FREE 72-PAGE BROCHURE +++ EXCLUSIVE GUIDE: BEST POLES

BEST VALUE - every week!

March 20, 2007

Angler's Mail

NEW LOOK ONLY £1.50

9 770003 324212 12

LATEST NEWS

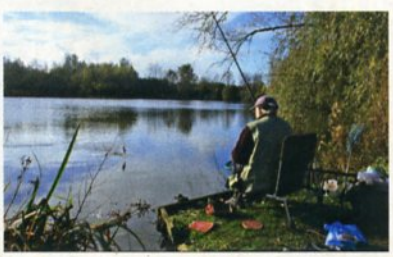
HAGGIS: it's the secret hot new bait!

ALL THE ANSWERS

MAKE CHEAP PELLETS - we show you how

WHERE TO FISH THIS WEEKEND

56 great venues open now!



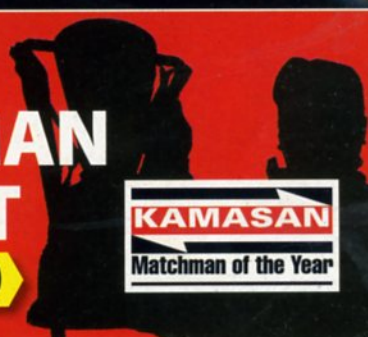
EXPOSED INSIDE »

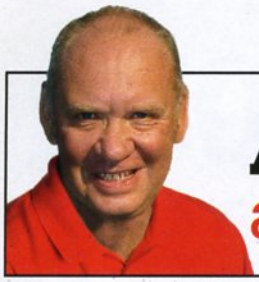
The sensational SPRING CARP METHOD

REVEALED

KAMASAN MATCHMAN OF THE YEAR RESULT

We crown the **nation's No.1** **P.60**





ANDY LITTLE'S angling adventures

The nation's No.1 all-rounder comes up trumps - usually! - wherever he goes. Photography by **Greg Meenehan**

Zander tales and mackerel tails at prolific Bury Hill

BURY HILL FISHERIES
DORKING, SURREY

Four tranquil lakes in the leafy Surrey countryside. The original Old Bury Hill lake is where Andy will be fishing, rather than Bonds, Milton or specialist carp water Temple.

THIS WEEK'S VENUE

ANDY'S AIM
Andy has teamed up with resident predator fishing instructor Eric Bailey to target zander.
A string of double-figure zander had been taken recently, so it was a chance for Andy to get in on the act.

CONDITIONS
Varied, to say the least. Bright sunshine and blue skies gave way to torrential rain, high winds and hailstones. Temperatures fluctuated dramatically throughout the day from about 12 degrees C down to about 4 degrees.

IT IS a long time since I last fished Old Bury Hill lake for zander, and going there again was like a trip down memory lane. I used to run the Predator Pro Fish courses there 13 years ago before handing over to Eric Bailey.

He has had fantastic success and probably caught more zander from the water than anyone, up to two PBs of 15 lb 15 oz each, taken several years apart.

The mild winter has made it an exceptional winter at Bury Hill for zander. Heavy rain has coloured the water, and doubles have been coming out almost every week, the best fish this season weighing 15 lb 6 oz.

This could well be beaten before the fishery brings an end to predator fishing on March 31. The zander are ready to spawn, and are carrying a lot of extra weight. I wouldn't be surprised if a lake record puts in an appearance before the close.

Eric gave me the lowdown on tactics and baits, and I couldn't quite believe what I was hearing. Small dead roach, eel chunks or lamprey have completely outfished anything else in the past, so when Eric said best bet was small tail sections of mackerel or herring, I nearly dropped the phone.

I thought he must be joking, as I have never caught a zander on a sea dead despite many attempts. It's written in zander fishing lore that sea baits are the kiss of death, but Eric said they were working a treat. He even had a theory about the zander needing more protein as spawning time approached, and so found sea baits more acceptable.

When he added that the biggest zander guard your hook bait by lying alongside of it, even moving it around, until they are ready to take it as the light levels drop, I was even more sceptical. It just had to be a wind up.

Eric reckoned it wasn't worth starting

Andy and Eric fished side by side but Eric showed the way with the first zander.

Deadbait sections have always been the best bet for zander, but mackerel is not normally on the menu.

This ain't no zander. Andy does battle with a lively pike.

Tackle-sensitive zander require a free-running rig and light tackle.

A double-figure fish as the light began to fade. At 10 lb 4 oz this was Andy's first on mackerel.

Something Andy thought he'd never see – a zed with a taste for mackerel.

Blue skies and bright sunshine, but the zander can't get a look-in with yet another pike.

Another pike! Thank goodness for new Bury Hill recruit Ken Collings to help raise a smile.

VENUE information

DESCRIPTION. A 200-year-old estate lake and three additional lakes at the end of a long avenue of rhododendrons in tranquil surroundings. Pike and zander fishing finishes on March 31.

TICKETS. £11.50 per day for one rod, £5.50 per extra rod. Boat fishing is available for an extra £5.50 per angler. Evening and concessionary tickets available. Web: www.bury-hill-fisheries.co.uk No livebaits be brought to the water. Fishing from 7.30am to dusk on weekdays and dawn to dusk at weekends.

LOCAL TACKLE SHOP. A new tackle shop offering bait has opened in the boathouse and will be fully up and running from March 31. Tel: 01306 877540.

LOCATION. Leave the M25 at Junction 9 and head south on the A24 to Dorking. Turn right onto the A25 and the fishery is one mile from the town centre on the left. Sat Nav reference: RH4 3JU.

» until about 2pm, and said he would be down then. Needless to say I was there as dawn broke loaded down with small roach and bream deadbaits, though just in case Eric wasn't pulling my leg I'd also packed small mackerel and herring.

Eric suggested we fish pegs 29 and 30 on the Long Bank, casting out about 50 yards into the channel between the bank and the island.

I set up what can only be described as fairly light barbel gear – a 1.5 lb test curve rod, 6 lb main line, very thin 10 lb wire traces and a size 10 lightweight treble with a size 6 bait-holding single.

One of the most important items of my zander kit is a very free-running leger set-up, made from a large-eyed Fox Run Ring glued into a piece of silicone sleeve that is then glued into a leger weight.

A knot protection bead is placed over the swivel that joined the main line to the wire trace.

The rods were placed on buzzers with lightweight bobbins, and the free-spool system was set at minimum resistance.

If there is one thing that is true of zander it is they dislike of any resistance when taking a bait. They will drop it if they feel anything tightening up.

It didn't take long to get the first take of the day, and it was on a mackerel tail. It felt like a big zander, but I will never know for sure because it fell off about halfway in.

Over the next couple of hours I had three takes, all on mackerel tails and all raising my expectations, but all turned out to be pike! Nice as it was to catch a few fish, pike weren't what we had come for, even though the lake holds them to 25 lb.

I was just contemplating what to do next when my old mate Ken Collings showed up. He now works at Bury Hill, running a series of matches and, while he may have changed venues, he hasn't lost his old habit of trying to wind me up.

He brought with him a hailstorm of amazing ferocity that turned the ground white at our feet while we crouched beneath my fishing umbrella. It's never a dull moment when Ken's around.

Eric appeared and dropped in next to me, casting out his mackerel tails and clipping on his lightweight indicators. Just as he'd predicted, fish started moving his baits around, giving him odd warning bleeps, until the sun had lost its strength. Then his bottle top trundled up to the butt ring, and after a short fight out came a 8 lb 8 oz zander, right on cue, and on a mackerel tail. Well I'll go to the foot of our stairs!

I wish I'd had a chance to see exactly what he had been doing, but while Eric was working his magic I had been kept busy with yet another low double-figure pike.

After our fish were returned I compared rigs with Eric and was pleased to see they were almost identical, so why was I catching pike while he had calmly nobbled a zander?

I had started considering his bait-guarding theory. We were both getting lots of what seemed to be line bites but without the lightweight bobbins rising up and down. However, Eric was adamant that you shouldn't strike or move the bait during this activity, or even

It is good to see fish like this 10 lb 4 oz zander thriving and in such good condition.

Zander are a handsome fish. This one was a plump and healthy 8 lb 8 oz.

So much hail fell that the ground around the swim turned white.

Violent hailstorms turned a sunny day into one when a brolly was essential.

reel in to re-cast, because you then have to wait for another fish to find it.

Once you have a zander guarding it, and it tends to be the big ones that do that, sit tight and wait for it to take it properly, even if that means watching it moving it from place to place for a couple of hours, giving just single bleeps.

With the temperature dropping and knowing that zander are prone to switching off in cooling weather, I wondered if my chance had gone. But just as it was getting dark I had a very twitchy, erratic take. Eric said just one word: 'Zander!'

I tightened down and pulled back and got that lovely sawing sensation on the other end that just had to be my target fish. After a short, spirited fight I slipped the net under a real chunky looking zed, my first on a sea bait, with my munched mackerel still across its jaws.

I was just putting it on the scales when my other rod was away. This gave an even better fight, and for a moment we thought I had hooked one of the real big lumps. Ken was on hand to help with the netting, and despite joking about trying to knock it off the hook he soon had my second mackerel-caught zander in the net.

What a belting brace – 9 lb 14 oz and 10 lb 4 oz – and evidence of a need to re-think my whole approach to zander fishing.

I have to thank Eric for his huge contribution towards the catch. He shared his specialist knowledge of the species selflessly, and I know I would have struggled without being tipped off about the unusual bait. It proved to me once again that time spent experimenting and exploring theories at the waterside can make all the difference to your catches.

> "My first on a sea deadbait, with my munched mackerel still across its jaws."

I want to squeeze in another couple of sessions somehow or other before the end of March, to try for one of the real monsters that Eric is sure are lurking out there.

All three zander were in immaculate condition and undoubtedly females plump with spawn. Whatever drives them to this extraordinary feeding pattern Eric sussed it out, and I'll be paying very close attention to his theories when we fish together in the future.

It may be March but Daniel Burr, from near Oxted, found this plump Bury Hill tench willing to feed.