

Dropback

February 1998 - Issue 12



Joint RO
Dave Fish

Joint RO
Neil Depledge

RO's angle

I am writing this in the second week of the New Year. I look outside and again it is raining. Although it is still very mild for the time of year, and has been all winter so far, except for a very short period. The wind is also quite strong today and is putting a fair old chop on the lake at the back of my house.

Over the past couple of months I have spoken to many pike anglers and it seems that all are struggling this year, everybody is blaming the weather. I am sure that this winter in particular, the food fish are scattered far and wide, not shoaled up in the deeper areas and consequently the pike are also scattered far and wide. In addition the pike are under more pressure due to the weather, the very cold weather normally keeps the "noddies" at home. (So perhaps it's a good job that no one is catching).

I had been hoping to put in a bit more time on my piking this winter, but so far that is not to be. The Thames is up high and pushing through, and each day we seem to have more rain and by the time it fines down the pike will probably be thinking about spawning and not interested in feeding until they have finished.

In mid December we ran a junior teach-in at Brooklands Lake. It was poorly attended, but those who did turn up enjoyed themselves, even though only one pike was caught right at the last knockings and a very sad looking fish it was too.

The wheels are in motion to organise speakers etc. for the coming meetings. Unfortunately we may have a problem in this direction, as Marconi/Plessey are shutting down and moving away. This has put the future of the club in the balance and at present we may have to look for a new venue after March. If you have any sensible suggestions for a new venue, please let me know.

Dave Fish

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Oregon Catch Return

By Andy Longfellow

Andy is a friend and fellow piker who used to fish with the Region. This article first appeared on the Internet pages of UKFW. Our thanks to Andy and UKFW for allowing us to reproduce it here.

I've recently returned from a week in Oregon and thought you might be interested in my catch return for two days Sturgeon fishing.

Previous close season international forays have taken me to Holland France and the US, all of which I've thoroughly enjoyed but nothing could have prepared me for my first encounter with *Acipenser Transmontanus* (White Sturgeon). This was a trip I could not expect to undertake safely without the help of an expert, professional guide. I was given the name of Mike Lombard of Sandy, Oregon and, following a brief phone call decided to bite the financial bullet and secure his services for two days - as things turned out, I couldn't physically handle any more anyway.....

Day 1 – Chilly, overcast with light drizzle - pick up from the hotel was 0500 and we eventually left the dock at about 6:00 am. I was fishing with another hopeful called Matt and I suppose it was an hour after arriving at the “spot” that “my” rod (an ugly stik) nodded in the direction of a sturgeon

that had picked up the 4lb shad deadbait. Incidentally the lead weight was 2lbs to hold the juicy morsel on the bottom of the river which was in spate and heavily coloured. At this stage I was quite naive and took some delight at the prospect of a take. Mike picked up the rod from the grip, wound down to confirm a big fish's presence, handed me the apparatus and said "have a nice day" with a maniacal chuckle - what could he mean?

I have been thinking for a few days now how to describe the ensuing battle to you all. You've all heard the clichés – “went like a train” – “unstoppable” - etc. but they sure as hell apply in this case. The bait caster reel was loaded with 100lb braided (soon to be released) Power Pro and a 130lb hooklink terminal rig with a drag adjusted to a monster setting within minutes my arms were like jelly and I realised that any advantage I gained over the beastie was as a result of Mike's expert boatmanship. It's one thing to hold a rod and pump and another to crank in line - in my defence I am more used to winding with my right hand and this set up was, erm, arse about face if you get my drift.

Anyway to cut a long story short we eventually brought the sturgeon to the side of the boat - law prohibits beaching or landing - and with an expert twist of the pliers the barbless 9/0 steelhead hook was removed and I took Mike's estimated 265lbs as gospel. Previous PBs seem a little inadequate in this fishery! We had agreed to alternate takes and the next came to Matt and although a little smaller than mine at 250lbs fought more strongly. The next take was mine but unfortunately the Power Pro had got bedded in on the spool and the resulting crack off threw me backwards onto the bait-well housing and painfully bruised my kidneys! This did not in any way help me land my next two at 330lb and 500lbs respectively. After the 500 pounder I was seriously f* * ked and decided to call it a day. I have never been so exhausted in my life – my arms were completely useless and my kidney hurt like hell and promised more pain in the ensuing days take would be mine....gulp!! I am not ashamed to say that there were occasions over the two days that when we got tired we would hand the rod over to someone else and recover - especially if the takes came close together. The bottom line for day two was two fish (after which I cried ENUFFFFFF!) @ 300 and 350lbs respectively. I was now a confirmed basket case - no change there I hear you chant - and we then spent the rest of the day catching shad. What a pleasure it was to see the rod tip dip indicating a bite and not fearing for my life. Seriously though, I managed to get a considerably bruised groin and kidney and a severe backache. BUT I WOULDN'T HAVE MISSED IT FOR ANYTHING.

Six takes in 2 mornings for five giants - 265, 330, 500, 300, & 350 giving a total of 1745lbs. (How's my maths?) When a fish was "on", it was "all hands to the pump." What with slipping of anchors, engine control and videoing it was perhaps inevitable that the photographs were disappointing but the video footage is not half bad even if I do say so myself.

The venue was the Columbia River on the border of Washington and Oregon States and was a beautiful setting with ospreys and bald eagles flying over mountains and volcanoes.

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A Tale of Two Ambitions

I have fished regularly since I was a boy and can still remember clearly my first fish, a gudgeon, taken from the Thames at Laleham. I must have been about 7 years old at the time and the capture of that little fish meant that I too was hooked.

It is only relatively recently, perhaps the last five seasons that I have concentrated my efforts towards the capture of *Esox Lucius*. This transition was the result of two factors. Firstly, I met Chris

Sims, a fellow member of Gerrards Cross and Uxbridge Angling Club, a keen pike angler and, secondly, he introduced me to the Walton-on-Thames branch of the PAC, where I got to know a good bunch of guys with the same liking and respect for pike.

Since taking up piking seriously I have had two main ambitions, first to win the annual Gerrards Cross pike match and second to catch a fish weighing in excess of 20lbs. I have witnessed the capture of 6 20lb+ specimens, two at Llandegffedd to a husband and wife in the same boat, two taken by fishing buddy Chris Sims and two landed by Neil Depledge, but I have never experienced a fish of this size on my own tackle.

The Gerrards Cross match is fished over two legs, the first at the Broadwater and the second at Denham Lake. I have fished the match each year since I joined the club and have witnessed both Chris and Anthony Goucher winning the trophy.

This year we had a new contender for the trophy in the shape of Neil Depledge and having fished with Neil on several occasions I knew that he had the knack of finding a decent fish, especially early in the session. It came as no surprise, therefore, that within twenty minutes of the match starting on the Broadwater, Chris reported to me that Neil had banked a fish of 11lb 6oz. Anyone who is familiar with the water will know that whilst the water holds some very big fish, they are not easy to catch and blanks are common. I was pleasantly surprised, therefore, that towards the end of the morning I had a good run which, after a spirited fight, resulted in a fish of 14lb 10oz. These were the only fish caught in the match, although I did manage to land a smaller fish late in the day after the match had finished.

The second leg at Denham Lake was fished a fortnight later. There was still everything to play for as far as the water can produce numbers of fish. Although on average they are smaller in size, I was conscious that Neil needed only 3lb 5oz to take the lead. Towards lunchtime I missed a run and shortly afterwards became aware that Neil was playing a fish he had hooked on a spinnerbait. At that point I remember thinking "Oh well, there's always next year!" The fish, thankfully, only weighed 2lb 7oz; I still had 14oz to play with. We moved round to where the other participants were fishing and learned that three of them had caught a fish each the largest weighing just 6lb 12oz, and a further two fish lost. The last fifteen minutes of the match seemed more like an hour. I must have looked at my watch at least a dozen times waiting for the minutes to tick by anticipating the sound of someone's Optonic at any moment. At the end we all shook hands and one of my ambitions had at last been realised.

Following the pike match I have only managed one fish of about 10lb from the Broadwater, experiencing seven blanks in a row. I decided to try a different venue in Surrey and succeeded in banking a nice fish of 14lb 7oz. After this success I decided to have another session on the Surrey lake on the second Thursday in November. It is shallow lake with a depth of only about 3ft and as we had been having frost all week I was concerned that the cold nights might have put the fish off feeding in such shallow water. By 3-30pm I had not had a run and it was looking as though my fears had been justified. I was thinking of packing up when the line was pulled from the clip on my left hand rod and started to peel from the reel. I picked up the rod and wound down to what felt like a good fish.

The fish made a series of strong runs and it felt like it might be a good double. Another angler who had been fishing the river, having heard my Optonic, came to see what was happening and offered to net the fish for me. Unfortunately, he was wearing a pair of snow white Nike trainers which were obviously brand new and he appeared very reluctant to get them either wet or muddy. As a result he had difficulty netting the fish and twice it powered away because he failed to get the whole of the fish into the net. At the third attempt he succeeded and it was only then that I realised how big a fish

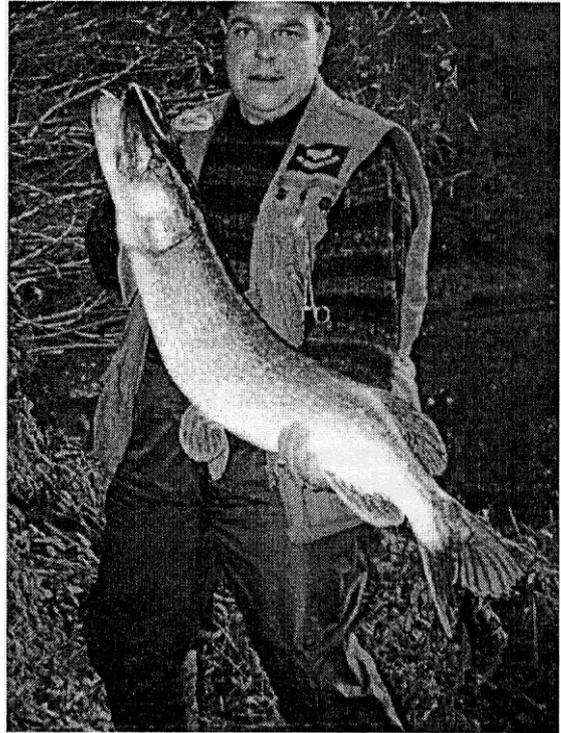
it was. Looking down at her I realised that she was bigger than any fish I had previously landed and I dared to hope that she might reach the magic figure. The hooks were quickly removed and she was gently installed in the weigh sling. The pointer on my Avons settled at 23lb 12oz. I hastily gave the chap my camera and asked him to take a few photographs to record the capture. This done I carefully returned the fish to the water where I held the fish until she recovered her strength and swam strongly away.

Ambition number two realised.

When I had the film developed I found that the first picture was very dark as my 'friend' had put his finger over the flash. The second frame was of the sky and the third was of the ground. The fourth frame showed the man himself with a very startled look on his face. These 3 were all the result of him pressing the self-timer button rather than the shutter release. The next two however, were reasonable photographs of the fish although here he managed to cut off the top of my head.

My ambition now is to just enjoy the rest of the season and hopefully catch a few nice fish.

Ron Parker



Messin' about on the River '2'

In the February edition of "DropBack" I wrote a short piece about the small dingy that Paul Smith and I had recently purchased and the fun we were having with the Pike on the Thames.

Since then we have moved on a bit and we have sold the little dingy to Neil who's not used it as yet. We are now the proud owners of a slightly larger boat which has to be transported on a trailer, but is light enough for two of you to pick up and launch from almost anywhere.

This boat has been owned previously by three other members of the region, the first was Male Jones, then Robbie Woodford and then Jett Kennett from whom we purchased it.

The boat came with oars and a cover, as well as the trailer, and is of fibreglass construction. It is single skinned, with buoyancy tanks at the front and the rear. Although the front tank has had a hatch inserted into the top of it and does not now serve as such.

The dingy is a smooth hulled displacement hull and there's a removable wooden bottom inside the boat. This is quite handy, as even when there is water in the bottom of the boat your gear stays dry, the only pain is it you drop something down the side as you can only lift out the wooded floor when the boat is completely empty.

We first used the boat exactly as we had bought it, without any modifications; there were a few bits and pieces already fitted. There were several cleats along both sides of the boat and at the front was a self locking cleat (these make it so easy to anchor up, no fiddling about tying off the rope). There was also a power cable running from inside the front locker to the rear of the boat where there were

two brass terminals, this was used by Robbie for his electric motor. A luxury we did not have at this stage. There were also various mounting brackets which Male (gadget man) Jones had fitted for his boat rests.

After our first trip out on the 16th June we decided to add a few personal touches. The rowlocks were plastic and left much to be desired, and considering that we were, at this stage, only propelling the boat by muscle power needed replacing. We tried to get hold of some thole pins so that the oars would be fixed in position, but were unsuccessful. We already had some metal rowlocks which were drilled so that a pin could be pushed through the top of it to lock the oar in, but, unfortunately, the oar was too thick and you could not get the pin through. So we adapted it and used a cable tie pushed through and tightened down and then another threaded through and up over the oar collar to lock the oars in the rowlocks. We also had to replace the rowlock mounts, this eventually involved replacing the wooden supports on each side of the boat as the original holes were too big. Paul undertook this and a very good job he did too. That was the oars sorted out. We then fitted a self locking cleat to the rear of the boat as we found that with the bigger boat you definitely needed two mud weights.

The other simple item that we fitted was some lengths of marine elastic along the inside of the gunnels on both sides at the front and the rear. This we used to hang the lures on, it made selecting and changing lures easy and also allowed them to dry out after use. This was fitted by threading the elastic through some small screw eyes and knotting the end of the elastic, very simple but very useful.

We had some good fun throughout the summer and caught plenty of fish, once again mostly on spinnerbaits, but the sport was slower than the previous year. This, I think, is mainly down to the very poor flow on the river caused by the lack of rain. Some of the weirs were virtually dry.

As the season progressed we carried out further minor modifications to make our lives easier. We are, however, still struggling with the weight of the trailer, I am convinced it is made of lead, filled with concrete or something similar.

We have now acquired a small petrol outboard which I bought off Bill Croft. He bought it at a car boot sale for next to nothing and sold it to me for the same price. The make is unknown but I was told that it is about 3HP and air cooled (this is rare). When I took it to get it serviced, the mechanic at the boatyard thought I was joking, he kept mumbling something about antiques, but they did it and it now runs like a dream and all for less than £50 including the original purchase.

With the outboard we have now explored further afield and covered new ground and new fish. It has also increased our fishing time as we do not take so long to get there once on the water.

With this slightly larger boat we are intending to try some bait fishing during the winter and also have plans to try some trolling. We have one particular swim in mind which we have managed to raise a fish from, on about five different occasions, and I would not be lying if I said that when it swam under the boat the head was one side and the tail was still out the other side. This fish has to be the biggest pike I have ever seen, and I have seen a few big pike.

I will let you know in the future how we get on.

Dave Fish

The Billingsgate Experience

On several occasions in the past I have heard Dave mention going up to Billingsgate to buy bait, but, for one reason or another, I have never managed to get there. Finally, however, we agreed a date and I set the alarm for 3-00am - Yep, that's right, 3-00am.

Just in case any of you don't know, Billingsgate is the largest fish market in England and supplies most of the south east with fish from all over the world. The modern Billingsgate market is in the centre of the docklands development area having moved from its traditional home a few years ago.

Along with Bill and Ron, I arrived at Dave's at about 3-30am and we set off to pick up Jeff and then headed east. It is strange to drive through parts of London that are normally full to bursting with traffic and pedestrians and hardly see another vehicle. However, as we neared our destination the traffic increased and by the time we pulled into the car park it was like driving in the rush hour.

The market is a huge rectangular barn of a building with fish stalls running in lanes the full length. Fish porters dressed in white coats are everywhere pulling barrow loads of fresh fish from the goods entrance to their stalls and woe betide the unwary customer who doesn't respond to a call to get out of the way. Half a hundredweight of fish and barrow can make a mess of your shins and ankles.

It is an amazing sight; there are fish from every part of the world. Simple cod and haddock from the North Sea lie side by side with giant tuna, barracuda, tilapia and salmon, as well as the most enormous prawns. The market has a simple trading rule. No fish can actually be sold before a bell is rung at 4-00am. You can, however, inspect and order your fish in advance and then collect it later and pay as you take it away. So what is the advantage of buying fish in this way?' Well, if you buy your deadbaits at your local tackle shop you probably pay £2 to £2-50 for a blast frozen pack of 2 to 5 fish depending upon species and size. Some of you, like me, have discovered that your local supermarket sells sardines, herring and mackerel at very reasonable prices - averaging about £1 per pound. But at Billingsgate we were able to buy 10 kilos of sardines for as little as £7. This works out at about 32p per pound. The added bonus is that these sardines are huge, about the size of the herring you get from the shops and they are far tougher and don't fall apart after a couple of casts. Herring and joey mackerel are slightly more expensive but are still an amazing bargain. OK, you have to buy a minimum of 10 kilos of each species but if you split the order with a couple of mates then it is no problem.

The only disappointment of the day was that we were unable to buy any smelt. One man we spoke to said that there was none to be had anywhere at the moment but he had some on order from various points in Europe. Some, I hear you say, well actually 7 tonnes was what he said. Which raises a question. What else, if anything, are smelt used for apart from pike bait? Do any of you know?

Quite what Dave's neighbours thought we were up to may never be known, but the sight of four men standing in the road wrapping over 30 kilos of dead fish in cling film at 7-00 am on a Saturday morning would probably keep psychologists in business for months.

So, if you have plenty of freezer space or can share the bait with a friend or two, I recommend that you take the trip out east. You can buy a seasons' worth of bait in one go and save yourself a lot of

money. There is, by the way, another bonus for getting up so early. Smoked salmon, giant prawns and shell fish are available at a fraction of the price you would pay in your local fishmongers.

Neil Depledge

Success in the night

After saying to Dave for months that I was going to write an article for DropBack, I felt that it was time that I did. I'm going to tell you the story of my first successful night session for river pike. The venue was the Desborough Cut at Walton-on-Thames, on Wed 2nd Nov last year.

I took a trip down there to have a look around and spoke to a couple of guys that were fishing. One said that he had caught a 28lb pike two days earlier on a livebait and the other said that he had landed a 17lb fish, also on a livebait.

So, I arranged with some friends at work to fish there on the following Friday. Five of us went, and because I can't catch livebaits to save my life I legered two deadbaits to a half sunk tree on the far bank. I was set up and fishing by about 3pm but there was no action until 9-30 that evening, when something picked up my roach and swam off with it. I wound down and struck. After a short scrap the fish was safely in the net, it weighed just over 10lb - my second double figure fish. I was well chuffed.

I recast another roach and about 2 hours later I had another run. This time a slightly longer and harder fight resulted in a fish of about 8lb, again I tired, so I decided to reel in the baits and get a couple of hours sleep.

At about 6-30 I woke up and recast to the same spot. About 3 hours later I had a DropBack and as I wound down and struck, I felt the fish but it came off straight away. Tony 2 Pike 1. I packed up a short while after this.

Since then I have had several day sessions there but I have had only one fish of about 6lb. I've also had another night session but it only produced a 4lb-er. The swim I fished was about 8ft deep and all the fish were taken on dead roach, fished on a simple free running ledger rig with a 2oz lead, size 6 trebles and 15lb mainline.

Tony Stone

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Thinking of Buying a Boat?

There are a number of our region members who now own their own boats, all of varying sizes and designs, and I am aware that there are others considering the purchase of a boat. Here are a few things to consider before you splash out your hard earned cash. In the future I will follow this up with details of all the other bits and pieces that I have found either essential or useful.

The first thing to consider before you buy your boat is where do you intend to keep it? Are you going to keep it at home? Is there room in the garage, will anyone object? Is there room along the side of the house, could I get it round the back or will I have to keep it out the front?

In the garage is ideal, out of the rain and protected from the weather. You won't have to bail out 10 gallons of icy cold water before you use it each time, but where do the kids and the wife's bicycles go, can the wife still get to the freezer and will the boat you buy fit in. the garage?

Along side your house is another option if you have room, but don't forget the grass will die and the weeds will flourish, unless you build or already have a hard stand for it.

In the rear garden is another option if you have rear or side access, maybe you could even build a canopy over the boat to keep the worst of the weather off. Again remember that the grass will die and the weeds will flourish, unless you have a hard stand.

The front garden or your parking space perhaps, if you live in accommodation that has set aside off road parking. The problems here are that everyone can see your boat, not only your neighbours (who might get a bit p***** d off with the view), but also any passing thieving b*****d. As before, the same applies about keeping it on the grass, only more importantly as if the grass dies and the weeds grow it will look even more unsightly and upset her indoors and the neighbours.

A method of security for your boat is advisable in all cases and this can range from a simple padlock on the towing socket (£10), a full hitch lock (£100) or a wheel clamp (£100). If you insure your boat, which can be done on some house contents policies, it is almost certain that if you take up the theft option they will want anti theft measures taken. This will be with an approved device and often nowadays is two approved devices. These will normally be specified as top of the range hitch locks and wheel clamps. If you can't afford to insure it, a simple method to hamper any would be thief is take the trailer wheels off (if your boat is on a trailer). It is also possible to buy a fairly cheap locking ball which goes into the hitch. If your boat is not on a trailer then a strong length of chain and a good padlock, with the chain threaded through something substantial on the boat and attached to something else, either fixed to a wall or the ground.

Another thing about insurance, if you decide to take your boat to any of the Scottish lochs or the lakes in the Lake District, when you register your boat they often ask for public liability insurance. This is often included in your boat insurance, if not you can get a copy of the Pike Anglers Club insurance which covers all paid up members.

Now we can progress to the actual boat. What type of fishing will you be doing from the boat, and what type of waters will you normally use it on? Will you normally be fishing on your own or as a pair?

If you normally fish alone then a boat of less than 12 feet in length is, I would suggest, advisable. The reasons for this are, if you are an inexperienced boater, anything bigger will be difficult to handle in the launch/retrieve and also when trying to position for anchoring. Also bigger boats are harder to row and more susceptible to the wind, and you need more room to store them.

If you normally fish as a pair, it is possible for two well organised anglers to fish safely and comfortably from a 10 foot boat. Although I would not advise Chris and Bill to take up a partnership in anything under 12 feet. The next thing to consider is the construction materials of your intended boat.

Wooden boats, I would advise you stay away from , they look nice when cared for and sit well in the water, but they need tender loving care. If kept out of water the wood dries out and shrinks and they then leak. They are also very heavy for their size.

Aluminium boats are very strong and very light for their size and although I have not used one I know of anglers who do and are very pleased. The downside of these is that they are a fairly new thing and there are not many second-hand ones around, and those that are, normally are expensive. They are very expensive to buy new.

Fibreglass boats are plentiful to buy second-hand, they require very little maintenance and can be cheap. These boats come in varying hull designs and it is a personnel choice what type you choose. Whether it be, displacement, semi displacement or a planing hull. I will explain these terms:

Displacement - this means the hull sits in the water and rides almost flat when under power, no matter what size engine is fitted.

Semi-displacement - this means the prow of the hull will rise in the water when under power

Planing - this is when the hull lifts right out of the water under power and only the very rear of the hull remains in contact with the water, this is a speed boat. It is not advisable to use a planing hull for fishing; they tend to rock about a lot as they sit on the water as opposed to in it.

The "*cathedral*" and "*tri-hull*" are variations of the planing hull and sit better on the water, the problem with these is the waves constantly slap the underside of the hull.

Mode of transport to and from the water

Almost any car is capable of towing a small boat. But to tow you require a tow bar and a light board. Both of these items can be purchased via mail order from Towsure Ltd at a very reasonable cost, you then have to either fit the tow bar yourself or pay someone else to do it. Alternatively you can employ one of the many companies listed in Yellow Pages to supply and fit one for you, at a cost of around £100. Alternatively you could, if the boat was not too big and heavy, transport it on a roof rack. The problem here tends to be getting it on and off, especially if you are on your own. The other option is to buy a large estate car or van and buy a boat that you can fit in the back.

It is often possible to buy a boat and trailer as a package, invariably this is how they are sold when new, and this is an advisable way to buy if you can. It is often difficult to find a second-hand trailer for the type of boat you have bought. You may be lucky and find a boat/trailer/engine package for sale, this is often how they are sold from new and the package is set up either to the buyers' specification or the manufacturers for the type of use the boat is going to be put to.

The Boat

Having decided what size boat will suit your purpose I would suggest you look at a few different ones before making your purchase. There are a number of new boat dealers locally and you can have a nose around their showrooms. The London Boat show is held in January, and most manufacturers have their boats on display. There are also a number of second-hand boat sales yards dotted along the River Thames. CS Marine at Runnymede is worth a look.

By now you should have a good idea of what you want. If you are buying fibreglass the things to look out for are: Osmosis (a starring of the gel coat, almost like impact shattered glass). This is important especially if the boat you are buying has been used in salt water, as if the water gets between the fibreglass layers it will separate them and this is very expensive to out right. Check the transom area at the rear, this is where the engine is mounted, look for cracks in the glass or signs of major repair. (Outboard thieves often cut the transom out with a chainsaw, and this can never be repaired properly). Most second hand boats will have little knocks and scrapes; these don't normally

have to be worried about. If there are any wood fittings on the boat ensure they are not rotten, as these all take time to repair. Check the gunwales where the rowlocks go and make sure the mounts are sound and the fibreglass is strong. That's about all for the boat, now let's look at the trailer.

The Trailer

There is very little that can go wrong with the trailer, and most things are fairly inexpensive to put right. The main thing to check is the "A" frame, the axle cross member and the two main beams that join at the hitchlock. If the trailer is galvanised so much the better. Look for any cracks around the welds. If you can, look at the trailer without the boat on. Check that the tow hitch is working properly and that the safety lock on it releases and closes. Check the wheel bearings (these soon get seized up if they are not greased regularly).

Check the suspension arms are not seized, they should move up and down freely (these are the shock absorbers for the trailer.) Check that the tyres are the same type, you can't mix cross-ply and radial tyres on the same axle. Are the tyres within the legal limit and look at the tyre walls if they are badly cracked the rubber has perished. Is there a spare tyre with the trailer, it's always worth having one.

Ask the seller if there are any accessories with the boat, ropes, anchors, a cover for the boat, fenders etc. Anything that is offered, take it.

The Outboard

Outboard engines come in all shapes and sizes. For the size of boat and use that we are going to put it, anything greater than 8 horse power would be unnecessary and on some types of boats would be dangerous.

The ideal size would be anything between 3 and 6 horsepower. The choice of makes is vast and many are produced by the same manufacturer and sold under different names. Mariner is one make that I would recommend. This is a 2 stroke engine as are most of the older outboards. This makes them all much the same. Suzuki is another make, again a 2 stroke, only with these the petrol/oil is not mixed the engine mixes it and varies depending on use. This can be a bonus when trolling under power as it prevents the spark plug oiling up. Honda and a few of the other manufacturers have in recent years produced a 4 stroke outboard engine. These do away with the plug oiling problem also, although I am told they are lot heavier than the equivalent power 2 stroke engine. The simplest outboards are without doubt the "Seagull" and these are often seen for sale at very good prices. The advantage with the smaller outboards is that the fuel tank is integral, and you don't have to worry about finding room for the separate tank.

The only way to check an outboard is to see and hear it run. You can fire it up in a dustbin full of water, when it's mounted on the boat. But the best way is put the whole lot on the water. Small outboards normally only have neutral and forward gears, to go backwards you turn the engine right around. Check for excessive smoking and noise once warmed up. Ensure that the gears work. Examine the propeller blades, the prop is made of soft alloy and easily gets damaged and is quite expensive to repair. Check the bearing on the prop as well, treat any oil leaks with suspicion. If you are happy with the package, make them an offer.

If you are looking at a boat and trailer package, ask the seller if they have an outboard and are they selling it. If not ask them what type of outboard and size they used. This will give you some idea as to what type of engine to look for in the future.

Now you have got your boat, in the next edition I will cover the other items you will need or find useful.

Dave Fish

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Dates for your diary

Monthly meetings 1998

February 9th
March 9th
April 13th
May 11th
June 8th
July 13th
August No meeting
September 14th
October 12th
November 9th
December 14th

Fish-Ins and other Events

February 14th - Davis Angling Sale, Thorpe Park
February 22nd Ardingly Reservoir
May 9th – 16th - Loch Ken
June 26-28th - PAC Summer Get Together' at Bluebell Lakes, Northants
September 26th - Piking '98, UMIST, Manchester
Oct 24th - 31st County Westmeath, Ireland

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 the text and border red.