



# PIKER'S DIARY

**THIS WEEK:** Midlands specialist Andy Black recalls a recent session.

# Piking on the cut

**CANALS** can be funny places to fish - long and featureless with vast areas often seemingly devoid of fish. But they can also be quite productive as my Piker's Diary partner-in-crime Ant Glascoe has proved in recent months with fish to over 27 lb!

For my latest session I decided to give a canal a crack too, and opted for the Gloucester Canal which is long and deep, and has done a few big pike in the past. I was greeted with high pressure, clear skies and sunshine, not the best fishing weather but, as the water was coloured, I was still quite hopeful of catching.

I decided to fish the canal for a couple of days to maximise my chances as I don't know the water that well, having only fished here a few times in the past. I had a plan that on the first day I'd walk the banks and chuck out a few jigs to find where the fish are

held up. Then the next day I'd concentrate on the fish holding spots with deadbaits.

I chose an area with numerous moored boats as it's important that you find features on a water like this. I know from past experience that this area has some good pike, and there's potential for zander and perch too.

As the water is quite muddy and churned up because of the boat traffic, I used a small 4 in. yellow Mann's Shad - the size is a good compromise for catching all three species.

I had a few casts in each likely-looking place, making sure the lure hopped along the bottom enchantingly. As I let the jig freefall down the far drop-off, suddenly I felt a light tap on the rod and after a quick strike I was in to a small zander, around 5 lb, for a nice start. I had a few more casts to exactly



I use lures to try and identify a possible fish holding area that may be worth returning to with deadbait rods.

the same spot, and had a few more zander around the same size, but then it went dead so I moved swims.

In the next swim, I had a hit straight away which felt like a better fish. It was soon in the margins, wafting up loads of mud and silt, before a nice pike of around 12 lb emerged.

On the next cast I felt my jig bouncing off something on the drop down, and then again on the next cast. Could there have been a shoal of bream?

A couple more small jacks are all that I managed, but at least I knew there were some fish present, and it's clear that there are a lot of baitfish here, as some started rolling on the top once the light faded.

Before I left, I returned to the car and pre-baited the swim with some chopped up deadbaits for the following day.

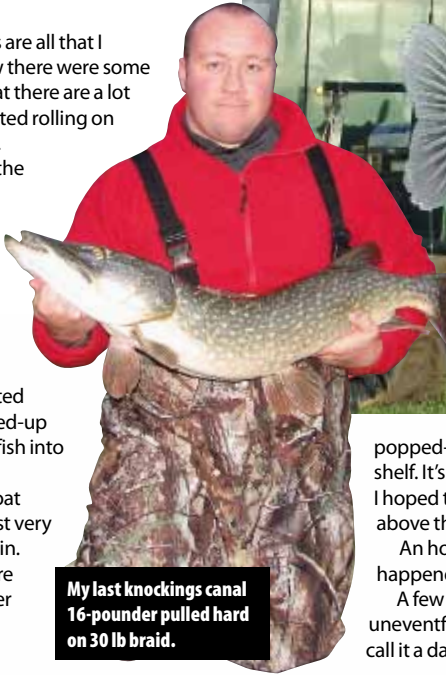
**Deadbait comes alive**

RETURNING to the area I baited up, I was hopeful the chopped-up fish have drawn a few more fish into the area.

I used my Greys Prowla boat rods as you don't need to cast very far on a canal and the 10 ft 6 in. rods are ideal as I find they are not as cumbersome as longer rods.

I quickly presented two

One of my lure caught zeds, they're always very welcome.



My last knockings canal 16-pounder pulled hard on 30 lb braid.

popped-up mackerel baits to the far shelf. It's quite deep here at 15 ft and I hoped the bait would waft around above the pre-bait enticingly.

An hour later and nothing had happened - oh dear!

A few more hours passed uneventfully and I was just about to call it a day, when suddenly one float

bobs on the surface. I quickly wound down tight and then struck into a fish. The fish answered back by swimming straight towards the nearest boat on the left, and it took all the strength of the 30 lb Power Pro braid to keep it from going under it.

With the rod tip thrust under the water, I kept the pressure on and managed to bring the fish quickly to the net. It was not a monster but, at just over 16 lb, it was well earned and a good fish to end the day on.



I TRAVEL light when I'm canal fishing even when deadbaiting. I use boat rods but no rod rests as I rely on floats for bite indication.



**BONUS BIG GIRL**

LAST week I was privileged to be invited to fish a Staffordshire reservoir that's only open for a few days each year.

Suspecting the fish to be in deep water, my boat partner Gordy Howes, from Cambridgeshire, and I both opted to target a large drop-off that we found in 35 ft to 45 ft of water.

I decided to fish with a large Chartreuse Manns shad with a 50 gr jig head to make sure it stayed down deep, and let the wind push the boat along to work the lure.

After about 50 yards I gave the rod a quick flick and a fish took it straight away. After a hectic deepwater fight, as the boat was blown about in the monsoon we were experiencing, I managed to get it to the boat and Gordy got her in the net first attempt.

At 27 lb 4 oz it's my tenth 20-pounder of the season, and my largest of the season so far. That'll do nicely!