

Wreck Fishing

The early 1970's saw an explosion of anglers all keen to sample some of the fantastic catches that were being reported in the angling press,

Skippers of Licensed Commercial fishing boats were finding it more lucrative to take a party of anglers wreck fishing than it was catching & selling the fish themselves,

In those early years wreck fishing was simply a matter of getting on or near a wreck, lowering a bait to the bottom and bingo! fish were so prolific that anglers could have a bumper catch regardless of their skill or tackle used,

The Inshore wrecks were soon plundered to death and so it was that a new breed of charter skipper evolved, one that was prepared to invest in faster boats and go longer distances to find the better fishing,

At the same time tackle starting evolving and in 1973 one of the first innovations on the market was the Eddystone eel, The Original Eddystone was the fore runner to the many variations of lures that adorn the groaning shelves of our local tackle shop today,

However, The concept still stands true today as it did back in the 70's, That is that the artificial lure should as close as possible imitate the natural prey that our target species are feeding on,

As a charter boat skipper I often despair at the equipment that some anglers bring with them when we go wrecking,

Old fashioned "broom handle" rods fitted with equally old fashioned reels filled with heavy mono line,

The old adage that "You only get out what you put in" seems to be a fair analogy,

If you borrow your dads 30 year old rod and reel (or even if you are dad, and still using it!) and then expect to catch as many fish as someone who has sourced themselves a nice tippy 20lb class rod fitted with a silky smooth lever drag reel loaded with good quality 30lb braid line, then I am afraid you are in for a very rude awakening!

Whilst your gear is streaming out behind the boat and nowhere near the wreck, the guy next to you with the modern tackle is continuing to fish close to the wreck, and, with less lead than you are using, as a direct consequence he is catching and you are not!

Also by now you have realised that this guy rarely snags the wreck, You on the other hand seem to be unable to get your lure even close to it without snagging and losing the terminal tackle, eventually frustration gets the better of you and you resign yourself to sitting and watching (usually because you have lost all your gear)

The problem is that by the time you "feel" the wreck on your stretchy mono line it is already too late to react and you are resigned to hanging on until the line parts (again), The guy with the braid line can feel every twitch and tap on his rod and is able to react in time before his gear is snagged in the wreck.

Luckily on Lady Godiva we are now able to offer a suitable alternative to your 1960's tackle,

We have an extensive range of rods, reels and terminal tackle on board Lady Godiva for our anglers to try out

So instead of dusting off that old rod & reel that you were planning to use on your wreck fishing trip, just give me a call to arrange a free trial of our superb tackle.

If you are contemplating a wreck fishing expedition and have no experience in this field then read on,

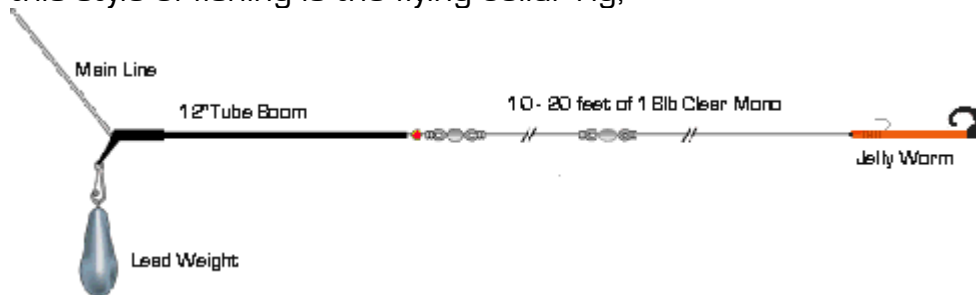
Wreck fishing can be divided into two categories:

Drift fishing and Anchored fishing,

Lets deal with the most popular first;

Drift fishing

Drift fishing is exactly what it sounds like, drifting over a wreck and trying to catch fish close to and on the wreck itself, One of the most successful rigs for this style of fishing is the flying collar rig,



This illustration shows a standard flying collar rig with a Jelly Worm attached, although it is equally effective with a Shad, Eddystone eel or even bait,

The method,

When the boat is uptide of the wreck, lower the rig carefully (so as not to tangle) to the seabed, as the boat drifts toward the wreck you should wind in on the reel at a nice constant rate avoiding any jerky motion and more importantly counting as you go, when you have turned the reel handle say, 25 turns, Stop, and lower the rig back down to the seabed, continue doing this until your skipper tells you to wind in so that he can drive back uptide to start a new drift,

If you feel a fish plucking at the lure DO NOT STOP WINDING just carry on as if nothing had happened, when the fish takes the lure properly it will instinctively dive for the wreck and in doing so will hook itself,

At this point you should lift the rod tip and let the tip of the rod absorb the shock from the fish shaking its head, and, let the reel drag do its job by slipping when the fish does one of its crash dives,

Take your time, enjoy the fight and, hopefully, victory will be yours, If you were counting then you will now have a good idea at what depth the fish are feeding and on the next drift you will be ready for them,

There are several variations that you can try on this rig, you can try a faster or slower retrieve rate, you could try winding in only 10 turns before dropping back or, try winding in 50 turns,

You could try different coloured lures, a longer leader length (or shorter), a heavier or lighter lead, or even try two lures on the same leader, The permutations are endless,

In more recent years we have have been using a new variation which we have called the hopper rig, this is a flying collar rig with a short leader (2 -3 feet) and a leaded shad attached, instead of retrieving we bounce (Hop) the shad along the seabed and over the wreck in an attempt to specifically target Cod, once again this rig can occasionally be very effective.

Another rig for drift fishing (although not as popular) is the Killer Rig,

This is basically a straight line rig with a Pirk at the bottom and one or two Jelly worms or Muppets at approx. 18" intervals above the Pirk, The Pirk is often a home made affair being a short (8" or so) length of chromed bar with a treble hook attached at the bottom, Muppets are brightly coloured plastic lures that imitate a squid,

The method is monotonously simple, you just lower the rig to the seabed and proceed to jig it with long up and down sweeps of the rod tip, this method can be productive on occasions but often accounts for foul hooked fish, also, if the rig manages to catch a fish on each lure, the result is often a parted line leaving the fish tethered together to die a lingering death.



Anchored Fishing

When the tide has slackened sufficiently your skipper will often elect to put the anchor down and settle the boat a short distance uptide of the wreck,

The main target species at slack water are usually Conger Eels and Ling, Both of these species possess a set of very sharp teeth and are often much bigger than the species encountered when drift fishing, Consequently it would be prudent to use heavier tackle to target these fish and especially in the case of Conger Eels, A 50lb class rod fitted with a large lever drag multiplier reel loaded with 50 - 80lb braid is the norm, hook traces should be mono line around 200 - 300lb breaking strain and a strong 8/0 O'Shaughnessy hook completes the rig,

Whole fillets of mackerel, Squid or Cuttlefish are typical baits and should fished on a short running leger rig,

Bites will at first be slow in coming until the scent from your bait has drifted downtide to the wreck and coaxed the fish out to investigate, bites can be very very gentle almost imperceptible from Congers they tend to gently mouth the bait until they have gained enough confidence to take it completely, Don't forget that Conger Eels are not accustomed to finding nicely prepared fillets of Mackerel lying around on the sea bed!

On feeling the weight of the lead they will dash for the sanctity of the wreck, this is when you have to hang on to your rod and let battle commence,

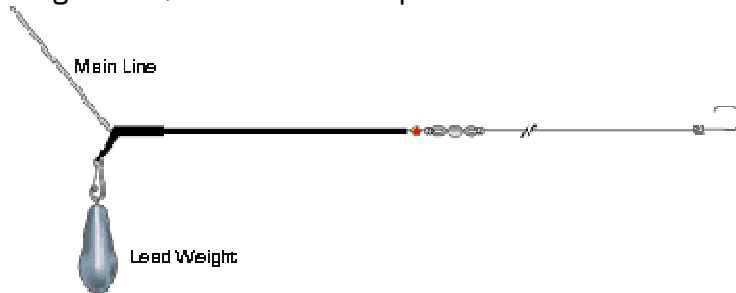
The conger can swim as strongly backwards as he can forwards and it is this capability that makes him so difficult to fight, even when you have him at the side of the boat he still has one more trick up his sleeve and that is the power spin, He will test your swivels to the limit as he spins around and around and it is here at the side of the boat where most Congers win the battle, The best tactic is to tire him out in mid water and only let him see the boat when he has given up,

Like me, most Charter Boat skippers will insist on releasing the fish in the water rather than stressing them out by hauling them over the gunwales, However, If you do want to take one home for the table please take a small one say 15 - 20lbs as these make better eating than the larger specimens,

Ling on the other hand will attack your bait with gusto and is very much a smash and grab affair, the fight will be hectic at first but less dogged as the fish starts to suffer from the effects of decompression, by the time he is on the surface he is to all intents and purposes, Finished.

One word of warning if you handle a Ling, He has a set of teeth almost identical to that of the Pike and like the Pike he has an anticoagulant coating on them which means that if you scratch yourself on them you will bleed for hours,
You have been warned!

Other species that you are likely to encounter at anchor are Cod, Pouting, Anglerfish, Turbot and Tope to mention but a few.



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