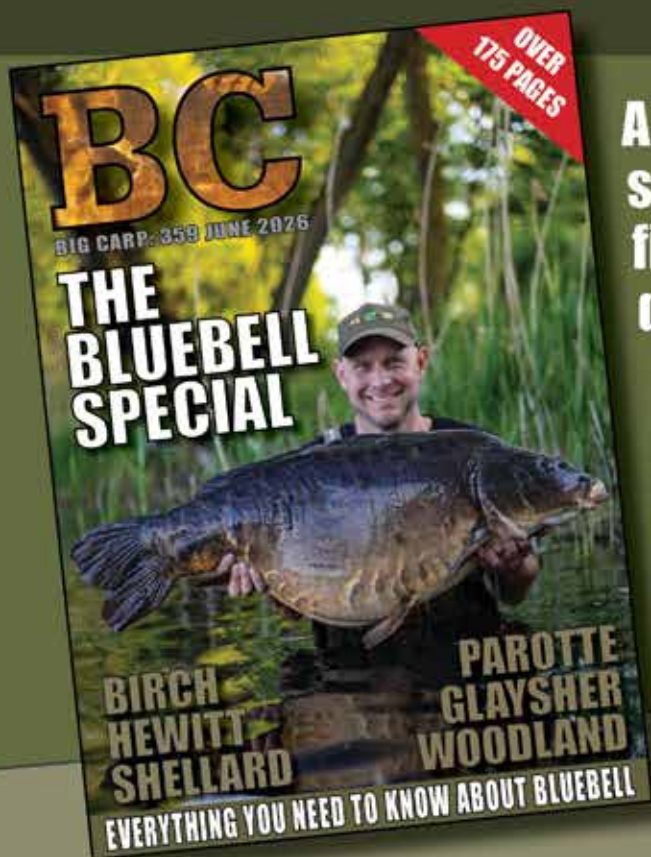


# JUNE ISSUES OF **BIG CARP** & **FREELINE** MAGAZINES - FREE HERE:

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A Bluebell Lakes special featuring some of the best anglers to have fished the water over the last 3 decades



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# BIG CARP READERS TOP TENS !!

## TOP 10 DAY TICKET CARP WATERS

1	BLUEBELL LAKES
2	LINEAR FISHERIES
3	SANDHURST
4	FARLOWS LAKE
5	COKING FARM
6	NORTON DISNEY
7	OAK LAKES FISHERY
8	BERNERS HALL
9	CEFN MABLY
10	CROMWELL

## TOP 10 FRENCH HOLIDAY VENUES

1	IKTUS
2	ABBAY LAKES
3	CRETE LAKES
4	BRITTANY FOREST
5	GIGANTICA
6	RAINBOW
7	THE AQUARIUM
8	DREAM LAKES
9	FISHABIL
10	RIBIERE

## TOP 10 BAIT COMPANIES

1	MAINLINE BAITS
2	STICKY BAITS
3	DYNAMITE BAITS
4	CC MOORE
5	TARGET BAITS
6	NUTRABAITS
7	DNA BAITS
8	URBAN BAITS
9	DAVE MALLIN BAITS
10	GOODZ CARP BAITS



## TOP 10 END TACKLE COMPANIES

1	ESP
2	KORDA
3	FOX
4	THINKING ANGLERS
5	GARDNER
6	TRAKKER
7	BANK TACKLE
8	NASH TACKLE
9	CARP ONLINE
10	AVID

## TOP 10 CARP FISHING BRANDS

1	DAIWA
2	SHIMANO
3	REUBEN HEATON
4	SOLAR
5	JAG
6	FREESPIRIT
7	FOX
8	TRAKKER
9	CHILTERN RODS
10	KUDOS

## TOP 10 CARP TACKLE SHOPS

1	JOHNSON ROSS
2	THE TACKLE BOX
3	YATELEY ANGLING CENTRE
4	ANGLING DIRECT NORWICH
5	POINGDESTRES
6	KESWALLS
7	ANGLING DIRECT BIRMINGHAM
8	ANGLING DIRECT SIMPSONS
9	TACKLE UP
10	ANGLING DIRECT CHELMSFORD

## TOP 10 ICONIC CARP LAKES

1	REDMIRE
2	YATELEY
3	WRAYSBURY
4	SAVAY
5	FOX POOL
6	HORTON
7	CASSIEN
8	LINCHHILL
9	ROACH PIT
10	JOHNSON'S RAILWAY

# BC

BIG CARP: 359 JUNE 2026

## THE BLUEBELL SPECIAL

OVER  
175 PAGES



BIRCH  
HEWITT  
SHELLARD

PAROTTE  
GLAYSHER  
WOODLAND

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT BLUEBELL

# WHY TRITIUM WATCHES ARE EASIER TO READ IN THE DARK

## WHY SPEED OF TIME READING MATTERS

Does it actually matter how quickly you can read a watch? For most people on a sunny afternoon, no. Shift the scenario and the answer changes completely. A dark ward at three in the morning, a timed ascent during a night dive, a coordinated field movement where everyone acts at the same second. In those situations, low light watch readability stops being a specification and starts being a real variable.

Overlooked because it seems trivial, that extra moment to locate a dial in darkness isn't trivial when it compounds. Two or three extra seconds of searching per time check, rotating the wrist, catching ambient light, squinting at a barely-there glow, accumulates across a shift or an operation. Those seconds are attention. And attention is finite, particularly when conditions are already demanding.



MX10 HORIZON

## HOW THE BRAIN PROCESSES LOW-LIGHT CONTRAST

Colour perception drops off in dim conditions. What the visual system leans



ALPHA HORIZON

on instead is contrast, the difference in brightness between an object and its background, to make sense of what it's seeing.

Clock faces are patterns the brain has processed thousands of times. Given sufficient contrast between illuminated elements and a dark surround, interpretation happens almost automatically. Hands, markers, their relationship, it resolves fast.

Strip that contrast away and automatic recognition breaks down. Instead of completing a familiar pattern the moment you raise your wrist, the brain has to search for the elements first. That searching is the delay. Brief, but real, and it costs time and focus.

With a tritium dial, the contrast is already there. Watch contrast in low light is the mechanism, and with tritium it's a constant rather than a variable. Luminous markers and hands sit against a dark dial with steady, consistent illumination. Our design approach starts from this point: darkness readability shouldn't depend on conditions. Give the eye what it needs immediately, every time.

## INSTANT RECOGNITION VS SEARCHING FOR HANDS

Here's what searching for watch hands in the dark actually looks like. Wrist up, dial barely lit, a lume coating that charged in daylight but faded hours ago. You tilt the watch, trying to catch ambient light. Rotate slightly. Squint. Eventually you get a reading. Total time: three to five seconds, depending on conditions.

That's the searching penalty. Minor in isolation. Costly in context.

Timing a dive ascent, those seconds of uncertainty matter. Handing over at the end of a night shift when someone needs a precise time, fumbling a dark dial is a small inefficiency that multiplies. When stress is already narrowing your focus, adding a visual search task is friction you don't need.

Watch hand recognition in darkness should take under a second. Instant dial contrast achieves that consistently, every wrist raise, without adjustment. Not just that one glows longer: one is reliably readable on the first attempt, every time. Consistently. That difference is what separates tritium from traditional lume.

Our MX10 was designed around this. Dial clarity under any lighting condition wasn't incidental to its brief. It was the brief.



[READ THE FULL ARTICLE >](#)

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THE ORIGINAL BRITISH TRITIUM WATCH COMPANY



NITE

WATCHES

NITE MAVERICK  
ENDURANCE ATHLETE  
**GARETH DE LA TORRE**

WEARS THE HAWK



★ Trustpilot

Reviews 5,768 • Excellent



## PROVEN THROUGH PASSION

For the past year, Gareth De La Torre, Endurance Athlete, Author & Charity Fundraiser has tested his HAWK watch on some of the UK's toughest endurance events, running, rucking, climbing. He'll be participating in this years TCS London Marathon, raising funds for the Royal Marines Charity, wearing military boots and carrying 40lbs!

Has his HAWK let him down?... NO

Nite watches are continuously put to the test by our Mavericks and come with a 5 Year Warranty, Swiss movements, super bright tritium illumination and most importantly a build quality that is designed to be used and abused by those who live for the outdoors.



SWISS-MADE  
MOVEMENT



TRITIUM  
ILLUMINATION



SAPPHIRE  
CRYSTAL



5 YEAR  
WARRANTY

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# CONTENTS

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BIG CARP 359:  
June 2026

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Publications 2026



Front Cover:  
Kev Hewitt with one of  
Bluebell's finest mirrors



Welcome to this special bumper addition all about Bluebell lakes near Peterborough. Bluebell has consistently produced some of the UK best looking and best known carp with Benson the common even making the national news. Even as we put this issue together the amount of stunning mirrors and commons amazed us still.

The complex has been a magnet for many of the UK's best carp anglers. The added beauty of Bluebell is that it is a day ticket venue that anyone can come and have a go at the incredible stock across all the lakes. Many a UK PB has been broken here. There's even a cafe and tackle shop on site. Everything you could need for a successful campaign is on tap. The bailiff team are always on hand to help out and make you visit a memorable one.

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DEALS**

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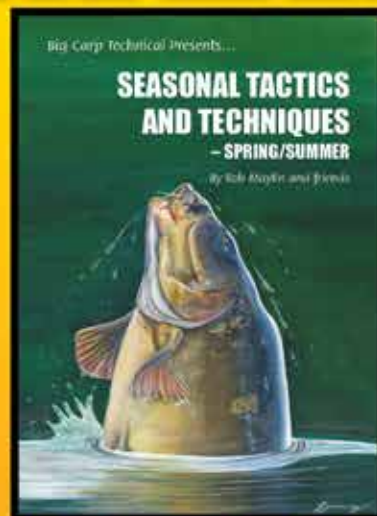
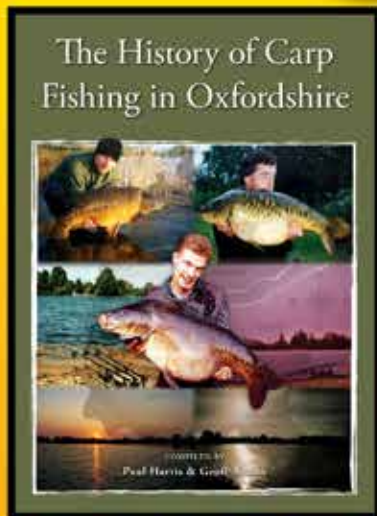
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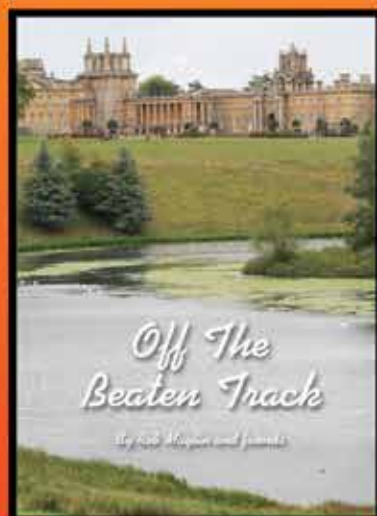
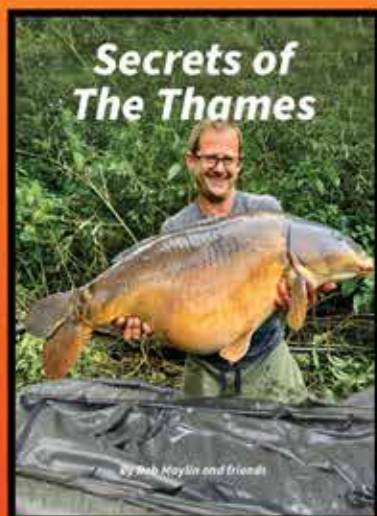
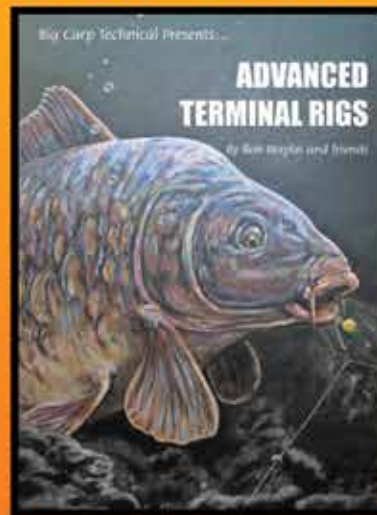
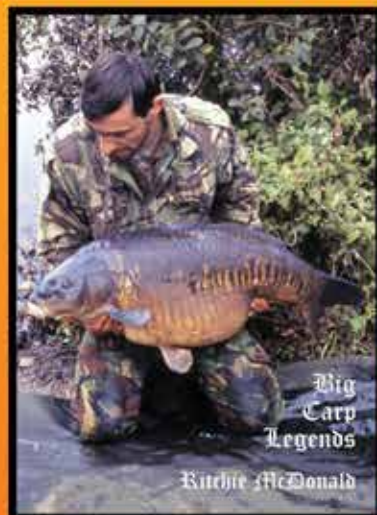
Rob Maylin

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# SUMMER S

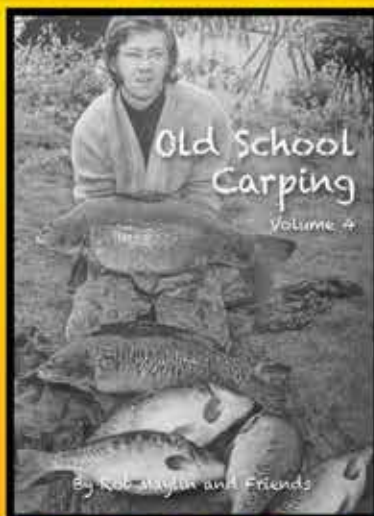
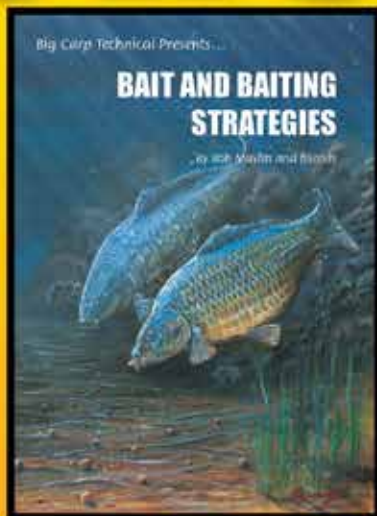


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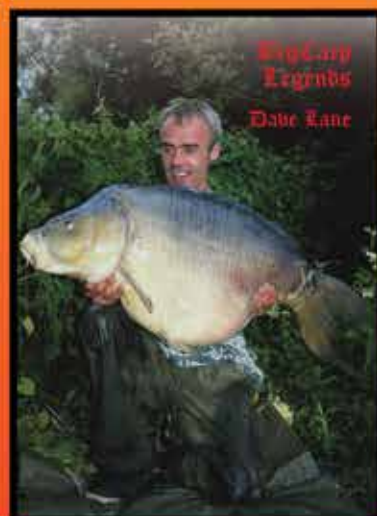
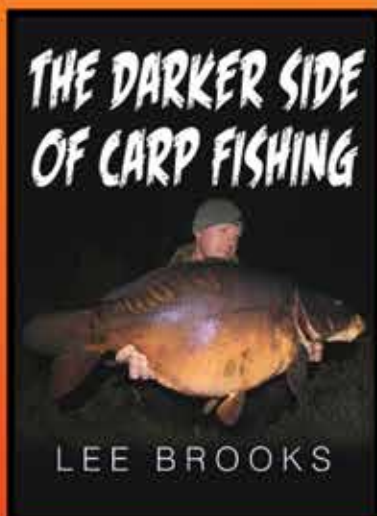
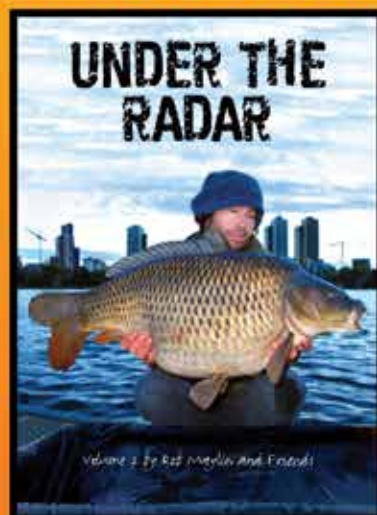
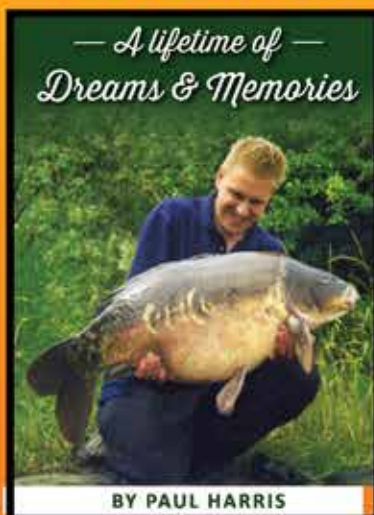
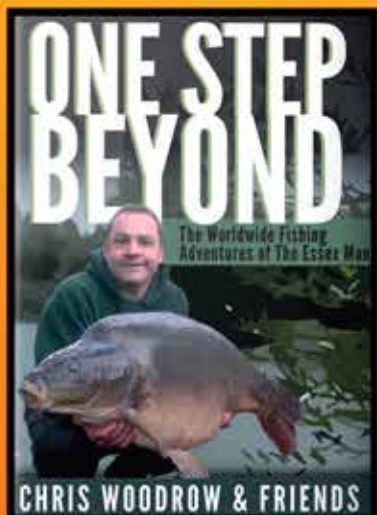


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NEW AND OLD BOOKS: [WWW.EBAY.C](http://WWW.EBAY.C)

# CORCHERS



AND GET READY FOR SUMMER ACTION



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# SHOCKLEADER

## EA CRACK DOWN ON ILLEGAL ANGLING



We've been back at Attenborough Nature Reserve following reports of individuals fishing illegally.

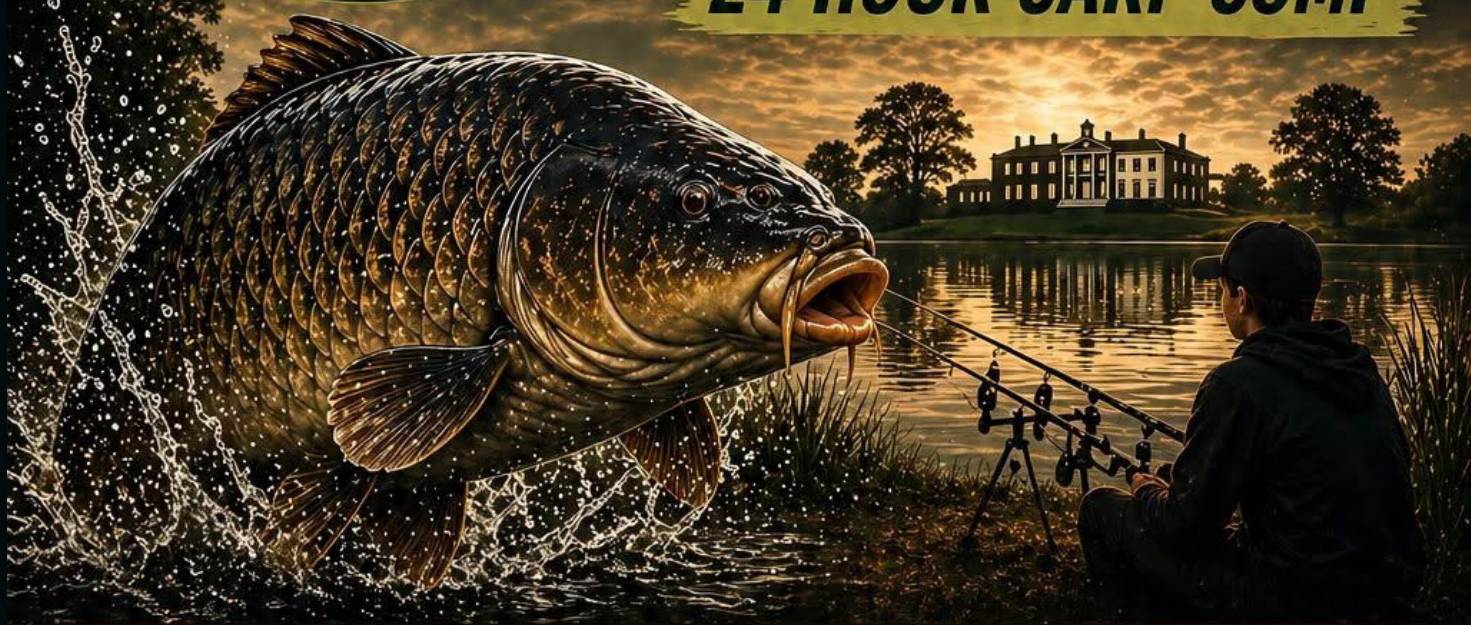
We'll be continuing to patrol the reserve and surrounding area to catch and stop those who think they can break the rules.

Remember, if you want to report any information to us you can do this through our incident hotline at 0800 80 70 60. The information provided is crucial to help us plan our patrols.



# HURLSTON HALL YOUTH CARP CUP

## 24 HOUR CARP COMP



**THINK YOU'VE  
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Gain experience &  
be part of something  
special



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Build skills, confidence  
& lifelong memories



**UNDER 17s  
WELCOME**

Friendly competition  
& great atmosphere



**LOCATION:  
HURLSTON HALL  
FISHERIES**



**DATE:  
SATURDAY  
13TH JUNE**



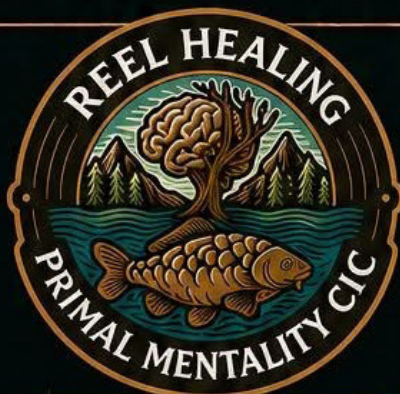
**DURATION:  
24 HOUR  
CARP COMP**



**OPEN TO:  
UNDER 17s**  
(UNDER 16s MUST BE  
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### PRIZES FOR:

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### INTERESTED?

DROP A MESSAGE OR REPLY:

# I'M IN!

LIMITED SPACES -  
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YOUNG ANGLERS. BIG OPPORTUNITIES. REAL EXPERIENCES.

# RIP ZYG GROGOREK



It's with great sadness to announce that my dear Dad, Grandad and Husband to my beautiful Mum Rose passed away peacefully this morning. Zyg Gregorek will live on in our hearts forever and we will continue his legacy and do him proud. There will always only ever be one ZYG, YOU he lived the best life and

literally lived his life to the full and his glass was always full too!  
Please respect our familie's privacy at this time that we are grieving.

Here's to you Dad/Zyg - catch big up there, we will miss you but we will NEVER FORGET YOU  
Love you always x

# BLUEBELL LAKES MAGAZINE

You could never put a price tag on a stunning Common like it, the

March 1997 Dave Scales landed her at 36lbs and only October that same year that Benson came out for the first time over 40lbs by Mark Ryder. People



The following year Benson came out even bigger at 58lb 8oz

"The Creature"

On the 28th July 2009 sadly Benson was found dead on the bank of Kingfisher after being at Bluebell Lakes for 16 years. She was caught 68 times of 4 of these were by the same angler. She earned her place in Wikipedia and in national and local papers. The media storm eventually slowed down but the legacy continues, and Bluebell lakes continues to thrive and forever be known as the home of Benson.



Bensons Legacy: Who's been into our tackle shop and seen our iconic Benson on the wall? Read all about her history and catch report in our latest Bluebell Lakes magazine, available to download for free from our website or pick up a free copy when visiting us.

# RIP TED



**CARP ANGLER OF THE YEAR AWARD**  
**?? WHO WILL BE THE WINNER ??**  
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**#CSPTA**

# **SOUTH WALES FISHING SOCIETY SPAWNING CLOSURE**



Spawning Protocol is now in Place due to carp spawning, The Pluck is now closed with immediate effect. We'll keep a close eye on the situation and will post an update as soon as we're able to reopen. Thanks for your understanding and cooperation.

Committee and bailif team



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# WEIRD FISH SPONSOR POLLUTION CAMPAIGN



We're delighted to announce and Angling Direct, and have that Weird Fish Clothing have launched an exclusive range come on board as a sponsor of of T-shirts to raise funds and our Anglers Against Pollution awareness of the campaign. campaign alongside Orvis The initial launch comprises

four shirts which are available online and through Weird Fish retail stores throughout the country. Weird Fish have confirmed that they will donate £5 to the campaign for every T-shirt sold. With over 800 volunteers carrying out water quality checks on the rivers and estuaries they fish, right around the country, the Anglers Against Pollution campaign is using the key data collected to step-up the pressure on water companies, the government, industry and agriculture to clean up their act and stop polluting our rivers, lakes and seas. And the best news - if you're an Angling Trust member you receive a 20% discount on all purchases at Weird Fish! Login to your member dashboard or keep an eye on your inbox today for the all important discount code. <https://www.weirdfish.co.uk/p/new-arrivals/angling-trust>

# **INAUGURAL ATA ANGLING SUMMIT CONFIRMED FOR NOV '26**

The first-ever UK Angling Summit – organised by the Angling Trades Association – will take place in November with the aim of bringing the UK tackle trade together and providing a wealth of useful information for manufacturers, distributors, agents, retailers and fisheries alike.

The event is scheduled to take place on Thursday, November 19th at The Arden Hotel, Birmingham and will feature a string of high-profile speakers and industry experts from across the world, discussing key topics that impact UK trade and recreational angling.



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OPEN DAY**



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# SONIK MAGLEV REELS



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prevent line from slipping under the spool. Power: Equipped with 11+1 shielded stainless steel ball bearings and precision machine-cut gearing. Durability: Incorporates a lightweight yet incredibly tough magnesium body and forged carbon rotor.

- Ultra-lite and tough magnesium body construction
- Advanced forged carbon rotor

- Ultra-long 45mm distance casting spool
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- Advanced cross carbon Quick-Torque drag system
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- BC0069 – 0.35/1000
- BC0071 – 0.35/780 0
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The foundation of the build is a moulded, EVA waterproof base, for maximum protection.

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The spacious main section is supplemented by an incredibly popular Solar first; fold-flat



internal organisers, which both brace and divide the main void. Plus, they're sized to perfectly file our Accessory Cases, for perfect 'filing' of your gear... The Solar Modular Concept, where everything fits everything else..

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pockets

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- Internal dividers
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- [www.solartackle.co.uk](http://www.solartackle.co.uk)

# Oak Lakes Fisheries



[www.oaklakesfisheries.co.uk](http://www.oaklakesfisheries.co.uk)

Here's a selection of some of Oak Lakes' cracking carp



45lb 8oz - the new Pipe lake record the carp known as Twisted Scale for Graeme Edgar.



Buddah's been on good form lately on Pipe Lake



15 lb 3 oz caught using manilla active 20mm



17 lb 9 oz



25lb



19 lb



Hi Mick, nice 18lb 8oz mirror for billy on day ticket lake

# Oak Lakes Fisheries



[www.oaklakesfisheries.co.uk](http://www.oaklakesfisheries.co.uk)

Here's a selection of some of Oak Lakes' cracking carp

**35lb 10oz**



Nice Sunday morning wake up call for Oak lakes bailiff Gary at 35 lb 10 Oz.



Nice brace of doubles - well done



This one came out at 22lb 8oz.



Archie was well chuffed with his big tench

# Oak Lakes Fisheries



[www.oaklakesfisheries.co.uk](http://www.oaklakesfisheries.co.uk)

Here's a selection of some of Oak Lakes' cracking carp



35 lb 14 oz Great weekend catch Nice angling



Paul Brosnan got amongst them with four fish catch



Pipe Lake member Levi with a 26 lbs 9 oz mirror.



Hi Mick 20lb from day ticket Friday.



Hi Mick, nice 18lb 8oz mirror for billy on day ticket lake

# Oak Lakes Fisheries



[www.oaklakesfisheries.co.uk](http://www.oaklakesfisheries.co.uk)

Here's a selection of some of Oak Lakes' cracking carp



31 lb new PB caught from swim 21 (platform 1)



Nice 22lb mirror



27 lb 1oz and a new PB



18lber from swim 5



**ANDREW SHELLARD**

# BLUEBELL REFLECTIONS

**F**ollowing on my productive winter campaign on orchid I decided to head back to Bluebell lakes (Swan) for a spring campaign!

Arriving back at the lake which I fished from winter/ Spring last year I looked at targeting the areas I did last year with the same tactics! After a good few walks around the lake and speaking to some of the regulars it was apparent the fish were holding up in new areas and my swim choice would have to change up from

last year! My first session back I decided to target the garden 1 area as I'd seen fish in that zone and it is a very popular swim which is very hard to get in and commands and out of bounds reed line! I had nothing the first night but the next morning I had an unreal 33lb two tone common which I caught out of a cove just off of the reed line!

That afternoon got warm and decided to floater fish which resulted in a mega 39.12 mirror and also a smaller carp off the top! That night was pretty

dead so the next morning I moved up to the humps swim which is up the opposite end of the lake. It was a good move as I had a 20 off the top straight away! The wind picked up and the conditions changed and I had 3 rods on a spot in no time, Within an hour later I was away with a double take resulting in a 33 & a lost fish! The next morning I had a wicked 37LB mirror know as black eye which was one of my target fish and just as I was

packing away!

My next session I knew I wanted to get back in the humps swim and I did resulting in a 8 fish catch including some real mega ones to 37 fish to a real hard area at short range! My next session was in a swim called point where I had 3 carp to 37 as well as stalking a carp called tango out of the edge down on the bottom bank which was one of my favourite captures to date as it's an incredible looking

### What a mirror!!



**Well pleased with this one**



**An awesome scaley**



orange dark common also with a 26 mirror! My next session found a few fish in close on a swim called platform 4 which is in the middle of the lake where I managed and stunning dark 30LB common. That afternoon I moved to a swim called the Reed's where I'd seen a few fish and a few hours later I had a carp called the Batman common due to its Batman like tail and again another fish of my hit list. A

wicked 36LB mirror followed with another 36LB common and brought that session and a brilliant spring campaign on swan to a close

My go to tactics where sticky bloodworm wafers with sticky crushed bloodworm boilies and pellets with glug in conjunction with naturals on a standard lead clip set up! Also my floater caught carp where on sticky 6 & 11mm floaters.

**Look at those colours**



# Black Swan Lake Premium Carp Fishing Pommiers North France

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Black Swan has it all! With its crazy charm, impressive fish and the cottage in the style of a "cabin in Canada". How can you not be tempted? Especially with this paradise being less than 2h40 from Calais! Black Swan is a 7-acre lake available for exclusive hire for up to 3 anglers. Although the lake already had some beautiful, dark carp and massive grass carp up to 70 lbs, the owner decided to stock it on a large scale. More than 200 carp between 30 and 66 lbs joined the lake in autumn 2021. Since then, the lake has everything to delight the anglers coming to immerse themselves in the in the atmosphere of Black Swan Lake at Pommiers (Soissons).



**The Fish:** It is an old gravel pit that was rarely fished in the past. We started off by making an inventory of the stock. We discovered that some beautiful old fish were swimming around in the lake, including some characterful mirrors and some beautiful dark commons. There are also a few monster grass carp that weigh over thirty kg (68-70lbs). In the spring of 2021, Cyriel decided to release some of his own fish into Black Swan Lake. A highly varied mix of mirror and common carp weighing between 13-30 kg were released. These additions were carefully hand-selected from several ponds at various fish farms and provided the lake with a fantastic fish population, including many thirties, forties and fifties. Overall, there are about 180 fish weighing between 10 and 30 kilos (20-70 lbs). There are virtually no bream or tench in Black Swan Lake. There is a nice pike stock.



Very limited availability for 2026.

Taking bookings for 2027 and 2028.

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2025 Spring & Summer early on and had some lovely Sandmartin & Swan: This captures from all different periodr was all about swims and tactics and both sandmartin and swan and mostly surface fishing and things really took off from zigs

### A unique looking mirror



**Lots of scaley mirrors here**



**A stunning mirror**





**I was over the moon**



**Another target ticked off**

## The incredible Tilly



Tilly at 55.4 from Sandmartin!  
My new Uk PB common and  
biggest fish on the bluebell  
complex!

Wow what can I say about  
this I'm literally blown away,  
4 swim moves later it literally  
was last chance saloon in the  
final swim and the final few  
hours!

I honestly think if it didn't  
happen there and then it  
wouldn't have happened

this campaign due to the hot  
weather coming in next week  
and the fish probably going  
to spawn!

Anyone that knows me knows  
how hard I've worked for Tilly  
but the stars really did align  
in the end and it all came  
good!

Massive thanks to will for  
doing the pics for me and also  
Kev Hewitt Angler we defo  
worked as a team this week!

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**JIM GLAYSHER**

# FOR THE LOVE OF BLUEBELL

Bluebell is one of the main premier and well known day ticket fishery's in the UK.

It's showcased some of the largest carp on our shores to 60lb+ and is open to anyone wishing to come fish for them on a pay as you go format. No booking just turn up and get on with it.

These articles featured will hopefully give you an idea of how and why some anglers have enjoyed fishing bluebell.

It features some of the best anglers from around the country who have travelled to the fishery with great success.

I personally fished bluebell a handful of times before I ended up working there for a short period. In my write up I share both experiences of fishing and a little about the team I ended up working with for a year and a half. I hope you enjoy the articles featured.

## **Bluebell before bailiffing**

Before I ever thought of working at bluebell lakes I'd completed four sessions over a period of around seven years. These four sessions added up to about ten nights with varied success.

**Session 1:** My bluebell curiously got the better of me in April 2018 when I decided to take the hour and half trip from Norwich to Tansor Peterborough on the boarder of Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire in the Nene valley.

On my first ever visit I'd hoped to fish Swan lake after looking through the website admiring the sizeable beasts pictured only dreaming I could catch just one of them.

On my arrival I wasn't quite prepared or ready for the busyness of all the lakes. I'd dabbled on day tickets like Linear and locals to home so I'd expected it to be a busy place but I was disappointed to find no swims available for

me on Swan lake. I also looked around Kingfisher another big fish water on the complex. Also not much available. The only lake I fancied was Sandmartin so I settled on the road bank with Mallard lake behind me. I plumbed, baited and waited for two nights with not much happening.

There was constantly people arriving and leaving as you camp on the road side and people constantly looking for swims it sure was busy.

I felt like I had to change something or leave with a blank with only a night remaining.

A few people had vacated swims to my left on my last evening and I suddenly started to see a few fish show in a swim that was empty. I acted quickly and moved all my stuff into the free swim. It was such an easy move two swims away and the fish continued to show periodically in the swim giving me a new confidence going into my last night.

This was a deep corner I'd moved into and I opted for single hookbaits as I'd already struggled over bait. In hindsight April and baiting spots was probably not the one so I sat on my hands with two rods on yellow single pop ups on multi rigs as it was only a small swim.

Nothing happened through the night but I woke up to a screamer at first light and I managed to slip the net under my first bluebell fish.

It was a lovely 32lb common. The bluebell commons are very special and recognisable if you've ever managed to catch a few of them you'll know they have the old Nene Valley look.

I went home with a smile on my face with a new water buzz.

In reflection of my first time on the complex I was impressed with the lakes and the fish. I was certain to return for another go at some point.

**Session 2:** My second trip

was with a group of friends. I think there was five of us and the others wanted a social on Mallard lake due to it being better thought of for a bite or two. I however was pretty keen to finally give Swan a try. A bit unsociable but I had to be selfish if I wanted to break my pb and I was dreaming of some of the monsters that had swam in Swan over the years.

I managed to find a swim on the causeway bank with the Nene creek that cuts through the complex behind me. This separates Kingfisher and Bluebell lakes and Sandmartin and Swan lakes. If you ever visit the site I'd advise walking over the weir at the top of the creek that crosses from Swan to Kingfisher viewing the main river Nene. It's a real nice classic view of complex.

I found my swim silty from the middle zone and fairly deep with no obvious features really. It was busy with people opposite and either side but I

had seen a few fish showing in my water so I opted for a spread of boilie over three rods. I was paid up for three nights so sat on my hands while people came and went. This seems the spirit of bluebell and you soon start chatting with anglers who've fished the place frequently listening to stories of fish they have caught. A lad from Liverpool with his dad as a guest told me how he'd caught Dave one

of Swans biggest mirrors and a 100lb+catfish. I could only dream.

The northern lads love fishing Bluebell as they are not blessed with many big fish waters up north. It also covers most of the country from every angle so geographically you fish with everyone from all over which is nice. Easy access big fish angling for everyone.

This session ended in a blank for me but I knew Swan

**Session 2**

# Hacche Moor Fishery



## EXCLUSIVE CARP FISHING IN NORTH DEVON

Situated in idyllic rural Devon, Hacche Moor Fishery is available for exclusive lake bookings only. Conveniently located near South Molton in North Devon, the fishery is surrounded by trees and has a stunning backdrop of rolling green fields, making a perfect habitat for wildlife from Kingfishers, Little Grebes and even Red Deer can occasionally be seen grazing on the hill. The fishery currently has four lakes for exclusives bookings: Top lake, Bottom lake, Jakes lake and the old syndicate lake. The bottom, Top and Old syndicate lake all have fish to mid 40's. Jakes has fish to 38. Lake exclusives are weekends only - Friday to Monday, 72hrs slots from April until the end of October. You can also book the whole site all 4 lakes for up to 15 anglers if needed. The rest of the time the site is syndicated. For the latest news and catch reports, please follow us on social media @hacchemoorfishery; we are on Facebook and Instagram.

**[www.hacchemoorfishery.co.uk](http://www.hacchemoorfishery.co.uk) / 07814510580**

wasn't easy. Certainly not disheartened I vowed to return again at some point for another go. My friends on Mallard had managed a handful of bites so they had definitely made the right decision.

**Session 3:** My third trip was definitely a memorable one. It was a spontaneous trip last minute decision after the forthcoming week of work I wasn't necessarily needed so I offered my wages to the man running the job and offered to take the next week off fishing. All my paid tickets had a close season in April and May so I took the chance to travel back to big fish dream of the bluebell complex.

That weekend was a bank holiday so I decided to travel on the Monday to avoid the almost certain carnage of day ticket bank holiday. On arrival it's was very quiet. There had been a mass exodus and the opportunity to angle and try get on a few fish arose.

I found a lot of fish showing in the gardens swims on Swan. A good south westerly blowing into the weedy part of the lake I bucketed my swim in the third garden swim to give myself some room from the guy in gardens 1. This was a good opportunity. The fish were showing constantly in close in thick Canadian pond weed so instead of plumbing for a spot I lengthened my hooklinks considerably with bright yellow pop ups foamed them up and fished in the weed with singles. I settled in for the night and sat on my hands.

I woke up to a melting run in the early hours as light was just starting to break and a good ten minute battle commenced and I bundled a chunky common into the net. I was so chuffed with the result of catching from Swan. Although I'd not done much time I knew every fish was hard earned from there. It was a real fist clenched "YES" moment.



## The Scar Common

It was still pretty gloomy first light dawning so I zeroed my sling and popped the fish into it after unhooking it in net easily with the barbless size 4. A quick weigh and she went 43-08 a new uk pb and first UK 40. The fish waited for pics for half an hour for improved light and was slipped back safely.

Yes I was buzzing and I exchanged my storey with a chap from the West Country who had also had the same fish

weeks earlier. He confirmed it as a fish called the “scar common”. A great famous swan fish in the photo album.

I did another night in the same swim but the fish had long gone so I had a look on Kingy and found the DVD swim vacant so moved over to there for my last night.

This swim controlled a large snaggy willow lined margin to the right. I carefully plummed tight to the snag as the main

feature and the other two rods had a max of 40 yard in front as the river bank controlled the middle of the lake. I could see bait boats cruising way past my water I was shocked at the layout of the swims and the water they controlled as I'd never fished kingy before. It was much smaller than Swan and I remember thinking how mad it was how many big fish it held. Almost certainly it had small water syndrome. Tricky as fuck I'd say.

A lad from Leeds has bucketed my swim from when my time ran out and bivvied next door and was warning me I needed a bait boat for sure to catch on kingy. I'd never used a bait boat as they were banned on most of the waters I'd previously fished or I'd never chosen to use them. Looking back at what I know about bluebell now I'd say they are definitely an advantage in many situations in fishing for very tricky day ticket fish but

not necessarily essential to success. If you own one and you plan to fish bluebell you may as well take it.

I never caught on my last night but always wished to have a go properly for one of the kingy beasts one day.

I went home more than happy with my Swan lake relic of a common. It's why we all go to bluebell. Mission accomplished.

**Session 4:** My final visit was a quick overnighter on the way home from barbel fishing on the river Trent in November.

I opted for kingfisher again in a swim called willows in a nice quiet corner. The lake was nice and quiet as clocks had gone back and the masses were at home in the warm.

Not much to report on this session. All I'd say with the knowledge I possess now about kingfisher is you will need more than a quick overnighter for success on there. Another headbanger of a lake.



**Full moon over the complex**

The barbel fishing was a pass but kingy bought me back down to earth.

The bluebell fish are very cunning and pressured creatures but the rule book is the same as many waters. Location is key. Not always possible on a busy complex but definitely opportunity can present itself more than you think.

Baiting heavy mostly won't catch you a big hit of fish on most of the lakes. It can work from time to time but it happens way too much most people leaving with blanks. Both times I caught were on yellow singles and my location was on point.

### **Working at Bluebell 2024-2025.**

In the winter of 2024 I found myself unemployed within my chosen industry of fishing/fishery's ect. I'd had around 10 years of low level assistant kind of work in the local

trade in Norfolk working at lakes helping out labouring, bailiffing and working in a local tackle shop after three years at college studying fishery management to diploma level. The work at the tackle shop had dried up and I felt locally I'd exhausted my fisheries career and had even started looking for "normal" jobs again. Anyone wanting a job in the fishing industry you need something decent to offer or perhaps have good friends in high places, or just work hard at it and never give up is best advice I could give. Slightly depressed looking through the indeed jobs app I came across a part time job at Bluebell lakes helping in the onsite tackle shop 26 hours a week. Not the greatest choice geographically for myself or amount of hours to make me rich, however it interested me as it kept me in the industry and Bluebell is well know and I enjoyed my time fishing there



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Steve & Jem Laws

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**26lb common off the top**



**28lb common off the top**



**31lb common from Sandmartin**



**34lb mirror 'while working'**

previously to seeing the job advertised. I applied for it with decent CV and cover letter.

I cleared off fishing for a few days and during this time I had a call from the fishery managers wife Fiona who asked if I could have a video interview. I said how about I drive up to the fishery for an interview and we agreed a date. Things were moving along fast so I had a bit of a think at my angle if I was to be offered the

job. I'd probably need an extra day to make it worthwhile and hope they wouldn't mind me staying in the bivvy and doing my work in blocks of 3-4 days to save me travelling back and forth from Norfolk. It's not the furthest but still not worth the fuel money.

I travelled up for the interview sometime in February which went well. I met with Jim the fishery manager who is the grandson of the fishery founder



**35lb common off the top**



**37lb mirror off the top from Sandmartin**



**A beautiful 33lb mirror off the top**

Tony Bridgefoot the owner.

Fairly soon after the interview I was offered the job which I accepted. I was to start on the first bank holiday of the year in March.

### **Tony and Lynda Bridgefoot**

During my interview I learnt that Tony had been unwell and basically had very little time left in his battle with cancer. Sadly days after I accepted the job Tony passed away and the funeral had already happened before I started and I never met him. I never really knew from my previous visits fishing that Bluebell was run as a family business as I was focused so much on my fishing sessions. Obviously all the regular anglers who fish/fished bluebell were aware of this and Tony was a well respected man known by everyone who used the site from its rise as a famous fishery in the UK in the 90's showcasing loads of

massive carp and coarse fishing making the place famous and desirable for anglers from all over the country for open access big carp fishing, which was Tony's vision.

He had arrived at the site and fell on his feet with his wife Lynda, living out of a caravan together firstly leasing and then buying Bluebell lake and then Kingfisher, Swan, Sandmartin and Mallard later down the line. Swan and Sandmartin had once been one lake but Tony had been paid to have them separated by filling in the land that separates the two lakes now with unwanted landfill. If you look at the top end of Swan you can see these boulders and rocks when the water is low in the summer.

I believe Tony and Lynda firstly lived in a caravan on site and over the years the success of the fishery built and built to become what it is today. A well established well known complex with a tackle shop,

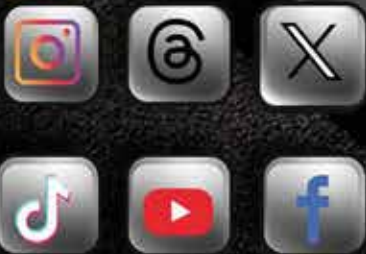
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**Toney and Linda Bridgefoot****Jim and Fiona Stacey**

showers and professionally run. It also means a lot to all of the anglers who enjoyed their time and fishing at Bluebell. Tony and Lynda were true foundations to what the place has become today.

Lynda, Tony's wife, I did get to know during my employment. She was a nice lady who had plenty of stories of the anglers who had been and gone over the years. Unfortunately she also sadly recently passed away. Rest in peace.

The unsung hero's Jim

Stacey who runs bluebell definitely is not a fan of the limelight. Quietly working behind the scenes is more up his street getting stuff done. From when he hired me until I left I always had great respect for him as a boss. Always fair and reliable and gives his support to bailiffs and workers and also believes in good customer service for people visiting. The grandson of Tony and Lynda he's been a long term fixture of the success and professionalism of Bluebell. He's certainly someone you should seek out if you need clarity and good info when you're on the complex. He's a family man to his wife Fiona who also helps run Bluebell behind the scenes and their son Henry.

His brothers Paul and Phil are also long term workers at bluebell. Paul's more in the shop booking people on and Phil prefers outdoor practical



Phil



Paul

working on tractors but everyone mucks in on all areas needed.

Mason also joined as a worthy addition to the bluebell team recently several months before I left in November 2025.

There is also a snack bar offering decent food run by local lad Tim. My personal favourite of chicken kebab and cheesy chips helped me pack on a few extra pounds for my winter coat.

### **Trev the Bailiff**

Any regular angler of bluebell will know Trevor Cook. Trev or Cooky as he likes to be known, a former lorry driver and family man. The Lincolnshire/Boston lad used to fish the lakes before he was made bailiff for Tony in a vow to clean up the stroke pullers. Trev lost his wife and moved in to bluebell full time in his caravan by mallard on the road bank. A hard time in his life bluebell helped him through. Trevor really cares about bluebell and a real protector of

the complex. If you come past the caravan at over 10mph the red mist will descend after a long season of telling people to slow down it certainly gets a bit boring saying the same thing over and over.

Bluebell isn't the easiest place to bailiff due to the sheer volume of different characters that come and go. Trevor however is not shy about coming forward and confrontation is an inevitable thing when someone thinks they know better than the rules laid out and explained to everyone who visits.

Trev is Instagram famous delivering news and updates on the fishery and people enjoy his short vlogs. The term old school is thrown about willy nilly these days but Trevs character is definitely true old school. On my first day working he introduced me as the new bailiff. News to me I thought I'd only be working in the shop I thought. Baptism of



**First of Trev's brace of 30s**



**Second of Trev's brace of 30s**

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## CUSTOMER REVIEWS

Big shoutout to the lads at Digger Boats Ltd I've been living onsite at Carthagena Fisheries for 23 years now, and we've had plenty of work done over the years... but this one tops the lot! We've been fighting a losing battle with reeds taking over the entrance to one of our bays for a few years now. Even tried getting in ourselves with dry suits and pulling them out by hand absolutely brutal work and getting nowhere fast... was starting to think we'd lose the bay completely. On top of that, the carp were loving it — hiding in the reeds and becoming a nightmare to catch. We'd had other companies in before with weed boats, but if I'm honest, the results just weren't great. Got James from Digger Boats in, he came down, had a proper look and got stuck in... and what a job they've done! 3 days later and the place has been completely transformed it's something I've wanted sorted for years and it's finally done. Already this spring we've had over 22 fish out — including a few we haven't seen in years! Normally we'd only see a handful by now. Can't recommend them enough — top lads, proper job done. Thanks again boys — Jerry Hammond

“


A massive thank you to Digger Boats you did an amazing job on our lake 🙌

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★★★★★


Stuart Stockton  
Chesterton Community Angling Club



 Neil Ellis 🇬🇧 recommends Digger Boats. 39m · 🌐

diggerboats.com has just completed some norfolk reed removal on one of our club lakes. The diggerboats team worked their socks off and done a great job giving great value for money, going well beyond what was the basic requirement, feedback from members has been really positive with how the lake is now looking. If you are a club or commercial fishery looking for a professional fishery management/ maintenance company then give diggerboats a call, we at Colchester Piscatorial Society are already looking at more fallen tree removal work for the diggerboat team to undertake!

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Stuart Stockton  
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**New stock arriving****Pretty one going in**

fire I soon rig checked most of the complex on a bank holiday with Trev. He's definitely a good teammate to have on side if someone fancies arguing or trying to mess about.

We went out ridding sometimes in the evenings. I'd locate them with the night scope and he'd pop them with the air gun. Great fun. Perks of the job for Trev as he enjoyed the vermin control. As well as his love for pork meals, Newcastle Brown



**Couple of new stockies for Mallard**



**The boss and Trev taking a breather from stocking Mallard**

Ale, Guinness and stories of the good old days he's caught more 30lb and 40lb Carp from Mallard than you can shake a stick at. I hope you get that 50 soon Cooky.

**The Simple Rules:** You are usually read the simple rules as you are booked on in reception before you start fishing. Before this you are required to walk round with a bucket to select your swim on your chosen lake. You get a sticker on your bucket with a two hour slot to reserve and you can update this throughout the day if it takes you longer. The bucket goes in the swim and you return to pay and then your good to drive to you peg or the nearest point. You can also reserve swim with a bucket sticker if you are waiting to get in a swim after another angler. Just ask for a reserved sticker and put your bucket in swim waiting for angler to vacate. During the

payment phase you will usually be told you must use manufactured barbless hook, no nuts, no maggots and no braid.

There are more rules but these are the main ones. Also driving speed round the fishery at a maximum of 10mph. You won't get too many warnings before you are asked to leave and depending where you have travelled from in the country these rules are worth reading unless you want a wasted journey.

**The lakes:** There are five lakes on the Bluebell complex mostly named after birds apart from Bluebell lake itself. All my information is based on current times with info I gathered while I worked there.

**Bluebell:** Bluebell is thought of as more of an intermediate lake for beginners although it holds a few chunks to scraper 40s and a fair few 30s your most likely to catch doubles and 20s. A good chance of catching but still not a runs water it can be

**The Rules !!**

## RULES TO KNOW BEFORE PURCHASING TICKET

- **MANUFACTURED BARBLESS HOOKS ONLY**  
*(No Crimping)*
- **MINIMUM 42" LANDING NET PER ANGLER**
- **LARGE WELL PADDED UNHOOKING MAT**
- **NO MAINLINE BRAID**
- **NO MAGGOTS, NO NUTS**
- **ONE PAYING GUEST PER ANGLER**
- **ONE DOG PER ANGLER, ON LEAD AT ALL TIMES**
- **ONE ANGLER PER PEG**  
*(unless in a designated double peg)*
- **NO UNDER 16's ON SWAN OR KINGFISHER LAKE**  
*(Fishing or as guests)*

### **OTHER RULES APPLY**

Please see notice board or website for more details.



**The Complex**

tricky and busy. Around 3 acres.

**Mallard:** This is the largest lake on the complex on your right as you drive in the entrance road. 20plus acres with over 1000 carp stocked. It's the closest thing there is to a runs water. There are 100s of 30lbbers and plenty of fish nudging over the 40lb mark with hundreds of doubles and

20s to back this up. It's done fish to 49lb recently which is expected to pass 50lb this spring. Mallard is a very popular water due to the volume of the stock and quality of the stockings in recent years from VS Fisheries particularly. The scaley mirrors in the 30-40 bracket are amazing.

**Sandmartin:** This was



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or Daron Boyd 07804 818054**

always one of the least popular waters in years gone by. It was often the quietest water. These days it's probably the busiest as it holds the biggest fish "Tilly". A 50lb common everyone hopes to catch but only a lucky few have the pleasure of holding for a picture. It has a decent stock of carp of around 350 fish. Loads of 30s and 20s and a handful of 40s. A tricky water but slightly easier than Swan or Kingfisher.

**Swan:** This is one of the most famous flagship waters of Bluebell. Around 12 acres it can be weedy and a wind driven lake. Big southerly and northerly winds are worth following. Swans held some very big famous carp including Dave, The creature, Z fish, two tone common, Scar Common and the perfect common. The list goes on and on.

Although it does not currently hold a 50lber I doubt it will be long before it does again. It

still holds many 40s and 30s. A very hard and challenging water it is rewarding and a lot of anglers favourite water.

### **Kingfisher "kingy":**

This is probably the most famous water due to one of its most famous residents of the past "Benson". This big common was one of the most famous carp in the country pulling anglers from far and wide to try and catch it. Today kingfisher is still producing big fish to just over 50lb. It's a challenging tricky water. Weedy and snaggy holding multiple 30-40lb fish. Many anglers leaving happy with a pb. Lots of anglers only choose to fish kingfisher or "kingy" as most call it "kingy fever".

**The River Nene:** The Nene is a famous carp fishery. Although people say it's not what it was but trust me it holds plenty of carp. Mystery is the name of the game. He who dares wins above and below the weir and lock behind



**They love a floater at Bluebell**



**Another nice 30 off the top**

kingfisher. It also offers great coarse fishing. Fishing bluebell while working. When I accepted the job I was certainly excited about the chance to fish bluebell regularly. I was to bivvy up between shifts on the rota laid out monthly. I mostly started early mornings but did fairly often also get later starts on my shift. I'd work in blocks between Friday to Mondays.

Although I fished Swan a little to start with I mainly fished Sandmartin as it was nearest lake to the shop and I'd loved to of caught "Tilly" the current biggest carp on the complex. My fishing fitted around the rota most mornings reeling in around 6-6:30am for the 7:00am gate opening. I certainly felt up against it as I racked up multiple blanks on Swan and Sandmartin. The last day of the shift I'd usually shoot off elsewhere for my personal angling where I'd be in quieter surroundings with a bit more success.

The blanking on bluebell continued for some time slowly grinding me down but I finally had a couple of bites from sandmartin, a small common and another common of 28lb. Bit of a monkey off my back.

I still continued to struggle into the summer until I decided to stay on for the first time after my shift had finished to try longer than work overnights and settle the score with a little more time on my hands. I had 3 days off before work started again. It was July and hot weather meant good chance on floaters. A good floater angler James Leung and bluebell regular moved in next door to where I was fishing and we worked as a team spombing out floaters working the open water on Sandmartin. I'd nearly gone home that morning and if it wasn't for James's enthusiasm I'd probably of bailed as I was working and spending a lot of time at bluebell and feeling



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a bit burnt out and sorry for myself for all the blanking.

We started catching well off the surface and over the next three days we had a massive hit of fish. Most days I'd catch roughly four-five fish a day and ended up with 13 fish before my shift started again. James went on the catch even more. The biggest I had was an old mirror in the low 30's and a common of 33lb. James had fish to upper 30's. This was a good catalyst for my future fishing while working here. Floaters were the way after work in summer I also had great success in spring and early autumn on them too. It's a great way to catch carp.

Although I continued to struggle on the bottom throughout my fishing at bluebell I was ready when mid spring came around and hit it off early the following year of my employment there. If the sun was out I knew I'd have a great chance of catching off

surface after work. Sundays were usually my best day as the complex would clear out and I'd find my way to the fish easily. I'd get my fishing fix most evenings off the surface.

I did catch the odd fish from the bottom but looking back all the anglers who catch a lot of fish on most of the lakes are excellent zig anglers. The sooner you get to grips with the foam at bluebell your catch rates will improve.

To summarise my fishing experience or try and improve it zigs would be the key to it I'd say. If you ignore them you're missing out on a very high percentage of possible bites. Most people put way too much bait in and the lads who catch well have all the strings to their bows and utilise them in the right situations. They also know how to get to the swim they need. Obviously getting on the fish is important but not always possible.

Talking to people to see



## The legendary Benson

when they leave is an option to get in the going swims and watching the water for the fish is standard stuff to get the location correct. The rule book is the same but they are difficult lakes the fish have seen it all. Catching a bluebell fish is a real feather in your cap and you should enjoy the challenge. If your planning

on visiting bluebell enjoy and good luck it's certainly a very special place with a great history and an amazing future.

I loved my time there and can't wait to return again.

**The fish of legends:** "Dave" in Swan was one of the biggest when I started but unfortunately died in the April just after I'd begun work.



**My friend John Everitt targeted bluebell swan lake just to catch Dave. He ended up catching it at 58lb 4oz**

When a fish like this dies it has a knock on effect of massive disappointment to the anglers who hoped to catch him and the anglers who had already done so, but mainly financially dents the fishery. Although bluebell does have many backup fish

and waters on the complex to soften the blow. The tributes rolled in. We held the fish in a freezer to be taxidermy to join “Benson” and “The Creature” on the shop wall.

Unfortunately we were let down for months by a few

different people and it never went ahead. We buried him next to Bensons the snack bar. Dave never quite hit 60lb but many peoples pb's held and obsessions where by this fish. Some of the best wanted to but never caught it.

**Tilly:** This is the complex's current biggest common she is now the main prize. She was actually caught on my first day at 54lb. The lad who caught her previous personal best was a 20lber. Unbelievable jump. That's what Bluebell can do. She was then caught in May at 56lb and featured on the front cover of BC mag. I was lucky enough to do the photos for a lad called Luke Eyre in the September. She tipped the scales at scraper 50lb.



**Luke Eyre with Tilly at scraper 50**



**KEV HEWITT**

# UNFINISHED BUSINESS

I first set foot on the Bluebell complex in 2014 but I can't help but feel I was a little late to the party. What I would have given to have been on the complex during an earlier era and given myself the opportunity to fish for the likes of the iconic Benson and the Creature.

I turned up to my first trip rather blind; I didn't have a clue which lake was which or what they contained. All I knew is that I had seen plenty of big carp featuring in Carp Talk Magazine from across the

complex. It was actually a very last-minute plan to make the two-and-a-half-hour journey from Swindon to Oundle. I was at work on a Saturday in June and I was flicking through Carp Talk when I saw a picture of a 50Lb mirror called Dave from Bluebell. My van was already loaded and I had planned on going elsewhere but I just thought F\*\*\*k it, lets go to Bluebell and see what its all about.

Inevitably the complex was busy turning up on a Saturday evening. I had fancied starting on Swan which turned out to

be a fantastic decision and one that would truly ignite my fire for a venue that would become one of my favourites to visit over the following decade and I am sure beyond. That first trip couldn't have gone any better. There were only a couple of swims free on Swan, Garden Two and Garden Three. Conditions couldn't have been any better that trip with a warm south-westerly pumping into the garden swims. I was soon setting up on showing fish in Garden Two and went on to catch seven carp in my first 24 hours. It all seemed so simple that first trip but anyone who has set foot on Swan will know that it really is a tricky lake and can seem impossible at times. I think the word I am looking for is moody. It really can go long periods of time without giving up any of its treasures and over the years with angling pressure the lake has become even more tricky. You

really have to have your wits about you when targeting this venue.

Over the next 14 months I was a regular visitor to Swan venturing to the venue on thirteen occasions. It helped that I was not married and had no kids at the time, they both came a couple of years later and that put an end to my regular visits to the complex for a while. During that first stint on Swan, I was quick to get my head around the venue and are reaped the rewards for my extensive efforts. I was catching well on zigs during spring and had over 30 fish off the top between April and June and although I had racked up a good number of fish, my first bite on the bottom never came until July and that was minutes later followed by my second bite on the bottom resulting in 41Lb common in one net and a 45Lb grass carp in my other net. It really was a pleasant reminder of what

was achievable on Swan and how a bite or two could make your season. However, it did not stop there. The bottom fishing got better and better and during mid-September my dreams became a reality when I slipped the net under the fish I had seen in Carp Talk some 14 months earlier. The incredible Dave was a new pb for me and my first ever fifty which pulled the needle round to 53Lb 4oz. It really was dream fishing. In just

thirteen trips I had landed 65 carp with 18 over the magical 30Lb mark.

After breaking my PB, I took a bit of a break from the complex for a year or two as I moved onto pastures new. But in true Bluebell fashion I just couldn't stay away for too long. A few of the commons had stacked on some serious weight and there was now the potential of two or three 50Lb commons with the Box and the Perfect breaking the 50Lb

Dave



mark and Two Tone knocking on the door. This soon became my motivation, my goal, my ambition and my dream was to catch a 50Lb common and Swan offered me a fantastic chance of achieving that dream.

Over the years I ticked off many more of Swans residents including a mid-November re-capture of Dave at a new PB of 55Lb 12oz. They were

all growing fast and reaching epic proportions. However, I was now married and with the birth of my daughter, my time on the bank was much more limited but I felt that if I could just keep going whenever the opportunity arose, the likelihood of catching a 50Lb+ common had to have been on the horizon. I was lucky enough to slip the net under the incredible two tone

### The Two Tone Common





# CARP SPAWNING

**PLEASE RESPECT THE FISH**

As spring sunshine warms the water, carp begin their annual spawning ritual. This is a critical and sensitive time for fish stocks — and all anglers have a responsibility to protect them.



## WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Carp spawn in shallow, weedy areas when water reaches **18–22°C**. They become exhausted, vulnerable, and easily stressed.



## WHY IT MATTERS



Spawning can fail if disturbed



Fish are at risk of injury



Future stock levels depend on a successful spawn



## DURING ACTIVE SPAWNING



Do **NOT** fish in spawning areas



Do **NOT** target actively spawning carp



Avoid casting into groups of fish showing spawning behaviour



## IF YOU CATCH A CARP



Return it immediately



Do **NOT** retain in slings or sacks



Keep handling and photos to an absolute minimum



## FISHING RESPONSIBLY



### FOCUS ON NIGHT SESSIONS

Carp often feed at night during the spawn. Leave rods out during the day and recast after sunset.



### CONSIDER ZIG RIGS & VISUAL HOOKBAITS

Carp cruise midwater during spawning. Use bright pop-ups and attractors.



### WATCH & LEARN

Observe from a distance or use a camera/drone to learn about the stock — without disturbing the fish.



### AVOID ACTIVE SPAWNING ZONES

Find quieter areas where you can fish without interfering with nature.



### KEEP DISTURBANCE TO A MINIMUM

Unhook in the water where possible, take quick photos if needed, and return the fish immediately.



**RESPECTING SPAWNING CARP PROTECTS THE FUTURE OF OUR FISHERY FOR EVERYONE.**

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common in late October 2018 at 46Lb but despite racking up over 150 fish from Swan, the Box and the Perfect commons both eluded me.

I had crossed the creek in 2018 and finally ventured onto Kingfisher for the first time. I struggled like mad that first year but salvaged my year with a late capture of the Si Harris mirror at a little over mid forty. I certainly failed to get to grips with Kingy that year landing only 7 fish from about 8 or 9 trips. The big common 'Lucas' had gone past the 50Lb mark in Kingy and this kept the dream of my first 50Lb common very much alive and a possibility with every bite. In the mean time I had landed both the big commons from my local syndicate lake, The Carp societies Farriers Lake. First up was Scar at 48Lb 4oz, a fish that had been 50Lb in the past. Then a late autumn capture of Stu's common left me thinking that I had finally

landed my first 50Lb common but the scales had other ideas as they settled on 49Lb 12oz. It was now time to move on and back to Kingy it was for a stab at catching Lucas and hopefully my first 50Lb common.

2019 turned out to be one of the best years fishing in my life. It's fair to say that Kingy was very kind to me, I had finally sussed it and reaped the rewards of a lake that was fishing well. In twenty magical nights fishing through the year, I managed to rack up 36 carp from 36 bites. This included an incredible 24 thirties and four forties topped by the bulldozer at 46Lb, a common carp that went on to reach 50Lb not long after.

I dabbled on the complex over the next few years catching a few more forties from Swan but my next session of note came during a trip in May 2023, when I was convinced one of the commons was going to

## The Si Harris Mirror



slip up. I was on the end of a warm northerly wind and the fish were stacked in front of me. I bagged 19 carp that trip fishing eight wraps from the bank in new money. Those two big commons were firmly on my mind and subconsciously I felt it was now or never. Like I had a sixth sense that time was running out. I remember packing up from that trip wondering if I was ever going

to catch that illusive 50Lb common.

Sadly, a little time down the line, news filtered though that the perfect common had been found dead. It was a stark reminder that nothing lasts for ever and time waits for no man. Also, at the time of writing, the Box common has not been seen for a number of years and I fear that another great fish has escaped my

grasp for good.

In 2025 I had other plans which kept me occupied but I did manage to get acquainted a little with Sandmartin. The lake had finally landed on my radar as the big common 'Tilly' had reached mid fifty. And so, my quest for a 50Lb continues. I visited Sandmartin twice in 2025 and did manage to catch the big mirror 'Cluster' at mid 40's. A nice way to get off the mark on the venue

but its about time I had my photo taken with that 50Lb common that's been avoiding me all these years. Could 2026 be the year when my dream becomes reality and Tilly pays me a visit? Or will my quest continue for years to come. Who knows. Carp fishing is a journey and one that I have thoroughly enjoyed and will continue to do so 50Lb common or no 50Lb common. Watch this space.

**Bulldozer**



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**LEE BIRCH**

# THE BEST OF BLUEBELL

**B**enson: I first started fishing Bluebell lakes in the late 90's and I instantly fell in love with the place. Back then it was a far cry from the fishery it is today. the café was an old porta- cabin, Tony, and Lin had put all their money into the fishery and had to make tough decisions like whether they could afford to have electricity installed or water. Electric took president and tony would drive up to the nearest garage for water. I always used to time getting my season ticket during the winter and always waited until I could see the ashtray full of roll up butts. This would indicate how stressed Tony was and I knew there was a deal to be made for a cheaper ticket.

The main lake at the time was Kingfisher, it had a few 40lbbers such as "The northern common, heart tail and the half Lin but the most famous of them all Benson. At that time swan lake had hardly any fish in but a few were pushing through such as the creature, Z fish and Dave all to become famous in their own rights in the future.

Sandmartin lake had a few 20lb to scraper 30's and a mallard was owned by the farmer who allowed a bit of wild swimming and the odd jet ski from time to time. We did get a bit of permission to fish there. I started fishing Kingfisher Lake in the October and planned on fishing right through winter until I caught Benson. It didn't really have winter form, and I was told it was difficult, but I was undeterred. That first session marking around I found a lovely silty bowl that sat at the base of a small plateau, an area that I really fancied as the silty bowl would act as a natural larder and the slope of the plateau offered different depths for the fish to move up and down as the water temps fluctuated. I placed my marker flat out and whilst baiting a rig the marker float rod tore off, and I reeled in a 26 lb common trailing line. I quickly clipped back up only for the same thing to happen again, another line trailer! A common of around 20 lb. Les Marsh walked into my swim and asked if I had anything I jokingly told him, "This place is a piece of piss I've already had 2 on the marker float!" I knew this area would be the perfect winter spot to target and even though it was in front of a swim called the lock swim I decided to fish it from the rats swim as I thought if anyone seen me catching and jumped in rats I could drop into the lock swim and be on the spot. I baited that area religiously 3 days on 4 days off with crumbed boiley and around a gallon of maggots each time as maggots were allowed back then. I had a fantastic winter catching 33 fish. The highlight of that campaign came in the January when I managed to catch the northern common at 41lb 10oz. However, elation would soon turn to despair as 10 minutes

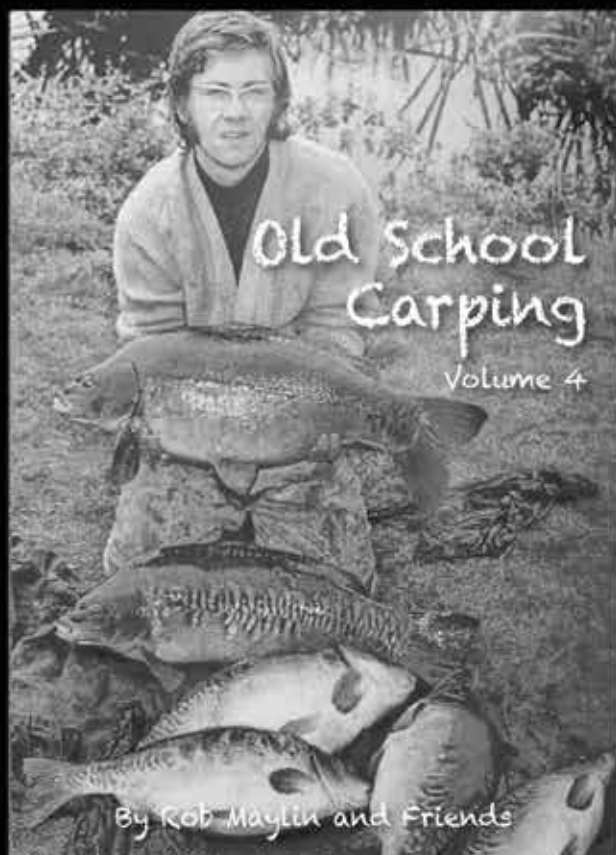
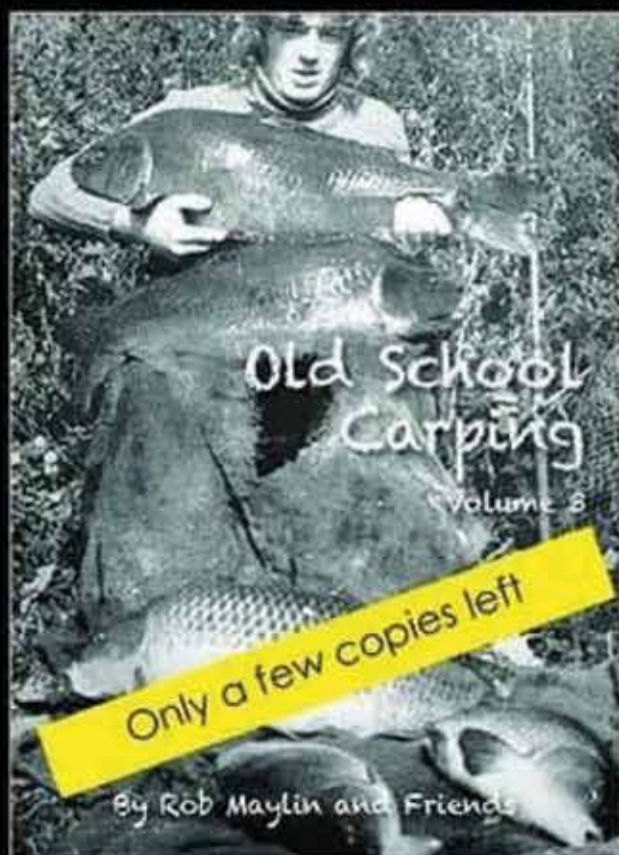
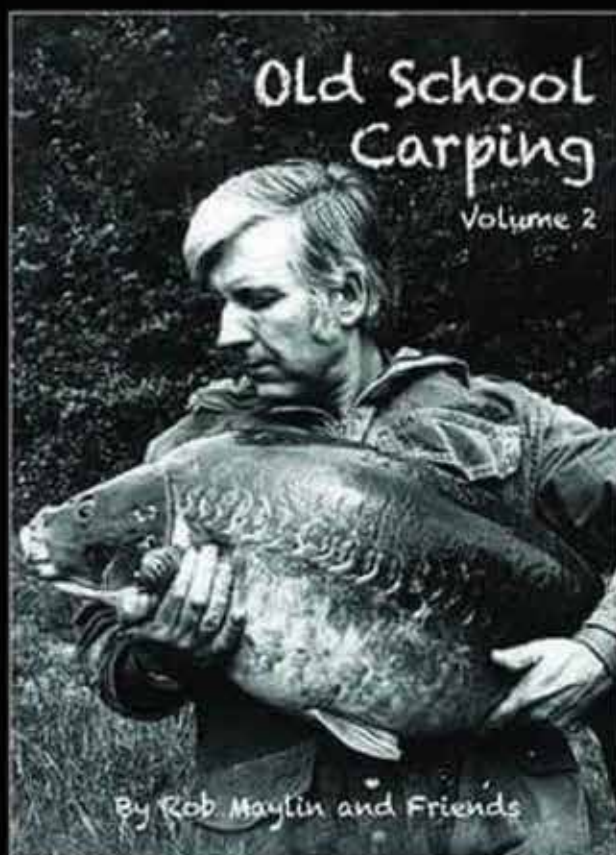
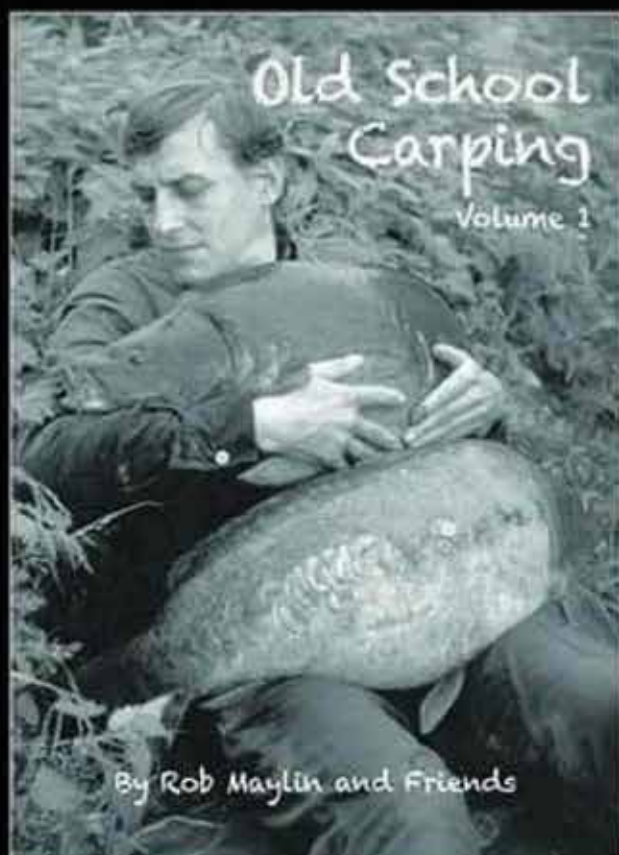
later I hooked Benson, I soon had her plodding around in front of me. I could see her twisting and turning in the gin clear water when the hook pulled! I was devastated... This sparked an obsession that little did I know would last another 10 months. I was going to fish that lake 4 days on 4 days off as that was my work shift patterns no matter what until I caught her. In the spring I decided to fish at peg called the pads as back then there was no distance limit to how far you could fish out. This area had three bars running parallel to the bank and the third bar was a known Benson spot. It also offered me a chance to target the same spot

## THE NORTHERN COMMON



from the pizz peg and the first point if somebody beat me to the pads swim. However the pads was not a popular peg, as the name suggests it had a lot of lily pads in front of it which put a lot of people off as it looked difficult to land fish from but if you slipped into the margins in your waders, the water virtually came to the top of them. But if you waded further out it shallowed up so you could play the fish from beyond the pads making it perfect to land fish. I got everything marked out from the bank from the 3 swims mentioned there was no marker sticks back then I just hid tent pegs in each swim and lay my rig near one and walk my rod out to the next and clip up to achieve the required distance. Bait wise I was using a bait called the miller mix from Nash bait it was squid all-season flavoured with maple and had halibut pellets soaked in L030 that later became the Nash bling liquid it still is today the best liquid I have ever used. I used to make two big buckets of the stuff up and keep shaking it up for days until the pellets were virtually mush the response off the fish to this mix was unbelievable. It was like they could not swim past it. When fishing I would bait just enough to get a bite and when leaving put a full bucket in. One of the Nash lads Clive had started Fishing Kingy and wanted to team up and use the same bait however he wanted to use crushed peanut particle as he had great results using it on the grange fishery. I told him about the L030, but he wasn't convinced so we decided to put a marker float to the spot. He would fish his peanut particle one side, and I would fish my mix the other. Whichever was best is what we would be use. He had a 16lb common on the first night. I had 7 fish including the patch

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**Another nice common on the mat**

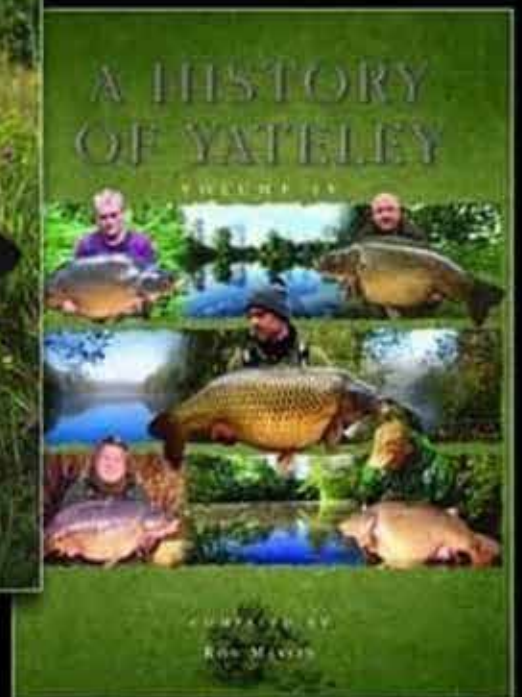
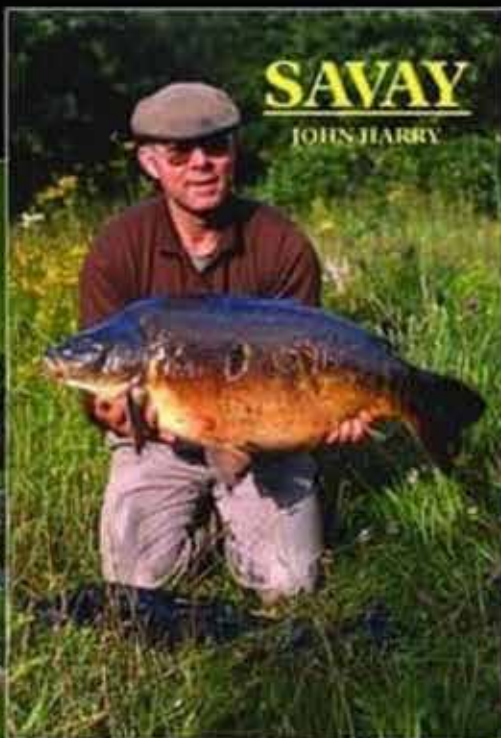
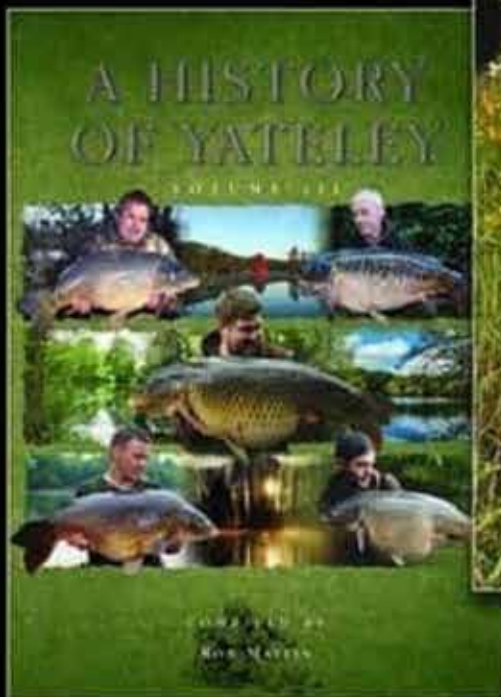
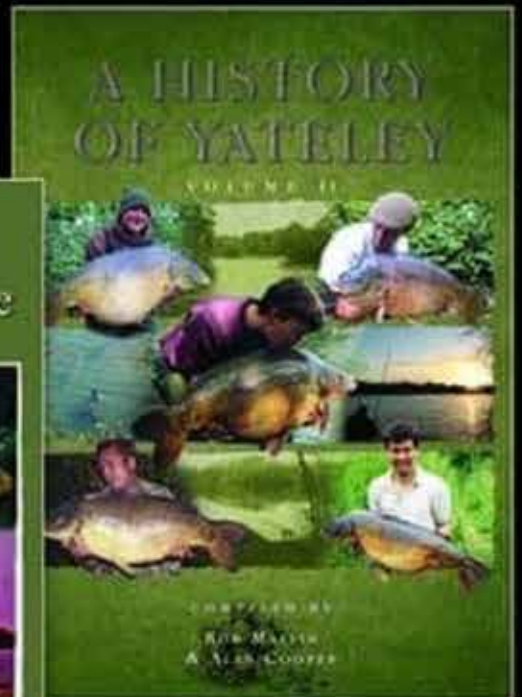
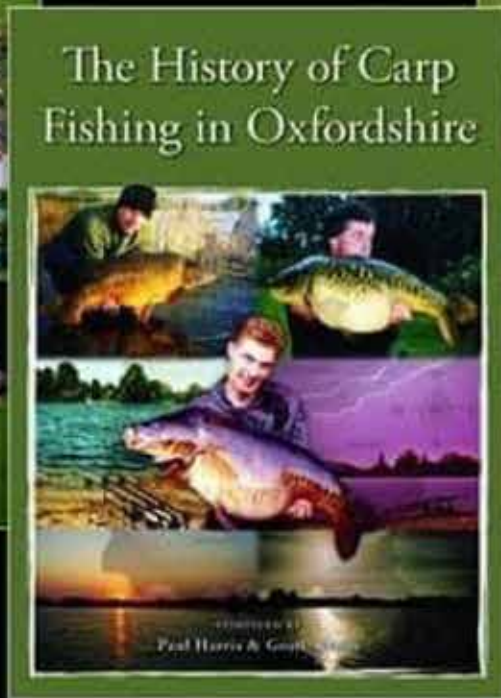
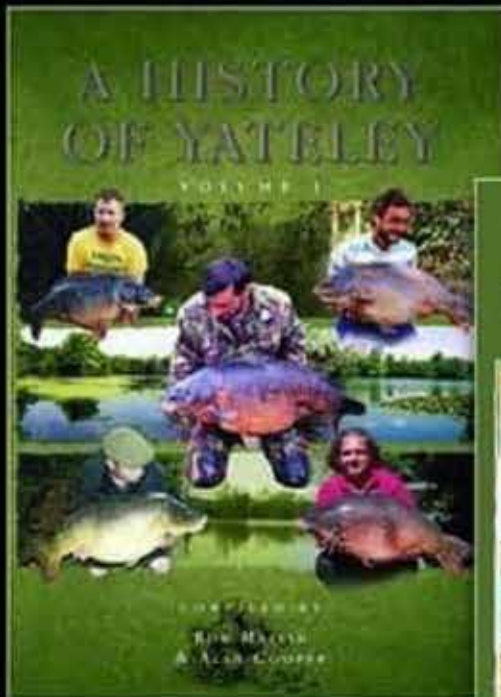


common on the first night. So L030 and miller mix it was.

It got silly at times from memory in the June 54 fish were caught from kingy we had 48 of them between us it really was that good. However still no Benson. I felt that it would only be a matter of time though I fished that spot right through until august and felt I should have had her by now. Since winter I had another 43 fish from that spot. On one of my last sessions It was forecast to be one of the hottest days that year after the morning bite time period had passed, I decided to have a reel in and have a good look around. I finally found most of the fish in the snags on the lock bank all hidden in the shade from the blazing sun including Benson. I watched them for a while, and it became evident that every time they left the sanctuary of the snags they would tip up and have a look on a small gravel spot that was

beneath a small overhanging branch. I quickly ran around to my swim and grabbed a rod and my baiting spoon and a small bucket of bait I baited the spot with the spoon so not to disturb them and placed the rigging perfectly. I filled my pockets with a couple of handfuls of Boily and climbed an overhanging tree to watch. As each fish left the snags they would try and feed on the spot, I would throw 3 or 4 Boilys at them to spook them as it was Benson or bust! This game of cat and mouse went on for hours in the blazing sun until eventually there was only 2 fish left Benson and a small mid double mirror. The mirror left passing the spot without looking at the bait and after another 20 minutes had passed, curiosity got the better of me. I climbed down to see if I could see Benson, I couldn't see her and thought she had left the snags by a different route. I was walking

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**The Patch Common**

back to reel my rod in cursing my bad luck when out of the corner of my eye I seen her coming out of the snags I quietly climbed up the tree just to see her tip up on the spot and start feeding she upended and I could see her gills flaring as she munched on the bait. Suddenly she froze all her fins went rigid and she started shaking her head. She was nailed! I

quickly jumped down from the tree and grabbed the rod the line had become caught around a little branch, so I quickly jumped in to free it. After a short battle I had her coming to the net I scooped her up and dropped the rod although when I looked into the net I had somehow missed her I quickly picked up the rod with the clutch ticking away underwater I couldn't believe



it if it fell off now who would believe me. However, second time lucky and she was mine at 55lbs 8oz a new PB. She was my 76th fish a feat in itself! I later worked out I had travelled over 14000 miles in the 10 months countless hours, but she was worth every bit of it! a moment ill never forget shared with good friends.

I left the fishery for a while after that but no where else

seemed to compare to it. Even though bluebell is a busy day ticket fishery at that time it seemed more like syndicate. The members were a great bunch of lads, everyone with the same ambition, everyone sharing information and on every capture most would wind in and come to help out with weighing and photos.

I returned a couple of years later; Benson had passed

**Benson**

away then she was so famous she even made ITV 10 o'clock news. I could have fished one of the other lakes but I loved Kingy so much. I had what was referred to off most people who fished there as Kingy fever something that caused a few marriage breakups over the years by now Kingy held over thirty 40lbbers but it was still a difficult lake due to its popularity and the immense pressure it was under from some very good anglers. I went on to catch a lot of these fish I could go on forever about them but theres a few that stand out head and shoulders in my memory.

Lucas: On my return the new king of the pond was a fish called Lucas however it hadn't been caught for over 16 months. I was just feeling my way back into the swing of things as so much had changed since my quest for Benson. I was steadily catching and was starting to get back into

the groove nothing much had changed spot wise. The fish used to love to feed on the clay and most bites were from first light until 12pm. After that you would just be sat twiddling your thumbs for the rest of the day. They love a low air pressure on Kingy as long as it's not accompanied by rain. I timed one of my visits to correspond with the low air pressure and was fishing the first point swim to the same spot I used to fish to years ago, known as Bensons hole at 18 and a half wraps to a small clay spot. I put single yellow pop ups out on fluorocarbon rigs and was just about to spomb up when the heavens opened the rain was biblical so I couldn't bait up. It never stopped raining for 2 days solid and I could feel the session slipping away as I stated earlier, they just didn't like the rain. I kept checking my weather app for a break from the rain. On my last

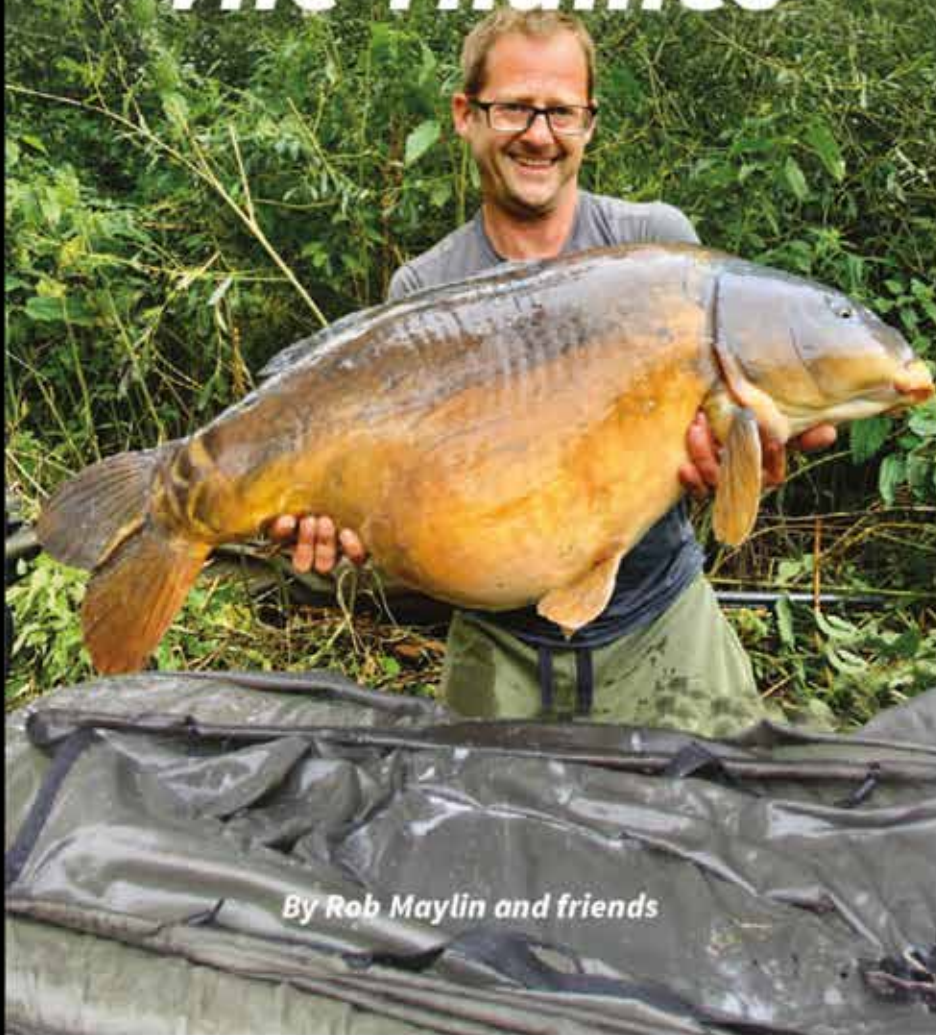
morning, the rain was due to stop at 4:30 am the lake hadn't done a bite for the entire time it rained. But I just felt it had to do a bite when it did. I set my alarm for 4:30 am and sure enough the rain stopped. I sat outside drinking coffee, listening to the chorus of the birds as it broke light when I received a savage bite. When I first picked the rod up, I was sure I'd hooked kingys one and only catfish, it just held it's ground out in the middle and I couldn't gain one inch of line. This went on for an age then slowly but surely I started to gain on it. Eventually I had it plodding around in front when it weeded me up after a bit of toing and frowning with the rod. I had a massive weed bed coming towards me, I quickly bundled the whole lot into the net and as I was peeling the weed out of the net. I could make out the frame of a huge common carp Lucas was mine! It's hard to believe

**Lucas**

# SECRETS OF THE THAMES

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£29.95

## Secrets of The Thames



*By Rob Maylin and friends*



The River Thames flows through southern England. It is the longest river entirely in England, with a total length of 215 miles (346km) and the second longest in the United Kingdom, after the River Severn. While it is best known for flowing through London, the river also flows alongside other towns and cities, including Oxford, Reading, Henley-on-Thames, and Windsor.

The river gives its name to three informal areas: the Thames Valley, a region of England around the river between Oxford and west London; the Thames Gateway; and the greatly overlapping Thames Estuary around the tidal Thames to the east of London and including the waterway itself. Thames Valley Police is a formal body that takes its name from the river, covering three counties.

In an alternative name, derived from its long tidal reach up to Teddington Lock in south west London, the lower reaches of the river are called the Tideway.

It rises at Thames Head in Gloucestershire, and flows into the North Sea

via the Thames Estuary. On its way, it passes through London, the country's capital, where the river is deep and navigable to ships; the Thames drains the whole of Greater London. Its tidal section, reaching up to Teddington Lock, includes most of its London stretch and has a rise and fall of 7 metres (23ft).

Along its course are 45 navigation locks with accompanying weirs. Its catchment area covers a large part of South Eastern and a small part of Western England and the river is fed by 38 named tributaries. The river contains over 80 islands. With its waters varying from freshwater to almost seawater, the Thames supports a variety of wildlife and has a number of adjoining Sites of Special Scientific Interest, with the largest being in the remaining parts of the North Kent Marshes and covering 5,449 hectares (13,460 acres).

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that a fish like this could go on the missing list for so long as kingy was constantly under immense pressure. I got a couple of neighbours to help me with the weighing. After weighing it twice we agreed on a weight of 50lb 2oz. Kingys first 50lber since the passing of Benson. I was overwhelmed and felt honoured to have caught it, the king is dead long live the king!

Flick tail: Through the summer fishing along the lock

bank, I managed to get a few fish feeding on the surface. I managed 3 fish that afternoon Lockjaw at 36lb, a smaller 30lb common and a lovely 37lb common. Whilst I was feeding, I noticed a big mirror feeding in a very distinct manor, every time it took a mixer it snatched and flicked its tail. It was a really random feeder, so difficult to pin down. After a few hours I did manage to hook it but it flat rodded me and after a few minutes the

### The 37lb Common



## Flick Tail



hook pulled and I reeled in one of its scales. I was gutted as I didn't know what fish it was. The next year fishing in big Al's swim I managed to get it feeding again it was easy to identify as again it flicked its tail after engulfing every mixer, it was a tricky spot to fish as there were a load of overhanging willow trees to the left of the swim full of snags. I managed to hook it and again it flat rodded me

straight into the branches of the overhanging willows I felt sure the line would break I felt it grating as the it thrashed about the surface, I heard a large crack and the branch snapped and it was free. I managed to get it to swim away from the willow trees by changing the angle of the rod but it eventually wedded me out 10 yards in front after giving the rod the butt the whole weed bed started to

move towards me. A couple of members Joe and his friend had seen the commotion and walked around to help. Without hesitation Joes' friend jumped straight in and bundled the whole weed bed into the net. After peeling the weed back there laid a massive scaly mirror. We weighed her; another new 40lber for kingy and christened it Flick tail after its characteristic way of feeding . My luck continued for the next few weeks landing another three 40lb fish 2 more off the surface heartail for the 2nd time that year at 43lb plus and a very special fish from sand martin lake

Tilly: Me and a few friends were having a social on kingfisher. I had a very good morning landing a nice couple of 30lbers and Heartail again this time off the bottom. At that time, we had a WhatsApp group that was used to pool information on and just general banter. I

left the lads a message to tell them I was off to Sand martin lake and was having Tilly that day. Everyone was like "yeah right oh." I wandered off to Sandmartin the bay swim was free one up from the cobble swim there's a set of reeds to the left of the swim. I fired a few mixers out and after a short while had a few fish feeding confidently. One looked a lot bigger than the rest and even though I wasn't 100 percent sure I felt it could be Tilly I kept watching her swim off to the reeds and every time I catapulted mixes out she would swim back out and take a few, after a while I noticed her less and less and decided to rebait just as I catapulted some mixers out she came up to take one and as the mixers hit the surface she spooked. She swam off along the road bank into the left hand corner I followed her up the road bank and watched her move into the southwest corner

nearest to the concrete block I quickly started spombing mixers out well beyond her for them to drift in on the wind and before long had a lot of fish feeding. Tilly had just come and parked herself not 2 foot from the margin to the right and every time a mixer drifted in front of her she took it without hesitation in all that time there was a lot of fish feeding further out I gave them a few more spombs to keep them busy and flicked the float out and slowly eased it back so that the wind would slowly blow the hook bait into Tilly. it was like watching it in slow motion as she engulfed the hook bait. A quick strike and she was hooked. She slowly waddled off not really knowing what had just happened to her and after a short fight she rolled into the net she weighed 49 lbs what a fish and one I dearly wanted I let out a war cry on the WhatsApp group to the total disbelief of the lads.

## Hearttail



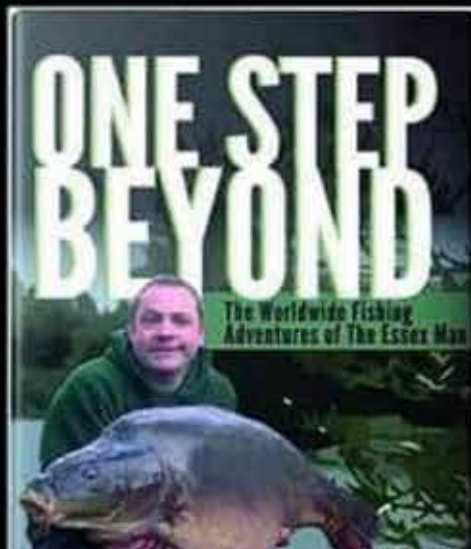
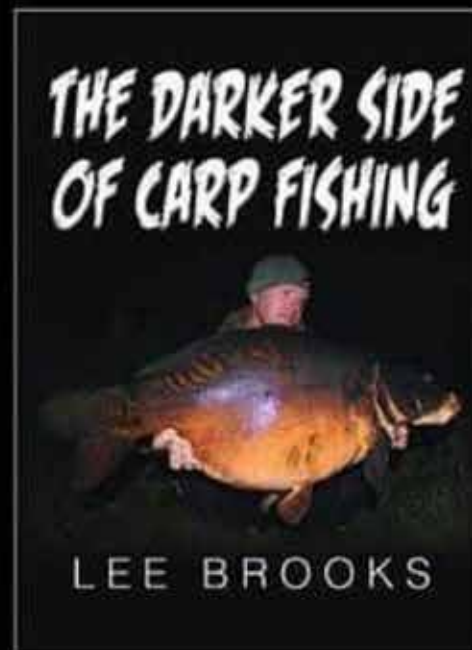
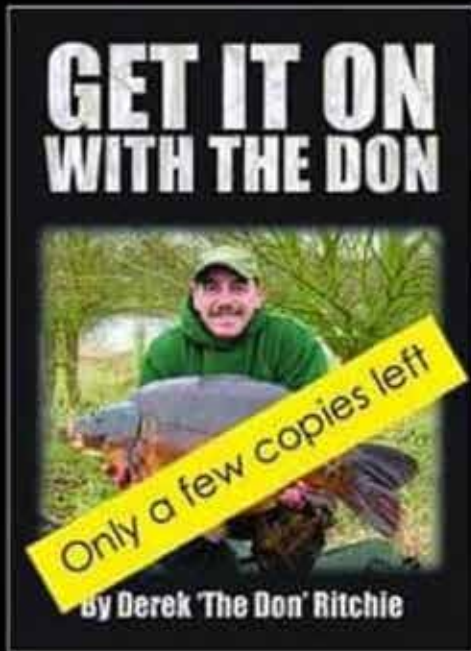


**Hoisting up Tilly**

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Tilly



Sadly not long after the fishery closed due to covid and I couldn't wait to get back on opening day. I managed to get in pizz peg and again managed another fish I dearly wanted; Twisted scale at 40lbs plus a couple of weeks later I found myself back in pizz peg and managed to brace a couple of 40lb fish the big Ghosty and the Si Harris mirror. I had caught this fish a few times and was starting to get more

and more recaptures. Even though I still dearly wanted to catch a couple more fish, the DVD fish and Slope head I knew it was nearly time to move to another lake. I had a fantastic few seasons catching most of the A team including a new 40lb fish for kingy I christened Baby bulldozer and bulldozer himself although spawned out at the time.

Heart tail: A week or so later me, Kev Hewitt and

Garry Dennis were fishing in kingy. After the usual morning feeding time had passed we decided to reel in and get on the barrow and walk the complex for a floater opportunity as hard as we tried we couldn't get any fish feeding off the surface for love nor money so wed decided to get the rods back out on kingy, I thought I'd give it one more go in a swim known as hoggs and couldn't believe it when I got a load of fish feeding I quickly rang Kev and Gaz and told them to get back round we noticed a really big fish feeding in amongst the other fish and Bart had join us along with us along with another few people spectating Bart had climbed a nearby tree and was commentating on the whereabouts of the big fish it took a mixer and Bart confirmed it was the big un I quickly punched the float out and it took the hook I bait instantly I was playing

## Heart Tail Agin



it with an audience behind me all barracking me not an easy situation! eventually I breathed a sign of relief as it slid over the net chord to a massive cheer from my audience it was my old friend heart tail again at 42lbs plus I was happy to catch her but I knew it spelled an end to kingy for me . I felt honoured to fish there with some incredible anglers who are now lifelong friends and catch the fish

I had caught I could write another article on all the fish I caught in that time such as the incredible mommon, Armour belly, and most of the A team at over 40lb Penny, Jays common, The fighting machine, The si harris mirror, The big ghosty, twisted scale and Baby bully to name a few but ideally wanted to catch a fish known as Dave from swan lake so it was time to move lakes .

### **Armour Belly**



**Jay's Common**



**The Big Ghosty**



**EXCLUSIVE**

## The Fighting Machine

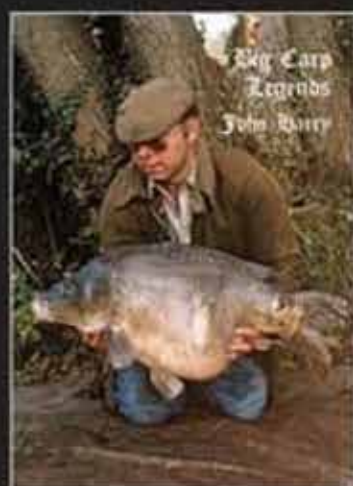
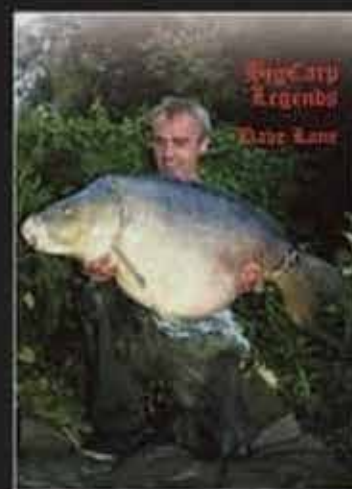


## The incredible Mommon



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Swan lake: I fished Swan lake for a few seasons, it held a lot of big fish including Dave, The box common and the Perfect common all weighing well over 50lbs. The lads on there were brilliant! It wasn't a place for the faint hearted as some of the windups were brutal but the fishing was second to none. Although I dearly wanted to catch Dave but more importantly I wanted to catch him off the surface I lost count on how many times I've had him feeding off the top and should of caught him a few times but being a busy lake I would often get him feeding only for the wind to get up and blow the mixers into some other anglers swim and Dave follow them and happily feed there with my neighbour watching on with 3 rods on the bottom it was so frustrating at times . One week whilst fishing the garden swim I set up a washing line rig fishing to the no fishing bank called the causeway as I had seen a few decent fish feeding off a small gravel spot, with that rod fishing I started to feed mixers ten yards out I soon had Dave troughing them right under my washing line rig suspended above him a couple of swans with their chicks decided to get in on the action and Dave happily fed in amongst them getting pecked off the swans every now and then I decided to stay calm and just keep feeding the swans until they had enough and move off then Dave surely would be mine. With the swans and Dave happily feeding I suddenly received a one toner on my washing line rig rod I stared in disbelief how could I get a one toner on a washing line rig? Surely it had to be a drop back! A Heron had took off and got wrapped in my line and dive bombed the area right between Dave and the swans Dave spooked off and the male swan climbed



**One of Swan's finest**

on top of the heron that was wrapped up in my line and started fighting with it. The alarm was screaming off and the noises from the heron sounded like something off of Jurassic Park! Meanwhile everyone around the lake were in fits of laughter I did manage to untangle the heron and the swan in the end no worse for wear but the chance was ruined .the next week i headed back for the same swim and again was floater fishing I had a good few fish feeding suddenly the wind picked up and the fish stopped feeding I watched for a while and thought the chance for a fish had gone when out the corner of my eye I noticed a fish taking mixer to my right next to the reeds I quickly punched the float out to the area when I received a

**Another nice 40 off the top**

phone call. I put my rod down and ran to my bivvy to get my phone. It was my fiancée, Leanne. She said "Haven't you caught that big daft fish Dave yet?" At that I noticed the line on the floater rod start to tighten... I quickly threw the phone down and was bent into a very heavy fish. Dave isn't known for being a big fighter and I knew by the fight and the weight I had finally

hooked him. After a slow fight I had him wallowing out in front, I reached round to get my net and by changing the rod angle. This made him kite right into my other 2 bottom rods as soon as he touched the line the hook pulled, I could have cried!

After licking my wounds for a while, I noticed a few fish back on the surface feeding and pretty quickly hooked

### The hook pulled - I could have cried



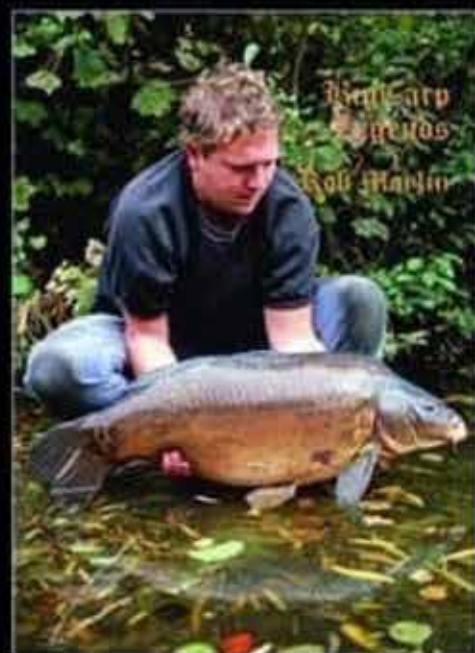
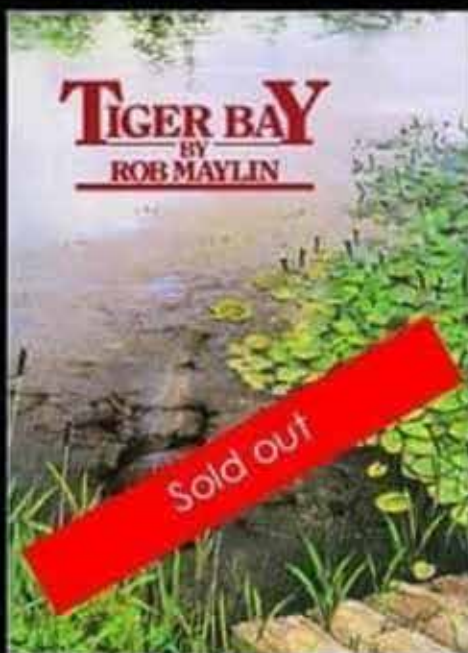
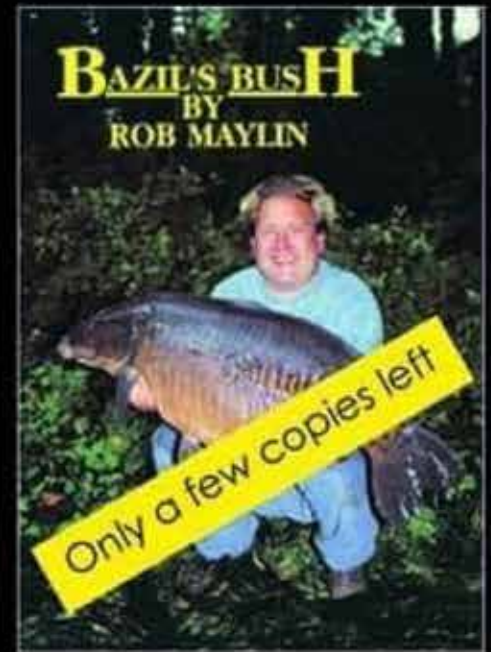
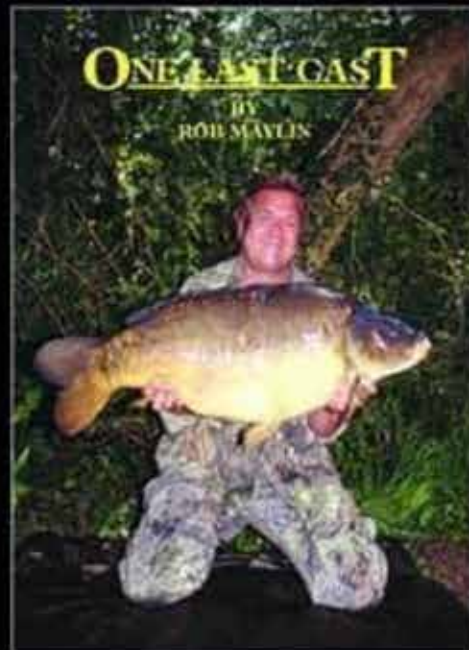
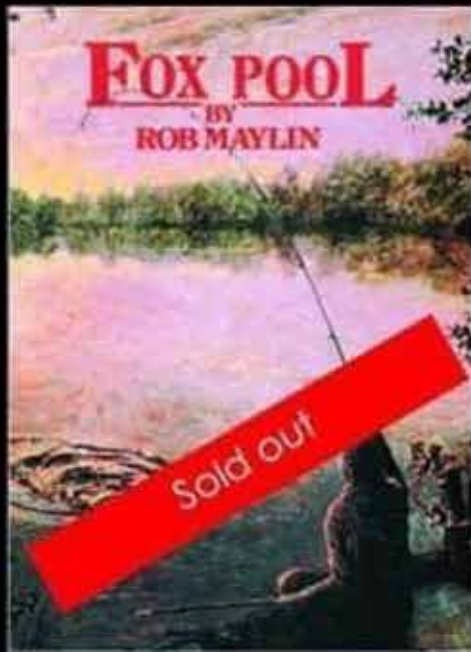
into another good fish. It fought like a demon and after weeding me up a good few times everything held and in the net was the Long common the weirdest shaped fish I've ever caught! It had the longest body from its pecks to the end of its tail, almost like 2 different fish stitched together at 45lb plus I wasn't complaining it was a great consolation prize. The next week the same swim was free, I jumped straight in again it was a red-hot day, and I fed mixers all day long but couldn't get any fish feeding. The trouble with swan lake is the fish prefer it to be overcast to feed on the surface, but the sun was blazing. I persevered feeding though, in hopes that when the sun went down the fish might feed at teatime. Most of the mixers had blew in tight to the reeds to my right I wandered round and peered over the reeds there was around 10 fish sneakily feeding tight to the reeds, I

### **The Long Common**



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felt zigs in this area would give me multiple chances so I quickly ran round and got my marker rod to get the right depth, I slowly lowered it over the edge of the reeds so not to spook them. It was around 3 foot deep i quickly ran round my swim to tie 3 over depth zig rigs up whilst doing this. I noticed a few fish close in so quickly catapulted in a few pouches of oily floaters and riser pellets out. A fish started Pac-manning on them instantly. I already had my floater rod set up but still had fish feeding tightly against the reeds. Should I just carry on tying the rigs up or have a go getting the fish in front of them? It was a split decision! I jumped up and pounced the float out the fish had moved down to my right but had turned around turning back up towards the hook bait one of the lads Gaz Smith was walking up towards me and said, "Do these fish even like Nash bait?" I replied, "You're about to find out" and counted down as the fish approached the hook bait. 3...2...1. It took the hook bait without hesitation, I struck and all hell broke loose. It didn't look like a big fish but it flat rodded me and stripped 100 yards off me in the blink in an eye I couldn't believe the power of this fish! I didn't turn it until it was on the other side of the lake in the stump swim, I quickly put the waders on and waded 4 swims up clambering over everyone's rods up to the 4th garden swim to get a more direct contact on the fish. The fight was incredible. After around 10 minutes I had the fish plodding up and down in front my old mate Garry Dennis and donned his chesties and was stood bedside me with a net. I said "Something doesn't feel right Gaz I can't get any control on it feels massive but it only looked small when I hooked it I might have foul

**I thought I'd foul hooked it**



## The Perfect Common

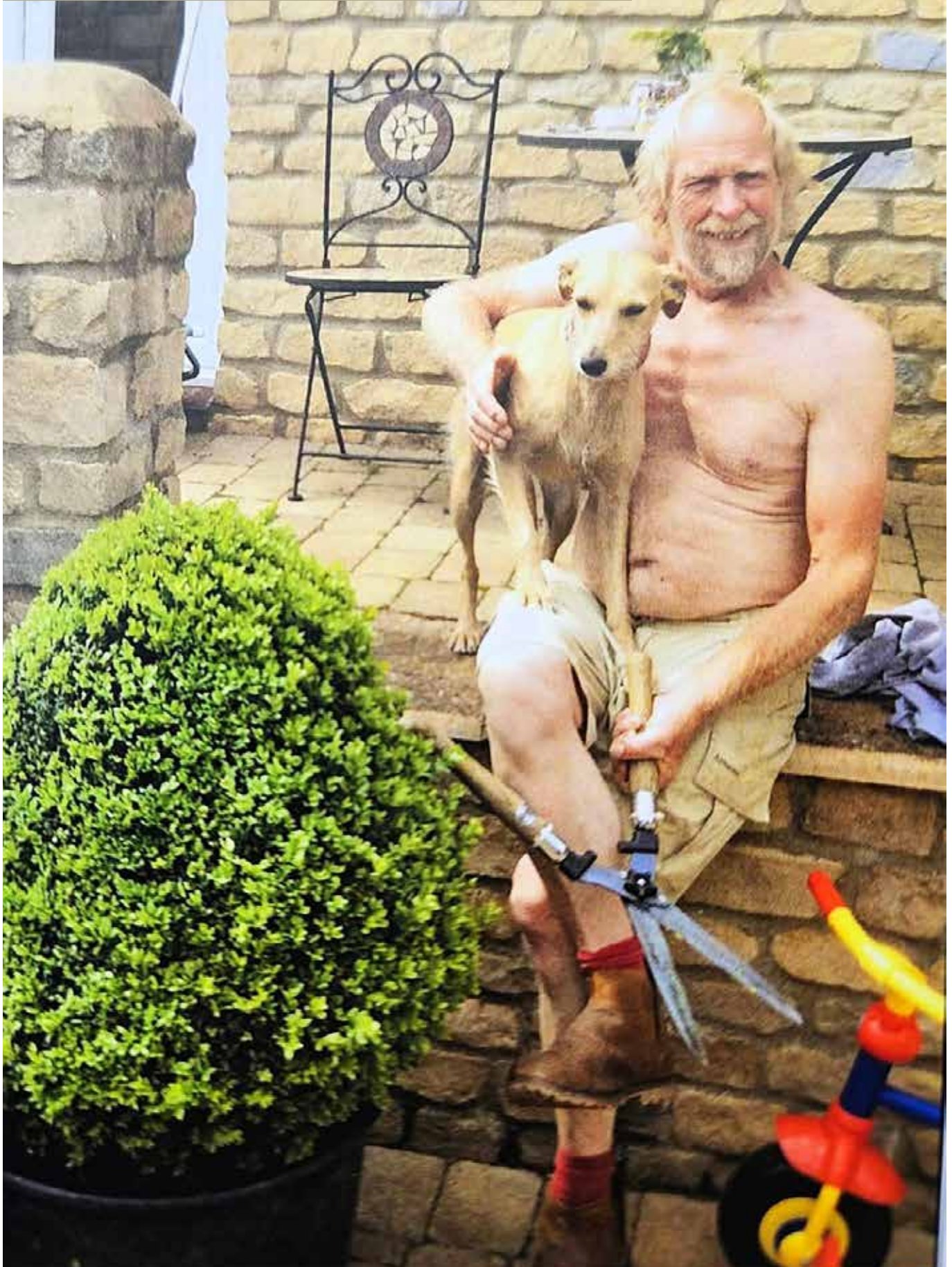


hooked it as I struck after another few minutes, I was convinced it had to be foul hooked I said to Gaz "I've had enough." I told him, "I would bully it up to the surface, if its foul hooked, we'll just net it quickly". I wound down on the fish, slowly it started to come up to the surface its head come up and then 3 foot away its tail it was massive and hooked fair and square I quickly lowered the rod,

slacking the clutch so not to pull the hook after another 5 minutes of tug of war we bundled it into the net, it was the Perfect common weighed at 50lbs 4oz what a fish my 3rd 50lb common from the complex.

I did go on to catch a lot of fish from swan, but my mam had taken ill and I had to be nearer to home to take her to hospital appointments, on top of that Tony had passed away.

**Tony, I didn't feel the same without him**



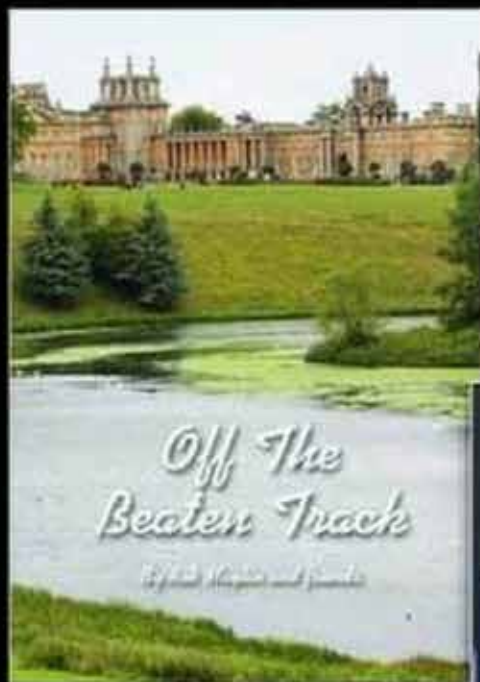
I loved Tony and after his funeral I went back to Bluebell but instead of the excitement I used to feel as I turned into the gates and down the track to the reception, I just felt sadness it just didn't feel the same without him being there. I decided to take a break for a while until my mam was a

### Tango



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little better and clear my head. Finally I did return last year in the summer and suddenly that excitement was back! I had some fantastic floater sessions with Kev Hewitt and Archie B catching fish to over 40lbs, it was just like old times. On one of our floater sessions me and Archie were on Sandmartin lake zigg fishing I desperately wanted to catch a fish called Cluster a lovely scaly mirror of over 40lbs. I receive a take on my right-hand rod and for some reason instantly knew it was Cluster and told archie it was him. He just laughed and said "You can't call that" but I was convinced. Suddenly my middle rod had a bite I told archie to hit it. He told me it felt like a big fish, and I should swap rods with him, but I was convinced I was connected to Cluster at that my left-hand rod was away a triple take! I told the neighbour to my left to hit it but it fell off a short while later. Meanwhile I saw the fish I was attached to roll that left me with no doubt that I was indeed attached to Cluster. I waded to my right, away from archie playing his fish and grabbed archies net. I quickly netted him and unhooked him and staked the net into the lakebed and went to help Archie net his fish. We netted it a stunning mirror of around 35lb I said to Archie "Come look at cluster!" As we waded over to it, I picked the net up to have a better look and he spooked and powered off, busting straight through the side of archies net. We both just stared in disbelief I was in fits of laughter but poor archie was mortified we sat chatting for a while after mostly me trying to console Archie as it was his net and he felt responsible me on the other hand still laughing my head off. "How can you take it so well?" He asked my reply was "In years to come archie it would just be another photo

**Gone but never forgotten**

of a 40lber, but this story is priceless." And so, it's proved.

So, what for the future? I'm returning to my second home bluebell this year. I'll always remember talking to Tony all them years ago in my swim one cold winters evening and him telling me all he ever wanted was to create the best day ticket complex in the country, somewhere where any angler of any ability would have a

chance at catching the fish of their dreams, well he certainly did that and more . It is a place that's made so many memories for so many people and lifelong friendships and now it's in great hands with Jimmy and all of the bluebell team. They do a fantastic job and I'm sure Tony and Linda will be smiling down proud of how they've carried their great legacy on.



**RYAN WOODLAND**

# HEIGHTEN YOUR SENSES

Other than maybe some younger generational anglers, it is probably no secret now that the Bluebell Lakes complex holds many very special carp. With 'special' being the most operative word, holding everything from grey and black scaley mirrors to old battle scared commons that each tell a story. From my knowledge of the stock that I've been acquainted with over the last 4 years I'd say there are roughly 12 to 14 strains of carp swimming around on site and currently around 55 to 60 different 40's across all 5 lagoons. The variety of the carp gives a true sense of surprise when your bobbins pull up tight and you never know what you are connected to until you get that first glimpse of bronze, silver, gold or Black as it boils up from the crystal-clear depths.

There are many reasons why these Swan creatures will test the most patient of us dangles, but the carp in Swan lake in my opinion are the masters at taxing even the best carp anglers time. The carp tax that comes with fishing Swan Lake is definitely time, because you'll need it in order to understand what the hell is going on under the surface. These fish don't play by the normal carp hand book.

The lake can become granite at many times throughout each of the 4 seasons and that's what makes it so appealing to fish for an angler that wants to think about their angling. Every sign from nature, every beep from your alarms and every fish landed is so valuable when fishing a lake like Swan. These carp don't give much away about how they are catchable on that particular day, but if you heighten your senses day and night, you'll start to piece

together the most subtle signs of how and where these beauties might be trip up. If you believe you will just turn up, find a nice spot, bait up that area and start catching in your "favorite" swim then you are sadly mistaken. This is no ordinary lake and that is all down to how busy the lake gets and how much bait gets applied all over the lake all year round.

### **A BIT ABOUT ME**

Those that actually know me will know that I have been a very private angler over the last 30 years of carp fishing and 39 years of course fishing. But as of the summer of 2025 I decided to lift the lid and become more public about my angling. Prior to this, other than those who have witnessed how I fish most anglers would barely know I exist on the bank. In my earlier years i did a masters in digital systems & robotics engineering but then 18 years



I mainly produce sporting events...



...there are worse day jobs

ago decided to move direction into a busy life as a producer in film, Tv and commercials. I often find myself producing a lot of sport on the biggest stages from anything like the Premier league football to professional boxing. However,

carp fishing has always been my pull back into nature to ground my busy life, and there is no better / friendly day ticket than Bluebell lakes.

**MY APPROACH TO TACKLING SWAN: UNDERSTAND THE**

**PROBLEM FIRST**

I chose Swan lake on the bluebell complex to campaign on for 4 years due to the complexity of the task at hand. Fishing a lake that has series of factors working against you as an angler was really appealing to me as I am always looking at ways to improve as a person and as an angler. In my opinion, the difficulty of fishing swan lake arises from a few different factors, and as an

engineer, before you come up with a solution it's best to fully understand the problems first.

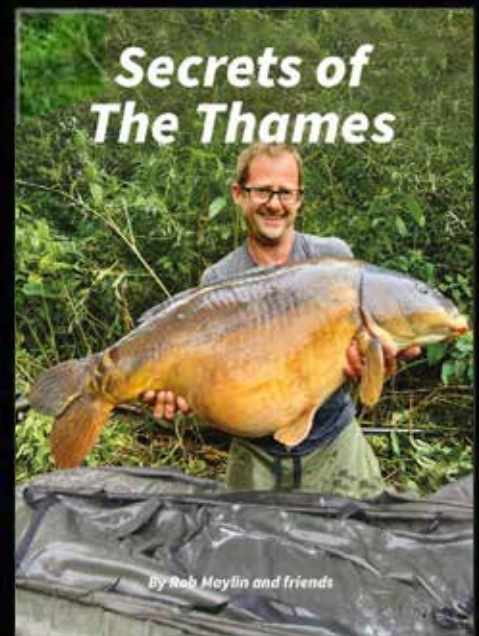
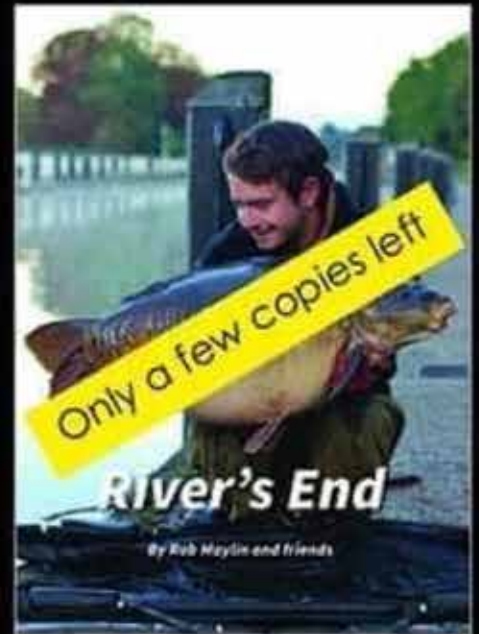
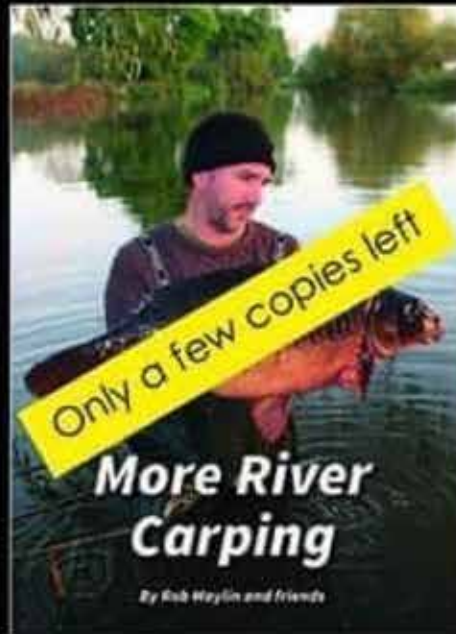
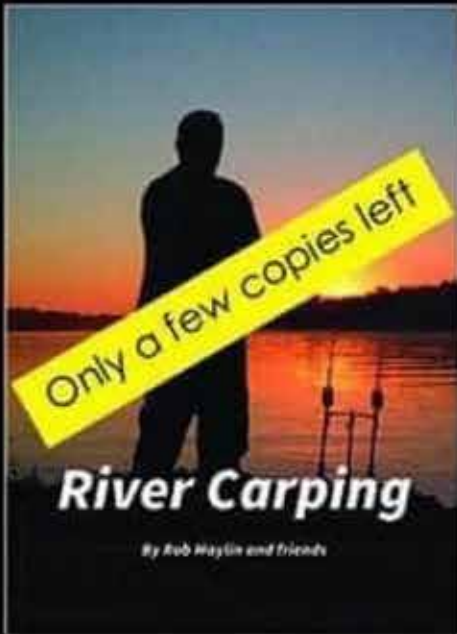
It's a busy day ticket with 72 lines constantly in 12 acres of water chasing probably only 175 old fish wary wise fish day in day out. So even if you know where the fish are feeding you can't always get on the bulk of them because that swim is taken. So you end up working extra hard fishing for the odd fish in the swims



**My faithful companion, Murphy**

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## Getting tuned in to the lakes



that are available. Then, couple that with the fact that your average day ticket angler on Swan normally turns up regardless of how it's fishing and throws in too much bait adding to the bait already in your swim from the previous 20 anglers doing the exact same thing in the that peg, you can now start to see this is a recipe for a very difficult session ahead of you before you have even got out of the car.

Also to kick a man while they are down, you can also throw in the mix that Swan Lake

is teaming with natural life readily being topped up from the river Nene and the natural springs under the lake bed. So to say the fish don't need your fresh bait is normally an understatement.

**MY SOLUTIONS:** Although being successful fishing a tricky lake like Swan could seem like a distant dream, I've always believed that If you take the right approach and focus per session you can slowly piece together the puzzle. Although carp fishing can be cyclic, no two sessions are ever the same due to the

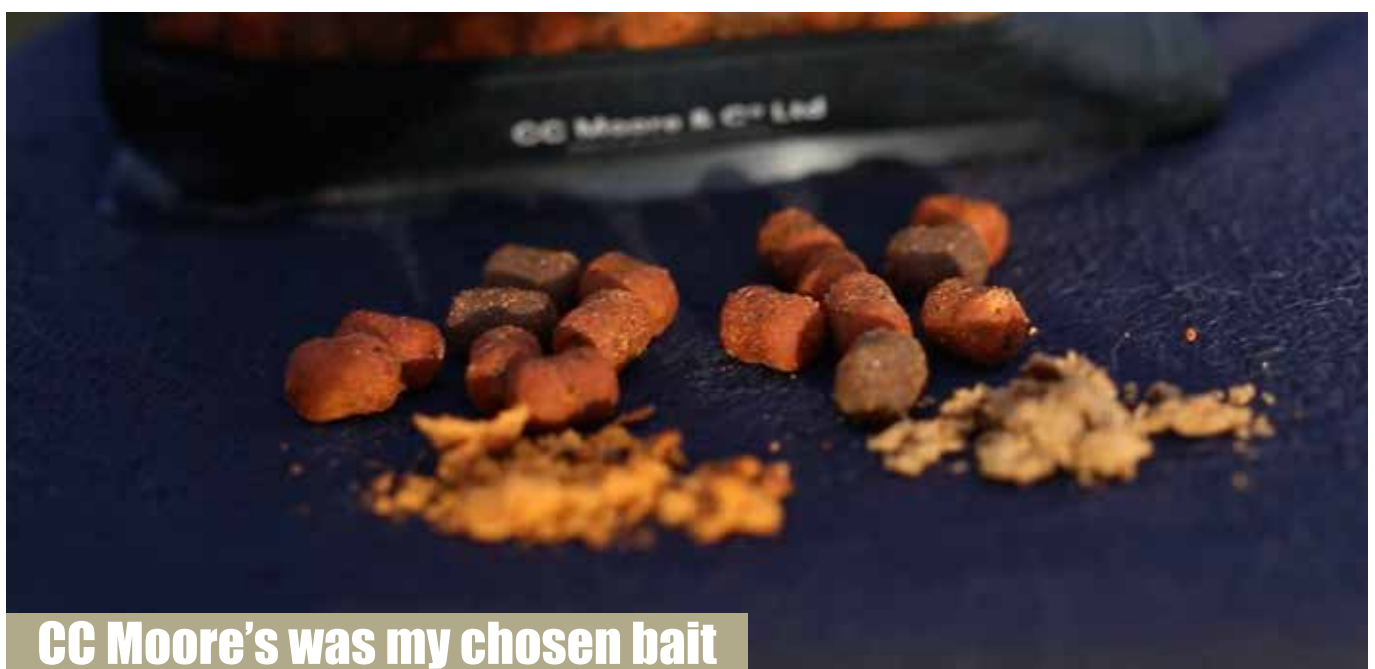
hundreds of variables at play. However, when you start seeing patterns appearing in response to the actions you are taking it starts to feel achievable.

**BOTTOM, ZIGS & SURFACE:** Firstly, I'd say deploying all three tactics of fishing on the bottom, Zigs and surface (when warm enough) is key to conquering Swan lake and don't be frightened to switch these up within a 24 hour cycle.

**TUNE INTO YOUR SENSES:** This is key if you want to stand out on a lake like Swan. Heighten and elevate

your senses and evaluate the smallest of signs the lake and fish are showing you. If it feels like changes need to be made, I'd suggest you listen to gut instinct and make them. These small signs set the direction of your entire session, so it's better to be at the bottom of a ladder you should be climbing than half way up one that leads nowhere.

**TARGET DIFFERENT TERRAINS:** Fishing on silt and or compressed weed to avoid large patches of old bait on big hard clean areas that other anglers before you have left behind would



CC Moore's was my chosen bait

## Searching for something less obvious



guarantee you more control of your baiting situation and in my opinion leave you with a better chance of getting a pick up. I do fish big clean hard areas sometimes but only if I see clear activity on that zone that they are cleaning off that old bait. Looking for really tiny hard areas the size of your hand that only one rod would fit on is also a brilliant tactic, as most anglers wouldn't find these let alone fill it in on that spot.

**FREQUENCY, TYPE & APPLICATION OF BAIT:** If you decide to put bait in your

swim, start with small portions and build the swim depending on if you get a response and start catching.

Use a good quality boilie and pellet and stick to it, don't think too much into the ingredients that make up that bait, and certainly don't blame it for why you aren't catching. Being in the best location using the worst bait in the world will always out fish the best bait in the worst location. Personally, I have confidence in the CC Moore range and have caught lots of Swan fish on their products,

so I just leave it there in terms of choosing a brand of boilie / pellet / liquids to play around with.

### **HOOKBAIT & FREEBIE EXPERIMENTS:**

The engineer in me loves to experiment with bait, and adding your own personal bait edges never goes a miss. I am constantly tinkering with everything in my angling and trying to personalize the freebie baits I am putting out and also personalized my hook baits. Sometimes the smallest of changes to your hook bait on a certain day on swan can be the difference between catching 5 fish in a session or a big fat blank. I am a believer that carp anglers should think like trout anglers when it comes to hook baits, if a detail is missing in the moment a carp goes to investigate hook bait it can be the difference between a landed fish and a missed opportunity.

**NATRUALS:** A sprinkling

of casters, or chopped worm can sometimes enhance your chances and be an edge in the colder months, but as everyone is doing this nowadays I'd use this method only when you think it's necessary because 7 or 8 months of the year I don't think it makes too much of a difference.

### **BOATS OR CASTING**

Bait boats or casting? Although Bluebell allow the use of bait boats on Swan lake, I'd urge you to consider if it's necessary in the swim / situation you are in to use one. I'm not against bait boats but I would much rather cast if it lends itself to casting as I believe there is less disturbance and effort required if you are good at casting & spodding.

I ended up with 91 bites on swan in 2025 of which 7 were 40's and of those 91 bites, 73 of them came from casting and 18 came from using a bait boat. If you don't like bait

boats then don't use them, but I respect all anglers and their angling choices, we all fish for personally reasons. It made me think when carp legend Terry Hearn caught the British record fish 'the Parrot @ 63lb' from Wasing using a bait boat, it's piece of mind that it could be part of your armory if used sensibly. I only bought a boat 3 years ago after carp fishing for 27 years without one and I'd say it's a great tool to exercise if needed, but just don't rely on

it, casting and leading is still the key to success in general.

This picture perfect fully mirror was part of a big hit of 17 fish. Looking at it you would think it was the cherry on the top of a big 17 fish wide birthday cake but lucky for me that day I had 5 other fish you would also consider a cherry.

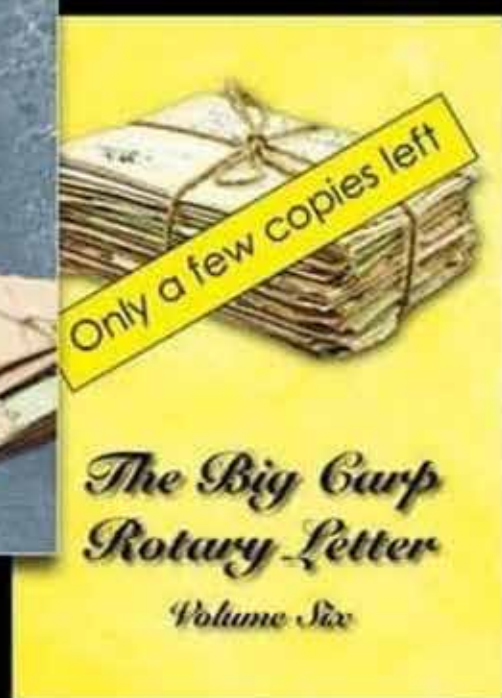
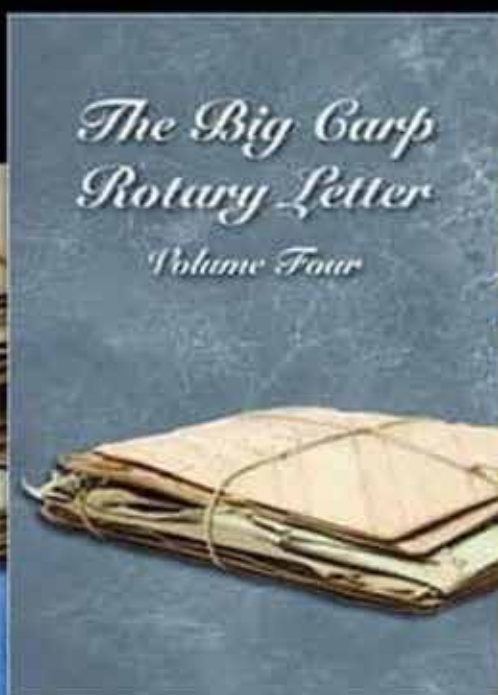
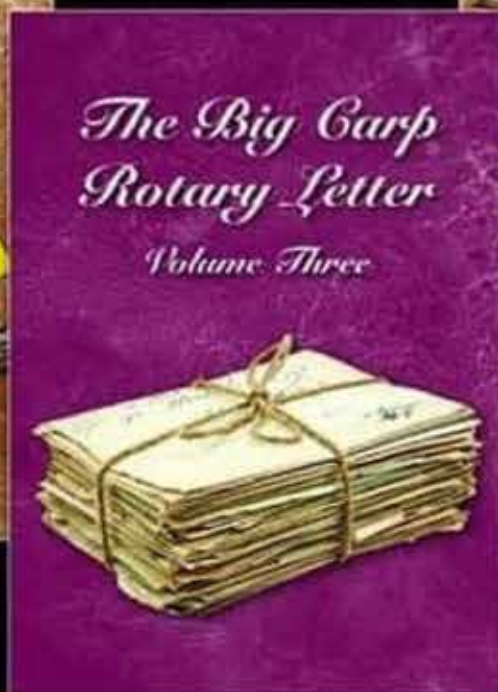
Swan does that on occasions, you are looking for a nice cherry to top off your session but then you find yourself looking down staring at an entire pot of cherries with no



**Not quite the cherry on the cake**

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birthday cake stodge.

The low to mid 30 'Infamous Orange Lin' ended up in my landing net twice. Once from a 13 fish hit and again 2 months later with an 8 fish hit. Trust me when I say, when you see this fish in the flesh It ticks every box an avid carp porn enthusiast could wish for. This fish evaded me for 4 years until at the end of my 4th year. Me, Archie and Birchy spoke about this fish the night before I caught it, then the next day it was there looking up at me. Manifestation can work!

I nicked this normally low 30 big platted mirror off the top in a summer session. It was the only fish feeding in front of me and I could see it was a beauty even from 60 yards. Being careful not to over feed her, she occasionally slurped around on the top taking leaf matter looking for insects in the surface film. I fired a few of Murphy's dog biscuits (he wasn't happy!) either side of the fish until she made the fatal mistake and sucked in mine.

This purple hued warrior



**The Orange Lin**

## The Big Plated Mirror



normally sits around mid 30 and It came from a birthday session hit of 11 fish that I shared with my partner. It was the last fish I caught that session which rounded it off nicely as I moved swim every day, which often I found to be the winning formula on swan if you can predict their movement. Holding a fish as tanned as that in the sunshine makes you feel you are in tropical waters. The fish in Swan can become so tanned

due to the water clarity.

There are lots of New Generational scaley's coming through like this upper 20 oil painting. I had this fish with 2 others in a morning after a quick move to the shallow end of Swan when all else was failing. Being mobile certainly pays off on swan!

Much like this fish, the staff at bluebell hand select the best looking fish to reside in swan lake and they have an awesome stocking policy

always trickling in a few dreamy fish each year.

This Tiger looking fish graced my net at 37lb+. A prime example that these dreamy scaley swan fish are not only scaley but start to push through the upper 30 and 40 mark. It came from an awesome session where I had 10 bites in late spring landing 7 fish in very quick succession fishing very short range.

This navy blue mirror tipped my scales at over 31lb and

made up for losing a couple of fish in the weed prior to this bite. Lots of effort trying to find feeding fish on that session led to me travelling light around the lake trying different areas that looked promising. Another example of the sort of prizes that are waiting for you if you are willing to put the effort in to find them.

This 35lb Chestnut beauty was my first ever swan carp some 5 years ago on my first



**The Tiger Mirror**



**The Navy Blue Mirror**



**The Chestnut Mirror**

trip to the complex. I wanted to fish a couple of nights and do a swan recce. Within 10 mins of arriving to a swim that a lad was fully packed down from after a 5 night blank, I saw some feeding signs in front us. I calmly got one rod ready off my barrow with a crusty old wafter on it from a previous session in London and asked the guy if he minded me sticking a rod out while he was sticking the last of his kit on his barrow. He said crack on..... 6 mins later my spool starts spinning on the floor and this peach surfaces. I did feel bad asking the guy licking his 5 day blank wounds to set up my net....

Not only does Swan Lake have lots of beautiful pretty fish, but it also has lots of big 40+ pretty fish. Walking around the lake in my first year of fishing swan made it quite clear to me that the majority of anglers on the lake were just targeting the two or three

biggest fish in the lake in the shape of Dave at 59lb and the box common at 57lb. No one else really had a good idea of what was actually in there. But after getting to grips with the stock from what I had caught and what I had seen getting caught I'd say at the right time Swan has roughly 16 to 20 fish that go over the 40+ mark and held some very under rated gems. I can't mention all of my favorite 40+ and big fish captures I've caught from swan but here's a handful to wet your whistle.

My capture of the 'Almost Leather' @ 41lb 4oz has to be one of my favorite moments from fishing swan. One of the most sort after and rarely caught fish in the lake came out for me as a part of a triple take landing it with another 40lber in the net. This genetic leather is a very cagey feeder so if you plan to target it make sure you have you're 'A' game, as it only comes out about

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## WATERCOLOUR CARP PAINTINGS

*The Legendary Big Carp Series*

### **Burghfield Common**

*The sixth in our series of Legendary Carp paintings is none other than that awesome creature, the Burghfield Common.*

*Only discovered in recent years, Nigel Sharp rocked the carp angling world when he finally landed the beast after a five-year campaign, during which time he had only seen this leviathan on a handful of occasions.*

*Regarded by many as the original myth, there was much speculation about its existence at all, until it was finally landed at an incredible weight of 50lbs.*

*Quite how it had evaded capture for so many years is still a mystery, but due to the vast size of this huge gravel pit, it simply became the needle in the haystack.*

*Once its existence was verified by that first capture, an army of the country's top carp anglers have invaded Burghfield's banks and some feared its mystery would be lost forever.*

*But no, this incredible beast has still proven to be virtually uncatchable with only a very few captures in the past half a dozen years.*

*Undeniably a legend, this beautiful animal well and truly deserves its place in the Big Carp Hall Of Fame. Coming soon – the Royal Forty...*

*Strictly Limited to only 100 signed and numbered by the artist.*



*The A3 prints are very modestly priced at only £25 and are available now on the Big Carp website [www.bigcarpmagazine.co.uk](http://www.bigcarpmagazine.co.uk). Visit the site, go to the shop and select the 'Fine Art' section. There is also more information on the rest of the series, which will be available at one to two-month intervals, but I can tell you that the Black Mirror, the Burghfield Common, Heather, Jumbo, Jack, Mary, Clarissa, the Bishop, the Royal Forty, the Fat Lady, Mary's Mate etc are already on the list and we are up for any more favourites – just let us know – Rob Maylin*

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**The Almost Leather**

once a year.

The 'Two Tone common' @ 43lb 8oz graced my net twice. Both times it properly pulled back and wouldn't give in. The two tone elements of this fish made it unmistakable when you were hooked into this beast. This fish had previously done captures of over 50lb which believe it or not can be a common occurrence for bluebell's larger commons.

If you are looking to break your duck and catch your first

40lber on Swan lake it is a very good chance it might be '4 Scale'. It's one of the lakes only hardcore feeders and can often make an appearance. I got to meet this character fish 3 times at 42lb and have often taken photos of it for other anglers. But in my opinion this feeding behavior is rare for swan carp as they are normally cagey feeders due to the pressure and over baiting.

'Circle Scale' @ 42lb fell to my varying tactics on 4



**The Two Tone Common**



**Four Scale**

## Cicle Scale



different occasions and has to be one of the best looking fish in swan. I feel blessed to have landed it so many times and It's getting up there as one of the biggest fish in swan too. Recently getting caught at 47lb and in my opinion is has already replaced the fish Dave as the biggest mirror in the lake everyone wants to catch.

Probably the oldest mirror in the lake at 40+ years old the 'Slate Grey' is a gnarly OAP battle torn grey slab of

muscle mass. It never quite reaches 40lb but never far off it, this fish was near the top of my wish list of fish I wanted to meet on the bank, let alone catch it myself. My dream of holding this fish came true on a session when I banked it in a session along with the oldest common in the lake.

The fish 'Sky' which the head bailiff Trevor actually named after me because of the work I do for Sky Sports. This fish has been floating around the

**The Slate Grey**



**Sky**



42lb to 43lb mark in the 2025 season but in my opinion still has a long way to go in terms of growing.

The 'Silt common' at it's best has spun the scales at 41lb 12oz and gets its name for obvious reasons. It can often be seen or caught when rooting around in the silt. I had this fish just under 40 in my second year and I caught it in the thickest silt I could find with a really critically

balanced bait gently sitting on top of it. Using my binoculars I could see a bunch of fizzing at range on my silty area, then 20 mins later it made the mistake picking up my hook bait.

'Black eye' tripped up in the same session I caught the silt common which almost gifted me another brace of 40's, but It was ounces short on each fish. This scrape-a-40 is one of the most unknown underrated

## The Silt Common



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*The Legendary Big Carp Series*



*Here she is at last! Regarded by many as the 'ultimate' big carp, the stunning Black Mirror, captured here beneath the Colnemere snags. The Black Mirror joins Basil and Heather in our 'legendary carp hall of fame', soon to be joined by other famous carp that have shaped our big carp heritage, starred alongside the UK's most famous carp anglers and made us all gasp at their beauty and give those who have dedicated their lives in pursuit of them, the utmost respect. One of my favourite carp of all time – strong, dark and so very difficult to put on the mat. Once again an absolute masterpiece, the one and only Black Mirror is available now as a small number of signed and numbered prints (100). Anyone interested in this or any of the others take a look at the website.*

*At the very modest price of £25, this is a collection not to be missed.*

*There will never be a collection like this again. Now is your only chance to own the history fish collection.*

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**EXCLUSIVE**

**Black Eye**



**Coins**



fish in swan and not often getting caught even though I've had it twice. It's almost Koi like and has an awesome over slung mouth... which is probably why it evades so many anglers rigs that aren't up to scratch.

'Coins' aptly named because of the two 1 pound coin looking scales on it flank is probably another one of the fish looking to break through the 40 mark this year. I had it 36lb 10oz in my first year caught on a single after a move in the

middle of the night, but this fish has recently come out ounces under 40lb and in my opinion will be one the next fish to hit 40lb.

'Bat Tail / Batman Fish' is a very unique looking common with a tail looking like a Bats head. All I remember about hooking this fish is the life saving ruck it gave and on the take it even burst out of the water and shot off into the opposite swim. I had it at an upper 30 after spawning but by the Spring this fish normally

**Bat Tail / Batman Fish**

sits around 40 to 41lb.

'Snip Tail' Is one of Swans old original characters with it's notable kink on the lower back and massively over slung head. Often mistaken for another Swan 43lb'er original called the Parrot. I landed Snip tail twice, once at 40lb 10oz and once at 42lb 8oz.

How I caught the 'Upfront common' at 42lb 12oz Is one of my favorite stories. I saw it feeding over my spot in the edge by wafting its pecks the fish only took bits coming up

off the bottom, laughing at me. So later that day I switched all 3 rods to really critically balanced 15 inch subtle braided rigs on popups only settling with the last bit of braid pulling the popup down. The following day I caught It on a different spot 20 yards away. The fish was 3.5ft long and only just fit in the net.

The 'Twisted back common' is the oldest common in the lake some 40 years old. Lovely crooked back and coarse like scales which almost feels like

## Snip Tail



**The Upfront Common**



**The Twisted Common**



a perch to the touch. I landed it at 38lb 8oz but use to get caught at 43lb when it was a little more spritelier in her younger years.

**MY FILM ON SWAN LAKE:**

After much thought about going public with my angling, In 2026 I will be releasing a film about my time fishing on Swan lake. The film has been in edit for the last 4 months and I am excited to get it out there and share some of what I have learnt from fishing probably the hardest but most rewarding day ticket lake in the country. I decided to make the film about 8 to 10 of my most memorable

sessions on swan lake over the 4 years that I fished it. Piecing it together not only in an interesting way regarding the fishing content, but I also tried to push some boundaries with how carp fishing films are made. Being a film producer I thought why not let my day job meet my passion for the first time. Those that want to watch it drop me a follow on my social media linked here: @ryanwoodland\_carp @ryanwoodland angler and I'll let you know on there when its live. I hope you enjoy the film and hope it even helps you put a couple more swan fish on the bank.



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*Mary and Mary's Mate, the icons of the great Wraysbury complex... The British Record in the arms of Terry Hearn and the brace which Sir Pete posed so wonderfully with on the back of his legends book are but two of the many captures which have earned these two awesome creatures their place in the Big Carp magazine legends hall of fame.*

*The A3 prints are very modestly priced at only £25 and are available now on the Big Carp website [www.bigcarpmagazine.co.uk](http://www.bigcarpmagazine.co.uk). Visit the site, go to the shop and select the 'Fine Art' section. There is also more information on the rest of the series, which will be available at one to two-month intervals, but I can tell you that the Black Mirror, the Burghfield Common, Heather, Jumbo, Jack, Mary, Clarissa, the Bishop, the Royal Forty, the Fat Lady, Mary's Mate etc are already on the list and we are up for any more favourites – just let us know – Rob Maylin*

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**STEVE PARROTTE**

# BLUEBELL LAKES

# THE LAKES OF

# DREAMS

**I**t was an honour to be asked to write about my time at Bluebell Lakes — in my opinion, the finest day-ticket fishery in the country. What Tony and Lynne created all those years ago is a testament to what hard work and big dreams can achieve. Though they are sadly no longer with us and are sorely missed by the entire Bluebell family, the fishery continues to go from strength to strength under Jimmy and the team, who have modernised the facilities while protecting some of the

best fish in the country from predation. I may have missed the famous Benson era — growing up reading anglers' stories in the magazines was what first drew me into fishing — but the Bluebell experience still proved to be everything I had hoped for.

After several years of my best mate fishing Bluebell, I finally gave in to his pestering and agreed to join him for a session. Work and young children had always made the 400-mile round trip from Wales hard to justify, especially when my local water was

only five minutes from home. The hustle and bustle of day-ticket carping never really appealed — but after hearing the stories and seeing the photos he sent, my head was well and truly turned. A date was set, the kit was prepped, and the excitement built quickly. We left at 4am to reach the gates for seven, and as we drove down the track and the lakes opened up before us, I felt a buzz that I still get every single session. We headed straight into the shop where Tony greeted us — cuppa in one hand, roll-up in the other. “Go and find your peg, boy, and come back and pay.” There was only ever one lake I was heading for.

For two years my friend Jon had talked about it non-stop, and now it was finally my turn. It was early April — still cold — so the lake wasn't overly busy. We hurried around and managed to bucket Point One and Point Two. What a result.

I was stunned by how beautiful the lake was and couldn't wait to get the rods out for my three-night session.

As soon as I started plumbing the depths, it became obvious just how weedy the lake was. Having only really fished silty waters, the next couple of hours were less “spot finding” and more “thrashing the water into submission.” My head was nearly gone.

Eventually, I found one decent spot at around 14 wraps, but it wasn't big enough for three rods. Sitting on my bucket, roll-up lit, I pondered my options.

Bugger it, I thought. Three zigs it is — reassess tomorrow.

My knowledge of zig fishing was limited, but at least I'd be fishing. I cast three 10-foot black zigs into an area where I'd seen a show, ate my dinner, and by 7pm I was fast asleep — the early start and excitement had caught up with me.

Around 9pm, the buzzers screamed into life. I flew out of the bivvy only to spot the culprit immediately in my headtorch beam — a big, angry swan that had spent the day attacking anything that dared enter the lake. After reluctantly sending him on his way, I reset the bobbins and crawled back into bed.

What felt like minutes later, the buzzers sounded again.

Half asleep, I assumed it was the birdlife — until I saw my left-hand rod hooped over. I lifted into the fish. My knees were knocking. I tried shouting Jon in the next swim but got no response. After what felt like an eternity — probably ten minutes — I

## The Dinosaur



bundled a clump of weed into the net and peered inside.

I couldn't believe it. I sprinted round to Jon's bivvy and woke him as gently as possible... which resulted in him launching upright like something from the undead. He stared at me, confused, while I simply mumbled, "Fish," before legging it back to the swim.

Once the fish was on the mat, we were gobsmacked. Not only had I caught on my first night, but it was a truly special one — a scaly mirror known as The Dinosaur, a rare visitor to the bank that often went years between captures. Sometimes it's better to be lucky than good. I didn't sleep a wink after that, staring at the back of my old Nikon in disbelief. The next day showed me what a great bunch of anglers fished the lake. Cups of tea flowed freely, and lads from all around came to congratulate me. This wasn't

the day-ticket atmosphere I'd imagined at all.

I even managed another twenty from the bottom and a couple off the top on the lake behind. I drove home absolutely buzzing — the fire was well and truly lit. Before I'd even left the complex, I'd booked time off work four weeks later.

The next session couldn't come quickly enough. Jon and I headed back, excitement building with every mile. Walking down the main track toward Kingfisher, I was ready to burst. Unbelievably, Point One and Two were free again. We flipped a coin — I won — a trend that continued for several trips, much to Jon's suspicion that the coin might have been double-sided. Soon I met the Kingy faithful — Birchy, Kev Hewitt, Gary Dennis, Jason Holden, Little Dave Jones, Maltby, the Bells — anglers who, in the months and years ahead, would become great friends.

# BIG CARP

## *fine arts*

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*The Legendary Big Carp Series*



*'Heather The Leather' – The jewel of the Blackwater Valley. She is THE Yateley Car Park Lake legend; a fish that shaped and changed the lives of some of the greatest carp anglers this country has ever known. Pete Springate, Robin Dix, Ritchie MacDonald, Jock White, Terry Pethybridge, Nigel Sharpe, Terry Hearn... the list goes on of anglers who devoted weeks, months and years of their lives in pursuit of the queen of the lake. She has gone now; gone to that great carp lake in the sky, but here, thanks to one of the county's most talented young artists, she has been brought back to life for all to wonder at her beauty... I am proud to bring you No. 2 in the Big Carp Legendary Fish series – Heather – God save the Queen!*

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We were all tuned into what we called the Lake of Dreams, suffering happily from what became known as Kingy Fever.

This time I didn't even lead around. The pre-tied black zigs went straight out, the rods were fishing within the hour, the kettle was on, and serenity settled over the swim. The first night passed quietly, but before dawn the lake buzzed with anticipation — kettles steaming, headtorches glowing, everyone scanning the misty water for signs of a morning bite. Then the left-hander pulled tight again. A mid-twenty common kicked things off, followed the next morning by another high twenty and a mid-thirty known as Lockjaw. I'd clearly taken to zig fishing — though I hadn't admitted to anyone that I'd only used the method a handful of times before. Birchy had already nicknamed me "The Welsh Gill Net." If only they knew... On the final

morning, the left rod was away yet again. Waders on, I slipped into the water and played the fish carefully, keeping steady side strain on my 10lb line to guide it over the weed. When the net finally closed around it, I dragged it to the edge and looked inside. This thing was enormous. My head fell off. With Dave and Jon already beside me, we secured the fish, brewed a sugary tea to calm the nerves, and lifted the Reubens.,45lb 14oz. The Fighting Machine. My second PB on my second session — I was living the dream.

The obsession was real. After such a flying start, reality soon humbled me. When the weed reached from bottom to surface and zigs were no longer the answer, a steep learning curve followed — but I enjoyed those challenges just as much as the early successes. Those years became the golden era of my angling life. We shared brews, captures, stories, and

I was well pleased with this one



laughs. The lake felt like a family, and often someone else's fish brought as much joy as our own. Penny Drops, the following year I set myself no real targets — just tick through the stock and enjoy every moment. But after seeing one of the boy's land Penny, a real old original mirror with perfect penny scales along her flank, the spark was lit. She was one I dearly wanted.

I set up in Woods, and it was obvious I was in the right area — fish were bouncing out everywhere. I'd heavily baited with hemp, corn, and worms and was happy to sit it out for the three-night session. Jon was across the lake in DVD, and after what felt like every carp in Kingy had shown over me for 24 hours, I got the dreaded call: "Do you want me to come over and catch one out of

your swim?" It did absolutely nothing for the confidence. We lived for the banter on that lake — but thank the Lord, just as I was giving up on the morning bite time, the middle rod screamed into life. As the fish powered around in front of me, I caught sight of it through the Polaroids — barrel rolling again and again trying to shed the hook. Then I saw the flank. Big mirror. Penny scales. Game on. I waded out as far as I dared and slipped the net under her with as little fuss as possible. I was absolutely buzzing. Penny was mine.

The Noddy Promise: The following November, Tony, Trev, and Kev organised a

## Promise is a promise



charity match on Mallard and Sandmartin in aid of the local children's cancer ward. It was a brilliant event — and in true Parrotte fashion, I turned up in a full Noddy outfit, determined to catch a carp and get the photo. Naturally...

I blanked. I promised the lads the next forty I caught would be photographed with me wearing the costume. All winter the outfit stayed buried in my bag, waiting. Early March arrived, the boys were back on, and the carp were beginning to wake up. I set up in LPJ and spombed out my mix. That morning I wasn't woken by my alarms but by an ecstatic Gary Dennis across the pond shouting: "I'VE GOT HER!" He'd only gone and caught the S.I. Harris Mirror — we were all buzzing for him. He'd wanted her for years and she had evaded him to the point of desperation. Then, as the sun crept up, my alarms screamed into life.

After a slow, steady fight, I slipped the net under what I knew was a good fish. At last — the Noddy costume came out. Standing at the water's edge dressed like a children's TV character, I watched the needle settle.

A morning I'll never forget — not least because the lad in the next swim came out, shook his head, and quietly zipped his bivvy back up. Less than 24 hours later, we were all sent home.

The nation was heading into lockdown. This gave me a new perspective as Covid eventually slowed the Kingy fever and made me realise just how tunnel-visioned I'd become. Since then, I've tried to balance fishing with family and work — though Kingfisher still has a firm hold on my heart. The beauty is that I still have unfinished business at Bluebell. Swan, Sandmartin, and Mallard all call to me. I've watched

friends land incredible fish from those waters, and maybe one day I'll surgically remove Kingfisher from my soul..... but I doubt it. These days I try to get down once or twice a month, often with the dogs in tow. If you see me on the bank, come and say hello.

Bluebell really is somewhere special. Whether you're a first-time visitor or a regular chasing the fish of a lifetime, the complex has it all — top-

notch facilities, a well-stocked shop, Benson's burgers to keep you fuelled, and bailiff Trev always looking out for anglers. What began as Tony's pipe dream — getting people outdoors and bringing fishing to the masses — has become one of the greatest complexes in the country. And with Jimmy and the crew at the helm, it continues to grow.

A place where dreams really can come true.

## So many decent commons to go at



**What more could you want....**



**....a true complex of dreams**



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JUNE 2026

**WATERLINE**

# MANOR MAGIC



**DAVE SPENSE  
DANNY HOLLAND**

# HOW BRIGHT IS A NITE WATCH IN THE DARK, AT DUSK & IN DAYLIGHT?

## WHAT TRITIUM ACTUALLY IS

Most watch lume gives up just when you need it most. Tritium doesn't. Inside each watch are sealed glass tubes containing tritium gas and a phosphor coating. As tritium undergoes natural beta decay, its electrons excite the phosphor, producing a steady, continuous glow. No charging, no button press, no battery. It just glows, all day and all night, for up to 20 years.

Every tube we use is sourced from mb-microtec in Switzerland, the global benchmark for GTLS technology and the manufacturer trusted by military and



HAWK GREEN TRITIUM ILLUMINATION VIALS

professional services worldwide. If you want the full technical detail, our website covers it thoroughly. For now, the short version matters most: it's completely passive, self-powered, and needs nothing from you.

## COMPLETE DARKNESS: WHERE TRITIUM EXCELS

Three things really matter: you can read. This is the environment tritium is built for. In genuinely dark conditions, whether that's a tent with no moonlight, a building with failed power, or operating below the surface at depth, you raise your wrist and read the time instantly. No pre-activation required.



MX10 BLUE/ORANGE TRITIUM ILLUMINATION VIALS

Green tubes are the brightest option for human low-light perception, which is why they're standard across most professional and military applications. Tritium watch brightness also varies by tube colour.

White and ice blue tubes are available across selected models and remain legible in darkness, but green consistently outperforms them in genuine low-light conditions. Our T100-rated models deliver significantly more brightness than standard tritium, providing fast, reliable orientation when ambient light is near zero. That's the rating in both the Hawk Nightfall and the Alpha Z Blackout, for exactly this reason.

When the MX10 was first supplied to UK Special Forces, the logic was simple: kit that relies on charging or batteries will eventually fail. Tritium doesn't.

## TWILIGHT AND LOW-LIGHT: OR IN TOTAL DARKNESS

Most watch checks happen at dusk, in a darkened vehicle, or in a bivvy at night are the conditions tritium illumination is meant for, and it handles all of them without requiring any action by the wearer.

At dusk, in dark rooms such the cinema, night club and restaurants, or in a vehicle cab with the lights off, tritium remains clearly legible without any effort. Standard luminous paint fades within a few hours of darkness. Tritium reads the same at midnight as it does at 10pm. That's the practical difference, and it's the reason professionals who depend on accurate timekeeping choose tritium consistently over traditional lume. Our full tritium vs traditional lume breakdown article on our website covers this in more detail if you're weighing up the options.

## BRIGHTNESS OVER TIME

Tritium tubes don't switch off, they decay. A question we hear often is how long does tritium watch illumination actually last in practice. Over the rated 20-year lifespan, brightness reduces gradually as the tritium decays. A ten-year-old tube will be noticeably dimmer than a new one, though still functional in genuine darkness. Worth knowing if you're considering a second-hand tritium watch.



MX10 HORIZON

[READ THE FULL ARTICLE >](#)

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NITE

WATCHES

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**GARETH DE LA TORRE**

WEARS THE HAWK



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Reviews 5,768 • Excellent



## PROVEN THROUGH PASSION

For the past year, Gareth De La Torre, Endurance Athlete, Author & Charity Fundraiser has tested his HAWK watch on some of the UK's toughest endurance events, running, rucking, climbing. He'll be participating in this year's TCS London Marathon, raising funds for the Royal Marines Charity, wearing military boots and carrying 40lbs!

Has his HAWK let him down?... NO

Nite watches are continuously put to the test by our Mavericks and come with a 5 Year Warranty, Swiss movements, super bright tritium illumination and most importantly a build quality that is designed to be used and abused by those who live for the outdoors.



SWISS-MADE  
MOVEMENT



TRITIUM  
ILLUMINATION



SAPPHIRE  
CRYSTAL



5 YEAR  
WARRANTY

NITEWATCHES.COM

# Rob's Ramblings

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Front Cover:  
Adam Honeysett with a  
big Manor common.



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8. CARP CHAT

20. CARP SCENE

26. ADAM  
HONEYSETT

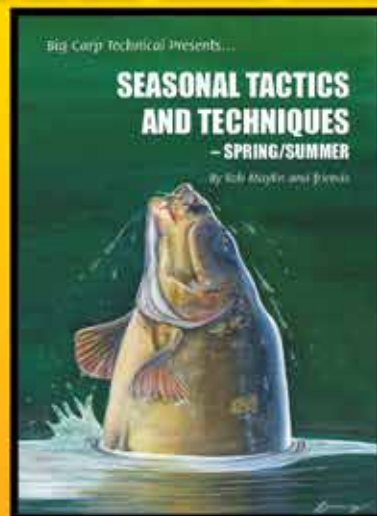
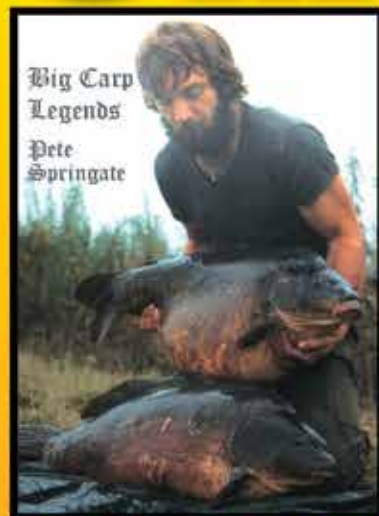
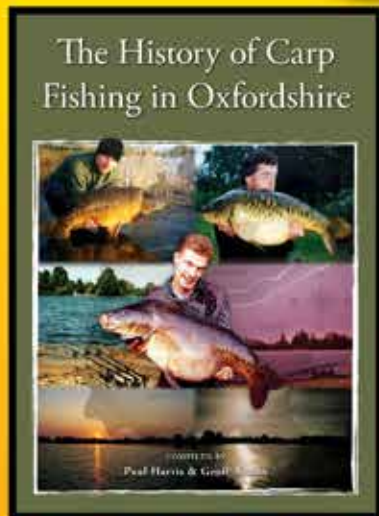
32. CHRIS  
CONNAUGHTON

40. DANNY  
HOLLAND

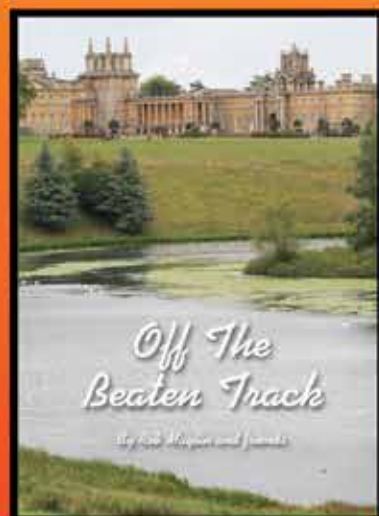
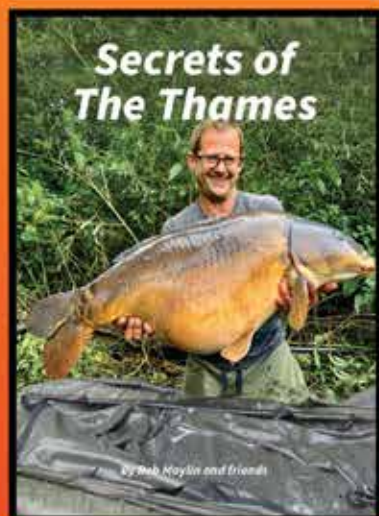
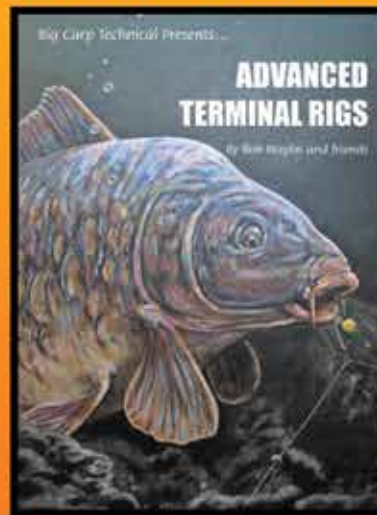
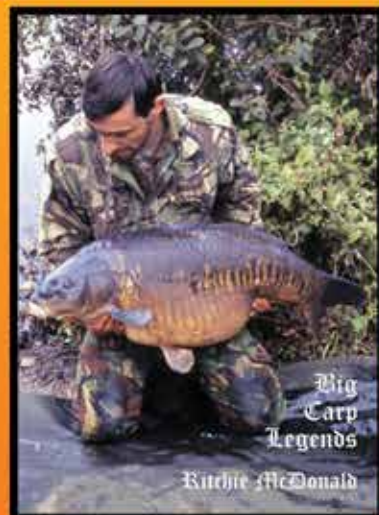
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# SUMMER S

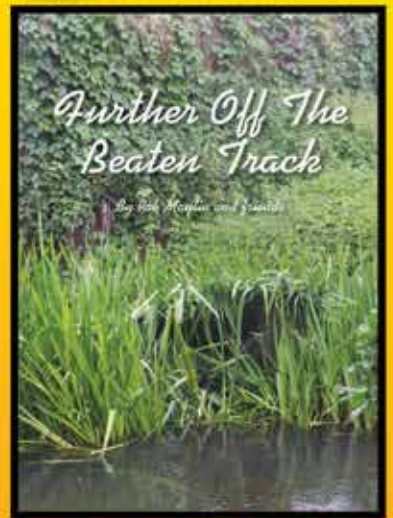
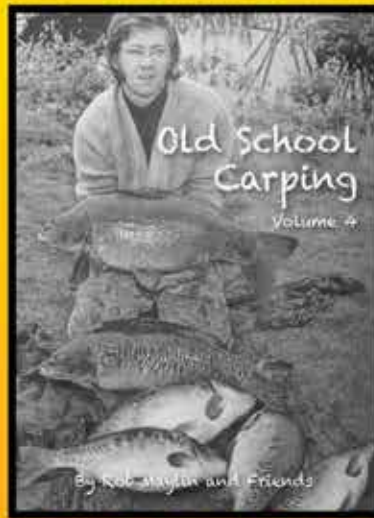
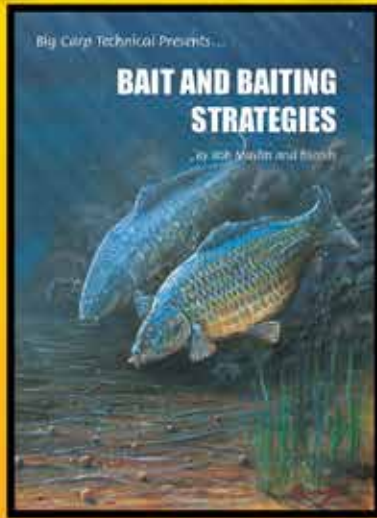


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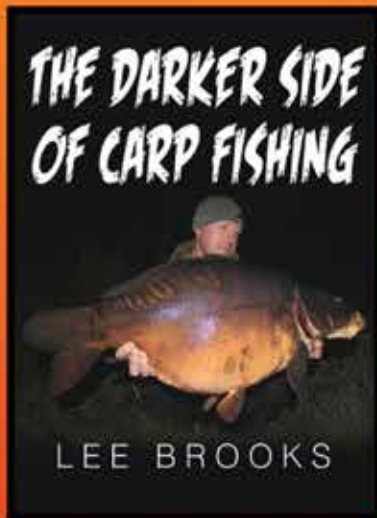
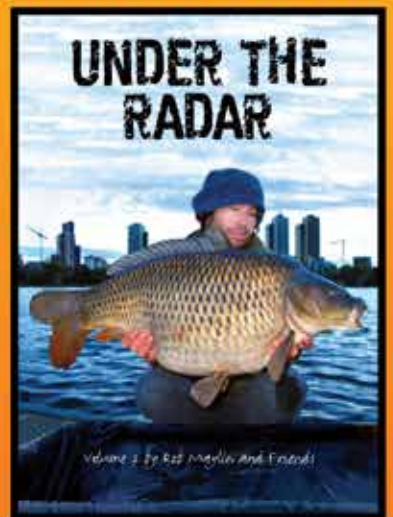
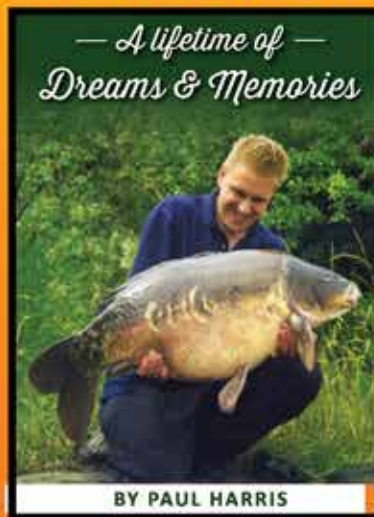
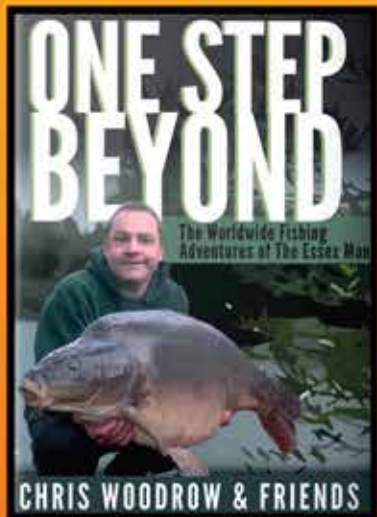


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# **ANGLER'S PARADISE MAKE OVER**



Set in the beautiful Devon countryside, away from all stresses and troubles is the forgotten complex, 'Shangri La' Opening in 2027, joining the 13 existing Anglers Paradise lakes. The site is currently undergoing a huge makeover, and is part of our ongoing project to care for our fish more responsibly. Top lake/Silver Rose - Winter Pike and predator Lake Middle/Intermediate Catfish Lake - Catfish to 50lb Bottom/Valhalla (Specimen Catfish Lake) - Catfish to over 100lb

# URBAN BAIT'S TEAM PLACES



## Promo Team Members Wanted

We are looking to add a small number of team members

Well here is the chance to be part of one of longest serving bait companies in the game, renowned for producing bait that's caught some of the biggest carp in the country over the years & has consistently put carp on the bank since day one!

1: We are looking for anglers that have knowledge around Social Media platforms such as Facebook & Instagram.

2: Are confident in front of

Camera

3: Are out on the bank fishing Regularly

4: Are happy to be involved in giving feedback on new products before they are released to the general public.

If you feel you can help in some way & would like to join the Urban Bait Promo Team then send us a DM or WhatsApp us on 07908 163442 for more information.

**20 PLACES UP FOR GRABS**

# **PHYLLIS TUCKWELL TICKETS ON SALE**



**ATTENTION.....**

Frimley tickets for the charity event in aid of Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice on sale now - 4th-6th September is the event date. Pits 1 & 2 are £150 per space Pit 3 is £300 per space 07717753166 is the number to call at the times given to get your space. Payment is taken by card at time of call. Make sure you save this as spaces go quickly for the awesome event

Thank you

Les Bowers

# **CALLING ALL CARP TACKLE, BAIT AND CLOTHING COMPANIES**

If you could help make this event even better than the last 3 years, any donation, big or small they kids will truly appreciate it. PLEASE PM ME OR COMMENT ON THE POST AND WE WILL GET IN TOUCH I am reaching out on behalf of S&R Fishery and Westmoor Farm to invite anyone to be part of a very special event we are hosting in August 2026, a four-day CHILDREN'S carp fishing experience designed to educate, inspire, and nurture the next eneration of anglers. The event will host 20 children and their parents, offering hands-on learning in carp fishing, fishery management, and watercraft, alongside structured daily competitions such as casting challenges, baiting accuracy, biggest fish, overall weight, and traditional sports-day activities to keep the experience fun and, most importantly, memorable.If this is something you'd nterested in supporting, I'd be delighted to discuss further details. Just drop me a message Thank you very much!

Lee and the team

S&R Fishery & Westmoor Far

## THE CARP SOCIETY JUNIOR CARP CAMP 2026 – LIMITED SPACES



**2026  
JUNIOR CARP  
CAMP**

**SAT 25th - TUE 28th JULY 2026**

The Carp Society Junior Carp Camp is a four-day event taking place at our renowned Horseshoe Lake in Lechalde.

This event is open to juniors aged 12 to 16 who are eager to learn or enhance their fishing skills, so all levels of experience are welcome!

Limited places, the fee of only **£95** covers tuition, fishing, main meals, and goody bags from our event sponsors.

For more information about this event, please visit our website [www.thecarpsociety.com](http://www.thecarpsociety.com)  
email [info@thecarpsociety.com](mailto:info@thecarpsociety.com) or call 01367 253959



Available! We've got a rare opportunity for young anglers aged 12-16! A small number of places have become available for this year's Carp Society Junior Carp Camp - and they won't hang around for long. Junior Carp Camp 2026 Dates: Saturday 25 July - Tuesday 28 July 2026 Ages: 12-16 years old (at the time of the event) • An unforgettable angling experience Cost: Just £95 for the full event Call: 01367 253969 If a space is available when you call, we'll take: The junior's name and date of birth. A parent/guardian email address (for registration), Payment to secure the place  
Places are extremely limited - once they're gone, they're gone!



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# **EDDIE LUCIA RIP**

## **BY MATHEW HART**



I met Eddie at Wingham Syndicate around 12 years ago, and from that very first day we just clicked. It turned into a genuine friendship, spending countless days and nights on the bank together fishing numerous lakes laughing, and making memories I'll never forget. Eddie was one of the kindest, most selfless people you could ever meet a true diamond. He would do anything for anyone without a second thought, and that's a rare thing these days. He had a heart of gold and brought so much warmth and laughter wherever he went. I can't believe I won't see him again. I'm going to miss him so much. My thoughts are with his family at this tough time. Rest easy, mate. Gone far too soon



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Carp Scene

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- 25lb (0.40mm) and 40lb (0.48mm)
- 300m and 600m spools



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**The ultimate in rod security. The rod is securely held in place under lock and key. The side bar locks at the 9 o'clock position and is released when you press it down to the 6 o'clock position. Simple - easy - reliable. Individual inserts from 12mm - 25mm perfectly match your rod. There's no compromise here. A must for fishing locked up, snag fishing or when fishing your rods out in the lake. Your rod has never been this secure. Manufactured from almost indestructable nylon using the very latest lazer technology right here in the UK.**

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# SONIK KRAFT CARP RODS



Introducing a new weapon in the Sonik line up. The Sonik KRAFT carp rod has been designed with cutting-edge carbon technology and meticulously crafted to optimize casting distance. It utilises a number of carbon technologies that were previously beyond the reach of carp rods at this price level. At the heart of the blank is a core of low resin high modulus carbon fibre that is interwoven in multiple levels throughout the walls of the blank. Engineered for strength, durability and exceptional levels of casting prowess. However, power is nothing without control and the KRAFT rod delivers pinpoint accuracy thanks to our new Bulletpoint™ tip construction. We tuned these new



technologies into a fast action blank that delivers exceptional casting performance without excess weight. Finished off in our understated Sonik style with a full shrink rubber handle and custom CNC machined matt carbon reel seat these rods are sure to impress.

Take your carp fishing to the next level with the KRAFT rod engineered to deliver unparalleled performance, power, and precision, giving you the advantage needed to conquer waters like never before.

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## CUSTOMER REVIEWS

Big shoutout to the lads at Digger Boats Ltd I've been living onsite at Carthagena Fisheries for 23 years now, and we've had plenty of work done over the years... but this one tops the lot! We've been fighting a losing battle with reeds taking over the entrance to one of our bays for a few years now. Even tried getting in ourselves with dry suits and pulling them out by hand absolutely brutal work and getting nowhere fast... was starting to think we'd lose the bay completely. On top of that, the carp were loving it — hiding in the reeds and becoming a nightmare to catch. We'd had other companies in before with weed boats, but if I'm honest, the results just weren't great. Got James from Digger Boats in, he came down, had a proper look and got stuck in... and what a job they've done! 3 days later and the place has been completely transformed it's something I've wanted sorted for years and it's finally done. Already this spring we've had over 22 fish out — including a few we haven't seen in years! Normally we'd only see a handful by now. Can't recommend them enough — top lads, proper job done. Thanks again boys — Jerry Hammond

“


A massive thank you to Digger Boats you did an amazing job on our lake 🙌

Anyone reading this, these guys are 10/10 very professional and didn't stop for 2 days solid.

Estimated amount of debris recovered 60tons, they did a fantastic job and I would highly recommend 🙌


★★★★★

Stuart Stockton  
Chesterton Community Angling Club



 Neil Ellis 📍 recommends Digger Boats. 39m · 🌐

[diggerboats.com](https://diggerboats.com) has just completed some norfolk reed removal on one of our club lakes. The diggerboats team worked their socks off and done a great job giving great value for money, going well beyond what was the basic requirement, feedback from members has been really positive with how the lake is now looking. If you are a club or commercial fishery looking for a professional fishery management/ maintenance company then give diggerboats a call, we at Colchester Piscatorial Society are already looking at more fallen tree removal work for the diggerboat team to undertake!

 Mark Turrell  
Great job done, can't believe the difference, thank you guys at Digger boat 🙌 🍷

 Top fan  
Stuart Stockton  
Fantastic company highly recommend these guys they did a fantastic job on our lake Highly knowledgeable and didn't stop for 2 days A very professional service 🙌

The company can carry out any aquatic projects on Rivers, Canals, Lakes, Ponds and Marinas. Weed removal, dredging, water deepening, reed and rush removal, aquatic tree works and much more.

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# THE MANOR

Friday the 9<sup>th</sup> of November saw me head off back up to the Manor. Amazingly, I had a relatively good run and arrived at around 16:30. I opted for one of only two swims left in the deep end of the lake. The weather was good, and it looked good for a bite. I positioned all three rods close in at around seven wraps. The night came and went without any action, but I had heard a fish close by in the early hours. I was up by 7am watching the water for any signs of fish. The lake was flat calm, and by around midday, it became obvious that I had to reposition the rods, as I had seen a fair amount of fizzing all a few rod lengths further than I had cast. Before I recast, I shared a cup of tea and a chat with a couple of the lads that had both caught new PBs in the last 24 hours. The atmosphere on the lake was electric, and you just didn't know what was going to happen next.

At around 2pm, I repositioned my rods further out with a small helping of bait around each. That afternoon, night and into the following morning, it rained really hard with no signs of fish for some time. It was around midday when I thought my chance had passed, so I decided to get my head down for a few hours before my drive home. I was woken at around 2.15pm with my alarm going into meltdown. After a bit of crazy battle with the fish kiting backwards and forwards over my other lines, I was amazed to see a huge common pop up.

Up on the mat, it was confirmed to be a fish that's often talked about but not often caught, a fish known as The Simmo Common well up in weight and a new PB common for me at 45lb 7oz. A great time and several cups of tea were shared with some great people on the banks of Manor that weekend. The Manor has certainly been good to me in my first year.



# Hacche Moor Fishery



## EXCLUSIVE CARP FISHING IN NORTH DEVON

Situated in idyllic rural Devon, Hacche Moor Fishery is available for exclusive lake bookings only. Conveniently located near South Molton in North Devon, the fishery is surrounded by trees and has a stunning backdrop of rolling green fields, making a perfect habitat for wildlife from Kingfishers, Little Grebes and even Red Deer can occasionally be seen grazing on the hill. The fishery currently has four lakes for exclusives bookings: Top lake, Bottom lake, Jakes lake and the old syndicate lake. The bottom, Top and Old syndicate lake all have fish to mid 40's. Jakes has fish to 38. Lake exclusives are weekends only - Friday to Monday, 72hrs slots from April until the end of October. You can also book the whole site all 4 lakes for up to 15 anglers if needed. The rest of the time the site is syndicated. For the latest news and catch reports, please follow us on social media @hacchemoorfishery; we are on Facebook and Instagram.

**[www.hacchemoorfishery.co.uk](http://www.hacchemoorfishery.co.uk) / 07814510580**





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The lake is situated in La Brenne in the centre of France, Set in The Brenne National Park a sanctuary for wildlife and an area of outstanding natural beauty There's lots to do in the area including La Hte Touche Zoo only 3miles away and some great local restaurants. Jay lake is perfect for the serious angler or a family holiday. We want all our customers to enjoy their holiday, and we look forward to welcoming you soon

Steve & Jem Laws

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# FURZEBURY FORTIES

I arrived at Furzebray carp lakes at around 5pm straight from work on Sunday 9.2.19. This was my last session on my winter ticket. Upon arrival at the lake, I was surprised to see only one other angler present. The wind was blowing a strong northwesterly, so I decided to set up on the back of this in a swim known as Lifebuoy with the option to move in the morning if no success, as the wind was changing to southwesterly.

I got the rigs out on the money after fighting with the weather (hail, rain and gale force winds), and before you knew it, I was

## CHRIS CONNAUGHTON

tucked up in my bivvy with a nice brew feeling very confident. At around 11pm, my right hand rod had a few single bleeps with the twitchiest of takes. I lifted the rod, and yes, I was



in. The carp came in relatively easily but enjoyed wiping out my other two rods. I turned my head torch on to see what was wrapped in my rod tips, and I saw it was a fish known as the Big Zip, which had been on my list for around three years.

Once the light shone down on him, he became full of life and melted off. Now I was into a battle with a fish I knew I was after, which was nerve wracking to say the least. The battle was insane and lasted around 15 minutes, but I finally slipped the net cord over the beauty, and he was mine. I got a few self-takes done and got the rigs back out. The night passed with no more action. I was up at first light and noticed a few fish down the other side of the lake in a swim known as the Lawns. I decided to wait until bite time had passed in Lifebuoy, and if nothing happened, I would be on the move. The morning passed with no success, so I was off into the Lawns.

I got the rods out on the far reed-lined bank. The next



## CHRIS CONNAUGHTON

morning at around 11am I had a belting take, which resulted in a stunning homegrown mirror carp of 16lb 8oz, and I must say, it is definitely going to be one to look out for in a few years. After a few pics, it was swimming away and the rig was back on the spot. At around 5pm that evening, just at last light, I had another take, but something didn't feel right. The line felt like it was grating, but I was not sure what on. I managed to get the fish all the way in, but sadly right at the net cord, the hook pulled, and this one got away, with my rig landing in my swim next to my feet.

It was safe to say I was not happy, but I changed my rig, got it back out on the money and retreated to my bivvy, sulking, going over and over what I had done wrong. Why didn't I just lift the net or let out a bit more line? You know what it feels like. I finally dozed off watching the football and was awoken





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around midnight by another very twitchy take. As the bobbin fell back down and started to slowly rise again, I jumped out of my sleeping bag and lifted the rod, feeling a great resistance slowly plodding along. This felt a lot bigger, and after a nervy battle snagging me around an island, I soon had my first UK 40 in the net and a new PB! It was a fish known as Star, and I must say a massive thank-you to Tony the fishery owner and James for coming and helping me with pics etc. Buzzing with the biggest of grins, the rig went back out, and I retreated back to my bivvy.

At 2am, the unexpected happened, and I had another take on the same rod. This felt unbelievably big and was just plodding along before stripping line like no tomorrow. I would get it in to the bank, but it just bolted again and again. I thought this had to be something special. What came next though I could never be prepared for... As the fish rose to the surface in the light of my head torch, I noticed it was a fish known as Blackspot and a previous PB of mine at 36lb, but she looked gigantic!

She went into the net (only just), and I realised what I just had and how special this moment was! I had not only had my first UK 40 but a brace of UK 40s in the winter from a Devonshire venue! We got her on the scales, and she weighed 44lb 4oz, my second ever UK 40, but in the same night as the first and another PB! It's safe to say I didn't sleep after that, as I was buzzing, and I still am now. All fish were caught using Sticky Baits frozen Manilla boilies, hinged-stiff rig with size 6 J Precision hooks, Homemade hook baits using Manilla hook bait kit but with extra additives and 4 oz Lakebed Leads inline dung lead.





# **SOMETHING DIFFERENT AT ROCKFORD**

Returning to the pen after my last article back in April, I was pleased, after the Big Leather, to try something totally different on Ringwood's' ultra- tricky Rockford Lake. Pressure off with the Leather under my belt, Rockford being my most troublesome of the valley's extremely difficult three waters, I had decided to have a bit of fun on there that coming summer. Big rods packed away and long range fishing a distant memory,

I decided to attempt the unthinkable, fishing the main lake close in, something in recent times rarely done, especially with all three rods. With no particular plans, just my little 12ft 2¾ tc rods and baby reels, I was raring to get started. I was still fishing the same as all my other fishing in my last article, using my customary 20lb Black Velvet with clear tapered mono leaders and fluoro bottom bait rig. Just because I was changing tactics, I couldn't change my terminal approach that had brought such success in previous years.

With new tactics underway, my first short range session was in a peg I knew had done fish in the past, especially in the fabulous hot weather we were experiencing, which continued all summer, but back to my first close in session... With the weather basking hot, I had decided to target a small corner of the massive expanse of the main lake. This bar and plateau-covered corner was a perfect area to make a start. Still with my trusted 1.2mm halibut pellets soaked in Bait Tec tuna and krill oil, I'd decided to fish all three rods on a previously very productive gravel bar that stretched some 80 yards across the entire swim. There was plenty of room for three rods – same mindset, one baited area, three chances of a pick-up. It's not how most fish but certainly my preferred approach over previous years on these ultra-difficult Ringwood low stock pits. All three rods set with shallow water in mind, I was finally on my way to trying something different. I was not expecting much action, as it really was baking hot on my second day into my session.

Sat on my bed chair sunbathing, all of a sudden one of my rods was away. Bearing in mind it was 1:30pm and 30 degrees, I was sure the sun had cooked my brain getting a take in those



conditions. Fish on and mind focussed, I was into what seemed to be a very decent fish. I had to play the fish gently, as it was behind a savage gravel bar I was aware of that my good friend Craig Morrison had told me about in this swim on some of his previous successes. Gently keeping the pressure on, bearing in mind I used tapered mono leaders (hardly the best piece of equipment for such extreme conditions), I was convinced as with all my fishing they could see the braid. After a really

spirited tussle, I finally managed to slip the net under one of the nicest mirrors I'd caught from Rockford at 36lbs. To say I was very pleased was an understatement. Photographs taken, the fish was safely returned, and I continued the remainder of my session in a totally relaxed state, careless of whether I had another bite or not, the latter being the case, which is the norm for Rockford.

**Zig time Peg 5:** A few days later, with the first fish under my belt and looking for my next challenge, I had decided to tackle the infamous peg 5 on Rockford, without a doubt the most difficult swim to catch from on the entire lake. It's a tiny corner swim where the fish frequented regularly en masse, giving many people a spectacular show but remaining near impossible to catch. For some reason the fish loved this corner, but numerous attempts in four-odd years by all and sundry in the club and some of the country's top young anglers and old had failed! This swim had only done one fish in four years, and that was to a floater. Perfect! I love a challenge!

So my first session in this swim that looked so perfect was pretty much weed, weed, weed. What a start! Having a play around with a lead, I had discovered the weed in this corner seemed to be thick mid depth at about 4ft, but with some foam round the hook, the bottom was a clear and a firm donk every time, but try and drag the lead back and you would think it was choked, very much like Spinnaker next door. On my first evening in this new swim, all rods were six wraps out in different spots, but still smaller than a tennis court. This was very me. Still, even with the weedy conditions, I knew my presentation was good.

That first evening around 7pm, I was joined by my good



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**The Fish:** It is an old gravel pit that was rarely fished in the past. We started off by making an inventory of the stock. We discovered that some beautiful old fish were swimming around in the lake, including some characterful mirrors and some beautiful dark commons. There are also a few monster grass carp that weigh over thirty kg (68-70lbs). In the spring of 2021, Cyriel decided to release some of his own fish into Black Swan Lake. A highly varied mix of mirror and common carp weighing between 13-30 kg were released. These additions were carefully hand-selected from several ponds at various fish farms and provided the lake with a fantastic fish population, including many thirties, forties and fifties. Overall, there are about 180 fish weighing between 10 and 30 kilos (20-70 lbs). There are virtually no bream or tench in Black Swan Lake. There is a nice pike stock.



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friend Matty and club bailiff, Pedro. We sat just chilling when all of a sudden, a massive mirror stuck its head out of the water no more than fifteen yards out. We all saw this beast and were amazed. Over the next couple of hours, the three of us were treated to what I can only describe as a show of big fish like I've never seen, and so close, you could name them. The Leather, Big Common and Single Scale to name but a few, were rolling directly over all three rods at various stages. I sat on my hands expecting a rod to roar at any time, but two hours passed, darkness was upon us, and still not a single bleep. Welcome to peg 5.

The fish continued to show for the remainder of that session, and one or two other friends were witness to the spectacular show of such large fish, so close in you could almost touch them. Still biteless after two out of five night sessions, I couldn't seem to buy a bite. These fish were obviously up to something, but I wasn't sure what. Thankfully the lads on Rockford are good guys and left me to it in this most frustrating corner. By the start of my third session, the visits became much less frequent, as I think the fish had now sussed I was present in their environment. Beaten on the bottom, it was time for a change - zigs, I thought. Now I couldn't plum the depths, as the marker float would catch on the weed and not pop up, so I had to guess the depth of the water to set the zigs. Guessing it at about 8ft, I had one at four feet, one at five feet and one at six feet. Now I'm a complete novice at zig fishing, but I did my best.

Just before dark on the first evening, using the zigs, I got a funny pick-up on the left hand rod. Fish on! Wow! I was in shock. After a very strange fight and nearly drowning, I slipped



the net under one of the lake's most popular residents, a fish called Roach Head at 42lbs. I was amazed a 40 on a zig. Only TJ had achieved this on this water, and that was in the bay, so to get one out of peg 5 made it extra special. That night on both the other rods, I hooked and lost one and completely missed one. What an amazing eight hours' fishing! If only I'd had the zigs on in the two previous weeks when some of the lake's biggest residents were in attendance, but I didn't care. It was only the second ever fish from peg 5 and a 40 on a zig! Ecstatic was an understatement.

**Bobble:** A couple of weeks had passed, and I was back on the North Bank. I remember arriving in the most awful conditions - wet and windy was an understatement. I stripped to my shorts and T-shirt because I knew I was in for a soaking, so

why ruin a set of dry clothes? At first, I was going to go in my favourite peg that had previously done me the Leather, but after a bit of thought, I had decided to go back to a swim that a few weeks previously had produced the beautiful 36-pounder, peg 12. So, after being soaking wet, it was bivvy up and then dry out. I had decided to concentrate on the same gravel area I had caught from only weeks earlier, ninety yards straight in front. With a beautiful southeasterly blowing into my corner, the conditions were about as good as it gets in summertime, especially amidst a heatwave.

Using my usual style of fishing pellets and boilie, I had baited this area as before and placed all three rods along this gravel bar, hoping to repeat the trappings of some weeks ago. Well, in typical Rockford style, I spent three days without sight of a fish let alone a bite, but I was still in with a shot, as I had a couple of nights left. The next day I had a break in my bad luck, but only for it to be the wrong sort. A couple of bream had turned up, but at least I was fishing efficiently and they could find the bait. On the last night, I decided to do something different, as before I had caught from this bank with the use of only two rods taking a bit of pressure off the areas. The Rockford fish are renowned for their awareness of lines in the water, only this time I decided to use only one rod for the final night. I had nothing to lose. I topped up with a bit more pellet, and my fresh bottom bait was set. It was blazing hot and not a breath of wind – things didn't look good, but Rockford does favour these conditions, sticky and horrible, but they seem to feed in this, and most if not all my previous captures had come in hot conditions.

To cut a long story short, I had got into bed and was out

like a light. 5am, and I was woken by the sound of a Fox alarm absolutely roaring. Wow! I was away! On picking up the rod, I knew I was into something a bit special. It seemed so heavy. As normal for me, the knees were knocking because this is The Land of The Giants. I continued to edge this fish in gently, as like my last fish from this swim, it had lodged itself behind the gravel bar I was fishing, and getting it back would be tricky as cut-offs in this swim were common. Eventually I slid the net under an absolute monster. I knew I had one of the lake's giants safely in the net, and I had calmed myself down. I looked at the fish and recognised it as the infamous Bobble. Wow! I was in total shock.





I'd not even weighed her, but I safely put her in a retainer and was ready to sort her out. Rarely for Rockford, and to my surprise, I was the only person on the lake so had nobody to take photographs. With the water being so warm, I was concerned about keeping her sacked for very long, so time was of the utmost importance. After a couple of phone calls, luckily my good friend and proprietor of Ringwood Tackle, Richard Middleton, once again answered my prayers and came straight down to take my photographs. A big thank-you goes to Richard for rescuing me once again. With a big'un all weighed and photographed, she went to an amazing 48lbs exactly. Wow... Bobble... one I will never forget.

**The Common:** Returning to the lake after Bobble, I was

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still on cloud nine, buzzing at such an amazing fish, and I decided to change things up a bit. Fish had been seen in the days in between my visits on the south bank, about as far from where I had been as possible. This bank is also normally very busy, as it's very popular, and getting a swim can sometimes be tricky, as it does do quite a lot of fish on average. I was fortunate enough to find myself back in my favourite swim on Rockford and one where I'd had probably ninety percent of my fish from, peg 42. This swim was the least fished of the five or six along the bank, as it seemed to be the least productive and unpredictable, but for some reason, it was one that I had some special sort of luck in. Anyway, I was fishing my favourite swim and conditions were perfect for Rockford – hot and still.

My fishing is very simple: bottom baits matching the boilie

over pellets, a bit like back in the 80s or 90s, but it worked for me. I try to avoid touching on technical stuff when writing, as I'm not entirely sure if there is any relevance to others about what I'm doing other than to myself, but so many anglers make comments on my presentation, as to me it's more important than location. I finally believe they will find me just as quickly as can I find them. That in itself might cause people to frown, but each to their own. I always use clear tapered mono leaders with 50lb fluorocarbon leaders and fluoro hooklinks, as I'm sure they can see a lot more than we give them credit for. Mono mainline isn't so great sometimes, so I opt for the braid and tapered leaders. It's just a thing I prefer, and all my fish are caught this way. It's not that other materials don't catch; they just don't fit my way of thinking.

Back to the fish, and I'm sorry if I caused some upset talking about rigs. Peg 42 – I was happy. At ninety yards in this swim, there is a gravel hump some 5ft deep, which can be easily seen from the bank and had previously done me some fantastic fish. It's my main focus in this swim, so without hesitation this was baited with my usual pellets baits with the above-mentioned presentation. The rods were out. Nothing had been showing to be honest, and it was so hot it felt that even for Rockford, the heat was a little too much, but I was down at the lake getting a tan with friends, so who cared? I had nothing on the first night, just plenty of mozzie bites and insomnia.

Time passing slowly, day two was upon me, so all the rods were rebaited and ready for action. After a good social with John Sudworth, ROAA Fishery Manager and my close fishing partner, we decided it was time for bed. That was an understatement – it was unbearable, just so hot and sticky. What a summer we had.

Boom! 5am on day two, and the left-hand rod on the hump was away with probably one of the most aggressive takes I can remember in nearly forty years of carp fishing. I was in. Wow! I had hooked something absolutely crazy; this fish was not impressed! It was just so powerful, but after a thirty-odd minute battle, a very knackered me slipped the net under Rockford's most elusive and biggest common. I was speechless, I really was. I had seen previous captures of my friend Steve with this beauty the previous autumn at nearly 48lbs, but pictures don't really do this fish justice.

News of the capture was quick to spread, as this bank was really busy, but I've never been one of those secret types of anglers; I'm glad to show and share. With quite a gathering around me, she finally went 45lbs 4oz, a massive common and one of the most beautiful out of there. A massive thank you goes to everybody who was there that morning, as it was a very special moment for me with such a sought after fish.

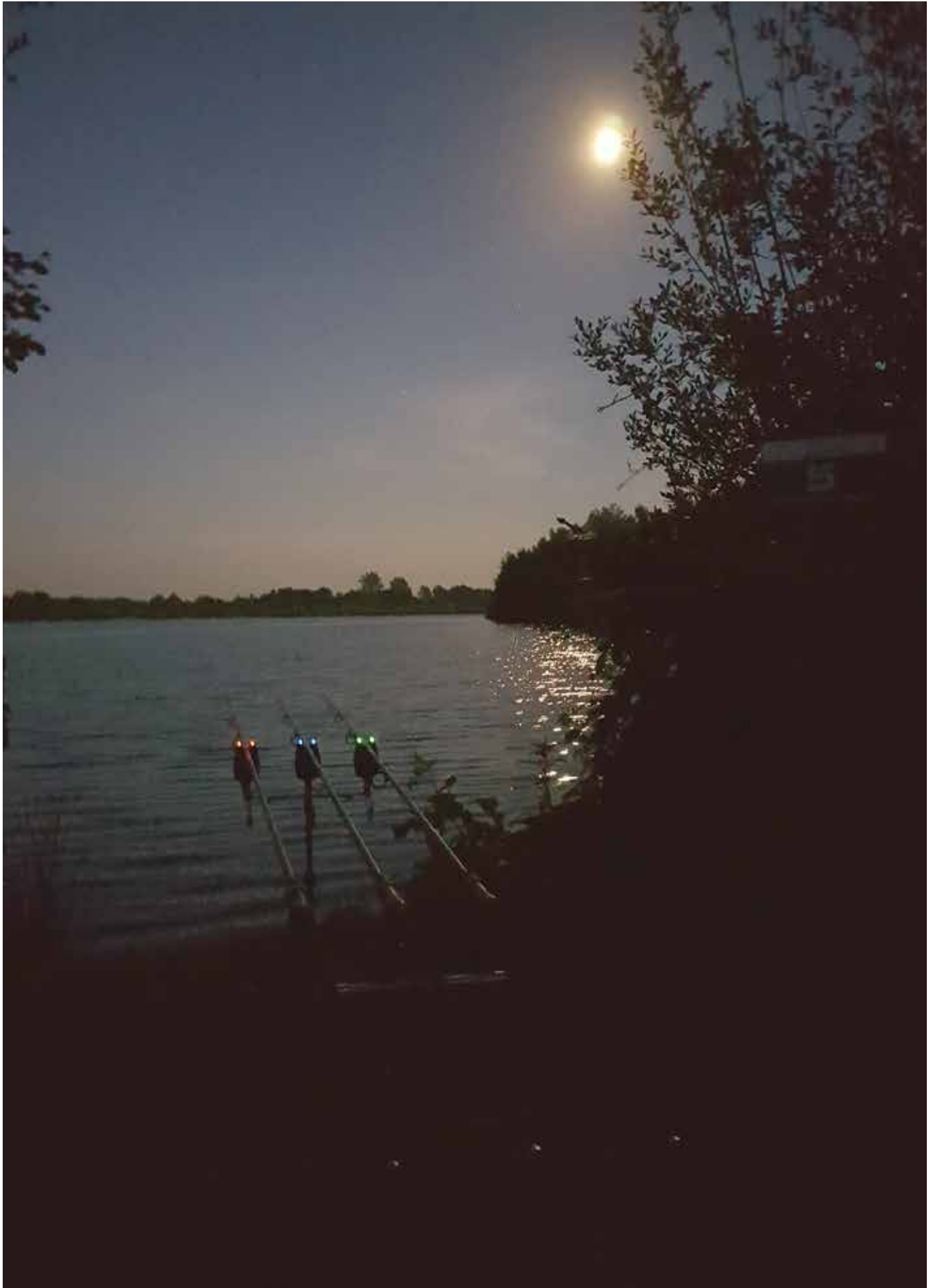
**The Sergeant:** August now, into my second week, and I had decided to fish an area that the year before had done both the Big Common and Single Scale, the one A-list fish I had to catch, but I was brimming with confidence and was sure I was in the right area. I had not fished this bank very much, but on the whole, it was probably the most productive bank on the lake, the Alice Bank. My plan for the next few weeks was to concentrate on this bank, to try to continue my unbelievable success of the last few weeks on this most tricky of waters. So, trying to not repeat myself, I went back to my usual ways with pellets, leader bottoms, baits etc. I was fishing and happy. Pretty much as all my other fish this summer, I had caught in shallow water, on top of gravel bars. Whether this was due to



the hot summer, who knows, but on reflection, it seemed to serve me well, so I'll go with it as a decision well made, but it was probably nothing of the kind.

This swim is pretty close to the area I had caught the 36lb'er some weeks prior, and the area was identical on top of a gravel bar, ninety yards out and about 5ft deep. My first visit in this swim was all settled. My good friend Neil was along the bank with his friend Scott, so the company was great. This chapter is going to be somewhat of a short one, as there's not a lot to report. My second day in peg 25, and I was away with another good fish on, to my amazement. I really couldn't believe my luck this summer, as I had struggled so much on this water in the past. This fish didn't really do much and was soon netted

# DANNY HOLLAND



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by Neil, who I owe a huge thank you to, as this swim is so awkward due to bankside obstacles. It's a nightmare to say the least.

My heart was thumping as Neil informed me it was a good one. We got her on the mat, and just by chance, Droid the head bailiff was having a wander around and immediately recognised the fish to be the one called the Sergeant, as it had three very distinct scales on one side like a sergeant's stripes. She tipped the scales at a massive 45lb 12oz, and I was absolutely gobsmacked. I couldn't believe my luck! It was just an incredible fish and one of the lake's rare visitors to the bank, I was so pleased.

I continued in this area for the next month and didn't so much as see a fish in my area, let alone catch one. The fish turned up in numbers out in front of my old favourite swim, peg 42, the complete opposite end to the previous year. It just goes to show they hold all the cards and we can only hope. This was to be the end of my time on Rockford after a four-year quest. I didn't quite manage to catch the mighty Single Scale, but I did manage to catch some spectacular big fish and form some lifelong friendships with guys I still talk to regularly to date.

I would like to thank you all for taking the time to read this article as much as I've enjoyed writing it. I am now on my way back to another giant water with just a few in, so hopefully we will meet again. Tight lines to you all, and may all your dreams come true.

Thanks,  
Danny.



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# **HOUNSLOW TRIO**

I had these three beauts from The Carp Society's Horseshoe lake this week. After a quiet first night, I had a little mooch about and found some fish moving around in Summer Bay. The water was crystal clear and very shallow, but by presenting a small solid bag injected with Evolution Smoked Salmon Oil, 1oz running lead, a Hit & Run 12mm pink pop-up or red wafter on the rig and letting the line (Sufix Advance 0.35 Green) sink down and lie on the weed, I managed to nick three bites and landed all three! The first weighed in at 22lb 14oz, the zip linear was 28lb 1oz and the largest and final fish was 29lb 2oz. It was a very enjoyable session where I felt I was rewarded for my efforts! Much love and peace out.

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