



# Boat-fishing with Confidence

I remember back to my first boat-fishing trip on Chew Valley Lake. I had entered a Southern region eliminator, having done pretty well on my previous season of bank fishing on the venue. I tackled up and tied on my fly, and went to meet my partner for the day. I was lucky enough to draw a real gentleman of the sport, Trevor King, who now very sadly fishes only in the great fisheries in the sky.

Trevor was amazed at my set-up, but was too kind to be too denigrating about it! I caught absolutely nothing that day, and felt completely at a loss as to what I should have done differently. It seemed such a different sport to the bank fishing that I was used to.

So, where did I go wrong, and what should newcomers to this fine sport do in order to meet with some success?

Firstly, and most importantly, everyone arriving at a new venue should seek the advice or guidance of people who know and fish the water regularly. Trout-fishermen are (in most cases!) very friendly people, and they love to pass on their knowledge to newcomers. Be prepared to admit that you know very little about the venue if you are new to it, and get as much information as you can, from as many sources as possible.

The first place to seek help is obviously the tackle shop or Lodge. All of the staff are keen fishermen themselves, and really enjoy helping first-timers. Be honest and tell the guys what sort of tackle you have... they don't laugh too much (unless like me you still have a smattering of antique items that you love to use!) Be particularly careful to say what kind of fishing you are used to, and what your supply of flies is like. The method that you usually employ is probably the best one to start with...but do double-check that it will be right for the water. It is unlikely that you will need to drastically change your tackle – I have taken out people using rods rated from #3-weight, through to #9-weight, and all of them have had the chance to catch trout, even though at each extreme,

they are not the ideal weight of tackle to use. I know that Bob Handford and his staff are very good with anglers new to the venue... they really do want you to have a good day, catch fish and come back.

You can easily buy a few of the flies that are working on the lake at the time of your visit, and if you seek advice from the right locals, you may even be given a personally tied example of the top fly. I regularly have to fill my fly boxes due to giving flies away to newcomers to Chew or Blagdon, and I know many of the regulars on the scene who are like-minded in wanting to see others do well.

Check with the staff or others going out on the day of your visit if there are any hot-spots that they can let you know about. Check about any safety measures in place such as areas where it is allowable to anchor, drift, or even beach your boat. Life jackets are now obligatory on most waters in the country, and as a result most anglers who fish from boats regularly have their own, but the Company will lend you one if necessary.

Make sure that you have everything with you that you need for the day! A statement glaringly obvious, but you would be amazed how often I see anglers turn up to fish our lakes without waterproof clothing, or sunscreen, or sunglasses...the list could go on for quite some time! I will presume that you have equipment that you bank fish with, so I won't go through a list of "essentials".

To be comfortable for a day on the lake it helps to have a seat to sit on (it is frowned upon to stand whilst fishing in a

boat), and whilst there are many snazzy examples on the market (probably the best being the "Chew Valley Seat" made by local angler Dave Wheeler), if you don't know whether you are going to fish from a boat that often, a simple cushion or bit of foam is a good starting point. It is a good idea to bring drinks and food, though if you forget these, a return to the Lodge will rectify this, as snacks are generally available. Bristol Water provide landing nets if you forget to bring your own, or if it is not suitable for boat-fishing. If you wish to drift-fish, and I strongly recommend that you learn to do this, then a good quality drogue is very useful. The boats are supplied with anchors that can be useful at times, especially in windier conditions when you can find sheltered water and fish in comfort. Never anchor your boat in an area where other boats are drifting.

Everything else is common sense! I wish it were that simple though. Most accidents happen either getting into or out of a boat, so take care as you carry out this manoeuvre. If you have never used an outboard engine before ask someone how it works. The rangers are there on the jetty for that purpose. I know it is a bit embarrassing asking in front of experienced guys who look like they live in the boats, but that is better than setting off and having to be rescued if you don't really understand how it works. When you are happy with the engine, and once it no longer needs choke, you are ready to go. (see pages 16 & 17).

It is very tempting to turn the throttle round so that you head off at full speed, but rarely is that necessary. It is best to motor at a speed that enables you to chat with your companion without having to scream at the tops of your voices. It is remarkable how far sound travels over water; I have heard some really interesting conversations held by people travelling flat out, even though they may be half a mile away! On the matter of companions for the day, they are probably the most important factor in a successful day afloat. A good friend



## Practical advice from Martin Cottis

There are many rules and regulations, techniques and tactics that apply to boat fishing. Magazines and books will help you once you get to that stage, or you can seek the help of a professional; Bob Handford will pass on the names of those operating at Chew and Blagdon, some of whom advertise in this magazine.

Do give it a go, for it will really add a new dimension to your sport. If you learn to fish quietly, without rocking the boat as you cast, and without believing that you have to throw your fly to the far horizon, you will be amazed how close fish will get to your boat. Enjoy the experience; on a day of rising fish, or during that last hour of the day when the lake comes alive, it is one not to be missed.

of mine was almost put off from boat fishing because of the partner with whom he generally fished. Fortunately, he found someone else who was much better company and now looks forward to days afloat as opposed to dreading them.

If you are new to going afloat, it takes some getting used to the constant motion, especially if you drift all day. Take a break for lunch; many of the locals go round the back of Denny Island and tie up to the "Queen's Jetty", whilst others return to the Lodge.

## WOODFORD LODGE TACKLE SHOP

**W**OODFORD LODGE can supply all the needs of the reservoir trout fisherman. The well set out shop has the full range of fishing tackle a modern still water angler requires supplied by many of the sports finest manufacturers.

The shop is run by experienced fisheries staff who fish the Lakes regularly and are able to give the best information on how to fish the waters and what flies and methods to use. Over 400 different flies are on sale from the smallest nymphs and dries to large pike and predator flies.

As well as all the tackle there is a wide range of waterproof clothing, fly fisher's vests, life jackets, landing nets, bags, basses, boat seats, everything an angler needs for a day's fishing on our waters. Add to that a huge variety of fly tying materials and equipment and a range of gifts and cards.

For the pike anglers there is a full range of successful lures for use at Chew and also a selection of frozen salt water baits.

Parking is never a problem and the shop is open every day during the season from 8.30am until 5.00pm.

**Snowbee.**  **Turrall**



WATCH OUT FOR SPECIAL OFFERS AVAILABLE THROUGH THE SEASON

Many visitors to our Lakes see people fishing and think they'd like to have a try. Often they don't realise how easy it is to try fishing and how cheap a day's fishing can be. Anyone can learn to fly fish and it's not as hard as you may think. You don't need to have any tackle or expensive equipment to start with and Bristol Water supply tutors, helpers and experts to make sure that everyone can enjoy a day at the water.

#### Can anybody fish your Lakes?

Yes, anyone can fish at Chew, Blagdon, Barrow and Litton. You don't have to be a member and permits are available for the day or part day, and from boat or bank.

#### How do I start?

Well you already have by picking up and reading the Buzzer magazine. In here is all you need to know about fishing at Bristol Water fisheries.

#### Is it very expensive?

Starting off is not very expensive at all as you don't need to have any fishing tackle to learn. We supply it all free of charge with our lessons!

#### What age do I have to be?

You can learn to fly fish at any age. We will teach anyone over 12 years old. We often teach pensioners and have an increasing number of lady anglers fishing at the Lakes.

#### After I've learnt to cast how do I go fishing?

As soon as you can cast well you can try fishing. We can hire you tackle if needed. We also offer a chance of 4 hours of fishing lessons to teach you the basic fishing techniques.

#### And now I'd like to buy my own tackle.

Our tackle shop sells all you require for starting to fish. A complete outfit can be bought for as little as £100. Our expert staff will assist you to choose the best equipment for your needs and there is a special 10% reduction if you buy a rod, reel and line together.



# Anyone can fish!

Anyone can fish for trout. Getting started has never been easier. If you fancy fishing, here's how!

So you see fishing at our waters is not so difficult. It's a great pastime in the fresh air and surrounded by some of the best countryside and wildlife in the southwest. And with a little luck you can catch and take home a fresh trout for a delicious, healthy meal!

#### TUITION

Bristol Water provides a wide range of fly-casting & fly-fishing courses and tuition for the would-be fly fisher, be he or she a novice, an improver, or perhaps just someone in need of a refresher course. Our Chief Instructor, Mike Gleave, is STANIC\* qualified and a REFFIS\* guide. These nationally recognized qualifications, and his long experience both of teaching and practising the art of flyfishing, make him the ideal person to introduce newcomers to the sport.

As well as running the courses listed here, Mike is available for private instruction, and we can thoroughly recommend his services.

\*Salmon and Trout Association National Instructor's Certificate; Register of Experienced Fly Fishing Instructors and Schools.

#### CASTING TUITION

The single most important skill is learning to cast properly with a fly rod. We offer two-hour casting tuition sessions for beginners and near beginners most Saturday mornings from 11am to 1pm during the fishing season.

The cost is £10 per person; tackle is provided if needed; groups are kept small and advance booking is essential.

#### FLY FISHING TUITION

Once you can cast a reasonable line you may require further guidance on learning to fish. Once a month, normally on the last Saturday, we offer a fishing class with carefully supervised bank fishing. The four hour course also covers fly selection, entomology and safety and costs £20 per person; groups are small and advance booking is essential. Two half-price bank visits may be taken after completing this course. Boat Fishing instruction for one or two persons can also be organised. A four hour session costs £25 - the date and time to be arranged by mutual agreement with the instructor.

#### BEGINNERS' DAYS

We offer beginners a chance to try fly fishing on Saturday afternoon sessions throughout the fishing season. Here they will learn the basics of fly casting and fishing, as well as have the chance to bank fish, and if available, boat fish during the session. Tackle can be supplied and the cost is just £10.00 per person. Minimum age for juniors is 12 years. Advance booking is essential as there will be limited places on each session. Apply to Woodford Lodge.

#### FISHING BUDDIES/MENTORS

You've been on some tuition courses, you've bought an outfit, and you've been bank fishing on your own a couple of times, *but you haven't caught anything yet, and you're not sure what you might be doing wrong?*

This is a common problem for beginners, and in order to help out we are setting up a register of experienced fly fishers who are available to accompany novices on their first few outings and 'show them the ropes'. If you are interested, contact us at Woodford Lodge and we'll put you in contact with a suitable 'buddy'.

If you would like to join the Fishing Buddy Register and offer your expertise to beginners we'd like to hear from you at Woodford Lodge.



## "Fish with the England Team Captain"



John Horsey has been the Resident Professional Guide at Chew Valley and Blagdon Lakes for the past 13 years. He is the only angler ever to have been appointed Captain of England at all four disciplines; World Team, European Team, Loch Style and Rivers.

A visit to Chew Valley and Blagdon Lakes can be a challenging, if not daunting prospect at times. Both are huge expanses of open water that contain plenty of hidden features, such as sunken islands, secluded bays and miles of tree-lined banks.

Knowing where to fish, what flies to use and which tactics to employ, are three of the essential ingredients for success. A day with John can also help you to improve existing skills, learn new techniques and thereby achieve more consistent results!

Why not enlist the services of England's Team Captain and let him show you the best way to fish Chew Valley and Blagdon Lakes.

#### \*\*NEW\*\* ... PIKE ON THE FLY!

During the past few years, John has fished extensively for pike using modified fly fishing tackle. He has now extended his Guiding Services to include pike fishing and he can supply all the necessary equipment to cope with these wild and sometimes huge "toothy critters"!



One of John's clients, Derbyshire County cricketer Christopher Bassano with a 20lb Chew Valley pike.

#### PRICES

From £160.00 per Boat per day (1 or 2 rods)

GIFT VOUCHERS AVAILABLE

Tel: 01761 490367

Mobile: 0797 4748496

WebSite: [www.johnhorsey.co.uk](http://www.johnhorsey.co.uk)

Email: [john@johnhorsey.co.uk](mailto:john@johnhorsey.co.uk)