was waiting for a call from Kevin who rang me on the Saturday night to make the plans for the next day. There was to be a draw for swims at the lake at 3pm, but Kev said that he was not bothered to make the draw. So we arranged to meet at the lake at 5pm in the car park. Within ten minutes of arranging this he was back on the phone saying that he had changed his mind and that we should be there for the draw. So we arranged to meet at the lake at 2pm to look around for the fish and decide where to fish.

I arrived at the lake at about 2pm and Kev was already there, so we took a good look around and saw a lot of carp on the surface. We decided that if we got a good draw we where going to fish the part of the lake that is called the Lawns.

We made our way to where the draw was to take place, where about 50 anglers placed their booklets in the sack. Luckily Kev was drawn out fourth and said he wanted to fish the Lawns so off he set. I had to wait for my ticket to be drawn, I had quite a nervous wait. I was about the fifteenth person drawn out and set off for the Lawns to join Kev.

I went back to the car and started to take my gear to the second swim down on the Lawns. Kev was in the next swim and after a couple of trips all the gear was in my swim. I set my marker float rod up and tried to plumb the depths which turned out to be a little bit more difficult than I thought due to the large amount of weed. I managed to find a clear section just in front of the weed bed at about a range of forty yards. We had already decided between us that we would use particles instead of boillies as everyone else on the lake seemed to be. So I set up my bait dropper rod and put out a large bed of particles, which consisted of hemp seed, tares, and moth beans. I was fishing tiger nuts as the hook bait, so I catapulted out a few pouch fulls. I then set up my bivvie and started to get things straight. Although we were allowed to bait up we were not allowed to cast out until 9pm.

I put the kettle on and had a drink before I started to put my rods together and set my alarms up. I then joined Kev in his swim and we talked about our approach and hoped we would both do better than we did last season, as we had both not had a fish out all year. Although we had both done very well at the Pike fishing, and now hoped we would have similar success with the carp fishing. Then Kev's mobile rang but he got cut off, then my phone rang and it was my other cousin Bob who was supposed to be joining us down the lake. However, he had been to Blackpool for the weekend on a stag weekend, and said he was knackered, too much beer. So he said he would not be down until early in the morning, we told him where we had set up and we would see him in the morning. It got to nearly the time we could cast out so we baited our rods. I was fishing a single tiger nut on one rod and a pop up tiger nut on the other. We sat back and toasted in the new season with a nice bottle of Port. We retired to our bivies for the night, but had no action in the night. Bob arrived in the

morning at about 7am but did not like the look of the swims either side of me and Kev. So he went walk about to find a swim, and decided to set up on the arm, opposite us.

Monday was pretty uneventful and we had heard that no fish had been out so far. There were still fish showing at the end of the lake we were fishing, and our confidence was high. After much talking about fish and lots of coffee and yes you guessed more alcohol we retired for the night. The next thing I remember is the sound of a screaming buzzer and a bait runner going into overdrive. In a matter of seconds I realised it was my right hand rod that was screaming off. I flew out of my bivi and struck into the fish and met solid resistance. I shouted to Kev but got no reply, I suppose this was to be expected as it was 4am. After several more shouts Kev appeared. I had the fish on for some time and had got it to the net about four times but every time I got it near the net it screamed off, on the last time it went through the other line. It was a bit of a mess but we got the fish into the net and then realised how big it was. Kev held it in the net while I got my unhooking stuff, scales and camera ready and we lifted the fish up it was a large mirror carp. I knew it was going to be a new PB, we put it on the scales and it went 241bs 8oz, after several photos we had a coffee and Kev said he was going to try to get a few hours sleep.

Both my rods were a mess so I decided to change the line over, as I was fishing with braid, to AN40. This took me some time before I was ready to recast, I fired out several more pouch fulls of tiger nuts and hoped I would get some more action. About 10am I reeled in my rods and went round to see Bob to tell him what had happened, he was very pleased for me and was glad I had broke my duck. We chatted for a while and then Kev came round. Bob decided to move around with us and be a bit more sociable. We helped Bob move his stuff round and he set up in the comer. I chatted to a couple of other guys and found out that a total of three fish had been caught. My fish, a 30 and a 28 pound common, so it looked like the fish had started to feed. There had been no fish caught out of the little lake as yet. Kev had to go home as his wife had got the day off and she was going to come down the lake for the day. Bob made the comment of "Don't forget the bacon sandwiches". And yes when he arrived back at the lakes he had brought down a load of bacon so we cooked it and had it for lunch, or should I say late breakfast.

Not long after we had eaten, and had coffee and tea, I was down talking to Bob about our approach to this seasons fishing when I heard a screaming run, it was my right hand rod again. I ran to the rod and struck into what felt like another good fish. As I started to play the fish Gary strolled up and said he had heard the run from the car park, and asked if it was a good fish. We all replied we don't know yet but it was putting up a good fight, but felt different to the first fish. So I had already guessed it was a common and hoped it possibly could be my first twenty. After a lengthy scrap it went into the net first go, we weighed it and it went 161bs 14oz. We took a couple of pictures and returned the fish. I re-baited the swim with some more tigers and sat back. Of course the comments started that if I caught another fish I would be getting wet. This fish was caught at about 12pm and the rest of the afternoon passed with no more action. Kev was a bit pissed off because he had to run his wife home, as his son who was supposed to come and collect her had gone out.

Not long after he had got back, a good friend of ours turned up. Andy or as most people know him "Stainless", as a lot of his fishing gear is made of stainless steel. He had been fishing the little lake but had given up as he said his baits were stinking due to all the rotting weed. This is very unlike him because he is the sort of angler who will catch a fish out of a puddle. However, he is a very modest bloke and very laid back, which is good when you do get to hear of some of the amazing catches he has had.

There seemed to be a vote that I lost, that I should go out and get the beers in, Andy said he would look after my rods for me. So it looked like I did not have a lot of choice, all I could think of all the way to the off-licence was my God I've left Andy in charge of my rods. He's bound to catch a thirty

on my rods so I flew there and back. As I was walking back to my swim I noticed my unhooking mat, sling and net laying there. The thought rushed to my head no he hasn't but as I got there and the story began I realised it was a wind up. As Andy cannot keep a straight face, what a relief. We sat for several hours drinking and talking, Andy said he had to go, and we carried on drinking and talking. The sun set and it was a lovely night, we all felt confident we were going to have some more fish. The night passed but no more fish were caught, although Bob had been up most of the night with liners. Bob said he was going home today as he had to go back to work tomorrow. Kev had already phoned his work and booked the rest of the week off and was going to go home sometime on the Friday. Bob packed up and left about midday and wished us both luck, he said he would probably be back at the weekend.

The wind started to get up a bit putting a nice ripple on the water, another angler turned up and set up in the swim where Bob had been fishing. I was slightly peeved at this as I felt he might catch after all the liners Bob was getting. After a lengthy chat me and Kev had with him we thought he seemed a nice bloke. Not long after we returned to our bivies my left hand rod roared off, this was the first run on the popped up bait which we had found surprising considering the amount of weed. I was soon into a good fish and it was taking line at a steady rate of knots. Suddenly it all came to a stop and we realised that the fish was weeded. The guy from the next swim said I would have to put the rod down and wait for the fish to move out. But I was having none of this as I have faith in my tackle and started to give the fish some stick it soon started to move but as soon as I got it near the bank the fish would roar of again. While all this was happening I had this bloke from the next swim saying that it could be the forty pound common, which I didn't want to hear this at this moment in time. We eventually got it in to the net Kev waited for me to get ready to weigh it, I knew it was a good fish it went 28lbs 2oz, a new personal best common.

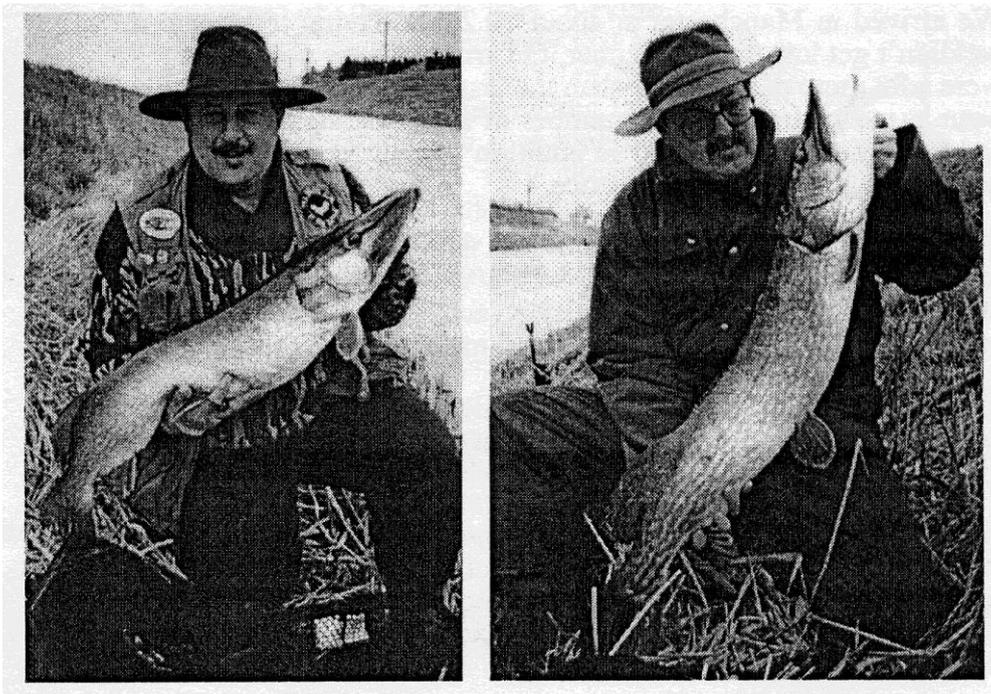
After plenty of photos we returned the fish, and took some more stick from Kev. This all took place at about 5.15pm, we had some food and drink and sat and talked. I said to Kev that all the conditions were great and he would get a fish. We turned in about 11pm and I made the mistake of telling Kev that there would be no problem if he caught a fish, as I was a light sleeper. Which turned out to be a big mistake as he hooked a big fish and screamed his lungs out, yes you guessed it, didn't hear him and he lost a big common at the net. He woke me and was not too pleased with me. I tried to apologise but I don't think he wanted to hear it. I woke the next morning and made tea as a peace offering but I could tell he was still pretty pissed off with me and so kept my distance. The next thing I knew was Kev shouting that he was in. After a good fight he started to pull the fish towards the net. I made sure that there was no mistake and properly netted the fish. I didn't want him to lose another fish, we weighed the fish that was a new PB for Kev, a mirror of 20lbs 10oz.

So I asked him "Have you forgiven me yet?" he said of course he had. The rest of the day was fishless and the weather was starting to deteriorate, the rain started and Kev, who was leaving in the morning decided to leave early. I was going to stay as I thought I still had a chance of another fish. The weather was still rough and I had no more fish. I packed up on the Sunday morning and reflected on a great week. Here's hoping that there will be many more sessions like this.

Anthony Goucher

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Small water - Big fish



These two fine 201b+ specimens came out of a small Lincolnshire drain. Neil and Chris were barely 30 yds apart and the fish barely 40 minutes apart. Although the photos do not show it, the two fish were very different. Neil's fish was long and lean whilst, Chris's was shorter and much deeper in girth (nothing to do with their captors).

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PIKING '97

Saturday 20th September 1997 dawned far too early in my house, in fact the day started before first light, the alarm woke me from my slumber at 5.30am and shortly after I set off to collect Neil.

It had taken some arranging this year but I had managed to sort out those who were going to the convention so that we were able to travel up in two cars. Chris driving one and Anthony the other. Both Neil's and my cars were out of order. A big thank you to the two of them.

Having collected Neil, we headed for Chris's house in Ickenham where we met up with Ron and Tim. Anthony had arranged to collect Peter, Bill and Jeff. We then set off independently for Manchester.

The journey was uneventful, although it seems to be never ending. We stopped for breakfast just north of Birmingham and as we walked in Anthony and the others were just walking out, small world isn't it. We were then ripped off by Granada services for the sum of £7.50 for breakfast, which was cold, I would have sent it back but we didn't have time.

We arrived in Manchester at about 10.20am having left home at 6.15, we didn't get lost this year either. On arrival it was noticeable that there were a lot more people there than the last few years. The "gremlins" had been at work already and a number of the trade stands had not shown up, for various reasons and in addition two of the advertised speakers had also pulled out at short notice.

The program of events got off on time with the opening address and an introduction to your committee. This was all done to what I would describe as an overly loud musical accompaniment. This deafening musical introduction was then used to introduce each speaker.

The first speaker of the day was Vie Bellars, I hope I look that young when I am nearly 80. He talked about his beginnings in angling and piking. Very entertaining.

There was then a short break and the next speaker was Alastair Smith, the PAC president. I missed this as I was busy in the tackle hall spending money and renewing old acquaintances. This then lead to lunch time, I did not bother to eat but had a beer in the bar with some of the lads.

After the lunch break the achievement awards were presented by Howard Yendle. It is immediately obvious that this man is used to public speaking in comparison with the other members of the committee. The award for Pike Angler of the year went to Ad Swier (a Dutch piker), this was mainly awarded, rightly so, for his work in relation to the culls in Ireland.

The award for R.O. of the year went to Tony Bolger, there was also a senior fellowship awarded to Dr. Bruno Broughton. Each made a short speech on receiving their award and Ad Swier announced that he would make a longer announcement later in the day.

It was then the turn of Eric Edwards to take the stage. He entertained us with some amazing slides of huge pike and beautiful scenery during his 'Quest for Big Pike' talk.

Next up was Derek Macdonald, self proclaimed jerk bait expert. Now this talk was arranged at short notice as a fill in for one of those that had dropped out. He was assisted in his endeavours by the managing director of Andico and it was, as far as I could see, a sales pitch for the new video and their gear. They then tried to do a question and answer forum, but he was very aggressive and "I am right". It was not worth the time and effort.

The last speaker of the day was Neville Fickling. I have seen Neville previously and he can be a bit "look how great I am". On this occasion he was not. It was an interesting talk and slide show, based around his analysing his falling catch rates. I found it very thought provoking. He also mentioned his forthcoming attempts on Canadian pike and when questioned admitted he was going to give all methods a try. It was enjoyable to see Nev on the stage and not receiving his normal barracking

This was the last speaker of the day and left only the Mega Raffle. For reasons best known to the organisers they moved everybody to the bar to draw this. I personally feel it would have been better to stay in the hall with the microphones as you could not hear anything in the bar.

After this quite a few people returned to the hall to await Ad Swier, only to be told he would not be speaking. Did he withdraw or was he withdrawn?

On this note we decided to return south arriving back at about 10pm. An enjoyable day for most, but a disappointing one for me. I expected much more for the 20th anniversary, and I suppose last year was a hard act to follow.

Dave Fish

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FIRST OF THE YEAR

Sunday October 6th dawned as another late summer day, the skies were clear and the weather forecast was for a dry day. Today was the first "fish-in" of the year and we were off to the River Rennet at Aldermaston, it had been arranged that we would all meet at the usual place and set off together for deepest Berkshire. On my arrival at 6.45am everyone was there waiting. I handed out the maps which had been kindly prepared by Trevor, he had been working in the area earlier in the week and taken the opportunity to visit and check the area out.

We set off and headed for the Reading services on the M4 as arrangements had been made to meet Chris and Ron there. On our arrival they were just returning to their car, having had breakfast, lucky sods. We then continued on our way and arrived at The Old Mill at Aldermaston at about 7.50. This was excellent timing as we had the water from Sam until 7pm. I collected the moneys in the car park and we all headed for the river. I had reduced my tackle to the absolute minimum so that I could move around easily during the day.

At first sight the river looked superb and very fishy. On closer examination it was apparent that it was very shallow but interspersed with deeper areas. There was a lot of streamer weed and over hanging trees. Everyone moved off and selected their swims, and I was really confident that we were going to have a good day (how wrong you can be). I dropped my gear in a swim and then walked most of the stretch that we had access to. Chris walked with me and we were looking for an area that was obviously deeper. We found a number of areas and started at a couple of swims just above a small inlet stream, the water depth here was about 5 feet. I put out a float legered small smelt and then got out my pole. The plan was to catch a couple of livebaits, I started getting bites straight away and these resulted in minnow after minnow, all about 2 inches in length, if you were lucky. I had bought some lighter gear with me and was intending to trot a small livebait for perch or chub, the problem was the minnows were too small. I tried 2 maggots but still the same size minnows. I tried further out and, if anything, they got smaller. In 15 minutes I had caught about 30 minnows. Neil then walked up and said he was having the same trouble, but he had also caught a crayfish. This was one of the American Signal type, and had been duly dispatched.

I then decided to go for a walk to see how the others were fairing. I left Chris watching my one rod, and walked off. Having spoken to almost everyone (there were 14 of us in all) the story was the same. Nobody had caught any pike and those fishing for the chub and barbel were being plagued by the minnows. The only two that were not catching minnows were Jason and Cecil who were lure and fly fishing respectively. There were also good numbers of the crayfish being caught.

Malc Jones thought he may have had a dropped run but was not completely convinced, and later on Neil had a take on a smelt. The bait had tooth marks in it but there was no movement of the float.

This is how the day continued. Chris and I moved a couple of times and still had nothing. Even the small trotted livebait failed, and the last swim of the day that I fished, positively screamed pike. It was a tight bend with overhanging trees and a small bay with a depth of about 6 feet on the outside and a very pronounced drop off on the inside.

At about 4.30pm I gave it best and packed up as did Chris and Neil. As we walked back many of the others had already gone home.

After dropping the gear off at the car Chris, Neil and I walked up to the Mill and paid for the tickets. Whilst there we were invited to have a look around. This we did and discovered that the day ticket only stretch above the mill included the mill pool, weir pool, mill race and a small lake in which we saw a number of carp moving around.

We spoke to a few anglers, but all came up with the same story. Although one did pass on some useful information about another venue, you will no doubt hear about this soon. An enjoyable but disappointing day, but one day I will give it another shot.

Dave Fish

Dates for your diary

Monthly meetings 1997/98

October 13th - Derek Hack, guest speaker

November 10th

December 8th

January 12th

February 9th

March 9th

April 13th

September 26th - Piking '98

Fish-Ins 1997/98 season

Oct 5th - R Kennett, Aldermaston Mill

Nov TBA - Pangbourne Lake

Nov 15/16th UKFW at Wraysbury II

June 26/27/28th 'PAC Summer Get Together' at Bluebell Lakes, Northants

All others are yet to be arranged. Where do you want to go?

Region 15 badges

These are available from Neil for just £2.50. They are the same design as the logo on the front page of DropBack. The pike's head is black with both the text and border red.