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Tailwalker – A Boating Tale

As I sit in here in the cuddy of my boat contemplating the third day of pouring rain and still without a fish, I have been thinking about the problems that I have suffered since becoming a boat owner. I have owned “Tailwalker”, an Orkney Longliner II for about 10 years now. It is a 16ft imitation clinker built fibreglass hull, fitted with a small front cuddy. It has remote steering which is mounted on the cuddy wall. The boat is fitted with a 20HP Mariner outboard; the whole unit including the trailer dates from about 1981.

I bought the boat for the specific purpose of fishing Loch Lomond, having previously suffered the discomforts of an open boat on the Loch. (Any one who has tried the hire boats there will fully understand) It is stable and has plenty of room and the forward cuddy gives shelter from the wind and rain. This story really begins in 1991. In May of that year I took the boat to Loch Lomond with Malc Green (our ex RO) as my boat partner. I had fished the Loch many times before with Malc on his boat.

The trip was uneventful, in that there were no problems with the boat, outboard or trailer. A few fish were caught and as I recall the weather was a bit rough! On occasions so rough that the wind and waves kept forcing the boats up onto the beach at Crom Minh. The journey home was also uneventful.

The May 1992 trip was a different story! On the journey up at a point just north of Gretna Green, whilst travelling at about 60mph, in the inside lane of a dual carriageway the axle on the trailer parted company with the rest of the trailer. This resulted in the boat being dumped on the road at 60mph whilst still connected to the remainder of the trailer and the car. Fortunately I had a change of underwear to hand. I somehow managed to stop the car, with the boat and what was left of the trailer still behind. On examination the damage to the hull of the boat was quite considerable, but could have been worse if that had not been galvanised metal keel bands and rubbing strips on the underside of the hull.

The boat was laying partially on its side in the inside lane of a dual carriageway just over the crest of a hill and the axle with both wheels attached was in the outside lane about 100 yards behind us. We quickly recover the axle and dump it on the hard shoulder. How the hell do you get a 16-foot boat full of a week’s camping/fishing gear/baits and food off the tow hitch and off the road onto the hard shoulder (grass verge)? I can tell you now all those science lessons about levers, pulleys and balance are absolute b*****s. We sweated and cursed and tried everything we could think of, we managed to get the boat into the kerb, but that was it. Fortunately a coach full of rugby players stopped and with their help we got the boat off the road.

At this point a police car arrived, just what I needed. I explained what had happened and on looking around we found a length of webbing strap with a large hook on the end



(as used to secure loads), this was wrapped around the inside of the wheel hub. It would appear that the strap had flicked up from the road and wrapped itself around the hub, in doing so it had passed over the webbing strap that held the boat on the trailer. It had then become snagged in the wheel and had wound around and around, tightening all the time until something had to give. The straps were very strong, and again using principles of levers, they had snapped the welds on the cross member where it joined the main trailer frame. Talk about bad luck!

What to do now, Bill Croft has an identical boat to mine and he had left earlier in the day to go to Lomond, and should be there by now, we could borrow his trailer. What we would do then I did not know. So we loaded all the gear from the boat that was of any value into the car. Thank God I had an estate car, and set off for Lomond. After a very short distance we had to stop at a café, delayed shock had set in! After a couple of coffees, we set off again.

We arrived at Loch Lomond and pulled into the boat yard, Bill's van and trailer were in the car park, and when we looked along the bank towards the bay at Crom Minh he could be seen setting up his tent. After a quick explanation of what had happened we set off again, now with Bill's trailer. Again we got back to the boat which was, not surprisingly, still where we had left it.

We now reverted to the principles of levers, pulleys, sweat and swearing and somehow managed to get the boat from the grass verge on to the trailer, I still don't know how we managed this. After securely tying the boat on to the trailer we set off again. We had left Shepperton at about 3.30am and eventually got to Balmaha at about 10.30pm. We managed to find a B&B that had a vacancy, handily next door to the pub, we dumped the boat and trailer in the boat yard and went and had a few pints. I was absolutely knackered. On retiring to the B&B we discovered the bed had nylon sheets and the mattress was so soft it folded around you and to cap it all the room was bloody freezing, and the breakfast was crap.

We now had to decide what to do with the boat; we examined the damage, which could have been worse. There was a large hole in the outer keel on one side. We decided to attempt a temporary repair ourselves, the boatyard owners were no help what so ever! So we set off for town and returned with fibreglass matting and resin. The resin and hardener were mixed in an old baked bean tin and the matting was torn to shape, this was then applied over the hole using our hands to hold it in place (you try working with fibreglass upside down). Eventually we patched the hole as best we could; the boat had electric bilge pumps anyway.

We then retired to the pub to await the drying of the fibreglass. Many pints later and with an 'I don't care' attitude we launched the boat, it didn't sink but leaked a bit. We set up and fished for a couple of days before tackling the problem of the trailer. We managed to find an 'Indespension' dealer in Glasgow and they repaired and replaced bits until the trailer was complete. At least the whole lot was insured. We fished the rest of the week and returned home without further event. The boat was properly repaired by Bridge Marine at Walton Bridge and a fine job they did.

The May 1993 trip was to be another chapter in the story. Due to the recent unexpected death of my mother I was a little disorganised when it came to this trip but I thought I was fully prepared and had decided to fish alone on Loch Lomond for the week. I was going to travel up with my wife and son in the car and they were going to stay at relatives for the week. The journey up was uneventful and we arrived safely, the boat was launched at Balmaha and all the gear was loaded in. Could I get the outboard to start, could I heck! I checked the fuel and everything else I could think of, but to no avail. There was a spark at the plugs but it would not start. I dismantled the carb and could not see anything untoward. I put the lot back together and tried again, this time it started but fuel poured out of the engine cover. I shut the engine down and again stripped the carb but could see nothing wrong. *This was the one thing I had not done in the lead up to the trip, run up the motor to check all*

was well. I would not make this mistake again.

It was now getting late so I unloaded the boat and pulled it back out of the water. We then found a B&B in the village and called it a day. The next day was Sunday and I made enquiries at the marina in Balloch re having someone look at the motor. There were no mechanics in on the Sunday but they would be in at 8 in the morning. I arranged to take the boat in then and spent the day with my family and stayed overnight at the relatives. The next morning the boat was quickly fixed. The problem being that one of the jets was seized up, caused by the fuel evaporating and the two-stroke oil going hard as iron. I had not run the engine dry after its last use!

The remainder of the trip went without a hitch, only Bill worrying himself sick about me being on my own. I had a good week catching a few fish, including my best fish to date from Lomond, a 19lber. I also lost a very big fish around the rear anchor rope, when I could not get the mud-weight up quick enough, a disadvantage of fishing alone.

I will stop here and continue the saga in the next edition.



Night fishing for pike

Most of the pike anglers that I have spoken to have never bothered to try night fishing for pike. Most of them do not think that pike feed at night or those that have their suspicions, but can't be bothered fishing in below zero conditions because of it being uncomfortable, wet, muddy and windy. Well, I for one can tell you now, those anglers just don't know what they are missing.

I first tried piking at night about three years ago. The summer had just finished and we were just getting into autumn. The carp fishing was getting harder and my thoughts changed to pike fishing for the following weekend.

My Dad, mainly a carp angler, wanted to continue carp fishing. We arrived at the lake early one October morning for a day and night's fishing. I had a fish straight away, then nothing until the light faded and darkness set in.

About 7-00pm 'BANG', I was into a fish. I then missed a take, quickly followed by two more misses, before I hooked up again. Nothing further happened until about 2-00am when I had a tiny beep on my Optonic. A drop back started before turning into a steady run. The fish was a pretty good size and was pulling hard when the hooks came adrift. Several more takes followed but all were missed. Now you might be thinking these were eels, but eel bites are gentler with only the odd beep on the alarm. These were definitely pike takes.

At the end of October last year, my Dad dropped me off at a new lake on a Friday evening. I was fishing with his friends, all carp anglers. So I settled into a swim and waited, it was pitch black. I'd never pike fished the lake before but within 4 minutes of putting a bait out the alarm sounded. The pike tore off and the clicker on my multiplier was going like mad. Five minutes later it was in the net. I had no idea how big it was until I lifted it onto the mat. It was huge, at 18lbs 5ozs a new personal best. That night I had five more takes, I lost two after short but hard fights and missed the other three altogether. What a session!

By now you probably know my recipe for success. It is quite simple and 'deadly' on the right water. If you are fishing at a lake with three to seven feet in depth, don't and I repeat don't cast both your baits 30 to 40 yards. Cast one bait just 5 or 6 yards, the best baits being big, oily, smelly things like

sardines or herring, simply ledged on the bottom, but popped up and maybe injected with extra oil.

You can float fish with a starlight if you like, but I don't. One, because I like to have a kip in a nice warm sleeping bag and two, you could drop off and get a take, resulting in a pike needing a strong dose of Rennies.

And that's all there is to it. It's a method I've kept to myself for a long time now. So, if you're brave enough to endure a night's winter pike fishing, go for it. You won't be sorry, but the pike will.

Stephen Baverstock



My Top Lure

Like most pike anglers nowadays, I have a fair number of lures ranging from tiny spinners to large jerkbaits. But if I could pick out just one for the rest of my life, it would be the Shakespeare Anaconda. This broad headed, minnow type lure with its wide rocking action provides a nice big target for aggressive fish from Pike to Wahoo.

There are two sizes, eight weights and two different patterns. I'm using the 150mm, 40g version which dives to 4ft which is a bit of an all-rounder. It can be cast a long way, which makes it ideal for large gravel pits, reservoirs, lochs and large rivers. It would also be good for shallow to medium depth trolling. At just £6 you won't go wrong.

Steven Baverstock



And finally.....

Just a few words on the end of season fishing (other than pike) situation at the point where the Mole meets the Thames opposite Hampton Court. For the benefit of all the all-rounders in the club, I hope, for the first time in my memory the Angling Times compared this section of the Mole favourably with the Hampshire Avon and the Severn for barbel. This season has been first rate for me with at least twenty, the best 8 lbs, being banked. All were in great condition and all were caught on curried luncheon meat legered over a bed of hemp.

On the last day, when the river had fined down a bit, the bream showed up in force. They were all about 4 lbs and did they go. One angler had a good three-minute scrap on his hands and I stopped spinning to watch. He told me afterwards, "I thought it was a much bigger fish". All fish were taken on single and double red maggot, mainly on the lead but some were on the float.

In the Mole itself, the water has been like cocoa and often rushing through. When it slowed a bit, a few nice roach mixed with tiny perch were to be had on coloured maggots. As for the pike, I am convinced that they were fewer but of better quality but I don't know why this should be. So, bang goes another season. I wish you al PB's in the season to come and remember what they say in Texas, "Remember the good 'ole Mole".

CWJ White