

Pike Anglers Club of Great Britain



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Deadbait trolling by Phil Wakeford

If you pursue your pike fishing on small waters or from the bank as I did for many years on the gravel pits of the Thames Valley then this article will not be of direct use to you. On the other hand if you are one of those hardy souls who venture out onto big waters in a boat then it may be that you can utilise the rig or have encountered similar problems and come up with your own solution. In which case why not reciprocate and let us know?

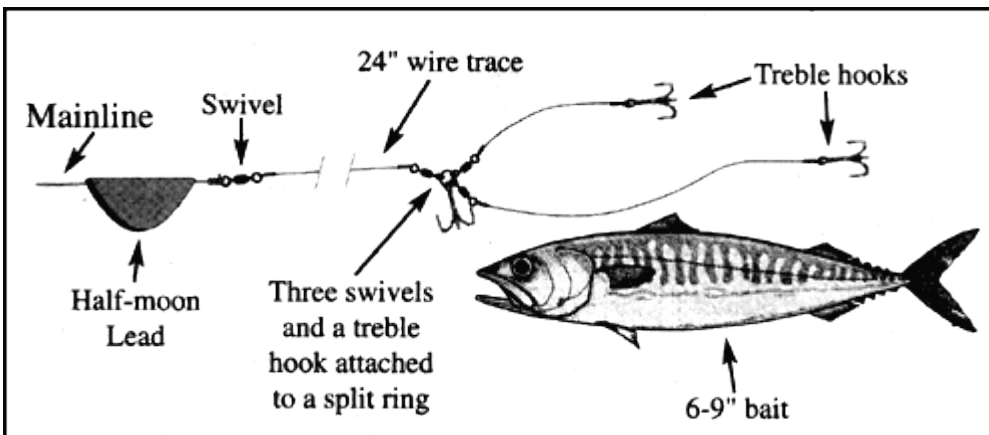
For some years now I have been making regular visits to the Irish Republic to fish the incomparable Loughs of the Midlands and West. Depending upon conditions and time of year the fish may be widely dispersed and to maximise your chances of success what better method than to "go on the troll?" There are many variations of the method using lures or bait, floats, leads or down-riggers but here I am talking about trolling with dead-baits.



The waters in question have something in common and that is that they are wild, rugged places. Trolling them all day will see you cover many miles either on the oars or motor and your rig will take a battering as it comes into contact with a variety of stones, boulders and rocks. Often the rod will arc around in a satisfying curve but your excitement is short lived as you realise that you have snagged the bottom. Maybe you have to back the boat up to get a direct pull or a different angle but providing you are using adequate (and I mean "heavy") tackle you will pull out. Adequate tackle for this type of fishing is 20 pound mono or 40 pound plus braid, 30 pound trace wire with fittings to match and fairly big, strong hooks. Upon retrieval ALWAYS check the terminal rig and especially the hooks. With modern chemically sharpened hooks like Gamatsu the point can easily get turned over or burred and depending upon the temper of the wire used they can either start to open out or sometimes break off. It pays to have a sharpening stone to hand as well as forceps or long nosed pliers to carry out running repairs but that is not always sufficient.

You should never hold back from putting a new trace on because the next fish you hook could be the stuff of legends! If you are ever over Cornamona way then take a look at the cased 49 pounder in O'Malley's Bar which is an absolute beast of 53 inches long, caught on a long line from the Corrib. Imagine what such a fish would fight like if you were fortunate enough to hook it. Think of the doubts that would go through your mind if you had just bent a hook into shape with pliers and the nightmares that would ensue should your laziness result in you losing your prize! Enough said?

Back to the trace again. If you are using standard snap tackles and one composite piece of it is damaged then you will have to remake the whole thing. This led me to break down the rig as follows.



To use the rig the lead treble is hooked through the bait's lips or into the head to get a firm hold. The other hooks are placed on opposite flanks, one about a third along and the other two thirds so that when a decent sized pike hits the bait the chances are that it will grab some metal along with the flesh. The beauty of this trace is that any

composite part can be replaced in seconds be it a twisted piece of trace wire or a damaged hook or strained swivel. Spare pieces are made up and kept to hand. This not only increases your productive fishing time but means that because it is so easy to snap on a replacement part then you are not tempted to cut corners and say "that will do". A lot of fishing that I have personally done with the rig is with two anglers sharing a boat using

a single rod each which is held. The boat is under power and speed is varied to suit the depth of water as shown by a fish finder. A variety of fish holding structures and other features are trolled such as points, drop-offs and weed beds though sometimes catches are made inexplicably in open water. Takes are often savage affairs though not always. It is a matter of personal choice whether to strike immediately or give a few seconds and a little slack line but most times the fish is either hooked or lost in an instant. We console ourselves by putting lost fish down to being small and when you see the impressive maw of a 20 pound fish or better you can see that they are well equipped to engulf even a hefty bait "in one".

I must offer a word of warning at this stage not under any circumstances to use the rig (as shown) for static dead-baiting. A pike swallowing three big barbed trebles would present a big problem for both the angler and the fish. So if you rest up in a likely looking bay to take a rest from your trolling then please revert to the standard two hook trace and mount the bait tail up.

There you have it then a versatile, modular rig for use when trolling dead-baits. Though I have seen variations on the same theme by anglers such as Bill Winship this particular rig was developed in stages literally on the water and has proved itself many times with some impressive catches and you never know it might do the same for you!

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