

JANUARY ISSUES OF **BIG CARP** AND **FREE LINE** MAGAZINES FREE HERE www.freelinemagazine.com or www.freelinemagazine.co.uk



Red Letter Day at Bluebell Lakes
by Terry Clarke
A Hot Session on Pepper With Five Thirties
by Barry O'Connor
A Day to Remember Part 1 – A Brace of 40s
by Wayne Iszatt
Yorkshire's Finest by Adam Andrew
Linear Red Letter Session by Ben O'Leary



Chronicle Fishing Fryerning Diary
Fen Drain Carping by Ben Leuty
A Golden Filling by Jon Mills
The Old Monastery Lake – A Short Story by Jonathan Lungley
Norfolk Broads – Discover the Potential by Keith Williams
The Forbidden Nature Reserve by Lee Brooks
The Feral Way... The Reserve by Leon
RK Leisure Wraybury 1 by Jo Green
More Beasts from the Country Park by Lee Brooks
Farm Pond by Joe Neale – Team PSB
A Barbel, Big Leather, Black Tail and Bye Bye! by Ben Dowers

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BIG CARP

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10	CARP ONLINE

Top 10 Carp Tackle Companies

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5	ERICS ANGLING CENTRE
6	KESWALLS
7	ANGLING DIRECT NORWICH
8	ANGLING DIRECT SIMPSONS
9	TACKLE UP
10	ANGLING DIRECT CHELMSFORD

Top 10 Iconic Carp Waters

1	YATELEY
2	SAVAY
3	REDMIRE
4	WRAYSBURY
5	FOX POOL
6	HORTON
7	CASSIEN
8	LINCH HILL
9	ROACH PIT
10	JOHNSONS RAILWAY



As voted by Big Carp readers!

Big Carp Magazine! *a history of excellence*

BC
ISSUE 306

**RED
LETTER
SESSIONS**

**Adam Andrew
– Yorkshire's
Finest**

**Barry OConnor
– Cottington Five
Thirties Session**



**Wayne Iszart – A Day to Remember
Ben OLeary – Linear Red Letter Session
Terry Clark – Red Letter Day at Bluebell**

Competitions



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we didn't"...**

Terry Heam

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Happy New Year to all our readers

I thought it would be a nice idea to start the New Year with a look back at some 'Red Letter Sessions' from 2021. January can be a bleak time of the year in the carp angler's calendar, so what better way to see us through the colder months, than to join some of our writers on the bank for some sessions where it all came together, all the hard work, preparation and in some cases, weeks of watercraft all came right. Let's hope we all have sessions like these this year!

Cover story this month is from Adam Andrew and his capture of Tyram Halls 'Baby Baz', Yorkshires Finest. Sadly, this fish passed away later in 2021 but here for posterity is the awesome 'Baby Baz' in all its glory.

Our dynamic duo, father and son pair Barry and Benn Oconnor are back again this month, this time at one of their favourite venues, Cottington. Talk about 'Red Letter Sessions', they don't come much better than this one, the story of five Thirties in a single session, only Cottington could produce such a quality catch! More from our regulars next issue, NOT TO BE MISSED!

Wayne Iszart also makes a return this month with his account of 'A Day to Remember'. Wayne is not only a very successful and dedicated angler but also a great writer and we are very fortunate to have his exclusive tales from the bankside. There are some extraordinary carp in this the first part of his series looking back at a couple of seasons targeting some absolute minters. You can look forward to part two coming soon!

Ben OLeary has had a mega session at Linear. This prolific venue keeps churning out these 'Red Letter Sessions' to anglers from all over the country, a testament to my old buddy Len Gurd RIP.

Also, this month we have Terry Clark with a Red Letter Day at Bluebell. We couldn't have an issue without Bluebell, this venue being bang on form at the moment.

I hope you have been enjoying our two free monthly carp magazines, Big Carp and Free Line – see them both here – www.freelinemagazine.com

Now I need your help!

Filling two magazines each month means I need twice as many articles, some people say they want to write, but never do. If you have had a successful start back after lockdown, we would love to hear your tale. There are no picture or word limits. Simply Email your article to info@bigcarpmagazine.co.uk

If you would like to join our FREE subscription list to be sent the mags as soon as they come out Email FREE SUBBY to info@bigcarpmagazine.co.uk. WITHOUT YOUR INPUT THERE WILL BE NO MAGS!

Have a great winter friends, catch a monster and send us the story. Be part of the UK's fantastic carp angling history!

Rob Maylin

PS We are doing some great ADVERTISING deals to help everyone through the pandemic, drop me a line at info@bigcarpmagazine.co.uk if you would like to see the deals and our media information pack.

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Editor/Publisher

Rob Maylin
Bountyhunter Publications
44 Herbs End
Cove, Hampshire
GU14 9YD
telephone 01252 373658
facsimile 01252 373658
mobile 07768 731425
email:
bigcarpstudio@hotmail.co.uk

Design & Production
Colin Spray

Advertising Sales
Bountyhunter Publications
44 Herbs End
Cove, Hampshire
GU14 9YD
tel/fax 01252 373658
mobile 07768 731425

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Front Cover
Adam Andrews.



News & Reviews

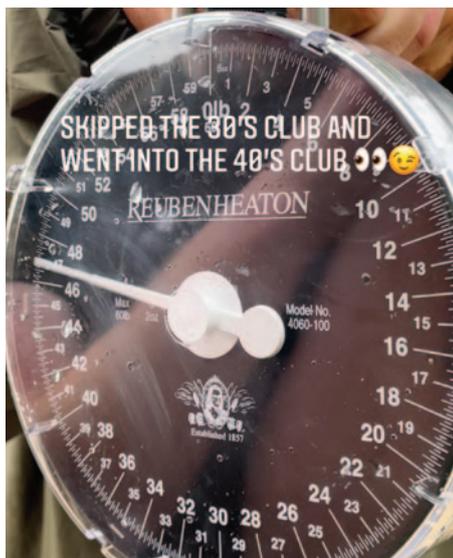
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Dream Maker

CARBON THROWING STICK



ShockLeader

What's happening, where and when in the carp scene

Coaching Juniors, Can You Help?

One of our key partners in your area are the brilliant team at Angling Coaching Initiative (ACI). They deliver fantastic and very affordable fishing coaching both at weekends & school holidays, regularly throughout the Spring, Summer and Autumn to budding young anglers; the very future of our sport. It is aimed primarily at juniors aged 8 to 16, both for newcomers and those seeking to develop their skills, but we also take some parents/guardians to further enhance the ability of families to fish together.

The most significant challenge ACI face is that the demand for places far outweighs the supply of volunteer coaches; not everyone could be catered for. So, they are seeking to double the number of places available next season, but this can only happen if they can secure a significant number of new volunteers to help coach the youngsters. We are asking for anybody who is interested in spending even a few days over the season by passing on your knowledge and experience to a young person, to please come forward. You never know, you could just change their life for the better. If you then find that



coaching is for you, the team will even help you to obtain a formal coaching qualification with the Angling Trust.

ACI need to secure the volunteers now though, well in advance of the 2022 coaching, so they can advertise to fill those student places you can create, and plan to have all the arrangements in place geared round the number of volunteers who come forward.

I promise, there is no greater feeling than when you help someone to catch their very first fish, the memory will stay with both of you for a lifetime!

Tom Humphreys, Angling Trust
Please contact the ACI directly
Chris Burt 07917 781299,
or email aci.info@angling-coachinginitiative.co.uk
Web; <https://anglingcoachinginitiative.co.uk/>. ■

Carp Society AGM 2021 Director Election Results

Thank you to the many members who cast their votes on line, via proxy and by attending the Carp Society AGM at Lechlade on Sunday 28th November.

We would like to thank those members who put themselves forward for election, especially because it shows there are still people out there who want to support the Society in its work and direction of travel. There were ten candidates in total for the six posts which had fallen vacant during last year's covid related restrictions.

The following candidates have now been elected to the new board of directors and will serve for a period of five years:

- Josh Boyes



- Miles Carter (Re-Elected)
- Greg Fletcher (Re-Elected)
- Steve Hall (Re-Elected)
- Richard Seeds
- Derek Stritton (Re-Elected)
- Other current Board members

whose period of office has not yet expired are: Andrew Ellis, Sabrina Widdows and Steve Bowles.

The board wish to add thanks to Paul Boichat, a former, and outgoing director for his work with the Society and the contribution he has made, and especially in helping us secure a new fishery, which was outlined at the AGM. As yet we cannot offer details of the fishery until the final contracts are exchanged.

As soon as that happens the Carp Society will issue a formal statement on our Web Site and Facebook Page.

We think our members will be very pleased!

Thank you again, Derek Stritton –
On behalf of the Carp Society. ■

Angling Trust message to ministers: Keep us fishing!



'Keep us fishing' is the Christmas message to Government ministers from the Angling Trust following the refusal of the Health Secretary, Sajid Javid, to rule out further Covid restrictions or even a fourth lockdown as is occurring right now in parts of Europe.

Angling Trust CEO Jamie Cook has written to senior members of the Government, including Michael Gove and the Secretaries of State for Environment, the Cabinet Office and Culture, Media and Sport, to remind them of how angling continued successfully and safely through the last two lockdowns and to press for similar treatment should new restrictions be introduced.

Speaking to the BBC on Sunday morning, the Health Secretary made clear that he did not rule out new coronavirus measures before Christmas - saying there are "no guarantees" in the pandemic.

In his letter to ministers, Jamie Cook said of previous lockdowns:

"We were pleased that the Government agreed to permit and encourage individual outdoor recreation to continue so that those who were initially restricted in the first lockdown could once again participate in individual,

socially distanced outdoor recreational activity.

This delivered huge benefits to those whose recreation is not narrowly confined to running, walking or cycling.

Experience has shown that socially distanced outdoor recreation such as angling is a safe and responsible activity and that its continuation does not contribute to the spread of infection."

He added:

"Whatever decisions you have to make in the coming weeks we urge you to allow angling to continue for all the reasons set out above and in the attached report. We stand ready to guide our sport through these difficult times in a safe and responsible manner as we have done throughout."

Back in February, as the government prepared its stepped approach to easing lockdown provisions, the Angling Trust submitted its 'Fishing out of Lockdown' paper outlining the advantages of keeping people engaged in angling and the measures that were taken to keep people safe and to ensure that our sport delivers economic and social benefits and makes a significant contribution to

improving mental health outcomes.

The paper, which has been resubmitted to ministers, outlines other reasons for permitting angling to continue including:

- a largely solitary sport where social distancing occurs naturally
- proven benefits for mental health and physical well-being
- appealing to people of all ages and backgrounds
- evidence that non-contact outdoor activities will not increase infection rates
- a reduction in pressure on other public open spaces

Martin Salter, Head of Policy at the Angling Trust said:

"Angling has proved both popular and beneficial throughout this dreadful pandemic with more people getting closer to nature and enjoying a safe, healthy and naturally socially distanced activity within Covid secure guidelines.

While other sports like golf were locked down, anglers were able to get out in the open air presenting no risk to themselves or anyone else. The Angling Trust is determined to do what we can to ensure that this remains the case through the difficult period that lies ahead." ■



Take a Friend Fishing starts next week

Here are 5 easy ways you can help

- 1) Ask anglers to register for a FREE licence: www.anglingtrust.net/takeafriendfishing
- 2) Use the hashtag: #takeafriendfishing
- 3) Use this MP4 in your story: <https://bit.ly/taffvid1>
- 4) Go fishing with a friend: Post the fishing trip on your story/reel
- 5) Tweet/Post: Take a Friend Fishing is back! 17th Dec – 2nd Jan get a free one-day Environment Agency fishing licence www.anglingtrust.net/takeafriendfishing #takeafriendfishing #getfishing

About Take a Friend Fishing

WHAT – Take a Friend Fishing Winter 2021

WHERE – www.anglingtrust.net/takeafriendfishing

WHEN – From: 17th December To: 2nd January

WHY – Get more people into, or back into fishing

WHO – Existing anglers take a friend or family member

HOW – FREE one-day fishing licences worth £6!

Take a
friend
Fishing

Key Messages

Angling can be enjoyed all year round – despite the colder weather it's the perfect opportunity to get outside into the fresh air, reconnect with nature and stay active. Getting to grips with fishing alongside an experienced angler is a great way to learn. Going fishing in the run up to Christmas and a day out fishing is the ideal gift for a friend or family member. The Environment Agency supports this initiative with fishing licence money as a way to provide more opportunities for people to go fishing. Angling improves mental

health and connects people to the environment at a time when awareness is important. During the festive period there are three weekends to take a friend fishing, including Christmas, Boxing Day and New Year – traditional dates for a get-together

For more info and to get a free one-day fishing licence to Take a Friend Fishing, fishing licence holding anglers just need to go to www.anglingtrust.net/takeafriendfishing and provide some simple contact details including their fishing licence number and the date of the fishing trip. Social Media:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/GetOutThereGetFishing

Twitter: @GetIntoFishing

Instagram: @getintofishing

You should always follow social distancing guidelines when encountering others. The most up-to-date information on these restrictions can be found at www.gov.uk/coronavirus. The Angling Trust is a representative body for all anglers in England and Wales. Our members support the campaigns we carry out to protect fish and fishing and our programmes to increase participation. We are recognised by Sport England as the national governing body in England and promote active lifestyles and maintaining a regular angling habit. We are united in a collaborative relationship with Fish Legal, a separate membership association that uses the law to protect fish stocks and the rights of its members throughout the UK. Joint membership packages with Fish Legal are available for individuals, clubs, fisheries and other categories. Please find out more.

Pictures: Thanks to Rob Hughes and On the Bank (holding chub), Bev Clifford (holding carp) and Hassan Khan (holding carp fin). ■



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Shockleader Catch Reports... Catch Reports...

I have been baiting a swim on a local club water for the last 3 weeks, every 3 to 4 days with a 1lb of 15mm Monster Tiger Nut boilies. 2 weeks ago, I managed a lovely 23lb mirror. Due to work commitments, I was unable to return until this weekend (1st weekend of Dec), but I did keep the bait going in regular. I arrived at the lake on a dark and wet Friday, to find the lake devoid of anglers. I set up and got my rigs in position, on Saturday morning the tufties and coots cleared out the baits. I topped up the spots with a few catapults of MTN after dark on Sat evening. I received a liner and a few knocks in the early hours, before I received a take at 6am, after a very long initial run of around 70-80 yards, I led the fish into the net without incident, to be greeted by the largest known resident in the lake. A fish called the Italian and weighing at a new lake and club record of 46.04lbs, what a result in December, by far my largest winter carp. Hookbait was a 15mm Monster Tiger Nut Pop-up, tied to a 360 rig, cast 30 yards to a clear silt channel.

Dan Cleary



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



From the staff and boards of the Angling Trust and Fish Legal, we wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and hope the new year is packed with lots of PBs! Special thanks to Kevin Hamill for the wintry picture.

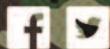


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It's the 23rd March 2020 and the whole country is sat on the edge of their sofas waiting for the blond man with the scruffy hair to address the nation.

Disaster, Britain is to go into its first full lockdown and I can remember standing there with my mouth wide open. I think the scariest thing was the unknown, the not knowing how we would come out of this the other side if we were lucky enough to escape this horrible virus. I don't want to dwell too much on this dark time but if the corona virus hadn't evolved, then the next part of my journey through life would never have happened.

I went to work the following morning and was summoned upstairs straight away to start deciding who was vulnerable and got to work sending home certain individuals to keep them and their families safe and it wasn't long before I was also put on furlough. My ex-wife was a key worker and although she could do her job from home, she was still working full time which left me to help my daughter with her school work, and like so many

struggled big time, not with being at home with her but the work. OMG!

Can I just say, school wasn't for me back in the day – I only went for the social side. To be honest, I had some of my best fishing days down the river on a school day. lol.

The problem with the home schooling, they were only set a certain amount of work a day so by lunch time my daughter was normally finished and bored and for thousands of parents I guess this was the hardest time, trying to keep your children up beat so they wouldn't get down although you, yourself inside were shitting yourself.

Anyway, my daughter, although very bright, (of course she takes after me), excels in things she is interested in with arts and crafts being one of them, had a drawing set that my mum and dad bought her the Christmas before. She opened the set and started to draw an eye which she needed to do for an art project at school.

I sat beside her and thought, wow this looks quite relaxing to be honest so I opened Youtube and found a tutorial on how to draw an eye and sat down with one of my daughter's sketch pads. before I knew it, four hours had passed and I had finished my first drawing. Now you're probably all sitting there wondering what the hell this has to do with carp fishing? Please bear with me and I will get to that later on.

Back to the story, before I knew it, I was on that very well-known shopping site ordering my own drawing set and proceeded to follow a few more tutorials in the process. Not thinking too much about it, I was drawing a woman on black paper with her hair waving in the wind.

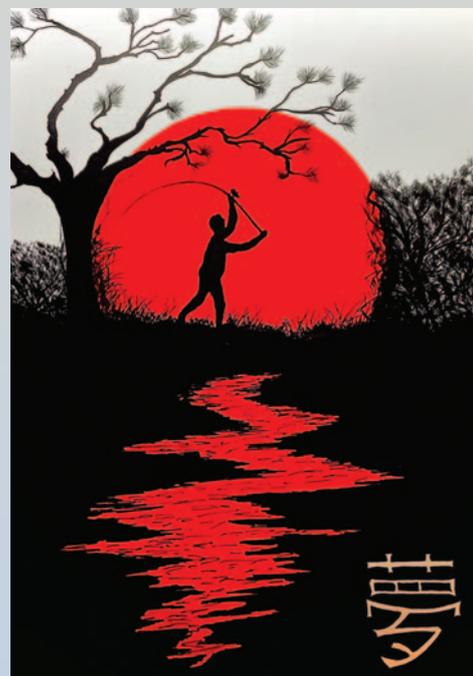
Karen, my partner, looked at it and said: wow that's amazing, you are improving all the time. So, I did what most do and posted the drawing on Facebook. I had loads of lovely comments and that gave me the confidence to push harder and stepped it up a notch trying more challenging



techniques and obviously buying better quality materials.

Like most anglers there are two birds an angler loves, one is the beautiful robin – a tame bird that will do anything for a maggot and the other the beautiful kingfisher with its striking colours and dart shaped head, the rest of lake fairing birds can do one. (lol).

I had an idea that I was going to draw a kingfisher in full colour on A3 paper – a size that would show every detail and a drawing that in the end took me over 30 hours to complete, well



om the heart

I wasn't doing anything else was I?

By this point I had joined a few Art Pages and one in particular was a page called Fishing Art. I clicked off a few images on my phone and posted. The response was overwhelming at the time, and even my close friends who would normally take the pi** out me for this had only nice things to say, all agreeing that I could possibly take it further.

Now I had no intention on selling the picture as it was by far the best thing I had ever done. But I was contacted by a guy called Mark Sargeant, asking if he could buy it?

The first two-three weeks, I continued to decline his offer. See the reason I was so protective of it is, I will only ever do the image once so if I let it go it's gone forever and yes I could do another one, but I think that's what makes art unique and special is one-offs.

I carried on thinking about Mark's offer and changed my mind in the end, the reason being how special is that somebody actually wants to buy your work from you, and that was worth more to me confidence wise, than the actual drawing its self.

Mark came to pick up the drawing and asked if I could draw his dog as well which I accepted and delivered.

A year has passed since that day and a lot has happened for me regarding my art and I have sold well over thirty drawings and commissions which has

now pushed me to a new chapter in my life (CLOTHING).

I have recently put pen to paper and started coming up with designs and have launched my very own brand – Aqua Liliium clothing. It's unique in a way that this is a piece of art on your back and not a computer created image.

I have one design on the market at the moment with a further two to be launched in January. Like most things you never know how it's going to turn out, so I was very cautious and nervous when ordering my first consignment, as you always get people who want to put you down.

The thing is, I'm a big believer in following your dreams and especially when it comes to my children, showing them that if you work hard enough you can make it come true and change your stars.

I am very lucky that I have good friends in this industry and one being Rob Maylin who I owe a lot too, a person that has always supported me and given me advice regarding my writing and would like to say thank you for believing in me.

If you do like documenting your fishing, give it a go and write your very own article, I write to show my kids. If I can do it, anyone can. Anything is possible. The only advise I would give is write from the heart.

At this moment in time, I am currently working on the website. Actually' re-phrase that, I am useless on a computer, Ellis, a good friend of mine, is working on a website. If you would like to get in touch, I have a Facebook page and Instagram, or you can purchase through the guys at Elmstead Fishing Tackle Shop.

I will also be stocking in other tackle shops so will keep you posted. Also, if there is a design or a piece of artwork you would like me to look at, please get in touch.

So, for thousands of people, Covid has been a horrible time with loved ones being lost and loneliness amongst the



elderly. Also, peoples' mental health taking an absolute battering over this. I guess you could say that I was one of the lucky ones and my cloud really did have a silver lining.

Take care and keep your family safe,
Mark Quinn



Barbarus

Our monthly reviews on products currently on the market

In this issue:

- Geoff Anderson
- Geoff Anderson



Press release

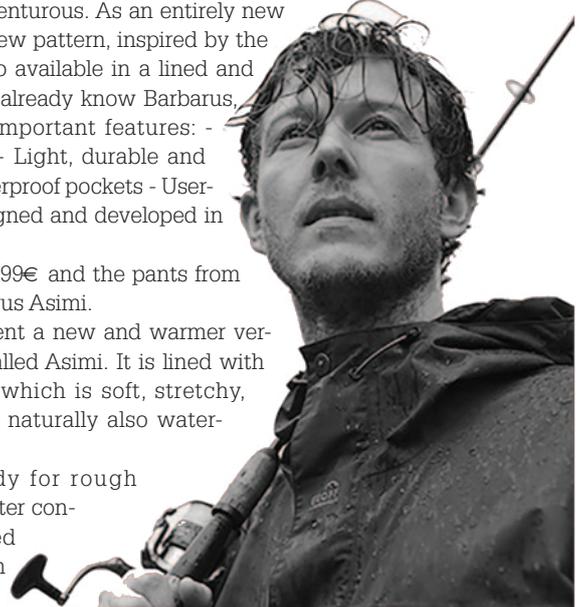
After 5 years on the market, the conclusion is clear: Barbarus has come to stay. That's why the time has come for Barbarus2.

Barbarus2 is available both as a jacket and as pants, and is – just like its predecessor – affordable, durable and adventurous. As an entirely new addition, it is available in a new pattern, inspired by the unique lapwing egg, and also available in a lined and warmer version. If you don't already know Barbarus, here are some of its most important features: - 100% wind and waterproof - Light, durable and breathable - Hidden and waterproof pockets - User-friendly YKK® zippers - Designed and developed in Denmark.

The jacket is priced from 299€ and the pants from 219€. Keep warm with Barbarus Asimi.

We are also proud to present a new and warmer version of Barbarus – and it's called Asimi. It is lined with 100% handmade polyester, which is soft, stretchy, durable, and warm. And it's naturally also waterproof and breathable.

With Asimi, you're ready for rough adventures in all kinds of winter conditions. The jacket is priced from 349€ and the pants from 269€.



Barbarus2 has arrived



WIN A HOLIDAY FOR TWO

Our good friends Steve and Sandy Bond have put up a fantastic competition prize in Big Carp to celebrate Big Carp's 250th issue. Here's your chance to win a Holiday for two including food at Lake Bossard.

And it could not be simpler to enter... All, you have to do is go to the BOSSARD Facebook page...

- 1 You must like the Bossard page.
- 2 You must like and share this competition.
- 3 And just write "Done" in the comments.



Closing date is
1st June 2022.

Good luck!

BOSSARD

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Press release



AirBear – gloves for everyone

AirBear is the name of our new collection of gloves. They are available in six different models, in three sizes. For fishermen who do not care about bad weather!



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AirBear Fleece Glove



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AirBear Fleece Fingerless Glove



AirBear Merino Liner Glove



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Red Letter Day at Bluebell Lakes

By Terry Clark

With a full moon due on the Wednesday night and some spare time on my hands I decided to take a trip to my favourite UK venue, Bluebell Lakes.

Back in the day Autumn used to be a great time to take to the bank. Fish would be feeding well putting on weight in advance of the coming winter. However, it seems to me that recently that has changed. We all know that since the first 'Lockdown' ended there has been a marked increase in the amount of anglers at all of the marque fisheries. That has meant far more bait going in during

the summer and with the nutritional qualities of modern boilies, the fish are gaining their winter condition much earlier these days.

That change in circumstances lead me to re-think my tactics for this autumn. Instead of going with the common practice of spodding at medium to long range, I decided to look for a corner swim, preferably with some water that couldn't be reached from other pegs. My tactics were going to be small PVA bags, short basic blow-back rigs and (to deter bird interference) slow sinking plastic corn as hook bait.

When I arrived at Bluebell it was very busy as usual. I wasn't going to be too fussy about which lake I fished,

I was more interested in getting a swim that would fit my tactics. Luckily there were a few options to choose from as most of the anglers seem to want to get in the pegs that allow casting to the middle. In the end it boiled down to a swim on Kingfisher (known as the DVD swim, from Daryl Peck's first Bluebell video) or one on Sandmartin (a much underrated lake!) I decided on the Sandmartin option.

This was a swim that I'd looked at on both of my previous sessions on Sandmartin but I overlooked it both times because it couldn't access the open water. However with my changed view on tactics, this one seemed perfect this time.

The breeze was blowing over my





right shoulder at a diagonal, that gave me an arc of slack water out to 8 wraps, I had a brief lead about and found two spots on the margin to the left hand bank. I also found a nice hard spot off to my right about 2 rod lengths away from a tree that overhangs, but doesn't go into, the lake.

Happy with my spots, I left the water untouched for a while, I knew that I was looking for an opportunist bite from a fish that had come into my corner to shy away from the angling pressure in the centre of the lake. I also thought that I might only get 1 or 2 'chances' before the wind changed direction the next day.

After taking my time to organise my gear I tied on the PVA bags. I'd prepared these before leaving in the morning, a mixture of 2mm pellets, crushed hemp and PVA friendly particle mix with a small amount of bait attractant added to the mix. Because the lakes can be weedy even in early autumn, and the snaggy nature of the margins, I had tied up some strong but basic rigs. 4 inches of 30lbs sinking braid, size 6 'x' wide gape hooks, a shortish hair tied 'blowback' style and 2 pieces of slow sinking fake corn. The lead system was 2.5 oz inline

pears, fished 'drop off' style.

After all 3 casts went perfect first time, I settled back and sent a few texts to my friends telling them where I was and discussing my 'new' tactics. No more than 1.5 hours after casting I was on the phone to my long term fishing buddy when there was a solitary beep on the right hand alarm, after a very short pause the indicator rose steadily to the blank and line was being taken from the reel. A quick "I'm in" to my friend and then pick up the rod into a fish. Barbless hooks at Bluebell so a careful 'tighten up' and then some sideways pressure to bring the fish away from any danger of the overhanging tree.

Now the fish was straight out in front of me, it wasn't tearing away but rather keeping steady pressure on me (always a sign that it might be a decent fish). After a short battle I got her to the surface, my first sight was of a 'plated' scale pattern on the tail wrist. With the fish now beaten I got her to the draw cord of the net, that's when I realised this was a properly good fish, she was broad in the shoulder and long!

With the barbless rule, unhooking in the net is easy, it was pleasing too

see the classic perfect hook hold, middle of the bottom lip, about 1cm back (simple rigs still work). I transferred her to the retaining sling and got the scales (thinking this could break my UK PB of 35/12). With the scales already zero'd to a wet sling earlier I lifted her up..... OMG! Not only UK PB smashed but all time PB beaten as well! 42lbs (19kg) exactly.

I needed to get some decent pictures of this one, so instead of doing 'self takes' I put her back secured safely in the retainer and went to the next peg to ask a favour. Luckily for me the swim to my right was being used for a 'tutorial' by Steve Renyard and he is not only a top angler and coach but an awesome photographer as well.

I do have to give some credit to Adam Penning, his video on autumn fishing was the confirmation that I needed to change my tactics. There was one line in particular that struck me. "Why do the same as everyone else when no-one is catching? What makes you think that you'll be the lucky one, when 20 others are blanking? Never be afraid to do the opposite to everyone else!" Well Adam, it worked for me. ■

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A Hot Session on Pepper With Five Thirties

By Barry Oconnor



Ben was away on a fishing holiday with Faye and the kids so I thought I'd spend the weekend fishing at Cottingham Lakes. I'd already pre booked the dates a long time ago so it wasn't a problem. My booking was for New Pepper a lake I'd fished many times before and was very knowledgeable about. I asked my friend and neighbour Alan if he'd like to join me. He didn't need a lot of persuading.

We set off in the early hours of the morning and reached Cottingham Lakes about ten minutes before the gate opened. There was a couple of cars in front of us but by the time the gate opened there was about ten behind us. We got down to the lake to find a couple anglers packing up so we put buckets in the swims to claim them. I asked if they'd caught anything and one of them said he'd had one carp of around twenty pounds. They'd been there for a week! Not what I wanted to hear. By the time we'd got our gear down to the bank-side the other anglers had gone. We could now set up. As I've said before I like to get everything set up and ready before I start fishing.

Everything was ready to go and I'm sure Alan who was a couple of swims away from me was raring to go too. It had taken a couple of hours to get the gear and set it up. It's a two rod rule at Cottingham and there must be twenty four inches of tubing on the line. Leaders are not allowed and hooks must be barbed and not barbless.

(Top) Two rods only on Pepper. There is actually a run taking place on the right-hand rod.
(Centre) I made up four bait stringers.
(Bottom) This post was a good marker to cast to.

Bait boats are allowed if used sensibly. I'd made myself a coffee and in between sips I was making up my rigs. Five inches of sheath type hooklink material had a loop tied in it for the hair. I then slid a small piece of silicone rig tubing onto the hooklink. A size 6 Deception D-X Curve micro barbed hook is then threaded through the silicone point first trapping the hooklink onto the shank of the hook. The hooklink is now tied to the hook with a "no knot" knot. I tie a loop in the other end of the hooklink to finish it off. My mainline is threaded through the tubing then through a tail rubber and lead clip and tied to a swivel. I push the tubing into the tail rubber to secure it. To finish it off I attach a small snap link to the swivel. This enables me to attach the hooklink loop onto the snap link. I've been using this rig set up for years because you can make a quick change if you need to. This way you can make up several hooklinks with PVA sticks, stringers or bags on them ready to go.



The view from my bivvy.

A tactic Ben and I use in matches. My hookbaits were Urban Baits Nutcracker boilies on both rods. If I was struggling I would be trying Fully

Loaded boilies or some pop ups or barrels.

I was using four bait stringers on the hook. My stringers were made



Alan with his first weighing in at 19lb 8oz.

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with Castaway web PVA. I've got a lot of faith in Castaway PVA products they've never let me down. I used a bait boat to put the hookbaits and stringers out onto some spots I knew. One rod went close to the far bank and the other mid water between the bank and an island. I attached a stringer to the hook and placed it in the boat. I then added a handful of Nutcracker boilies and sent the boat out to the spot. This was also done with the second rod. Everything was set up and I was now fishing. I didn't know if Alan had got his rods out but I did know he was in a good swim. My rods had only been out about twenty minutes when an alarm sounded while I was sitting in my bivvy. The right hand bite indicator went up and then stopped. It dropped and rose again so I picked it up and pulled in to it. There definitely was something on the end. It was moving and then all of a sudden it stopped. It was caught up on something out in open water possibly a sunken branch. I kept a tight line on it and eventually it became free. It was pulling and tugging and the rod was bent double. As it rolled in front of me I could see it was a good one. Alan had seen me playing the carp and came down to help just in time to net it. It looked big in the net in the water. We zeroed the sling on the scales and put the carp in it to weigh it. It took the dial round to 30lb 2oz. What a corker! What a start! Twenty minutes in and a thirty on the bank.

Nothing more graced the bank that day but in the morning Alan had a finicky bite that produced 19lb 8oz Mirror. This was close to Alan's PB. Later that morning I had a take that pulled the rod round. I picked it up and found myself connected to something very powerful. It went on driving runs and just as I thought I'd tired the carp it shot off again. By now Alan had seen me playing the carp and came down to my swim to net it. The carp was having none of it and stayed away from the net. After about fifteen minutes the carp began to tire and was gradually coming to the net. As it rolled we could see it was something special. Alan did a splendid job with

(Top) A handful of boilies were
(Centre) This is the best PVA I've ever used.
(Bottom) Just a basic hook set up.

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Alan's biggest at 25lb 9oz.



30lb 3oz.

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the net and engulfed the carp in it. Peering in to the net we could see a very large Common peering back at us. We got it onto the bank and set about weighing it. We watched as the dial on the scales edged its way round and settled on 37lb 9oz. Just a few ounces under my PB Common. I sent a photo of it to Ben and we agreed it was one of the forty Commons slightly down in weight.

First light on the third day saw Alan get some action again. The culprit was an 18lb 8oz Mirror. That wasn't the only carp he caught that day. About three hours after he had the 18.8 one of his rods was off again. This one gave him a bit of a battle and was hooked from the bowl area where he was fishing. Again Alan said it was a very finicky bite but when he picked the rod up the carp shot off. He eventually got it to the bank and it registered 25lb 9oz on the scales and was a PB for him. Alan was well happy with that. On the last day we had some heavy rain but at first light one

(Top) There are some stunning carp in Pepper.

(Left) They're sharp and reliable.

(Below) 33lb 8oz.



33lb 8oz.

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(Above) 36lb 11oz.

(Below) The hair was threadled through the top boilie in the stringer.

(Right) A hook bait went on this far bank.

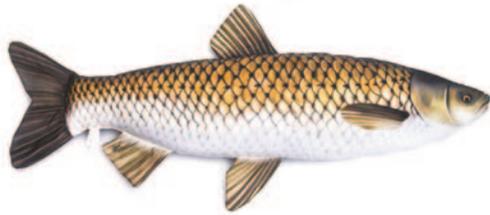
(Below right) A good bait will always work.



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(Above) 18lb 8oz.
(Right) 30lb 2oz.

of my alarms went off and as I raised the rod I could feel something on the end. Something was wrong though it didn't feel right. I struggled to get the fish to bank but when I did I could see why. I'd hooked a trailer. I'd actually hooked the swivel on the trailing line. I got the carp in the net and untangled the line around it. I let the carp go. I didn't weigh it but it looked around the 23/24lb mark. Later I had another run after the trailer incident and landed a 30lb 3oz Mirror. We still had about six hours to go and the carp were now showing over and near my hookbaits. It wasn't long before one of my rods was off again. A hearty fight between me and the carp followed. The carp in Cottington Pepper Lake don't give themselves up easily and this one was proving it. It was darting everywhere to try and



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get free. The battle was slowing and I brought the carp to net. It looked another good one. The scales settled at 33lb 8oz.

Yesterday the lake was rammed but now today it's empty. We were the only anglers on the lake. Sometimes it can be good sometimes bad. On Pepper I like it when it's full. I believe this helps to move the carp around. There is nowhere they can go to hide. It was getting near the time to go home and as I was packing up some gear my right hand rod was once again arching round. I lifted the rod and a healthy bend appeared in it. I use my Free Spirit two and a half pound test curve rods at Cottington and my rod was bent double. I was pulling and something was pulling back. I had to

**(Right) The Pepper carp give a good account of themselves.
(Below) 37lb 9oz.**



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Another fight commences.

let it go on the clutch a few times. Several swirls and boils appeared on the surface as the carp twisted and turned. Where I was fishing isn't that deep so the fish couldn't go down. Instead it was kiting along the surface. It always seems much longer than it really is when playing a carp. A few minutes can feel like a life time when you're trying to net one. If you can see it's a good one then those minutes can be heart stopping. As you're playing it you wonder if the hooks going to hold or your line isn't going to break. These things run through your mind when you've got one on.

Anyway the battle carried on until I managed to tire it. As the net enveloped it there was a sigh of relief. Again it was a Mirror and something special. The scales confirmed it at 36lb 11oz.

What a session this has been. I know Alan was happy with his three carp and I was positively over the moon with the five carp I caught. Especially as mine were all thirties. I've had some very good sessions at Cottington over the years and this must be up there with the best of them. I can't wait to get back. ■

**(Above right) A sigh of relief when they go into the net.
(Right) Coming to the net.**





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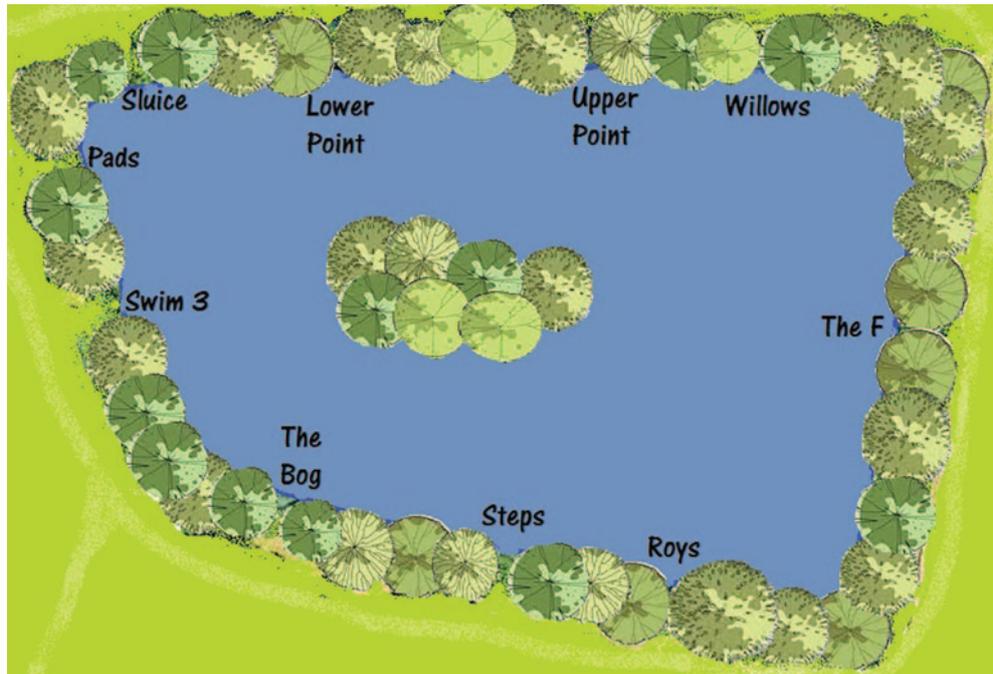
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A Day to Remember

Part 1 – A Brace of 40s by Wayne Iszatt

3 1st of May, 2020, and I had just about escaped the no fishing national lockdown with my sanity still intact, partially at least. It was to be my final night on a syndicate that had been my main ticket for some years, as I had a new venture starting the following morning, a ticket to a lovely little pit in north Cambridgeshire that contains some special old Carp. A mate, Dan, was also joining the pit, so we pulled in a barbie and planned to set off at the same time the following morning. Because of Covid, the lake had an arrival schedule in place of midday onwards, to reduce the number of people at the lake at any one time, which as I had a thick head from the HobGoblin Ale, this suited me fine.

I drove through the gates and was buzzing with anticipation. I had only seen the lake in the winter before, so it looked stunning now it was fully flourished in late Spring, it was just a lovely little old Carp pit. The Lake is around 7 acres with depths to 18ft. The stock of Carp was said to be no more than 60 odd fish, and most originating from a stocking in the 1980s, with the odds that a few more had made their way in during those earlier years, as Carp had a habit of growing legs back then around this area. There were several fish that went over the 40 pound mark, with the Queen of the pond being the one they called The Pig, a lovely old, mottled and fat mirror which had reached over the magical 50 pound at one point about 3 years previous, although she had been hovering around the mid to upper 40lbs bracket in more recent times, but still big enough for me. A few more worth a mention are mirrors such as Martha, a dark fish with the frame of a unit, The Peach - an absolute stunner with a few scales on each flank that forms a broken linear pattern, Leathery ones such Brushstrokes, and MoonScale, a hefty brown one which had reached a weight of 48lbs. There is also a big Common, which seldom visits the bank, and has nudged mid 40lbs in the past. There are a couple of fully scaled also, and in honesty, there are



(Top) The Pit.
(Right) The Pads looked good on opening night.



One on the first morning.



The Washing line trap with the ScareCoot keeping guard.

too many to mention, and even the smaller ones were of such a vintage patina that I wanted to catch them all. I had clocked that a warm North Easterly was forecast, so having got my bearings on the wind directions looking at Google maps, I was keen to check out the corner receiving the wind, which was the Pads corner, and it looked banging and I do like fishing corners, so with more new and keen members expected to arrive any time, and all four swims that fish to the island already taken, I dropped my water butt before we continued on our lap around. To be honest, everywhere looked good, and there were a few Carp to be seen cruising about up the opposite end on the back of the wind bathing under the warm sunshine. As it turned out, the lake didn't get full as I expected, and there was 6 of us on for opening night, so there was a couple of moving options, but I stuck with my instinct in the Pads

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Revenge on the Linear.

corner, and Dan dropped in the swim next door - social round two! My confidence was increased when one wallowed out tight in near the pads, I had to flick a bait down there, I thought. With an overhanging tree between the swim and the lily pads about 20 yards away, it was a choice of either a side sweep cast across, or flick it out from behind the pads and wade the rod back around the overhanging tree and back to the swim. I opted for the latter for easier accuracy, and I was pleased to find a nice clean drop in front of the pads. I could see the swim had clearly not been fished much at all with us only just coming out of lockdown, so I was fairly certain the clean gravel would have been caused by the fish spending a lot of time in there, flanking and feeding, rather than someone else's bait, which was just what I was looking for, and the trap was set. When it came to bait, although my main bulk feed was boilie, my initial game plan was to try maggots as a hookbait, although there was an unsaid rule not to hoof them in, so I was sticking to no more than a couple of pints a night. On dusk, I received a twitchy bite, and

sure enough I had my first Carp quickly in the net as easy as that, only it was quite comical in that it weighed around 2 pound! There were a handful of baby ones that had survived from the previous years spawn, which was good news for the future. With a fresh bunch of maggots flicked back out, it wasn't too long, around 11pm before I received another twitchy bite, and this time a dirty great Eel was responsible. To be honest, it had been that many years since I had last seen an Eel, I was actually quite impressed with it. But I didn't fancy being up all night with nuisance fish, so I swapped over to the meat based RG Prime boilie to match my freebies before getting the rod settled again. June is a glorious time to be beside the water with the warm summer evenings, and we had another barby and stayed up until the early hours, feeling buzzed with the place. My excitement was enhanced further when a hefty Carp thundered out the water in the Pads corner, and I watched the rings lap in across the inky black surface. I wasn't asleep for long when the rod flicked down the corner went into melt down at around

4am. The first fight on any water is always a tense thing, it was a powerful fish that had me playing it like a baby, so afraid that the hook would pull. But gently, gently, in the half light of morning breaking, and eventually I had the fish gulping for air as it slid over the net cord. Yes! One on the first morning, I couldn't believe it. I popped the hook out in the net and retained it safely so he could recover from a long fight, whilst I got everything ready. The sun was just rising over the Folly bank when I laid him on the mat, and it was a lovely Mirror Carp, with dark tanned colouration, and a few scattered scales, these were my kind of Carp. By midday the following day, the corner felt void of Carp. One of the island swims became free, a swim called Lower point, so I was keen to check it out, as fishing tight to the island had been productive with the hot weather we had been having. I was struggling to get any decent drops tight to the island though due to thick silkweed, and I didn't want to thrash around too much so the other rods were placed in silty areas. A blank night and morning passed, I had later found out just

how 'spotty' the lake could be, especially at that time of year when the upper layers are warmest, and with hearing Carp show again in the night down in the pads corner, I decided to move back down there, hoping for a second chance on the margin spot in the corner. Despite Carp showing on my third and final night close to the spot, no bites materialised, and I was beginning to realise how lucky I had been on the first night and how cagey they could be, almost like the one that I had caught had told the others the spot wasn't safe! But I was happy with one safely in the album, and was itching to get back before I had even arrived home.

The following weeks session arrived, and I had 2 nights ahead of me. After walking a lap, I was tempted by Upper point, another island swim, with some nice looking margin spots too, and peering under some overhanging trees, I saw a carp slowly ghost by. My bucket was quickly

dropped, and my kit barrowed around there with no time to waste, and I set about getting a trap set under the overhanging trees. I had planned to fish it on a washing line, as there wasn't much room to play a fish from under the tree canopy, but there was just one branch hanging down in the water between the clean gravelly spot and the swim about 10 yards away, and on closer inspection it was completely clad in sharp zebra mussels. Part of success in Carp angling is foreseeing hazards, and even if I wasn't fishing down the margin, there was still a fair chance a fish could kite in there for anyone playing one from the swim and cut them off. We don't want trailers, so I whipped it off with my little flick saw, and the spot was now safe and fishable. For anyone that doesn't know what the washing line method is, a storm pole is positioned close to the spot just in the edge. Once the rig is lowered on the spot, the line is then attached to the

top of the storm pole in a way that the line is gripped, but will pull free easily when a fish bolts. I personally use a hair bobble, then push a loop of line through it with a stem of grass then holding it in place (See photo) and then the line is then left slack from the pole to the spot, but tight from the rod to the pole. This keeps the majority of the line out of the water and safe from any sharp branches and rocks etc, and also means there is less line in the water that may spook the Carp. When a Carp bolts from being hooked, the blade of grass will just pull through easily and you generally get a drop back. So the trap was set, with a bottom bait rig, and plenty of freebies and particle. The island again was very silkweedy around the edges, so it was difficult to find anywhere I was confident in, but I settled on the point of island, with two on the one spot really, one high up the shelf and one lower, where it was cleaner, but silty. Although my money was on the mar-



First bite from Lower Point.



A margin muncher.

gin rod. Happy enough, I settled down for the evening with some cold beers and a steak. I kept a close eye on the margin, but I didn't see any more Carp appear, and the night set in. The next morning, the bait still looked undisturbed, and nothing had visited the spot over night. Then a family of coots appeared, and started hammering the bait. I had a little trick up my sleeve though - a Scarecrow. I carry a Scare mask for such occasions, and positioned on a banstick with a hood over it, he looks proper dodgy. My ScareCoot was then positioned guarding the spot, just out of the Carp's sight line, but so the bird life can still see it. It worked a treat, and the coots didn't go anywhere near it again. But I was just thinking about a move, as I had heard carp elsewhere around the pit during the night, but then one lumped out in the channel between me and the island, down to the right. What with the coots making the recent disturbance, and with the weather now drizzly, and a cool easterly pushing in, the margins didn't look typically favourable, so I decided to whip that rod in, and cast a PVA bag close to where I had seen the

show. No more than half an hour later, I checked the margin spot again, and to my horror it was all smoked up with several large Carp shapes absolutely smashing the spot! I was kicking myself big time! I could just make out in the murk that one was a Linear. I watched them clean me out before I could get an opportunity to lower a rig again. The hours ticked by, and by late afternoon they hadn't come back. Hopeful of another opportunity in the edge, I stayed in the swim for my second night, how could I move after just missing out on such a chance? It was heavy rain throughout most of the night, and by dawn I really had a sinking feeling that I had blown it, and I was going home empty handed. But like clockwork, another show in the channel, but they are not stupid, and where they were showing is just out of casting scope, in a safe triangle between me and the next swim where you can't put a hookbait, but I did soon have a rod down that way as close as I could get it, but this time the margin rod was staying put. I was on the dying hour of the session and thinking about packing up, and after seeing no carp on the margin rod, my

hope had all about gone, when out of nowhere I received a drop back as the line pinged out of the hair bobble, before the rod hooped over and I was on it like a flash. I needed to play it with the rod tip down under the water due to the overhanging trees, and I didn't bother with the waders, and just hopped straight in the lake to get the best angle on the fish, and with me positioning the storm pole slightly past the spot, it had bolted from the initial point of pressure and was already half way across the channel in a good place for me to play it, all had gone to plan. Another hard battle ensued, but luck was on my side, and he was safely in the net before too long. It was a stunning long linear, two toned on one side and knowing the stock as I do now, almost certainly the one I had seen. I was well pleased to have got revenge on their free smash and grab feast the day before, and he was a credit to my album, all's well that ends well.

Thinking about the pit hard at home and whilst at work, it was clear it had potential to be a wicked margin water. The lake bed was mainly very soft clay, which meant the weed



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Margin traps set in Swim 3.

could be ripped out very easily by feeding Carp, and therefore I knew it wouldnt take much pre baiting to clean up spots, so that was my main game plan, up close and personal, just how I like to fish. I couldnt get down the pit that following week, but when I did I had 4 nights ahead of me. I was

keen to get back in Upper point again, and back on that margin spot, although in my absense a couple of anglers had clocked the same spot and it had done 3 fish if my memory serves me right. I knew from past experience that they are always that bit extra cagey in the edge, and it can

only take a handful of Carp to fall for the trap before bites dry up. I did my first night in there, but within 24 hours they hadnt visited the spot. Having itchy feet I had a move to the other end of the island and moved to Lower Point that had just come free, and from there I did witness another angler and now good mate, Adam, show just what the lake is capable of when the females are in bulldozer mode, and he had a hit of fish over his week off, including two of the forties on the other side of the pit opposite in The Bog, which was great to see. It was a blank for me, but I was learning, it was all about finding the right dining spots at the right time, in which Adam kindly gave me a few pointers for the swim I was in and told me about a productive gravel area to the extreme right of that swim.

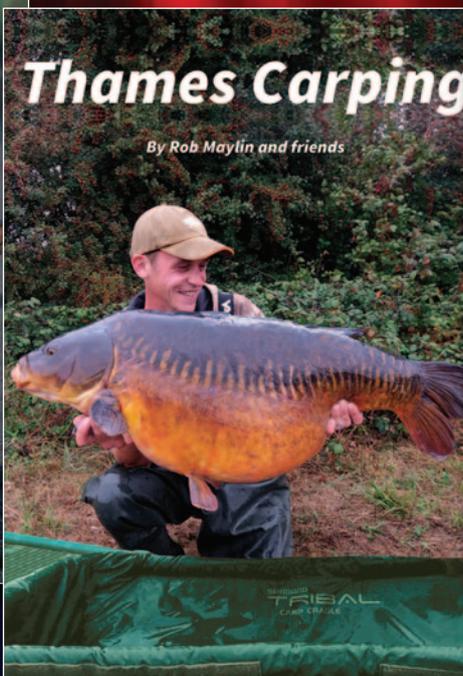
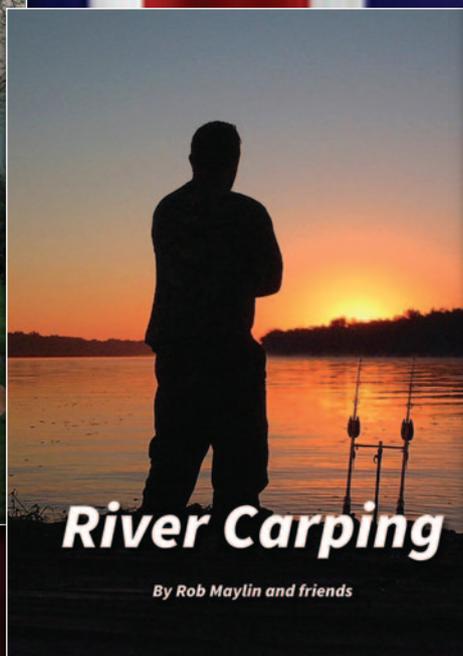
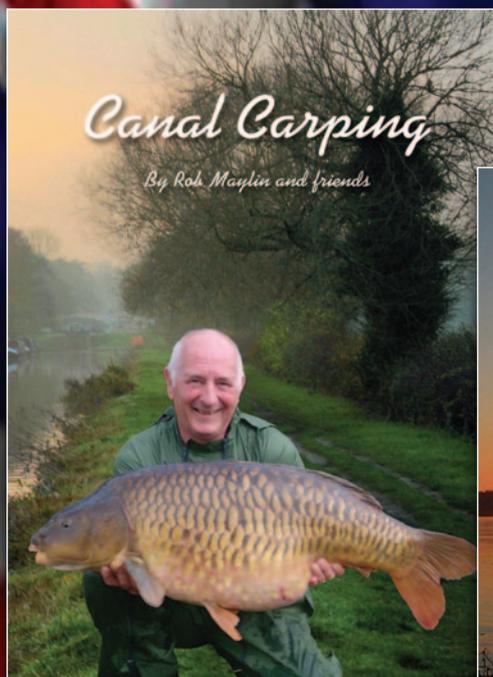
Due to a lot of people still being on furlough, there was a 3 night rule implemented on the lake, so I had planned a social on the other pit for my final night, but before I left the following day, I had a walk around the island lake to check out some potential margin spots. In one of the corners on the Folly bank and looking from up a tree, I found some that were getting tight in. The lake was busy, so I think they were just getting away from the pressure. But from up that tree I saw the big old Common, looking every bit well over 40, along with another one of the A team, which I believe was Moonscale, literally about 3ft under my feet at one point, as I clung to a Willow branch. That certainly got the buzz levels up, and the next time I was down I brought a big bucket of particle, and I started baiting a few margin spots. I made the mistake though of getting tempted by the text book new big South Westerly that had just whipped up, and got on the teeth of it and fished open water, expecting the Carp to show up. The traps were set best I could in an unknown swim and trying to make minimum disturbance, but I never saw a single show in my water, and in hindsight I think they had soon backed off it. Giving it the night in hope, I was still empty handed in the morning. The lake had got busy, and the main swims I fancied were occupied, so I remained in hope that pressure would push them down to me. But another blank was on the cards the following day. Before leaving, I did



Peabody the 'Carp Dog' was making friends.

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I was having a run of tough luck.

a lap to check the stalking spots that I had baited on arrival, and they had clearly been smashed, and already presentable for a bottom bait, there were chances to be had, but I wanted to build their confidence up on the spots first. The tricky bit now was timing and getting in the swim in which the margin spot belonged to when the fish were close by. Obviously I was looking in the corner I had seen the Common, but also up the other end of the pit on the road bank, there was a couple of in-between swims that were not getting a lot of attention, along with the Pads corner. These swims only had a small amount of water, margins or just a flick out to about 6 wraps, and they were weedy, so generally got left alone, so I started baiting a few spot around there. One spot in particular was in front of a concrete sluice with an outlet pipe, and an overhanging tree canopy above, and I had seen Carp getting tight in. It looked banging for it, but was weedy, so had clearly not been fished in a long while. So before leaving, I quietly lowered the rake down there a few times and dredged a nice hole, and baited it along with a couple of other spots.

The next session I fished Lower Point and did catch a nice 22 pound Mirror off the gravel patch, but my main incentive was to keep the bait going in on these margin spots, as I was sure that it would do a few. After now having a few baiting hits, I had a 3 night session planned, and was buzzing to drop a rig on two of the primed spots each side of swim 3. I was trying to be crafty by using a few maggots, which didnt pay me well the first evening when I caught an Eel. However all come good the following morning when I had the one noter from hell, and after a hard battle, landed a nice Mirror, with half Linear scaling. I had another chance that day, and on checking another baited spot that I didnt have a rod on, I witnessed them smashing it, including what looked to be one of bigger ones, and I could just about make out a few scales on it flank, in which I was pretty sure it was The Peach. I reeled in my rods and hurried round there, and seeing there was no Carp in sight, I quickly attempted to lower a rig, only for the same 3 Carp to come back into view and homing straight in for another feed, only to flinch and spook away, having seen me in the

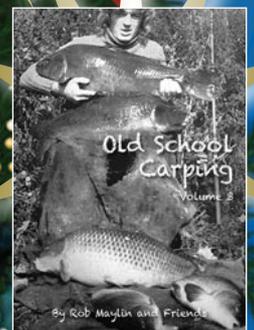
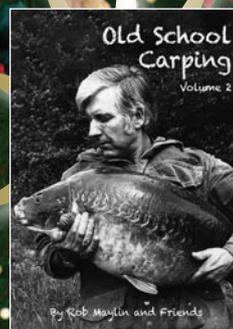
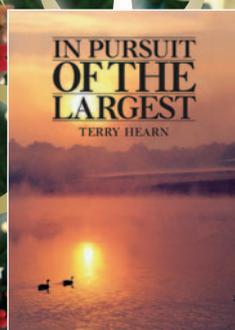
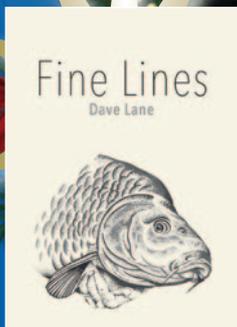
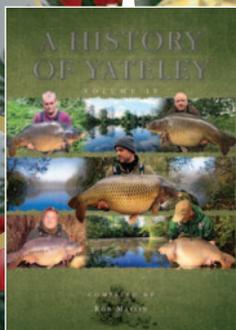
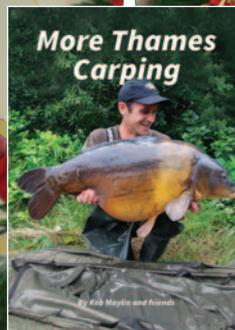
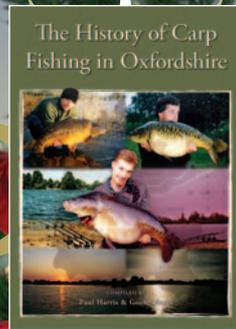


The Saddle Back – stunning.

Dear Santa,
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frozen 'twat gets caught red handed pose' and trying to look like a tree. Kicking myself for being too brave, and knowing I should have been waiting for the opportune moment, by evening they hadn't returned, and I knew I had blown it for those three on that spot, for now at least. So I shifted up to a spot in the Pads corner that I had been dropping bait on too, and it had all been eaten over night and the spot was growing fast, and I settled there for the night. On morning, I inspected the spot to find just my single Sweetcorn hookbait visible, they had clearly been in and got away with it during the night. The spot is carpeted with broken mussel shells, and on inspecting the rig, what was a sharp hook was now positively blunt, in which I assume was caused by fish feeding and wafting the light bottom bait around on the deck, so the chances are I probably had numerous pick ups but they can easily deal with a dulled hook. Cursing my luck again, I reeled in and topped all the baited spots up, and watched for an opportunity. I got one in the afternoon, when a pack of Carp hit one of the spots. This time I made sure I waited

for a definite safe chance to lower the rig when they had ghosted off, and the trap was set. They came back in to feed and the water murked up quickly, and after a couple of minutes a good fish was right on line with my rig with its gills flaring, this had to be a bite, as its nose inched right over my hookbait, only for it to rise up and waddle off with his mate in tow, like he had sensed danger again. Day was soon turning into night, and I decided to check the rig by lifting it out, and to my horror it was caught up on what must have been the only twig on the spot! So I think she had tried to snaffle my hookbait and but it snagged up on the twig, which then spooked it. I was cursing my luck, that was several chances now that should have materialized into bites, I felt so close, but was just having a spell of tough luck. I stayed on that spot for the final night, but nothing occurred and the bait was still there in the morning, but typically had all been smashed on the other spots, and in particular the raked spot off the sluice was now growing fast and starting to look blatant to any angler having a nosey around there. I hadn't yet put a rig on

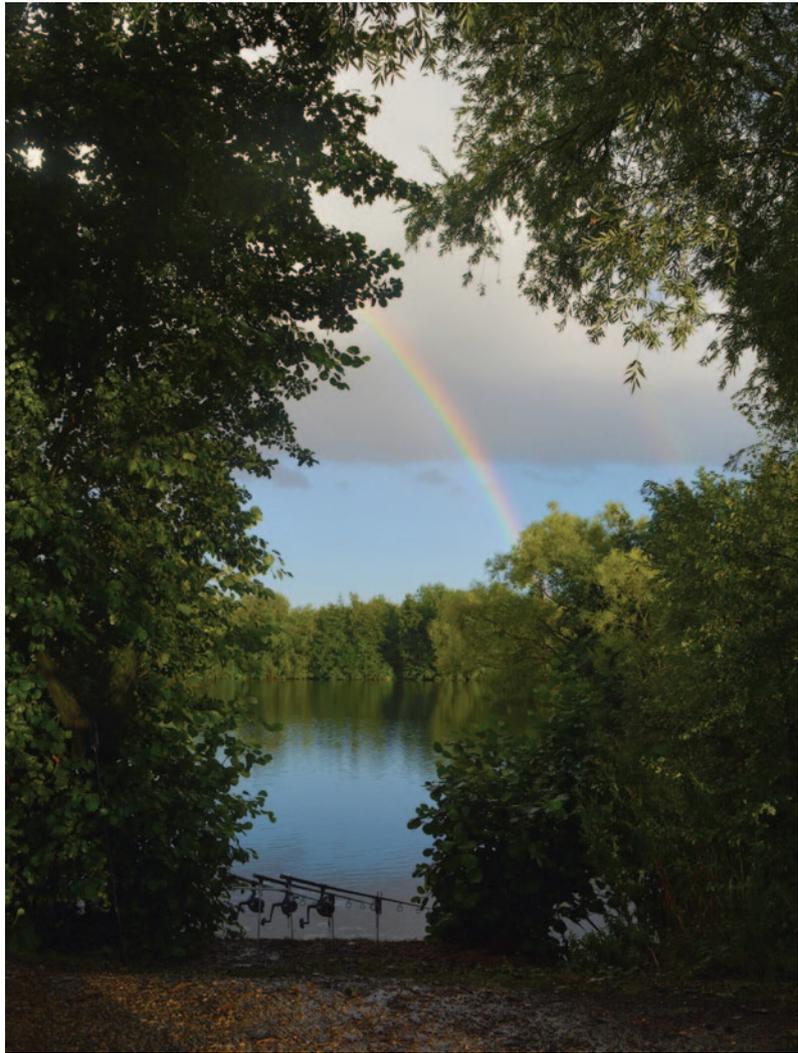
that spot, as I really wanted to get them confident on it first, so I applied the last of my bait there before leaving, feeling a bit frustrated, but still enjoying my fishing, the Carp were just winning at that time, and that's part of the thrill of the game. Food for thought once at home, I had been playing around with alternate baits like maggots and corn to be different, and also bottom bait rigs on coated braid, reason being that I was concerned when fishing on a shelf and with the fish often moving up the shelf when feeding that a pop up may be too blatant and proud of the deck. But having seen how the clay smokes up so easily, so the fish are virtually feeding blind, I decided that I had been over paranoid, and I was sure I would have had a bite or two on a pop up with the hook off the bottom so it wasn't getting dulled so easily, and a durable boilie on the hair.

On returning the following week I was chatting to another member and he had caught The Peach the day I had left, and stalked from the road bank, and sure enough it was the same spot that I had fished the night before that the Carp had my pants



A chunky common from Upper Point.

down on! He hadn't known I had been fishing the spot just hours before and had just found them ghosting around the spot, and dropped a rig. I was well happy for him, but I had to laugh to my myself, as you couldn't write how my luck was going on those margin spots. Not only that, the Sluice spot had been spotted and fished too since I was last there, and had also done a couple of fish. Now, I just want to reiterate that every one is mates on this syndicate, and we are all happy to see each other have their share, so it wasn't a case of others jumping on somebody else's pre-bait, it was merely down to sharing a small pit with some very talented anglers always looking for an opportunity, and if I had seen a nice clean spot and fish close by when stalking, I would have done the same. It's part and parcel of fishing an intimate and often busy water, the lake is too small to be possessive over swims or spots, and everyone has their day, I was just hoping mine would be soon. The following trip I had my daughter and her friend with me for two nights. I wish itching to drop a rig on the sluice spot before the party was over, but there wasn't room for two bivvys for the kids too, so I ended up the other end finding a few fish on the breeze, and dropped a couple of rigs close to where I had seen the Common a couple of weeks before, which was still due out. But after a quiet night, and wanting to show the kids some fish, we ended up moving on to the other pit on the site to fish mainly for the Catfish, in which I caught them a 54 pounder and a nice 24lbs Mirror too. But I had to be honest, I was just itching to get back on the main pit, and baited the Sluice spot again before leaving. A few more days at work and then I was happy to be going back through the fishery gates again. I had heard a couple more Carp had been caught from the Sluice spot that week too, so I figured then it was now or never, and dropped in there for my first night. But by late morning the following day, apart from a couple of Tench visiting, the Carp were not getting in close. I figured it was likely that the fish that been caught from it that week was enough to blow the spot for a while, again I felt I had been so close, but now so far, it was all about timing, and my luck wasn't in, and it was clear there wasn't enough



Upper Point.

time to bait a spot for a couple of weeks, you had to be quick on the draw, or the chance would go to another angler. I really should have knocked the one rod fishing on the head then and started concentrating on the main swims again, as I felt I had wasted a lot of time with my eggs in one basket by fishing one spot at a time when I could have had 3 spots out in the pond. But me being stubborn, I was determined to have some reward for my efforts, and with just one more night at my perill, I decided to give the Swim 3 margins one last shot, having seen fish getting in front of there. This time armed with Poppers on spinner rigs, with plenty of free boillie, and finally the buzzer one noted the following morning, and after a fair battle in heavy weed, I had a decent Common sulking in the net. And what a stunning Common it was too, one called the Saddle Back, in her dark and chesnut summer tones. I

was well pleased to finally get some pay back for my efforts.

By now we were well into August, and I had a 3 night session planned. I fancied getting in Lower Point if it was possible, as it had been the hot swim for a while, especially the gravel spot, but because of that it was one out, one in. The swim was taken as I expected it would be, so I dropped in Upper Point to start off the session. I had a decent marker around this time, keen to find some better drops without silkweed. The bottom of the island shelf felt decent, clean clay, in which I catapulted a good spread of boilies with a pop up amongst them. One rod was down on the margin spot and one just out to the left in more open water, and once the rods were settled, the barby was on and the beers were opening. I was getting used to the lack of action in the night, it was definitely a 'days water', so the anticipation was always on the morn-



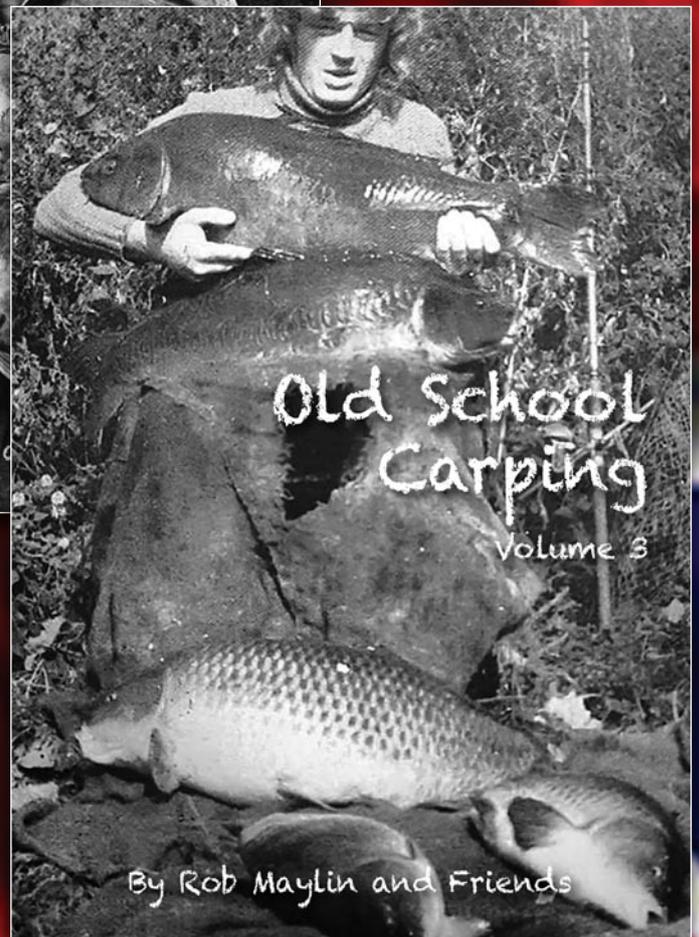
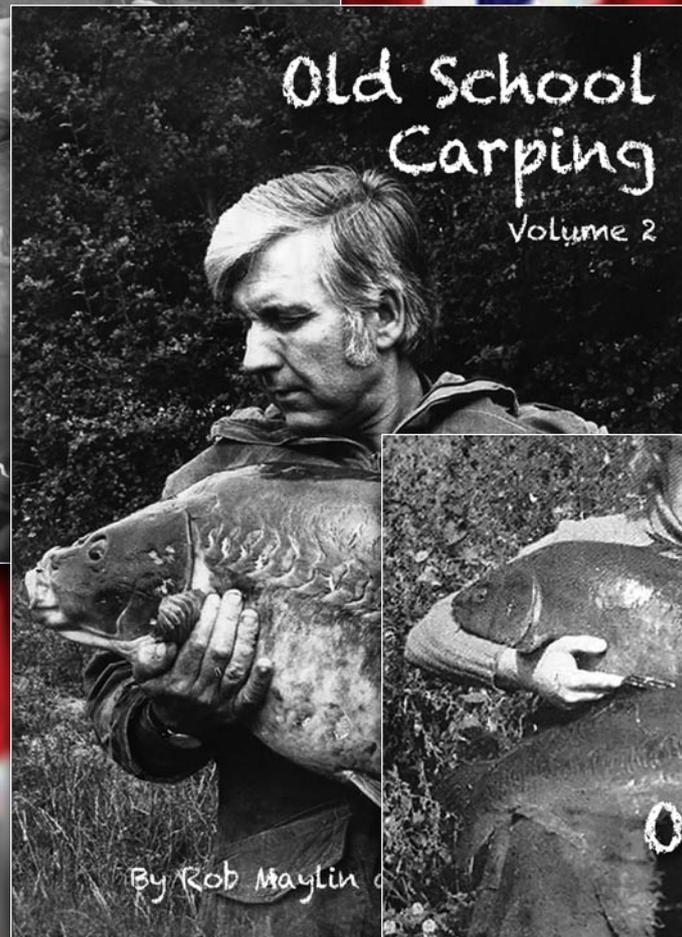
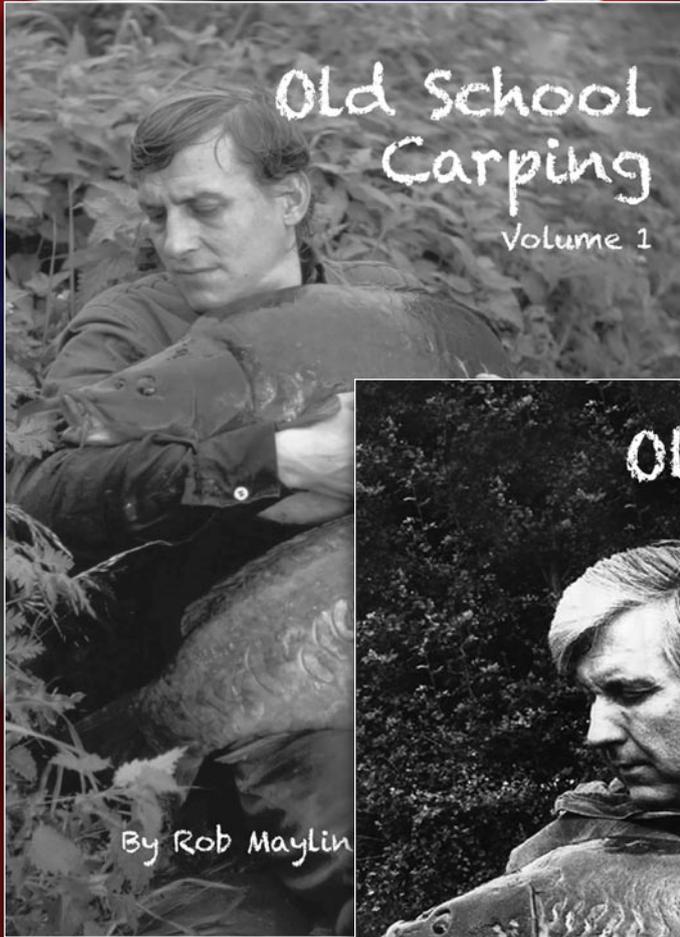
The session was off to a good start with one on the first evening.

ing bite time arriving. And it didnt dissapoint, with the rod on the island shelf rattling off around 9am, and I was soon landing a 29lb chunky Common. Having seen some fizzing continuing on the spot when I was playing the fish, I immediately reeled in the left hand rod, whipped on a fresh pop up, clipped up and flicked it to the island shelf whilst I sorted the fish in the net out. And after returning the Carp, the same rod went back out, so I had two on the spot, about 4ft apart. Only about half an hour passed when the first recast rod was away. It immediately darted into a wall weed between the swim and the spot on the take. After a few minutes of tension on the fish, I eventually got it moving, and just when it appeared to be out of the weed bed, the bloody hook pulled out. That was the end of that days action, and another quiet night followed. Around 8am the next morning, Lower Point was coming free. I was now in a predicament, do I stay for my final night after the two bites the previous morning, or get

moved into what had been a more productive swim of late. I knew I didnt have long to decide, as the swim would have been gone within an hour or two I was sure, if I didnt take it, so I got moved and the rods were soon out in Lower point, with the banker rod being the on the gravel area to the right at about 40 yards. Dan was due to come down for a night, but he was in two minds and thinking of leaving it and wasnt feeling it after a few blanks himself. I told him to get his head together and get down, as the lake had just started fishing well, and suggested he could drop in next door in Upper Point and we could have a barby. He did so, and flicked a couple of pop ups out whilst he set up camp. Only around ten minutes later he rang me to say he had a fish weeded up. He managed to free it from the weed bed and shortly after I was netting one of the A team for him. The one called Brushstrokes at 44lbs plus, and what an epic Carp she was. I was well buzzing for Dan, as he had smashed his PB and we had a right

celebration that night. I had to laugh at my luck again though, as he caught it from the same spot I had reeled in from only a few hours before and on the same bait, and I was kicking myself for moving. My luck just hadnt been in, but it had to turn soon, surely? Nope! As I did get a bite in Lower off the gravel spot on the following and final morning only for it to heavily weed me and drop off too, and I left there a bit gutted after losing two on the bounce in the heavy weed, and wondering if I would ever catch one of the big ones. A couple of days later, the main prize The Pig also got caught too, the females were clearly on the munch. Determined as ever, I thought I would pull in an overnighter mid week, and I was suprised to see that the Car park was empty. I headed straight back into Lower point, and with no one in the Bog swim opposite, this gave me an opportunity to lead about at the point of the island. I had not done so before and had left the point of the island alone, as I was always mindful that it was close to

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spots that people generally fished from the Bog, and there had always been someone in that swim when I had got into Lower Point beforehand, and being a new member hadn't wanted to annoy anyone. After a few casts, I found a lovely crack just tight to the trees, and stuck a Pop-up on it, with just 6 spombs of freebies and chops over the top, the chops being important, as with it being on an island shelf, they wouldn't roll away.

The right hand rod was back on the gravel spot, and the left hand rod down the channel. In honesty with only having the one night, I wasn't expecting anything to happen, but thought I may have a chance in the morning. So I was surprised when the rod on the point of the island burst into life out of the blue around 10pm, and my first night bite from the pit. The fish immediately tried to charge round the island so it was a bit of a hit and hold moment or two, as it hit the surface and began rolling about under the overhanging branches, but the

hook didn't pull, and it was soon kiting out into safer open water, and with a few minutes of a ploddy fight, she was soon beat and rolling over the net cord. I flicked my torch on and realised it was a decent one, and it was one they call Fungus, a crusty old looking one and one of the thirtys, they were getting bigger, and I was well pleased. Morning bite time was all quiet, but I was well happy driving home with that fish in the album.

A few more agonising days at work, as I heard that the lake was still fishing well, and there were still the other females due out, and my trip soon came round on the Sunday pm. As I mentioned before, timing was everything, and it felt like my luck was turning as Lower Point had just come free again as the weekend anglers left, so I bagged it, and remembering Adam's hit before when the females were on the munch back in June, I felt it was time to hoof some boilie in. Despite it being mid way through bite time, I didn't rush to get my rods out. I

really wanted to get to know the swim better, as I hadn't done much leading around, as I had always wanted to keep disturbance to a minimum when setting up. Usually in this scenario I would sacrifice the last hour of the session to lead about when starting on a new water, but with it being a popular swim, there had always been someone waiting to get in it, so I had not wanted to thrash it about before leaving out of consideration for them. But I bit the bullet and decided to just get on with leading it on arrival, as I really wanted confidence that I was presenting well on all 3 rods. In particular, I wanted to search out the hot spot gravel area to right that been doing a lot of bites. My plan was to fish the edge of the spot, rather than in the middle of it, so I was looking for the very point the gravel stops, and I wanted to be there, just in the soft clay. Reason being, I think a lot of fish will feed with more confidence on the edge of a spot, as that's where all the free bait gets



Fungus.

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The Peach didn't get away with it this time.

wafted about to when fish are feeding and they don't see a lot of hooks there. The spot was going to get two rods, with one deliberately landing short, on my edge of the spot, and one to the right, again just into the clay. This way there was no line or leaders running over the clean gravel area too that could potentially spook them when they were feeding. And, knowing the females were on the bull doze, I put good hit of RG Formula Red + Plum 15 millers over and all around the spot, with both rigs on a Spinner rig with Pop-ups. I felt confident, and it was worth the disturbance and effort to set the trap that little bit more cunningly. I had a really good feeling, and didn't have to wait too long for a bite at around dusk on the left hand rod, with a nice 24 pound mirror. It was a lovely evening, a starry night and bright full moon. It all felt bang as morning bite time was approaching, as I heard one thunder out the water towards the Pads corner and not too

far from the double rod trap. Morning broke, and it was the 1st of September, with the full moon still visible above the horizon behind me. I had only swung my legs out of bed a matter of seconds when the middle rod and the one on the right hand edge of the spot gave a few bleeps and the tip arced round and I was swiftly lifting into a bite. The fish had already weeded me in the wall of weed just to the left of the spot, but after a bit of steady persuasion it was soon on the move, and a powerful fight ensued as the fish made off for the channel to my left. I didn't bother with my waders, as I needed to be quickly on the side strain with the rod tip stretched out past the overhanging trees. A few tense moments followed as it tried to kite into the overhanging trees, but I gave some heavy pressure back and before long it was passing my swim again swimming in the opposite direction this time. This continued for a few minutes as it went

back and forth, all the while staying deep and slow, and I started to wonder if it was one of the big girls. Inch by inch, I began to get her higher in the water, as she twisted and turned, circling in the margin in front, and eventually a big dark back broke the surface and I reached forward and scooped her up first time. There was no mistaking now, it was one of the 40s for sure. I popped the hook straight out, and carried her in the sling up to the mat to unhook and identify her before retaining her for a few minutes to let her catch her breath and whilst I got everything ready.

On peeling back the sling I saw the two little scales that I had been gazing at on my wish list photo's of targets on her side.....MARTHA!!! She was mine! Safely in the sling, I started getting my scales ready and the camera set up for the self takes. I did think about quickly putting the rod back out, but knowing I had a second rod

already on the spot, I figured there was no immediate rush as it could do more harm than good by spooking any more that may still be feeding. Just as I had finished setting up the camera, the other rod let out a couple of bleeps and then broke into a one noter. It also weeded me up heavily, but this time to the right, where the weed was more dense. After a couple of minutes with the rod locked up and no movement, and conscious that I needed to get

Martha photographed and back as retaining is only permitted for a few minutes, I nearly just put the rod on the rest, which would have risked it slipping the hook, but then it gave a slight kick and the rod tip began to come my way, millimeters at a time. Very, very slowly I had the fish and the weed bed moving my way, and after a few minutes as it came closer, a huge triangle raft of weed began to emerge on the surface, with a Carp somewhere underneath it. I had

become used to netting fish that were trailing a weed raft, but this was off the scale, as the raft was about 12ft long. I sunk the net deep under it where I could see some of the leader and then reached for the net cord, now up to my chest in water and just tried to shuffle as much in as I could, hoping the Carp was in there. As I began stripping the weed away I felt a tail and it was, before it went bezerk, erupting in a white wash of water and weed, and I struggled to keep it in the net, but just about managed. I knew then it wasn't a small one either. I stripped away more weed and got a look at the fish, and saw it had a few scales skattered down its lateral line. 'Those scales look similar to The Peach' I thought. Sure enough after finally removing the net full of weed, I realised it definately was The Peach, and another 40 pounder! I was elated, and couldnt believe my luck, after so many missed opportunities and the fish running me dizzy at times, just

like that, I had a brace of 40s in front of me and waiting for a photograh, it doesnt get much better than that. Whether placing the hookbaits just on the edge of the spot made a difference to what fish would pick them up, who knows, but it had worked, and was definately worth putting the 2 rods on the spot that morning. Martha was a new PB at 45lb 7oz and looked incredible as I hoisted her up, a proper hefty and good looking beast of a Carp, and the Peach looking stunning with her dark summer tones. With only one other angler on the lake, who had come round to give me a hand with the weighing, I decided there wasn't enough hands on deck for a brace shot, as much as it was a probably a once in a life time opportunity for Carp of such kaliber, I left it, and photographed them individually. But a dream brace had come true for me that morning, and a magical day to remember.

To be continued. ■



Martha was mine!

Oak Lakes Fisheries



www.oaklakesfisheries.co.uk

The Award Winning Oak Lakes Fisheries

New Union Media are proud to announce 'Oak Lakes Fisheries' as our Recommended Fishery of the Year 2021/22. Each year our Editor's select from a number of categories where we believe a certain client deserves a special mention. This year Oak Lakes Fisheries was a standout performer in the Fishing and Angling category.

During the selection process we have to consider a number of key elements what we believe would make the winners stand out from their competition such as customer care, value for money, overall experience and customer feedback to name a few. 'Oak Lakes Fisheries' ticks all the boxes and therefore are declared this year's winners of this coveted award.

We recommend any fishing enthusiast to visit Oak Lakes and experience the many different lakes on offer whilst hooking some amazing fish. Oak Lakes is undoubtedly Essex's best kept secret when it comes to fishing and angling. There are a number of different lakes on the fishery all offering very different fishing experiences and containing many varieties of fish such as Carp, Tench, Roach, Rudd, Perch, Bream, Catfish and Pike.

Ideal for Carp Fishing are The Oak Lake (day ticket) and Pipe Lake (Members only) where anglers have been known to catch some carp weighing over 30 lbs. The Predator Lake is home to some extremely large Catfish, with some weighing well over 140 lbs and large Pike over 30 lbs. The Match Lake is a two and a half acre lake with at least 20 comfortable swims, 3 islands with depths of 5-6ft.

Oak Lakes Fisheries is predominantly a day ticket fishery, but with a private

members only lake too. Day tickets can be purchased for regular carp fishing throughout the day or a 24 hour ticket where anglers can fish all day and night on all of the lakes.

Our staff are on hand to offer their professional advice if you're searching for any particular type of fish tactics, baits to use or advice on the depths, reed beds, lily pads, gravel bars etc.

If you're fishing for Pike then the winter is the ideal time to catch them whilst the summer is the optimum time for Catfish and Bream. Oak Lakes actually holds the record for the largest Catfish ever caught in the country by avid angler James Jones weighing a whopping 144lbs and visitors are forever on the precipice of trying to emulate that feat.

Oak Lakes is unique compared to other fisheries. This 40-acre land offers tree-lined lakes with Monkjack deer, rabbits, hares, woodpeckers and kingfishers and a plethora of wildlife. There are also many near by take-aways and pubs who will happily deliver to the fishery. We have an on-site cafe open weekend mornings as well as a bait and tackle shop for when you're running short on supplies. Toilet and shower facilities are in the main car park.

To find out more about this award winning fishery or if you have any enquiry about membership then call Paul on 07702 382027, Kevin 07771 896964 or Mick on 07771 941361 you can also email your enquiry to oaklakesfisheries@outlook.com Alternatively visit our website at www.oaklakesfisheries.co.uk or our Facebook page.

Just a selection of some of Oak Lakes' cracking carp



First double for Vernon Sanders this winter caught on Oak Lake in the Bay swim Nice one Vern.

Lake Prices
Day ticket lake (Oak Lake) – £10 a day and £20 for 24 hours.
Predator Lake – Prices are the same as the day ticket lake for pike during the winter – £20 a day and £30 for 24 hours for catfish in the summer.
Match Lake - £6 for one rod and £10 for two rods.



Another cracking Pike for Vernon Sanders out of the Bay swim on Oak Lake he knows how to catch well.

Oak Lakes Fisheries

www.oaklakesfisheries.co.uk



A Merry Christmas from all at Oak Lakes Fishery

A huge thank you to all our valued customers

Looking forward to better times in 2022

and to seeing you all again



Exclusive

Yorkshire's Finest

By Adam Andrew

Living in Yorkshire we aren't blessed with too many big carp like other parts of the U.K. but one that has stood head and shoulders above the rest has been Tyram Halls baby Baz. A dark old mirror that has been on most northern anglers' wish list.

I first started fishing Tyram for Baby Baz in the winter of 2017. With a busy work schedule the first couple of years was spent fishing over nighters between work, I was lucky enough to get amongst the fish from the off. Looking at Baz's past captures it had been a day light captures. Many of these being in high pressure and high temperatures. So, my chances of getting Baz on a overnighter was going to be hard work.

My weekends are usually spent with my son. Being only 7-year-old, so weekends was going to be tough to make time. Timing my sessions would be essential, keeping an eye on weather forecasts and whenever it looked like Baz weather, I would have a few days or a week off work.

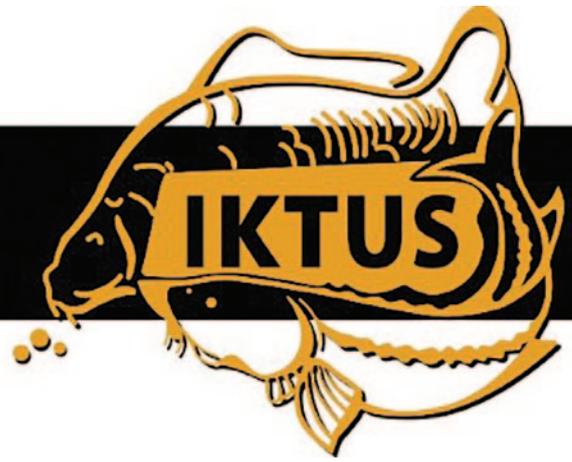




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Urban Baits Nutcracker Session Pack Competition

A massive thumbs up to our great friend Terry Dempsey for providing an awesome NEW monthly competition

And it could not be easier to win this fantastic **Urban Baits Nutcracker Session Pack** which contains **5kg of 18mm Nutcracker Boilies** (RRP £37.50) and a tub of **Nutcracker Pop-ups** (RRP £6.49), perfect for an early season session.

To win simply go to the Urban Baits Facebook page and 'LIKE' it. THAT'S IT! – Terry himself will pick a winner at random.

Closing date is 1st June, 2022

– SO GET LIKING!



I was catching fish and getting a lot of repeat captures. Several times just missed it or being on the bank whilst it came out, so I knew I was not far away. I booked a week from work starting on the 22nd of August this year.

The weather forecast looking perfect. Also, the same week last year one of my mates had it the same week so the omens looked good. Turning up to the lake and finding fish at the bottom end of the lake so obvious starting point but keeping an eye on movements would be essential with the carp moving easily off any pressure. Being quiet during setting up and knowing the spots I was able to keep disturbance to a minimum. There were fish all over me until dusk then by first light there wasn't a fish in sight.

Thinking back to last year I remembered they did the same, moving round to peg 4 under the cover of darkness until around 10am and Baz seems to like it round that area so at first light I reeled in and walked round to find Peg 4 was taken they was all there as I expected after a chat with matey in peg4 he told me he was due



to leave around mid-day, so a move was on.

Making my way around to peg 4 by mid-day there was no fish in sight by this point, but I knew they would be back. This giving me chance to set my traps without spooking carp out of

the swim. 3 Ronnies with 3 Pink Pepper pop ups went out perfect over a bed of Trigga freezer.

As expected, the carp moved back into the swim overnight. I went to bed full of confidence. my right-hand rod was away around 5am, this fish



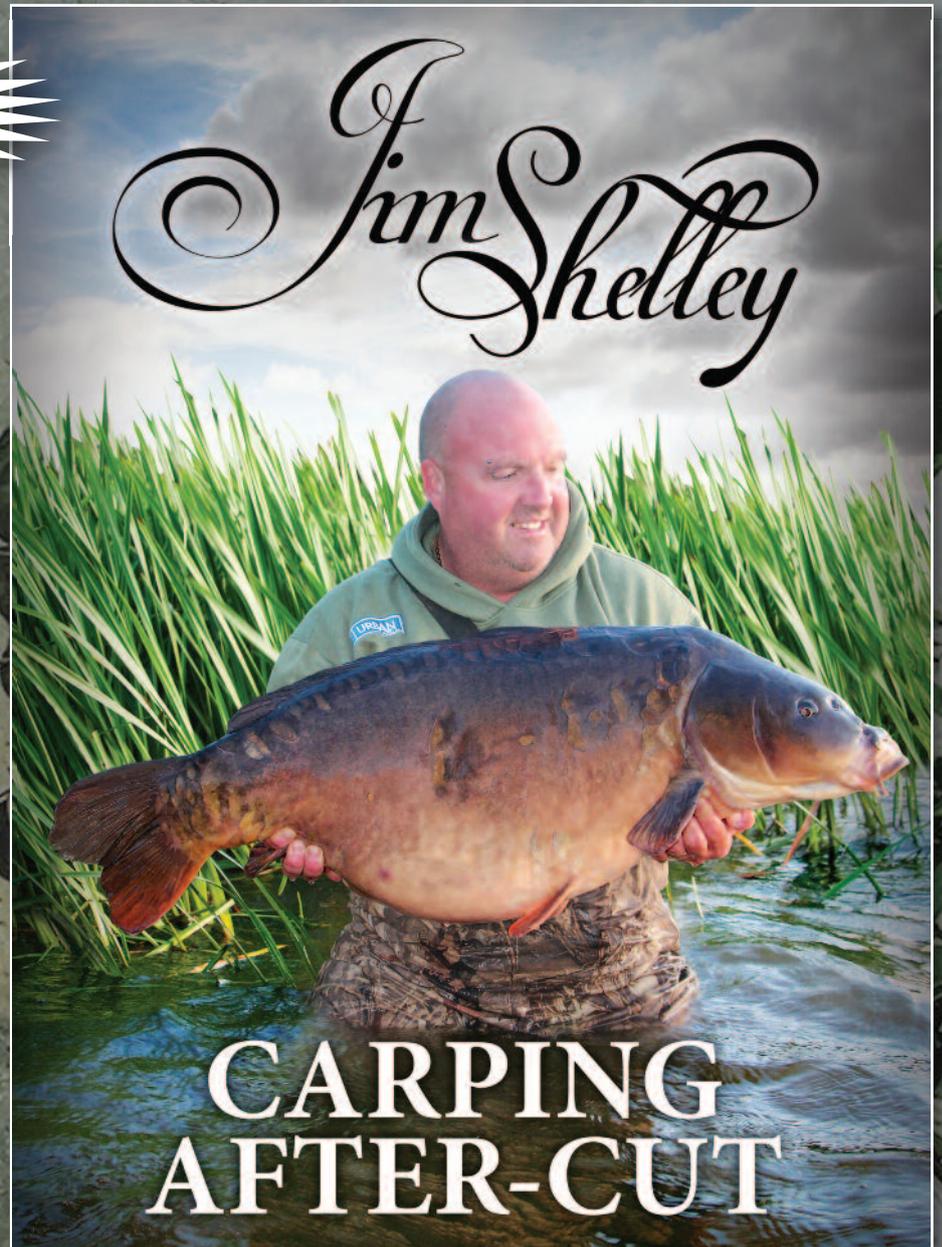
CARPING AFTER-CUT

At last, the third book from the UK's most prolific catcher, Jim Shelley. Following in the footsteps of his sellout second book, Carping Re-Cut, this book documents Jim's fishing over the last few incredible years. No one comes within light years of Jim's captures over this time with numerous 50-pluses from some very testing venues and a shed full of backup 30s and 40s.

ALL BOOKS ARE
SIGNED BY JIM

Here is what Jim
had to say...

"My new book is finally here, 'Carping AFTER-CUT', after spending hundreds of hours writing it bankside. Come join me in the next installment detailing my highs and lows over the last few years, starting from Charnwood, Ellis, Dinton, Fen, Swavesey, Woolpack, Bayeswater, Sutton, Buchan plus some poaching for good measure. Like 'Carping RE-CUT', there will be plenty going on to keep you gagging for more."



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went absolutely crackers, I had it in my head all way through the battle this could be the one. It was still dark at the time so when it finally went in

the net, I had no idea what fish It could be.

Rushing back bivvy and grabbing my head torch to find it was a long

common at 29.14 (repeat offender) nice to be off mark few self takes at first light and back she went. With the swim destroyed I wasn't expecting any further action but with few nights remaining I was confident they would be back. Keeping a look out in my swim and around the lake I was lucky enough to find Baz Friday mid-day.

Just off the back of my baited areas so my confidence was now through the roof Baz was doing laps from one spot to next temperatures was still high and pressure through the roof. Proper Baz weather.

I had to be off in the morning to have my lad, so I had from now this mid-day to catch it Morning came and no Barry. I couldn't leave with what I had seen, dilemma time. The weather being perfect and knowing I would never get a better chance of catching Baz. luckily, I talked my mum in to having him the night and my dad to bring him over to me the following morning.

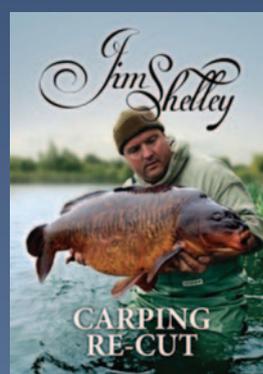
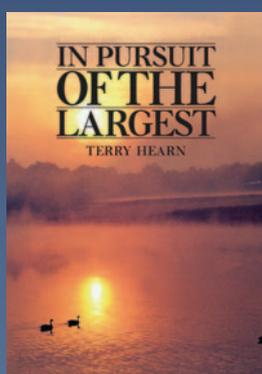
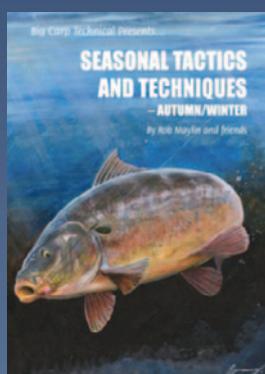
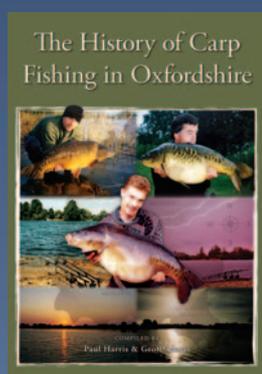
Bang behind peg 4 in a disused jet sky lake with plenty of tench and bream I baited a spot down the margin with chopped and crushed trigga to get them grubbing to keep my boy





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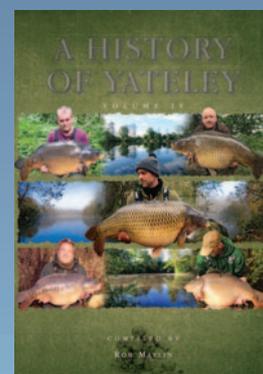
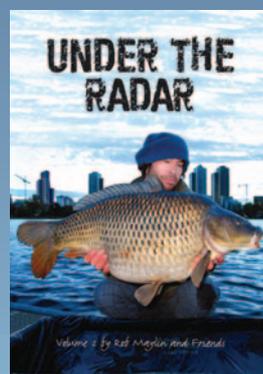
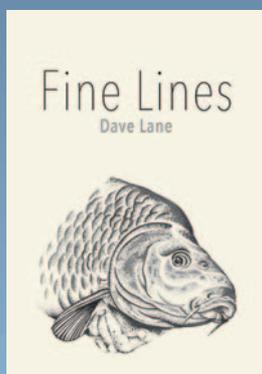
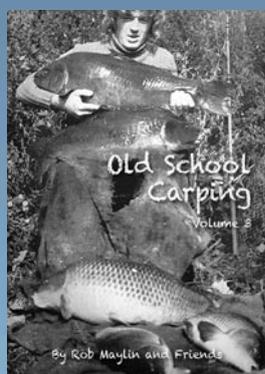


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happy and got a stalking set up ready for the arrival of my lad.

We had a great time stalking and ended up with 2 tench. He was over the moon and aptly named them Terry and Tony. Later that day I was thinking about when and where I was saw Baz in the water, it passed over top of a bar several times just off the back of my baited spot, so I moved my right-hand rod to top of the bar.

The rod went out with a solid donk perfect slack lines and a good spread of Nutrabaits Trigga over top and time to settle in for night. I went to bed full of confidence.

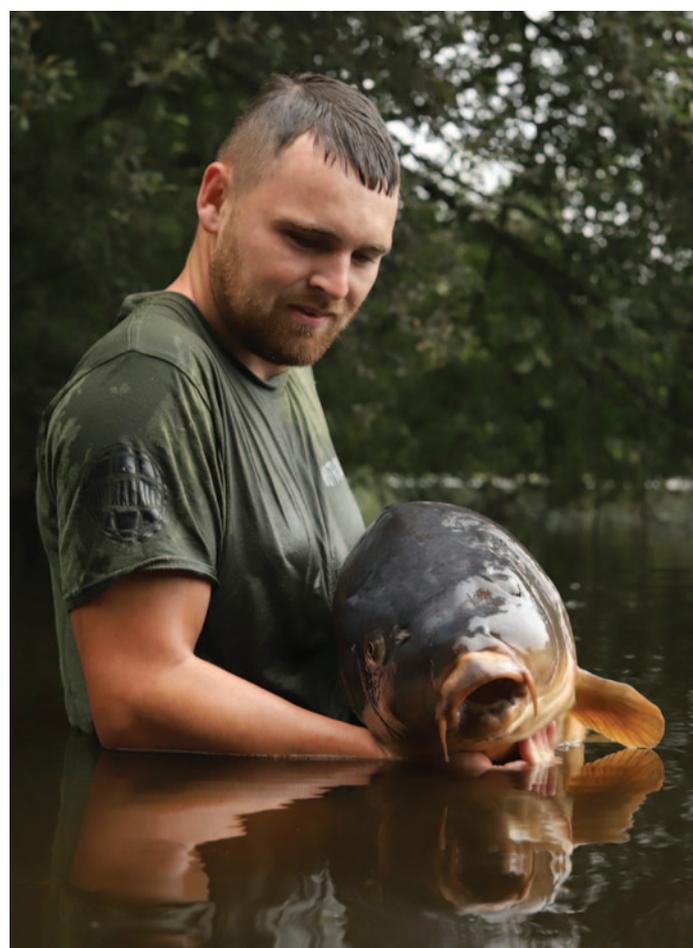
First light I was awoken by a few bleeps on the right-hand rod but on closer inspection finding a swan tipping up and picking baits up off the bar. I put kettle on with the face on thinking that my chances were out of Window. Around 20 minutes later my right-hand rod bobbin lifts a little, as I look over the lake the swan has gone. Few seconds later the bobbin slowly lifted to the top and rod slowly bent round and I was in action.

The fish was moving slow and heavy but luckily keeping in open water. After a few heavy lunges a massive wrinkley old head popped up and went straight into the net. Knowing instantly what fish was in the net the adrenaline kicked in. The one I had dreamed of catching for years and 1,000hrs planning and fishing had finally paid off.

I ran to bivvy and woke my boy up, we have done it mi boy, we have just caught the best fish in Yorkshire. He jumped out of bed and ran down to net to have a look; we were both buzzing I rang all the lads up from round the lake to help out with photos. This giving myself a few minutes to calm down and take it all in.

Luckily good friends and bailiff Jamie Price were on hand to share the moment. Carefully hoisting Baz aloft, she settled the scales at bang on 49lb a little down in weight but does it really matter not one bit to me it's Yorkshire's finest carp.

Plenty of good shots and slipped her back. Job done It's all over I have just caught the finest carp in Yorkshire what a buzz. ■



CARPING RE-CUT

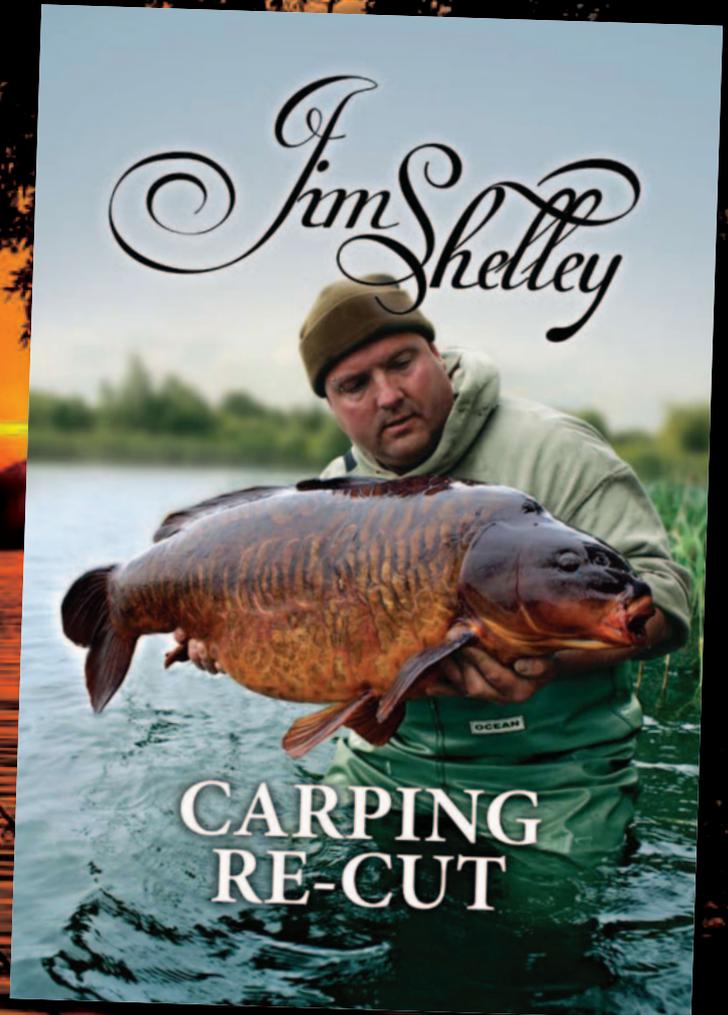
Jim Shelley

Jim Shelley is the UK's most prolific hunter of big carp. He is a carp fishing force of nature and no carp can withstand his pursuit for long. He has carved out a career in carp fishing with an iron will and perspiration, and this book is the physical embodiment of that drive. Every single word is testament to the fact that Jim won't ever give up. He taught himself to write so that he could genuinely say that he'd written this huge book unaided. That is just what he has done too.

Inside you'll find the truth... the whole truth. Nothing has been airbrushed and at times Carping Re-Cut can make for uncomfortable reading. It's gritty, it deals with difficult situations that Jim found himself on and off the bank. Let's not forget, throughout a portion of this book, Jim's wife Jane battled with cancer and if the strain took its toll, then Jim has written about the consequences, and left nothing out! Carping Re-Cut tells the story of a man driven to catch the biggest and best carp out there. There are colourful and touching moments along the way and of course, there are the fish! This book holds beautiful images of many of the fish that captured the hearts of carp men throughout the last decade or so. Eventually, Jim worked out how to catch them all, and the way that he did it is laid bare here for you to read.

So, join Jim on a journey that starts in 'bandit country' near Heathrow, passes east through Cambridgeshire and Norfolk before swinging back via Royal Berkshire, and plunging deep into the jungle that is the mysterious Colnemere, as Jim searches for the ultimate prize, the Black Mirror. One thing's for sure, it won't be dull!

At last the long awaited second book from carp fishing's No.1 angler is available direct from Bountyhunter Publications. Carping Re-Cut is the follow up to Jim's highly successful first book Carping Un Cut and is a mammoth size publication containing over 400 beautiful colour plates, exclusive stories and an incredible amount of huge carp from waters far and wide. Jim always was a great carp angler but over the past few seasons he has evolved



into the ultimate catching machine. Water after water, target after target and record after record have fallen to this sometimes controversial angler, nevertheless no one can deny his ability and no carp is uncatchable once Jim sets his mind to it. Jim's first book was a great read and it's sometimes hard for an author to match the quality of his first book, however this is not the case with Carping Re-Cut. This book is a revelation and no carp angler of any ability, age or status should miss out on what is definitely the book of the decade from the world's greatest carp angler.

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Linear Red Letter Session

By Ben O'Leary

Waking up at around 3am the buzz was real; I was itching to get back down again. 4 days at my disposal, bank holiday weekend, I knew it was going to be busy, but I was ever hopeful that my I would reap the rewards for my effort. After loading the car, food aplenty, I made the near 2-hour journey towards Linear with my eye set on Oxlease.

Getting there around 5am, first on the gate, it looked promising to get a swim on my preferred lake. In the run up to the gates swinging open, I decided to try and catch up on some

of the sleep lost due to the first light start but the excitement buzzing me round me like a wasp in a blender had other ideas.

The gate opened and upon doing so, I was met with the stark reality that day ticket carping encapsulates, it was busier than it looked. Swims had been bucketed 3 days in advance and I was left erring on the edge of caution - do I lap and risk missing empty swims on other lakes or do I leave the car loaded and head over to one of the other beautiful waters on the complex.

Deciding on the former, I managed to get into swim 2 on Oxlease. After speaking to the guy who had occupied the swim for previous 2 days, he

informed me of the struggle to get on the fish which resulted in him drawing a blank, a revelation that left me pondering my next move.

Whilst all of this was going on, I had a backup offer in my mind that would ultimately lead me elsewhere. Tom McKay - being the great lad he is, had offered to let me double up on the point on Brasenose 2 if I could not get in a swim that I believed would become fruitful and put fish in my net.

After a quick call to Tom to confirm he his cards were still on the table, I quickly got the rods back in the motor, surrendered my swim and got myself over to the road and onto B2. After meeting up with Tom and dis-



46lb7oz.



Mid-20 from the first night.



Mid 20.



Weigh scales of the 46.

covering Ian Russell was finishing a tutorial, it gave us a few hours to discuss what we believed would bring us success in our session. We knew it we were prepared and efficient in our fishing, twinned with arguably one of the best swims on the complex, we could achieve a session that you fish Linear dreaming of.

Who would fish which side, would we spod, what rigs, what distances? This were all questions that our wait allowed us to think about. Decisions that would further heighten the excitement, expectations and eagerness that the journey to the complex had allowed me to build up.

After a quick chat with Ian and the guy that had been lucky enough to enjoy the tutorial, as well as carefully observing the water, it was clear to see the fish were on the left-hand side of the peg. Tom informed me he did not like the left side, and I was free to take it. Sloshing like dolphins in my half of the swim, I could not believe it

he had been so kind as to say I could fish that side.

The anticipation to get fishing was real. If a session was ever going to be mine it was this one.

I decided to bait a spot at 24 wraps with a few small spombs of corn, boilie and carp particles buckwheat and maize. I finished putting my bait out and continued to watch the water, it became quickly apparent putting all 3 rods on the baited area might not be the most efficient use of my time due to the carp shouldering in various areas of my swim. After making up a few solid bags, I dispatched what was going to be my middle rod onto the head of a showing chunk. One on the showing fish to my left with a small spomb of carp particle over the top and one in a small bay behind me.

The fish I had seen showing to my left all seemed around the mid 20 mark but that did not bother me I just wanted to land my first fish of the ses-



Upper 20.

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Smallest of the session at 22lb.



28lb.



35lb bang on.

sion and my first Brasenose 2 carp after drawing a blank on my previous session on the Oxfordshire day ticket water. Little did I know what I was about to hook would be a fish I could only dream of catching.

After receiving the take, the fish surfaced straight away, and I thought it was going to be one of the mid 20's I'd seen showing shortly before. I wasted no time in donning the waders in order to get closer to the fish, after a 15-minute battle in which it stayed deep, I questioned whether my assumptions of it being a mid-20 maybe be underestimating the quality of the fish which had taken a liken to my fake corn hook bait. Around 10/15 yards away from the bank, I had my first glimpse of the fish, shaking its head like an angry leviathan.

Seeing them in the water is always deceiving, I knew it was a good fish, but I did not let it distract me from the task in hand, to get this fish in my net.

A short while after seeing it properly for the first time it was in my net. Whilst the carp sulked in the net, I looked over to Tom and said, "that's a

unit". I had never seen a fish of such proportion on the bank before, let alone seeing one sulking in the folds of my net. I was adamant from the outset it had smashed my PB.

Tom took a quick glance in the net and said, "I know exactly what fish that is, it's an upper 40, one known as the Punisher." I could not quite believe it, prior to this session my personal best was only around 28lb caught from a local day ticket.

I safely retained the fish and made sure there was no way of that fish doing its best Houdini on me.

I rang the bailiffs but there was no answer, so I asked if the lad the swim next door, Michael, would be able to give me a hand weighing, recording and photographing this immense fish.

I made sure the scales read zero on Tom's sling before taking the fish out of the water, we transferred the fish out of the retainer sling and transferred it into the weigh sling, we put the scales through the rings on the sling and placed our bets on how big she was going to be.

We lifted her up and the scales

skipped straight past 30, straight past the low 40's and spun round to 46lb7oz. I could not believe it; I had obliterated my PB by almost 20lbs. We did some photos before getting in the water to do some water shots. The first person I messaged was my girlfriend and said, "I'VE DONE IT, I'VE CAUGHT A 40, I CAN'T BELIEVE IT". My angling target for that year was to catch a 40 and id smashed it out the park within hours of casting out.

I still could not believe it; the session was off to a flyer and I was in dream land. I of course got the bucket for the new PB and before 9 am the next morning; I had had 9 takes, landing 8. What a session it was turning out to be and I was less than 24 hours in.

The session seemed to go from strength to strength as they kept coming throughout the session, in total I landed 15 fish to 46lb including 4 30's with a string of upper 20's for good measure.

On the Sunday, my older brother came down to the complex to congratulate me on my new PB and enjoy the glorious May sunshine. Later, that



31lb.

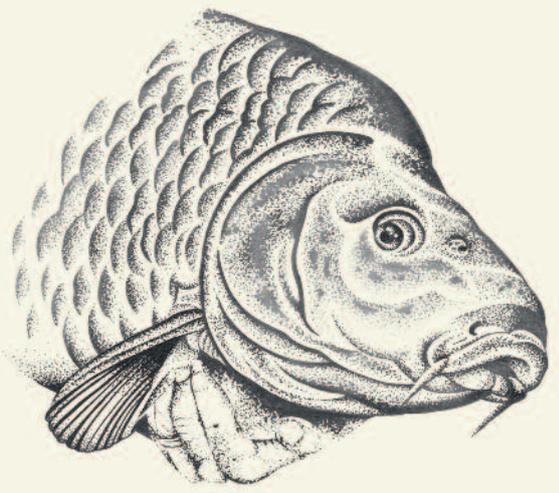


Mid-20 from the first night.

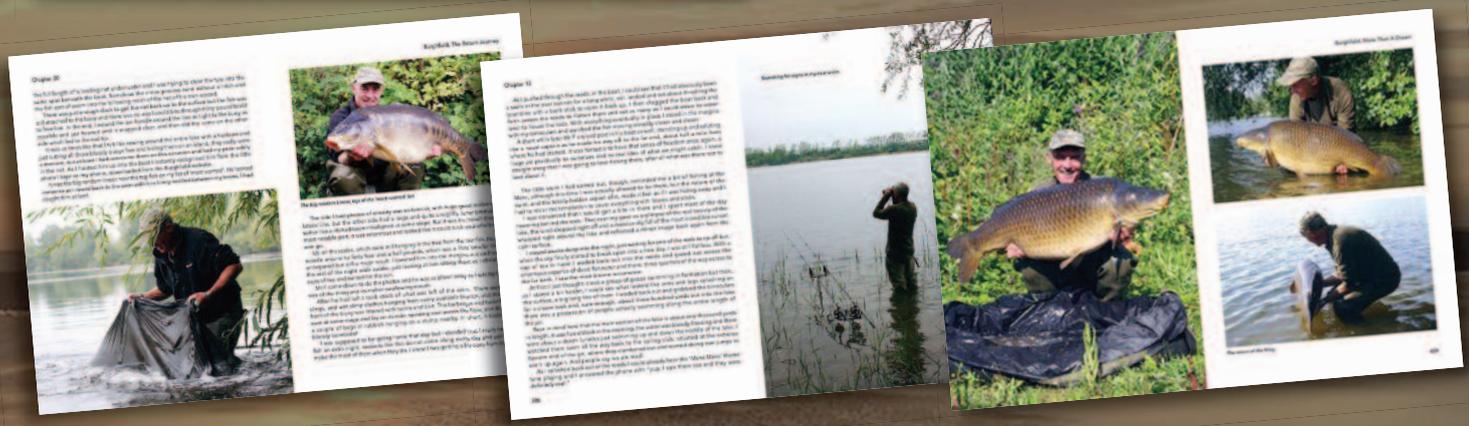
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Fine Lines

Dave Lane



Now available direct from Bountyhunter Publications is a signed copy of Dave Lane's fourth book, Fine Lines. Whether you are an avid fan and following on from Dave's first books or delving into his world for the first time, you are bound to be entertained, amazed and left wanting yet more of his adventures. Together with his faithful hound, Padwar, he has travelled the land in search of monster carp and catalogued his experiences in his own inimitable style, which is peppered with humour, disasters, bizarre occurrences, and, ultimately, success.



Dave's writing style has always focused on painting the entire picture so that you, the reader, can feel as if you are there on the bank beside him at all times, sharing in the experiences every step of the way. The big carp scene is a weird and mysterious place, and although Dave fishes right at the pinnacle of this strange world, he always seems to find time for a bit of fun along the way, so sit back and enjoy the ride. It's a must read for novice and experienced carp anglers alike.

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33lb.



First ever 30 at 35lb.

afternoon, I needed to go and stock up the food vault and whilst I was gone, my brother watched the rods for me and was lucky enough to catch his first Linear fish, a 30lb'er. Result. Upon my return to the swim, we enjoyed the moment as brothers should. It is not just about the carp but the moments along the way.

It really was a session of dreams. All the hours I had done across the complex in every weather condition imaginable, the countless blanks which sandwiched the couple of 20s I had caught, it shows if you put your mind to it and persist in your objectives, things will slot into place and rewards will be reaped.

I have got to say a huge thanks to Tom McKay for letting me double up in one of the best swims on the complex. A big thanks to Tom, Michael and Reece for helping me weigh and photograph fish and lastly, a big thank you to Linear for the complex they have created through their love of angling.

Sessions like this happen about as frequently as the eclipse, so until the next one, tight lines. ■



The swim after the carnage of catching a 40.

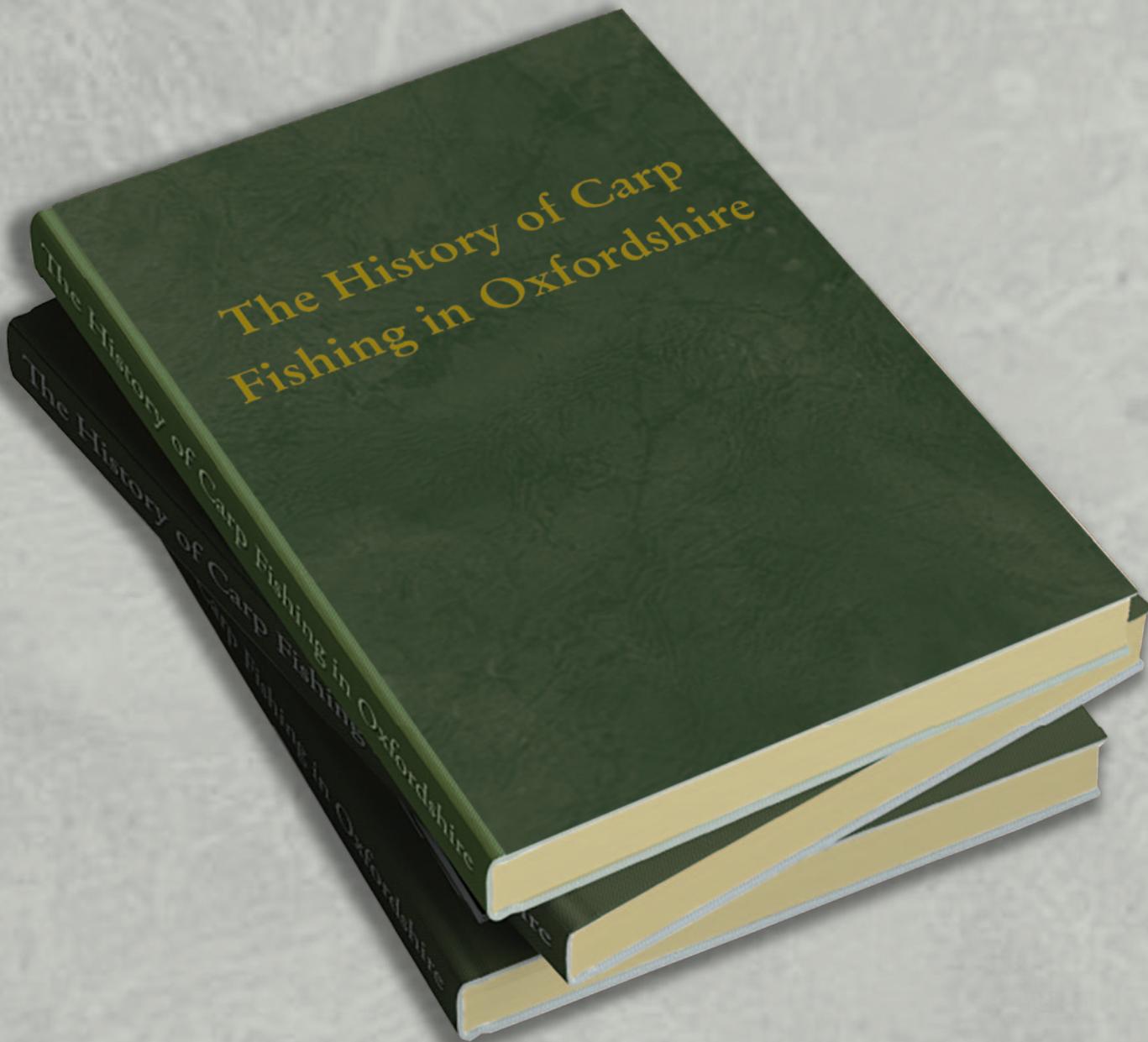


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The History of Carp Fishing in Oxfordshire

Paul Harris and Geoff Adams

Carp fishing has a very rich history. In the early days of it becoming popular, Kent and the Colne Valley were the hot beds of our fledgling pastime and of course there was the legendary Redmire Pool.

Into the new Millennium and one area above all others exploded onto the scene, this was of course Oxfordshire. The quality of the stock of carp in this county was incredible but where did these beautiful scaly beasts come from? When did the Leney's get stocked? What were the origins of the famous Linch Hill fish and what of the history of the now infamous Linear Fisheries? Over the course of the pages of this book all will be revealed as Paul and Geoff have put together the facts of how these lakes were stocked and also banded together many successful local anglers, some of which have never published any of their catches, who tell their fishing tales on these stunning lakes.

With more than 300 pictures of some of this country's finest ever carp and several full page maps, this huge volume tells the story of Oxfordshire's carp fishing history whilst still leaving a little bit of mystery for your imagination!

Included within the pages of this book is the foreword written by local legendary angler and former tackle dealer Joe Taylor. We have chapters from Paul Kitchin on the legendary Vauxhall Lake. David Brian Williams tells us the story of the lakes in the City of Oxford itself! Chris Robinson has written an incredible chapter on two of Dorchester's lakes. Orchid and The Lagoon. The history told in Chris' chapter on these lakes is just incredible and wait until you see the pictures!

Next door to The Lagoon is Dorchester's Alliance Club Lake and Joe Forrester tells his story of the incredible scaly carp that inhabited this lake and how he outwitted them.

We have a real coup in the fact that brilliant all-round Oxford angler John Everard agreed to be interviewed and he has an incredible amount of historical information to share, as has Gerald Stratford who is also included in this informative chapter.

No book about Oxfordshire's carp fishing history would be complete without the story of Oxford's first forty and what a story it is. Richard 'Paddy' Paradine has never written or published any of his catches before and we have his interview here for you of his historic catch which was kept under the radar for so long.

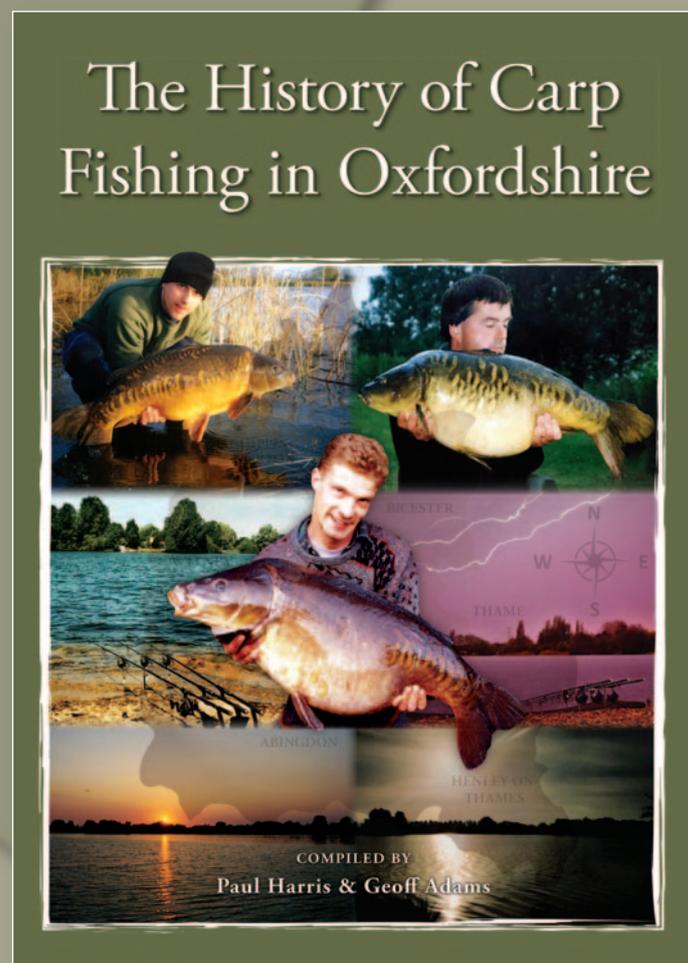
Nick Stansfield is a brilliant young Oxford carper who doesn't shout about his catches. We have two incredible chapters from him from two of the county's most iconic lakes, The Leisure Park and The Big S! Josh Chatfield has written a fantastic chapter which really gives you an insight into how fishing on The Leisure Park was back in the day when the Leney's were still about and culminates with his capture of The Big Leney at its biggest ever weight, the iconic 'Paddy's Fish'.

We have brilliant chapters on Newlands from Ginger Robinson and Milton Pools from Stuart Rothwell. Danny Aplin has written about his time on Linch Hill which will just blow you away! His pictures alone are worth purchasing this book.

Nick Franklin has written a lovely chapter on one of Oxfordshire's little known lakes and his account really hits home that carp fishing isn't always about the numbers game. Sometimes it's just you fishing for the unknown! There are superb chapters on Manor Farm from Paul Hathaway and St Johns from Stewart Roper.

If that wasn't enough Paul and Geoff have wrote chapters themselves which cover the stocking history of lakes, how the gravel company ARC played such a big part in the early stockings of Oxford's lakes, the early days of Linch Hill and Linear Fisheries and facts and stories regarding Oxford's other lakes, some very off the radar!

If you like your history, you like carp fishing and love stories of beautiful scaly carp, there is only one book to purchase this year. Here it is...



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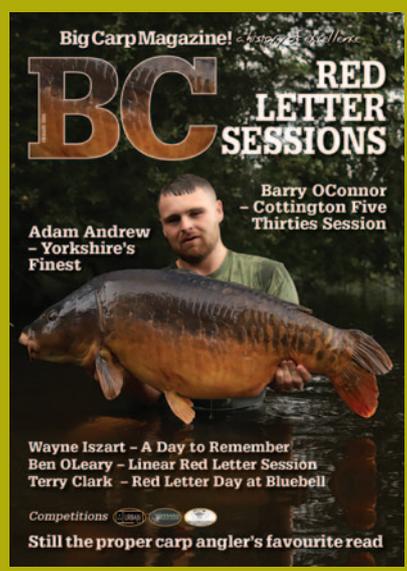
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Editor/Publisher
 Rob Maylin
 Bountyhunter Publications
 44 Herbs End, Cove, Hampshire
 GU14 9YD
 Telephone 01252 373658
 Facsimile 01252 373658
 Mobile 07768 731425
 Email: bigcarpmagazine@hotmail.com

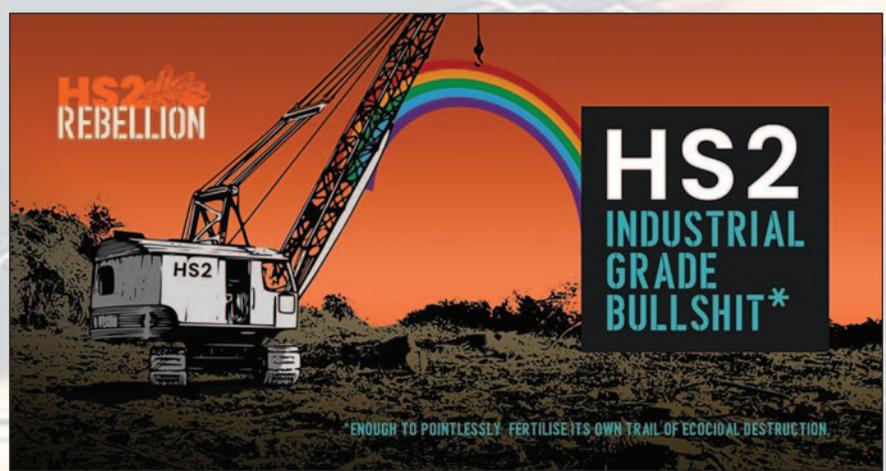
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Also available this month,
Big Carp Issue 306.
 Miss it and miss out!

A trio of thoughts for today! HS2 Rebellion – Join the media and digital team



Our team has become smaller with time and it's been a while since we took on new people.

It would be great to have new people in the team helping with various tasks – social media, press office, newsletter, planning, organising, website, admin, etc Please register your interest here: <https://bit.ly/3dnWECV>

'While committing to net zero emissions by 2050, the UK government seeks to further hamper the efforts of those risking life and limb to stem the worst effects of climate and ecological breakdown.'

We absolutely have to oppose this PCSC Bill as these recent amendments will directly target environmental activists and are a response to direct action protests from groups such as Extinction Rebellion and Insulate Britain, and protests against the HS2 high speed railway.

Earth and tree protectors are NOT terrorists! They are simply safeguarding precious habitats, fragile ecosystems and natural structures (such as the aquifer) from the onslaught of heavy industry and crushing infrastructure.

There are, of course, many other reasons why this is such a dangerous descent into blanket control by legislation; the Bill specifically targets Gypsy, Romany and Traveller communities and minority groups which Whitehall seeks to silence.

Let us be loud and disruptive, and let our voices be heard! This is how we sound the alarm!

Walking in UK woodlands saves £185m a year in mental health costs, and street trees in towns and cities cut an additional £16m a year from antidepressant costs! Incredible stats!

"It demonstrates just how vital it is to invest in healthy trees and woodlands." It makes medical, economic and environmental sense says Sir William Worsley, the chair of the Forestry Commission.

This is wonderful affirmation of what many of us know and experience! Its why we must fiercely protect our precious resources.

By all means get busy planting knee-high saplings but STOP taking our mature trees – and STOP NOW, not in 2030.

#TreesNotTrains #StandForTheTrees #StopHS2FellingOurFutures



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Restoration Handbooks published to give best practice advice on creating new estuarine and coastal habitats

Three new environmental handbooks that set out guidance for the first time of how to carry out best practice estuarine and coastal habitat creation projects across the UK and Ireland have been published.

The handbooks provide practical guidance on restoring and creating estuarine and coastal habitats, bringing together advice on planning and implementing such schemes with case studies and lessons from previous examples.

They will be a tool to support local authorities, community partnerships and environmental organisations on restoring blue carbon habitats – habitats that can absorb carbon dioxide, help achieve net zero and tackle climate change.

The three detailed handbooks have been written by academics, industry specialists and environmental organisations that are experts in the field:

Saltmarsh, led by the Environment Agency

Seagrass, led by Zoological Society of London, University of Portsmouth and the Environment Agency

Restoration of Estuarine and Coastal Habitats with Dredged Sediment, led by Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science, Environment Agency and marine consultancy and survey company ABPmer

Since the Industrial Revolution there has been significant loss of nature-rich, carbon-storing estuarine and coastal habitats around the UK and globally, which the handbooks aim to counter by encouraging restoration projects and laying down best practice guidelines.

The handbooks look at a range of existing projects as case studies,



such as:

The restored saltmarshes in Cwm Ivy on The Gower Peninsula and Steart in Somerset restored saltmarshes

The Seagrass Ocean Rescue reseeded seagrass beds in Dale, Pembrokeshire

The Solent Beneficial Use of Dredged Sediment scheme

The creation of these habitats will provide flood defence, fisheries, water quality, biodiversity, social and well-being benefits, as well as mitigating against climate change.

The coastal restoration handbooks are hosted on the website of the Catchment Based Approach (CaBA), a partnership of local authorities, water companies, environmental organisations and businesses working together to maximise the natural value of the environment.

Emma Howard Boyd, chair of the Environment Agency, said:

“Ecosystems cannot adapt as fast as the climate is changing. There is a biodiversity crisis as well as a climate crisis.

“It is essential we tackle the climate emergency head-on and to do that we need to move towards a sustainable economy based on valuing nature, and protecting and restoring the natural environment at its heart.

“These handbooks set a standard and streamline projects, helping to reduce costs to projects and ensure the best possible outcomes.”

Alison Debney, Marine and Freshwater Conservation Programme Man-

ager, Zoological Society of London, said:

“By restoring our carbon-rich estuarine and coastal habitats, we both recover biodiversity and build our resilience to climate change creating a win-win situation for nature and people.

“Natural habitats provide us with many benefits including protection from coastal flooding, improved water quality, food provision in addition to their incredible carbon-storing potential and biodiversity conservation.

“It is the intention that these handbooks provide us with the ‘how-to’ so that we can collectively contribute to recovering these vital yet neglected habitats and contribute to addressing the global challenge of climate change.”

These three handbooks partner with the existing handbook on European native oyster habitat restoration, which was published in November 2020.

All four restoration handbooks will be living documents and will be updated when changes in legislation or updated science.

Saltmarsh: <https://catchment-basedapproach.org/learn/saltmarsh-restoration-handbook/>

Seagrass: <https://catchment-basedapproach.org/learn/seagrass-restoration-handbook/>

Restoring Estuarine and Coastal Habitats with Dredged Sediment: <https://catchmentbasedapproach.org/learn/restoring-estuarine-and-coastal-habitats-with-dredged-sediment/>

European native oyster habitat: <https://catchmentbasedapproach.org/learn/european-native-oyster-restoration-handbook/>. ■

Campaign groups give cautious welcome to government climbdown over sewage amendment

Along with other campaign groups, the Angling Trust has given a cautious and guarded welcome to last night's announcement of a government climbdown on the Lords Amendment to the Environment Bill aimed at ending sewage pollution from storm overflows.

After a massive public backlash, ministers have agreed to bring forward a government amendment similar to Amendment 45 in the name of the Duke of Wellington, which was controversially voted down in the House of Commons last Wednesday. The amendment will be introduced in the House of Commons, when the Bill returns there for the next stage of passage.

It is claimed by ministers that the measure will:

"...put a new duty on water companies directly to secure a reduction in the impact of sewage discharges from storm overflows and will inject additional regulatory backing to government priorities to reduce storm overflows."

Writing in a blog for members and supporters, Angling Trust Policy Chief Martin Salter said:

"The Angling Trust will continue working jointly with The Rivers Trust, Surfers Against Sewage, Salmon & Trout Conservation and others in try-



ing to get the best possible outcomes for our ailing rivers. We will look carefully at the government's new amendment when it's published and we will have particular focus on the forthcoming Strategic Policy Statement for Water (SPS) which sets the framework for water industry investment over the next five year period.

"We will want to see real action focussing on sensitive catchments where the environmental damage is at its worst. There will need to be a balance of increased investment in sewerage infrastructure triggered through the SPS and the forthcoming

water industry price review, coupled with the increased adoption of the nature-based solutions advocated by The Rivers Trust and others to keep rainwater out of the system in the first place."

He added: "We all want to secure meaningful action to end the scandal of sewage pollution of our rivers, waterways and coastline - not just more endless monitoring of a problem that is plain to see and possible to fix without costing the fantasy sums suggested by ministers and immediately undermined by their own reports and studies." ■

Carpy Humour



ANLRS **NEWSLETTER**

Nov 2021

Hello to all our supporters

After what seems far longer than 18 months we sit here putting together the next newsletter as restrictions have been lifted, the Euros and Olympics have come and gone, Lewis Hamilton secured victory at the British Grand Prix in front of a crowd of over 136,000 people and we can now hear the chants of the crowds at the football.

Is life on nearly back to normal?





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With the odd glimpse of good weather over what has been a mixed-up summer it has been great to see so many people enjoying the beauty of what our island offers. Sadly, with this comes the rubbish that is left behind as a small minority leave items that they feel it is someone else's job to tidy up. Not only this but this social litter poses risks to wildlife and the wider environment. As anglers we can all do our bit to reduce our impact and we are delighted to say the scheme has been very busy since our last newsletter with returns coming in for recycling and not just fishing line as you will see below.

Recover, Research, Reduce and Recycle – Update

The project, consisting of 28+ bins being sited along the Sussex Coast, has completed its first six months and the initial results have been collated. The support of local groups has been invaluable throughout this in terms of emptying and returning the contents for us to analysis.

The general public and anglers have welcomed the bins with open arms and a video of one of the Rottingdean bins being emptied by Fish2Waters Dee Harmer and her family had over 100,000 views on social media! Great coverage and shows so many that as anglers we do care and want to help in the fight against aquatic plastic pollution. A few weeks into the project Jane Fuhrmann, from Paws on Weymouth beaches and open spaces, got in contact about the project and has since managed to get 8 pipe bins installed around the Weymouth and Portland area.

They have already made several returns to us, which has fed into the survey, and they have now secured a site to sort, analysis and store the waste plastics they recover from the bins. From the success of the bins in the first couple of months they have now created the Weymouth & Portland Marine Litter Project so take a look at their work on facebook. This is a great addition to the project and will give us a snapshot of the different wastes found in another county on the south coast.

At the midway point of the project, we have collected the following from the bins that cover 26.8 miles of the south coast.

Commercial Fishing Waste 527.0kg
(Includes rope, net mends, cable ties, mono nets and heavy nets)

Recreational Fishing Waste 23.7kg including 12.35kg of lead weights, 2.5kg of metal rig components and 78,000m of line.
(includes lost mono, recycled mono, feathers / sabiki, lures and hooks)

Quite staggering amounts from such a small section of our coastline and scary when you consider how much could be around the entire UK coastline! We will let you do the maths on that calculation!





Treasure Your River Campaign

We were hoping to have announced this back in 2020 but a certain virus delayed the progression of the project, but we are there now!

The Treasure Your River project, created by Hubbub and supported by the Coca-Cola Foundation, is a working group of litter busting organisations with the aim to remove 95 tonnes of litter from our rivers and prevent a further 90 tonnes from entering them in the first place. Amazingly over 80% of marine litter originates from inland and our rivers deliver it to the oceans.

Dr Emily Smith, Environment Manager of the Angling Trust approached us to work on a joint application to get involved with this wide-reaching project. Between us we are delighted to announce that we have secured funding to offer 50 free ANLRS pipe bins, superbly made by the team at Merkko in Reading, to angling clubs and fisheries on 5 major river catchments in the UK over the coming months.

Is your club or fishery based in the Bristol Avon, Mersey, Severn, Thames, or Trent river catchments? If so then to apply please fill out the form on the Anglers Against Litter website: anglingtrust.net/get-involved/anglers-against-litter

These bins can be set up on a fence, bank or gate and provide a way for old fishing line to be recycled into new products such as rod stands and stop line entering the environment.



Take a Friend Fishing is back...

Get together with a friend and create some amazing angling memories!

NEW: Winter Fishing Campaign to run from Friday 17th December 2021 to Sunday January 2nd 2022 Registration for a FREE fishing licence is open now at www.anglingtrust.net/takeafriendfishing

Take a
friend
Fishing



Due to its massive success in 2021, Take a Friend Fishing will return for Christmas, giving even more people the chance to get out and try fishing

Between 17th December to 2nd January (inclusive), existing fishing licence holders can register now for a FREE one-day fishing licence worth £6 from the Environment Agency to take someone they know fishing.

December and January are a fantastic time of year to get outdoors and enjoy some time next to the water. Taking a friend or family member for a winter fishing trip is the ideal opportunity to catch-up at Christmas.

Getting outside in the countryside is a great way to relax and lower the stress level during what can be a busy time of year for many people. Angling is the perfect fit for staying active outdoors, and with physical activity playing a vital role in both our physical and mental wellbeing, a fishing trip

with a mate or family member means you can stay active, and fish safely.

At this time of year there are still loads of fisheries, lakes, stretches or river and canal open all over the country that are perfect to visit even in colder weather, and a catch-up with a friend can easily be combined with a quick 'Take a Friend Fishing trip'.

The free fishing licence will be sent with a confirmation email, so please remember to have the angler's fishing licence and both people's email addresses plus a few other details handy when you pre-register to Take a Friend Fishing.

Registration is open now so that anglers and their friends who want to get a date between 17th December and 2nd January (inclusive) booked in advance can visit www.anglingtrust.net/takeafriendfishing to register for the FREE fishing licence.

The Take a Friend Fishing campaign is a partnership between the Angling Trust, Environment Agency and Angling Trades Association - it's designed to give more people the chance to get into fishing.

Following a relaunch in 2020, and despite the challenges of national lockdowns, over 6,000 people have taken part in Take a Friend Fishing these past two years. The initiative will show people it's still just as easy to get into angling, especially with a friend to show you how, and a free fishing licence from the Environment Agency usually worth £6.

Clive Copeland, Head of Participation at the Angling Trust, said "Winter fishing holds special memories for me - I'm reminded of family get-togethers where it was always my goal to get out pike fishing with my brother and mates, no matter what! Because last winter was so restricted, I'm now determined to make the most of what feels like a reinvigorated approach to the outdoors and all the benefits of spending time doing what we all now know is good for us. That is; being outside, noticing nature, taking time to appreciate how fishing is so easy to show a friend or relative, and now, is even easier with a free fishing licence during Take a Friend Fishing Winter 2021."

Heidi Stone, Environment Agency Fisheries Partnerships Manager, said: "Angling is a sport to be enjoyed all year round, so we're delighted to see that Take a Friend Fishing is back for the winter. Despite the colder weather, angling is a perfect opportunity to get outside into the fresh air, reconnect with nature and stay active.

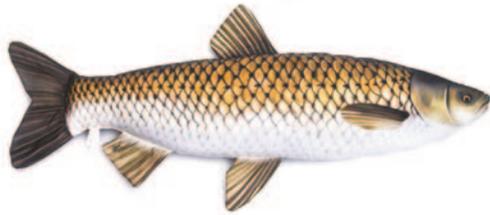
"Getting to grips with fishing alongside an experienced angler is a great way to learn. We hope that



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anglers will have an opportunity to head out to the bank with a friend over the festive period.”

Andrew Race, Chairman of the Angling Trades Association (ATA), added: “The fact that we have yet another window of opportunity for the Take a Friend Fishing programme speaks volumes about the level of stakeholder commitment to growth of the industry. Angling Trades Association along with the Angling Trust and Environment Agency are fully committed to angling growth and promotion of the health benefits it brings. I for one am looking forward to going fishing in the run up to Christmas and a day out fishing is the ideal gift for a friend or family member. Angling is something that doesn’t cost the earth, improves mental health and connects people to the environment at a time when awareness is paramount.”

The new Take a Friend Fishing offer runs from Friday December 17th to Sunday January 2nd. That means that during the festive period there are three weekends to take a friend fishing, including Christmas, Boxing Day and New Year - traditional dates for a get-together.

This December look out for reminders that there are free fishing licences available to make long lasting memories of this wintertime together out on the bank.

For more information and to get a free one-day fishing licence to Take a Friend Fishing, fishing licence holding anglers just need to go to www.anglingtrust.net/takeafriend-fishing and provide some simple contact details including their fishing licence number and the date of the fishing trip.

Hashtags: #takeafriendfishing #getfishing

Social Media:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/GetOutThereGetFishing

Twitter: @GetIntoFishing

Instagram: @getintofishing

Media Contact, Logo and Images: More images (as well as the ones below) can be found in our Take a Friend Fishing gallery along with the brand new Take a Friend Fishing 2021 logo and guidelines. For more info contact James Roche - james.roche@anglingtrust.net 07791 786 251.

Thanks to: Hassan Khan for the photo used here of himself fishing with friends. ■

Benwick Sports give the Angling Trust their backing and a whole lot more!



Top independent tackle retailers and match specialist Benwick Sports have recently signed up as Retail Associate members of the Angling Trust and donated nearly 100 brand new rods along with reels and floats to the Trust.

Benwick Sports have been trading for over 35 years and their tackle shop near Ely in the heart of Cambridgeshire is an absolute ‘Aladdin’s Cave’ for anglers, with an amazing range of stock including many hard-to-find items that other shops don’t sell.

In recent years their online store has become increasingly busy due to their brilliant service and huge range. Jamie Cook, Angling Trust CEO, and John Cheyne, our Marketing, Communications & Membership Manager, were delighted when Adrian Crane, the man behind Benwick’s success, invited them to the shop for a chat.

Talking about his decision to sign his business up as members and to donate the large quantity of tackle, Adrian commented:

“The Angling Trust have done a great job over the last few years, which has benefited me individually as an angler and our business, especially during lockdown where their lobbying to parliament helped us to stay fishing when other sports were not so proactive and were unable to

carry on like angling.

“Therefore, when we needed to pass on some excess stock the Angling Trust were the best organisation I could think of who could distribute the items to worthy angling causes to best effect. I can trust that they will do the best with the items we passed on to them safe in the knowledge that lots of people will benefit.”

John Cheyne said:

“It was brilliant to get the chance to sit down with Adrian and discuss the needs of an independent tackle shop like his, that has grown so much over the years and continues to expand. Local tackle shops are so important to anglers, so to feel that the Angling Trust has helped them prosper through a difficult period is absolutely fantastic.

“As a Retail Associate, Benwick Sports will now be selling our Anglers Against Pollution badge and sticker packs, so they will be helping to promote our essential work every time a customer walks in. The donation of rods and reels is a fantastic opportunity for us to get tackle to those that need it most via our participation team. We will be working with various groups across the country to ensure it is used to help people with mental health issues, encourage diverse community groups to discover the joys of angling and to get more young people to try fishing for the first time.”

If you are a tackle retailer and would like to know more about becoming a Retail Associate member of the Angling Trust then please call Emma Jenks on 07495 122503. ■

My name is Luke Marvin, I fish Kempston lake syndicate in Bedford. I've recently been baiting an area amongst the weed for 3 weeks and had a few low 20 commons. I got rained off from work one day last week and slipped back into the same swim for the day it resulted in a fish we call the football common going 29lb12oz. One of our A team commons. Fingers crossed I can get a few more of the bigger fish thru the winter months. Tightlines.



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Wide-Fit Ladies Wellington Boots

Over 25% of women have calves too large for traditional Wellington boots.

Wide calf welly specialists Jileon have just launched a brand new purple version of their groundbreaking ladies' boot in response to a Facebook vote by fans.

Fashionable and versatile, this new addition can be worn in summer and winter with all kinds of outfits.

With 26% of women having a calf size too large for regular Wellington boots, Jileon have created a stylish range for ladies who don't want to compromise on comfort and style. They are the widest fitting wellies in the UK.

Jileon's extra wide fit wellies feature a brilliantly simple expanding insert making them a comfortable fit for ladies with calf sizes from 45-53cm. They also come with a thick padded insole for more comfort.

Perfect for a long walk in the country, or for shouting on the side of a sports field, Jileon Purple Wellies combine practicality with style for the plus size woman.

Jileon Extra Wide Fit Purple Wellies are available in sizes 4-8 from www.jileon.com

About Jileon:

Launched in 2006, Jileon are a family run business, focused on providing a range of high quality wide calf and funky wellies at a good price, backed by exceptional customer service.

Website: www.jileon.com ■



Hotspot Design – K-way Fishing Mania

The k-way Fishing Mania can be considered a jacket, a practical and versatile garment, perfect for your outdoor activities, it is the perfect companion in case of variable meteo, for all seasons and climates.

The k-way Fishing Mania is crafted from technical fabric, 100% sturdy nylon that provides protection from both water and wind. Full zip, regular fit and long length. Side zip pockets, ergonomic hood and elasticated cuffs add a functional touch. It provides a reliable barrier to the weather, waterproof and water repellent to keep you dry, windproof to keep you warm, it can withstand all the wear & tear associated with everyday rough use. Versatile and compact thanks to its packable construction, it can be folded into the back pocket when you don't need it, and can be stored in your backpack and used in the event of unexpected rain or wind.

The design fuses superior functionality with distinctive graphic details, such as all zip borders in contrast colour and matching the Fishing M. Versatile and compact thanks to its packable construction, it can be folded into the back pocket when you don't need it, and can be stored in your backpack and used in the event of unexpected rain or wind. ■



PACKABLE

Leatherman launches Raptor® Response emergency shears

Multi-tool specialist Leatherman has launched the new Raptor® Response emergency shears, enabling medical professionals and everyday users alike to cut through materials with ease in an emergency situation or during routine cutting tasks.

An ideal addition to any first aid kit for the home, workplace or when on the move in the outdoors, the Leatherman Raptor® Response's compact, foldable shears glide through most materials, from clothing to bandages and thick outerwear, while the micro-serrations on the inner blade keep fabrics from slipping and binding. The tool features the time-tested shears of the brand's Raptor® family but with slimmer handle grips, while the handy ring cutter, ruler, oxygen tank wrench and pocket clip offer additional functionality.

The Leatherman Raptor® Response tools are made from premium stainless steel, while the contoured handle grips are designed for comfort and ease, finished with a durable ceramic coating. Weighing 157g, the tool is available in a choice of Grey, Crimson and Navy and retails at £89.95.

Along with the full Leatherman range, the Raptor® Response is covered by the brand's 25-year guarantee and is available now at www.leatherman.co.uk. ■



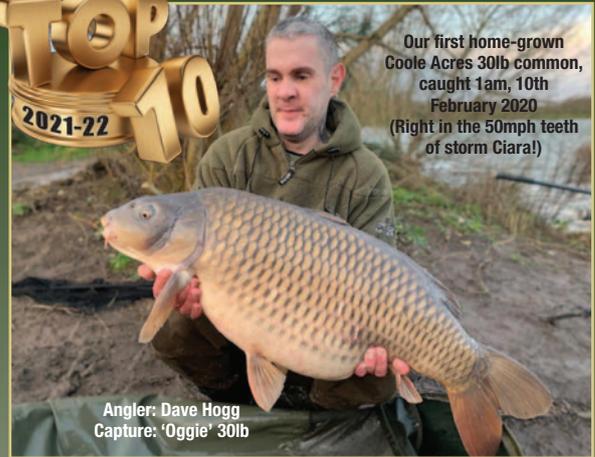
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Chronicle Fishing

January 2015 Lake Diary – Fryerning Fisheries, Ingatestone, Essex By Kevin Goss



Well it's a new start to the year for XL but it's been a very slow start to January,

which is to be expected on most waters at this time of year. With very few anglers hitting the bank in what's turned into a very cold month, hit with lots of high pressure and freezing temperatures combined have been keeping the fisherman and fish at bay across the whole complex. With this all said there have still been two lucky anglers who managed to reap the rewards of staying out and fishing in January's harsh conditions.

Adrian Hunt's skills found him the first 40lb carp of the year from Fryerning Fisheries, a carp known as the Woodcarving weighing in at 43lb 3oz, and well, the picture explains the reason for its name. Next out was the ever growing and ever hungry Gurm being caught by Rhys Mills at its top weight of 54lb. Who knows when this fish is going to stop growing? This was all for the main lake in January, but again both carp were PBs for Adrian and Rhys so a fantastic start to



Adrian Hunt holding the Woodcarving at 43lb 3oz.

the year for them. The Valley Lakes have been equally quiet with only three fish finding their way into the catch report this month, but it didn't take Barry Wingham long to find the valley's first 30 of the year, 30lb 2oz to be exact, so a good start to 2015 here. Danny Clarke and Michael Jarvis were both rewarded with 20lb carp for their efforts with the only other carp caught in January.

Chris and the team at XL have taken good advantage of this quiet spell at the beginning of the year

putting into place barley straw sausages across the lakes. The straw can now start doing its job of inhibiting algae growth and ensuring the water is in tip top condition for our cherished fish in the coming months – great fishery management from a great syndicate. For the entire up to date goings on at XL please visit the website at www.xlcarp.com and if you would like Chronicle Fishing to help showcase your lake in Big Carp Magazine please visit www.chroniclefishing.co.uk ■



Rhys Mills with the ever-growing Gurm at 54lb.



Barley straw sausages being put into place.

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A Barbel, Big Leather, Black Tail and Bye Bye!

Part 4 by Ben Dowers



After just over a week at home, which included a few local socials to catch up with some mates, I was back at Horton on the 10th Sept. The spot to the left of the Spindly was still looking very promising, despite my time away, and I put a bit of bait on it as and when I could through the week. Although it was occasionally getting eaten, I was still yet to see a fish on it and wasn't convinced that tench weren't responsible. The lake had slowed up a bit now, which was no surprise, and this was the best chance I'd found all week. Towards the end of the week I was in the Scooter, reeled in for a look up the Church Bank and found the spot had been cleaned off again, so I moved in there and rebaited it. This was soon cleaned off too, and I decided now was the time to fish it. Getting the rig in place took some doing, involving the two-rod trick, but all went well on



the first attempt (should have known it would go tits up then) and it couldn't have been there for more than an hour when the rod tip was wrenched round.

Grabbing the rod and keeping the tip low due to the overhanging branches, the fish came out and kited round in front of the swim. Thinking

all was good and that the fish was under control, I lifted the rod, and at that exact moment my rig came flying back at me. The change of angle had obviously pulled the hook out – gutted. I believe that was the only bite the lake did that week, and I lost it. I can't really complain though, as that was my first hook-pull from a carp on

(Top) Good barbel – terrible hair!
(Below) Big Leather? 43lb 8oz.





(Above) Waddling away.
(Bottom) Tash.

there (I lost a few roach or rudd on the corn), and I suppose it was bound to happen sooner or later. On trying to replace the rig in a strop and a rush to do it before dark, I ended up falling over twice resulting in wet feet, blunting a hook, and getting tangled in numerous trees, but eventually it

was in place. The next day the bait was still there untouched and I had to be off.

Instead of going to Yateley I went barbel fishing with Bod and managed to spawn out one weighing 12lb 4oz on the first night, which cheered me up, until we visited a little lake that held a near-30lb mirror. The first day I was robbed by a low double common, which was feeding less than a foot

away from the mirror, so it was back to the river for a 6lb barbel and back to the lake the next day only to hook and lose the mirror to another hook-pull! I hadn't taken my usual carp gear, not having expected to encounter any and therefore was using a bodged-up rig, but it did mean I wasn't feeling full of confidence on my return to Horton.

I was gagging to get back in the Spindly, and when I got there it was empty, but there was still bait on the spot, so I opted to fish a bit further out in open water but keep an eye on the margin spot. Occasional fish were showing close in and all looked good, so I put both baits about 15 to 20 yards out, one to the right with a small mesh bag of groundbait, and one to the left with my usual hemp and corn approach on some nice, clean gravelly spots. I had fished these spots a few times before and was yet to receive a take from them, but I was convinced that they would produce at the right time. The right hand spot was on the hardest and cleanest area I could find closest to





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the large weedbed that grows between the Spindly and Scooter swims, where a few had shown recently.

After what I remember as an uneventful night, I decided to move my left hand bait back to the spot where I had suffered the hook-pull and left my right hand bait where it was as there had been a few shows close to it throughout the day. That night I was a-kip fairly early and was woken up at half four in the morning to a take on the right hand rod. The fish had pulled the hanger up to the blank and appeared to have stopped on the tight line. Lifting the rod, I could feel a heavy, almost solid weight, which eventually started moving. It did very little, and after easing it out of two or three little patches of weed it rose to the top, and very slowly came waddling along the surface to the net. Greatly relieved that I had bagged it, I peered into the net to see an incredibly wide fish, very pale in colour. That was enough, and there was surely only one it could be – the Big Leather. This fish hadn't spawned, and had been caught a month or two before at 44lb. It had been my last capture from Horton the season before, having taken it from the Plateau in November at 35lb-plus. Although I would have preferred a new one, I was more than content in the knowledge that there was a forty in my net and it was almost certainly the heaviest mirror (?) in the lake at the time. After some organisation I went to wake Paul who was fishing further up the Church Bank and ask him to help. We weighed the fish at 43lb 8oz and after a few photos sent her on her way!

It's not a particularly good-looking fish, I'm sure you'll agree, but an impressive beast nonetheless. I stayed in the swim for another couple of nights, and despite seeing the occasional show over the weed near my right hand bait, I received no further action. Time for a move, and after a good look about I settled on Springate's as there was a fair bit of fizzing going on in front. Soon I had two baits out with a couple of spods of hemp and corn round each and the fish (hopefully carp) were still about. Ronan dropped into the Slope next door and I wandered round for a chat and to help him drink his Kronies! After a while I went back next door to



From Phil's.

cook some grub, and on getting into my swim I noticed a good-sized patch of fizz directly in line with the tree I was using as a marker for my left hand bait. It looked about the right range too, and so I happily sat down and started cooking some super cheap hotdogs (funds getting low). Before I had finished eating the last one it was away, and I struck, expecting to feel the unwelcome weight of a bream. So far the only fish I had caught whilst fishing on the bottom in Springate's were bream, but it soon turned into a carp and after a good scrap it rolled over into the net. At first I was sure it was a repeat of Lester, but after comparing some shots we found it to be Tash, and therefore a new one for me – pukka! She weighed in at 36lb 8oz, another of the big females, and she was soon on her way soaking me in the process.

The next day saw my time limit up again, so that was it for that week. I was more than happy with my two in what had been a slow week, very pleased not to have had another hook-pull, and was feeling back on track. On the way to Yateley my van started making some horrendous noises, and I decided that I had better make this my last trip there for a bit, so I planned to do another week at Horton on the way home. I blanked at the Car Park and was soon back at Horton. I can't remember where I ended up but by the 1st Oct I was in Church Bay. There were several fish

(including the Humpback Common) under the canopy, and after maybe an hour of watching them I decided on a little stalking, but soon figured that I was likely to upset them and would be better off fishing for them from Phil's corner.

This swim is almost constantly fizzing, but this time it was definitely carp causing some of it. Phil's hadn't done a bite so far this season, but due to the amount of fish present and the fizzing from those I couldn't see, it looked like it was ready to do its first, so long as I didn't screw it up, which I am certainly capable of and well-practised at! This swim has overhanging trees on either side and there were clearly fish feeding on either side of me. I flicked a small mesh bag up the right onto a silty area and my usual one spod of hemp and corn approach on the left just off the edge of the branches onto a nice clean feeling harder area. The fish put up with this and carried on feeding – buzzing. It was now just a case of waiting and hoping.

I went for a look under the trees to the right and noticed a group of fish really close in on a fishable spot may be 5ft out, and so put some hemp and corn on it when they left. Soon they returned and dropped down to feed. Excellent – this persuaded me to move my right hand bait closer in. There's a tree trunk that leans out over the water, and I planned to creep out on it and lower my rig from there so I would know it was fishing effec-

tively. After getting my rig through to the tree I tied it up to a branch and returned to the swim for bait, foam and backlead etc. When I got back to the spot I couldn't see the fish, and so taking advantage of the opportunity I crept out on the trunk, untied my rig and set about preparing it for placement. Crouching down and trying to keep balanced, I looked down, about to drop my rig in, and there they were, a group of five or six good fish had ghosted in and were now directly underneath me. Oh dear! I was literally on top of them as they were happily feeding away. This wasn't part of the plan, and any movement may send all of them out of the bay ruining the chance.

After a while trying to keep as still as possible and endure my aching leg muscles, they gave me a break and I got my rig in. I shot back to the swim and got my line settled. Whether they had clocked me or not I don't know; they should have really, but they were

Shadow at 33lb 4oz

still about. Of course it is possible to spook fish and have them stay in the area; I'm sure pressured fish are aware that if they think someone is about all they have to do is not eat anything. They are still safe sun-bathing, and it is not necessary for them to leave at top speed. It still looked good though, and I was confident I'd get a pickup. Surprisingly though, it was 1.30am before it happened, and I woke to my left hand Neville screaming. Jumping out of bed, I got my boots on and nipped down the steps to the rod, picked it up and leant into it. So far so good, and after a few minutes it was in the net, a nice looking stockie called Shadow that weighed 33lb 4oz. The closest angler to me was in the Slope four swims away, and he soon got woken up and pestered into getting out of bed. After returning the fish and poncing a cup of tea, I returned to my swim, put the rods out and went back to sleep.

When I woke I went to check my right hand spot and there was still bait on it, so perhaps they had

clocked me there after all. Never mind, the job was done, or so I thought, but soon the fizzing started up again in the same areas. When I got the chance, I replaced my rods and lay back to await events. This swim is probably not more than 40ft from the house behind it and a very noisy house it can be. With dogs barking whenever you walk past, loud music, louder engines and even louder arguments, it is a similar situation to the Lodge steps, I think, where the fish are used to the noise and don't regard it as a problem. It is not really a bad thing, and did mean I thought I could get away with having my iPod much louder than usual!

The night passed and I woke at around quarter to eight in the morning surprised that nothing had happened. Lifting my head off my bed I looked out over the lake, saw no signs, and thought I must have messed up the chance. I fell asleep again, and the next thing I knew there was an alarm screaming at me as line was being ripped off the left hand spool. I leapt out of bed, and without





Black Tail.

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**(Above) From the Tench.
(Bottom) Still some left!**

putting my boots on landed in a large patch of stingers. Hobbling down the steps I realised I must have been sleeping on my arms, and had bad pins and needles in both. Grabbing the rod, I discovered what a problem this was; it made it very awkward to get the fish under control since I couldn't even control myself. The fish carried on taking line and heading out of the bay; eventually my arms returned to normal, and I could start to play the fish rather than just hold on. I turned it and brought it back towards me where it chugged up and down the edge, ripping up bits of ribbon weed, taking line occasionally.

Soon the core broke the surface and shortly after an ancient looking black head belonging to a mirror appeared. This set my legs shaking and blocked out my stinging feet, as I was now attached to one that would really hurt if it fell off. It powered back down but was starting so tired and the next time it surfaced it showed me a flank, which convinced me I was fighting Black Tail, one of the few remaining Fox Pool mirrors, a fish far older than me, and my most wanted. After another dive the fish came up again. I

led it to the net and breathed a sigh of relief when it was safely within the mesh. I looked in to make sure, and yup, there was Black Tail. Only one thing for it now, a big shout – YES! I secured it in the net, reeled in my other rod and sprinted round to persuade Gary from Hull to come and help. The run halfway round the lake was a bit scary, as I was suffering from a paranoia that kept telling me it would have escaped by the time we returned, but all was well and thankfully it was still there. We weighed it at its top weight of 38lb 8oz; Gary took some lovely shots, and I took it back to the lake where I could hold it in the water and admire it for as long as it would let me.

It's an awesome fish in incredible condition given its age – there is a picture of it in Maylin's Fox Pool book – a right special one! These are the ones that really get me buzzing. Also this was its fourth capture of the season, and in all likelihood its last. I told Gary that I was going to the off licence to get the required party juice, to which he replied he had plenty – pukka! So I chucked my rods and bags on my barrow, as I didn't trust leaving them there and made my way round to the Gate swim by about 9am. The next thing I knew it was 5pm and I was feeling a little wobbly. After a quick stagger to the shop for a few bits, I was back in my swim getting my baits out. Despite a little fizzing the next morning nothing hap-

pened, and after two blank nights I moved down to the One Up for my last night and a bit of a social. It was my mum's birthday soon; I'd promised to be at home for it, and also had a weekend's piking on the Broads in a barge booked. This, combined with the fact that my van sounded like a blender full of ball bearings meant the next day I loaded it up and headed for home almost a week earlier than planned. Once I got into fifth gear my van sounded much more comfortable, and I made it home. The Broads trip proved great fun although pretty unsuccessful, and no one that we spoke to had seen or even heard of a double figure pike being caught all weekend. My van seemed to have recovered and I thought it may be ok, so after Mum's birthday I was Horton bound again.

Unfortunately whilst I was away it had been fishing well; the Boxer had done what was likely to be its last capture of the year, and by the time I returned on the 19th October (safely, with my van still sounding ok) the weather had gotten much colder and it had slowed up again. In fact it was nearly two weeks after I arrived before the lake did a fish. After the first blank week I left for Yateley, and in almost exactly the same spot as before my van started screaming again, but it got me there. It turned out that no carp had been landed from there for a couple of weeks either and after another 48-hour



headache I was back at Horton on the 28th with a dry mat again.

The first six nights of the week were fairly uneventful and clues were thin on the ground. However I had moved into the Tench swim to the right of Lodge steps due to some fizzing. In hindsight I think it was caused by the ribbon weed breaking down, but that evening I thought I heard a carp show in the RIP. The ripples looked carpy, but I wasn't convinced enough to move, so ignored it. Later in the week a big wind blew up, pumping straight in there. I went into the Spindly Tree (foolishly); a day later the Cabbie moved into the RIP and I was now sure I had made a mistake.

On my sixth morning of that session the Cabbie had tripled up on Gizmo from the RIP, and as he had to go to work, I moved and dropped in after he left. The wind had been pelting into there for a couple of days, and due to the few shows I'd heard the

night before to the left of the Spindly, I flicked a solid bag of groundbait up the right onto a nice smooth area in about 15ft of water. The middle rod (three rods allowed from Oct to end of Feb) went on the gravel hump in front and the left-hander near some reeds in about 6ft. The Cabbie texted me to say that each time he had caught Gizmo before he had braced it with a big mirror. It was looking good, but unfortunately this had to be my last night, as my van really did need some attention. I didn't think it wise to risk another trip to Yateley, and I was getting very low on funds. I was struggling to sleep due to the wind threatening to fell the trees and the fact that I had one night left to save a 16-night blank! Eventually I got to sleep and was woken before 6am to a screaming take on the right hand rod. After almost striking the wrong rod and a good scrap, it went into the net. It was clearly one of the big stockies,

and I was hoping maybe Scar or Bugs, but was disappointed to discover it was Fingers for the fourth time, weighing a touch over 40lb (I weighed it before I realised what it was). After asking the lad in the Spindly if he wanted to witness it, I sent it on its way without photos, hoping not to see it in my net ever again. That was it, and I packed up shortly after to have a wander round and say some goodbyes, as I wouldn't be back till the spring, assuming I could find some work.

On the way home I reached the A12 when fifth gear disappeared, but luckily made it the rest of the way in fourth. That was my last carp of 2010, and when I got home I put my sea fishing hat on for a bit. Little Phil had dropped into the RIP after me and landed the Dynamite Fish and a 30lb

One last one.



common, leaving me really wishing I had moved onto the show that I'd ignored in the RIP earlier that week. Fortunately, and somewhat surprisingly, the factory proved true to their word and I was back at work within a few weeks. Shortly after I left the lake in November, five little mirrors, including two fullys, were stocked, supposedly to make up for those that had died. Although they are very pretty, I am not convinced they can.

I managed a couple of weekends at Horton in the winter for nothing more than good company and giggles, which was sufficient to make the drive worthwhile, and I had accumulated enough holiday to have the last week of March there too. A few days before I was set to arrive I had heard that the Boxer (now my most wanted) had been seen behaving oddly. Sure enough the day after I got there I found it creeping along the margins of Dog Bay, and though it still looked stunning, its behaviour was worryingly similar to how Wallace's had been before it died, and I was to see it

several times in the next couple of days. Let's face it, to turn up at Horton and find your target fish in the edge several times in the last week of the season is surely too good to be true, and I was convinced that it was on the way out.

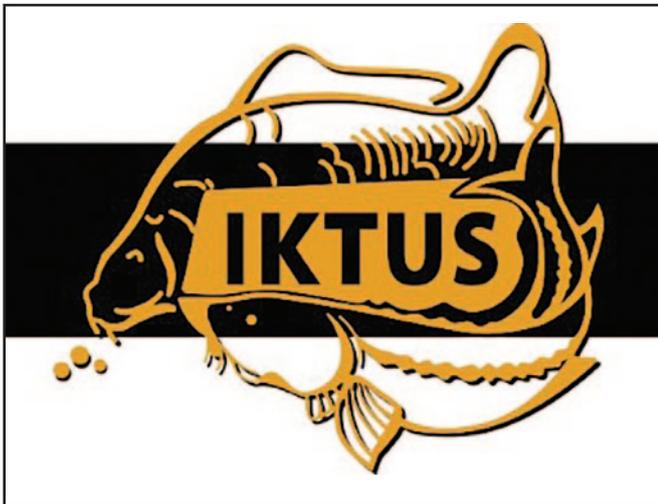
In the Dip snags I found a group of five fish; two of the new stockies, Trouble, a mid-twenty common, a 30lb mirror and one that could only have been the Big Leather. The two new stockies got straight onto the corn that I put under the bush, and I was hoping I could use them to kick-start the others into feeding. I laid a trail of hemp and corn out of the snags and down the marginal slope to try and lure them out to an area that was safe to fish. The next morning one of the new stockies made its first mistake, a scaly mirror of around 12lb. By the end of the season only two of them had slipped up.

After this I got caught up in the social side and the rest of the week was great fun but unproductive for me. There was one downer though,

when the Big Grey was found dead, leaving just one or two Fox Pool mirrors in there depending on who you ask. There were, I believe, eight captures that week; five of them to a lad called Dave from Bristol, with four of them on the last day up to Scar at over 40lb!

All in all it was a very enjoyable season spent in beautiful surroundings. The lake fished exceptionally well that season, and I finished up with 23 carp and a grassy – over twice as many as I had hoped for, and by a stroke of luck managed to bag two of the three that I wanted most. Although the Boxer was still there it was looking ill, and it was time to drop my ticket with the intention of concentrating on the Car Park Lake the next season. I really ought to say thanks to everyone who made it more enjoyable or at times more endurable, and that season will certainly rate as one of my most memorable. The place is fantastic and I thoroughly enjoyed my time there.

Best of luck. ■



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Fen Drain Carping

By Ben Leuty



As an avid river fisherman I can speak for a lot of us and say that the three-month waiting period from March until June can only feel like what I consider a lifetime. The constant roaming, prebaiting and clock watching can be stressful enough before you have even wet a line. But there's something about the river, something that draws my attention more than any lake I have fished. I think the major factor is fishing the unknown – miles and miles of carp infested winding water system and not quite knowing if the next one to hit the spreader is a new PB, which quite possibly has never seen a hook before.

My campaign begins about mid-April time on my local drain in Lincolnshire named the South Holland Main Drain, a smaller run of water unlike your Nene, Thames etc but just as exciting. Whilst the sun is high in the sky I grab the bicycle and my Polaroids and it's off hunting. I wanted to start my campaign somewhere out of sight, somewhere where other carp anglers who were present wouldn't think of going, because as we all know, that first day of the season can be manic. Luckily for me I have the drain a stone's throw away from my house so everywhere is pretty accessible. I started my search on an area towards one end of the



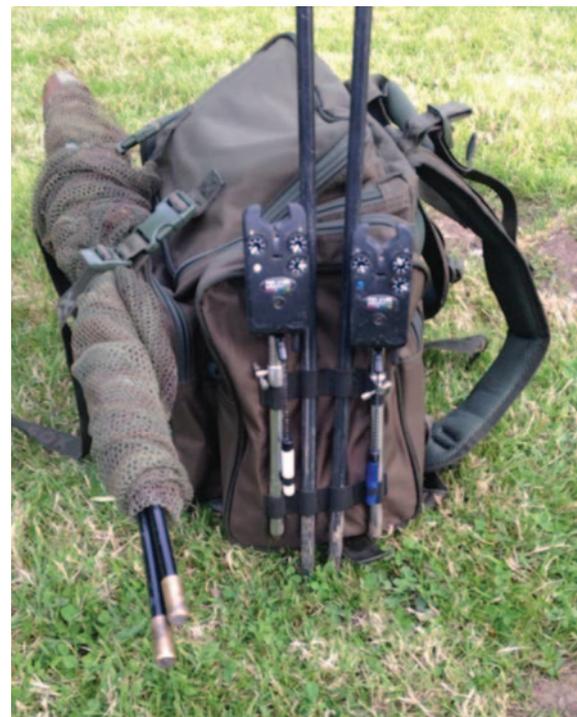
water. This area is probably one of the weediest and most gin clear areas of the drain, so I could only presume with the air warming up and the fish getting ready to spawn they would be here.

After looking about for a couple of minutes it became pretty apparent there were fish here, and in large quantities. There were a lot of bream but in the mix were some very good carp. I noticed a couple of good upper double/20lb mirrors, which for the drain is an awesome sight, as this water holds about 90% commons.

So I began my baiting campaign. Finding a couple of clear spots I baited up heavily with boilies and

coming back every two or three days to top it up. This stretch of the drain is very shallow and bird life can cause you problems, but I kept returning with the instinct that carp would come over the spots.

Well, the days went by, June 16th was upon me, and the bag was packed and ready to go. I had work that day until 3pm and couldn't wait to get down to the river. Once the working day was up I headed down to the spots where a friend of mine was going to meet me later on. I saw a few fish, and due to the long-awaited return I quickly got the rods out on the spots. After a few hours sitting on the spots and bit of roaming it





soon became apparent that the fish were in no mood to be feeding. My friend and I also noticed the fish were swimming around in small groups of four or five, which from previous experience gave me the impression that spawning wouldn't be far round the corner. We decided to call the first day off and go back to the drawing board, disappointed, but by no means not defeated.

My next trip took me to an area of the drain that in previous years has given a lot of bites, in fact I remember last year in a two-hour session it gave me seven carp to 16lb so had high hopes of a bite. I have a friend, Luke, who has been a saviour due to me having no vehicle, and he has helped me get around to these areas where a bike just wouldn't cut it. Anyway we headed down to the spots and set up on two swims that we know have done fish in the past. We weren't there long before my left hand rod bent over and the alarm sprung into life. I was into my first fish of the new season, and the nerves started to kick in. As I played the fish away from the far marginal reeds it attempted one last power-off, as these river carp are very well known for, before it popped its head up and slid over the net cord.

As I was peering into my net the right hand rod gave one bleep. Presuming I had knocked it, I carried on preparing the fish in my net when suddenly it melted off. I quickly lifted

into the fish, but it soon became apparent that it had managed to gain a couple of yards of line and bury itself in the reeds. Applying steady pressure wouldn't budge the fish, so I opted to slacken off the line, deal with the other fish and hope it would free itself. After a few minutes I picked up the rod for the rig to come sliding straight back out. The carp had managed to free itself from not only the reeds but my rig as well. So with that I got my prize out the retainer to see how my season was going to start off. The carp was only 8lb, and an average carp for this river is roughly 8lb-12lb, so it did not come as a surprise. It may have not been the biggest in the river, but it was an extremely welcome starting block to my campaign. My friend Luke went on to have two commons of roughly the same weight.

I revisited the same swim the following day in hope that a few bigger fish would be present, and it didn't



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take long for the Delkim to let out a cry and the rod was off. Straight away I could feel this fish was possibly a bit bigger by its slow, deep lunges unlike the powerful, long surges of the smaller torpedo like fish. Once in the net I could see this fish was bigger. Tipping the scales at 15lb 12oz I was over the moon with my first double of the year. For the next couple of weeks I returned to the same spot knowing the fish were there and hungry. I ended up catching a few more singles and two more at 15lb, all commons.

As the weather began to warm up again I decided to head back to the spot where I first started my campaign. I really wanted to catch a carp from this area and felt the fish would be in the shallower water. Upon my return I decided not to do any prebaiting but instead feed pellet into the



and with a massive gulp couldn't quite believe my eyes. Although not a monster I was truly amazed at seeing an old, dark warrior of a mirror in the bottom of my net. This is a major rarity in the Holland drain, and was my first ever mirror weighing in at 12lb 8oz. After taking a quick couple of self-takes I slipped the stunning fish back and got the rig back out. I was only fishing this area of the river with one rod, so I could concentrate on one area, plus I also felt it was unsafe to fish with two due to weed surrounding the spot. I finished the session with a nice dark common of 11lb.

After having such a good short session in this area it wasn't long before I returned. Putting the same tactics in

swim as I fished. With bream having pushed out of the area I felt very confident using pellet. After catapulting a nice bed of a pellet out it was clear to see the fish were very keen on this method, and tails were up pretty much straight away. I waited a few minutes watching the gin clear water for a gap in their feeding where I could lower a bait into the bucket sized hole in the weed. It didn't take long once the rig was in place for a group of five fish to be back over the spot. Within what felt like an instant the rod was bent round on a tight clutch with a carp wallowing on the surface. The battle was aggressive but short, as I couldn't allow the fish to gain any line in the thick weed.

Once the fish was in the net I lifted it up to have a quick look at my prize,



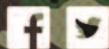


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place and feeling pretty confident I can only say the session became nothing more than a nightmare. I managed to lose a total of nine carp to hook pulls in the weed and caught one tench. The weed growth had increased majorly, and looking back I should have increased my hook size, but as they say hindsight is a wonderful thing.

As a month passed we were hit by a large amount of rain, which then caused the drainage board to open the gates and pump the water out. The weedy spot then became impossible to fish, as it was down to nearly one foot in places and the fish had clearly moved out. It was a Friday afternoon and my friend Luke and I decided to have a two-hour session on an area further upstream where the water still had some depth to it. It didn't take long before my left hand rod was firing up and the Delkim sprung into life. After a quick battle Luke and I stood over the net and burst into laughter at what could only be classed as the smallest carp I've ever caught out of the river. We still felt I had to have a quick snap with the fish, as it was actually my second ever river mirror carp... What a fish this will look at 20lb! Such an amazing scaly creature!

An hour passed and we stood there chuckling to ourselves about the little critter as Luke kept jokingly telling me how he was not letting me have that as my 13th carp to his 12, when suddenly I could hear my right hand rod roar off. I ran as quickly as I could to the rod, and as I hit into it the fish

was already powering down the river to my right. This fish was not stopping for anyone and just kept steaming line off the spool. Luke was fishing a few pegs down from me, and I could hear his alarms going off, so I knew we were in trouble. I decided to walk up the bank and head towards Luke's swim to try and get the fish off his lines. All I can remember as I walked down towards him was Luke quoting he could net the fish nearly, as it was practically next to his feet. This was soon cut short by his words, "Quickly, get here!"

With my heart pounding I jumped into his swim to see a great big crash in front of his swim, and after a few last bursts Luke did the honours and slipped the net underneath the fish. After regaining my breath we hoisted



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the fish onto the mat, where it then became apparent this was a big fish. Luke lifted the fish off the ground, and the scales slipped round to 22lb 2oz! My first ever 20lb drain carp, and what a sense of achievement it brought to me. These fish do not come around often in this water, and it's truly an amazing feeling. We took a few pictures as daylight was pretty much over and returned the magnificent creature with the biggest grin a carp angler could have.

As time went on I continued to have success on the river with plenty of fish, but nothing of massive size. This didn't bother me too much, as I had already completed my two targets of catching a drain mirror and a 20lb fish. I also added a little bonus in managing to get a brace river shot with my long time friend and carp angler, Luke which was something we have talked about for years, so it was a great feeling.

About the end of September I had a session that stands out as an enjoyable memory. As I have previously said, the river runs a stone's throw away from my house, but the fish just never seem to hold up there, or so it seemed. I went out one Saturday morning with my brew in hand just to have a little look at a couple of match anglers fishing. As I was looking down the river it soon came apparent there were carp here crashing out all over, and in great numbers. Well, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to work out that I soon turned round and ran home to get the rods. Within 20 minutes I had found a spot and had a couple of rods spread out. It didn't take longer than ten minutes of being in the water and we were away. I ended up catching three fish and losing one in about two and a half hours' fishing, all three fish being doubles up to 16lb. Yet again not the biggest in the river but such an achievement to catch them from my back yard, so to speak. I returned the following day and nicked another bite in the baking hot weather.

If you are still with me I thank you for taking the time to read my article, and I hope I've given people a good insight into drain carping, even possibly enticing you into giving it a go. I'm currently on 21 fish this season with plenty more time to go and excited for more pleasurable sessions. Good luck and happy angling! ■



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The History of Carp Fishing in Oxfordshire

Paul Harris and Geoff Adams

Carp fishing has a very rich history. In the early days of it becoming popular, Kent and the Colne Valley were the hot beds of our fledgling pastime and of course there was the legendary Redmire Pool.

Into the new Millennium and one area above all others exploded onto the scene, this was of course Oxfordshire. The quality of the stock of carp in this county was incredible but where did these beautiful scaly beasts come from? When did the Leney's get stocked? What were the origins of the famous Linch Hill fish and what of the history of the now infamous Linear Fisheries? Over the course of the pages of this book all will be revealed as Paul and Geoff have put together the facts of how these lakes were stocked and also banded together many successful local anglers, some of which have never published any of their catches, who tell their fishing tales on these stunning lakes.

With more than 300 pictures of some of this country's finest ever carp and several full page maps, this huge volume tells the story of Oxfordshire's carp fishing history whilst still leaving a little bit of mystery for your imagination!

Included within the pages of this book is the foreword written by local legendary angler and former tackle dealer Joe Taylor. We have chapters from Paul Kitchin on the legendary Vauxhall Lake. David Brian Williams tells us the story of the lakes in the City of Oxford itself! Chris Robinson has written an incredible chapter on two of Dorchester's lakes. Orchid and The Lagoon. The history told in Chris' chapter on these lakes is just incredible and wait until you see the pictures!

Next door to The Lagoon is Dorchester's Alliance Club Lake and Joe Forrester tells his story of the incredible scaly carp that inhabited this lake and how he outwitted them.

We have a real coup in the fact that brilliant all-round Oxford angler John Everard agreed to be interviewed and he has an incredible amount of historical information to share, as has Gerald Stratford who is also included in this informative chapter.

No book about Oxfordshire's carp fishing history would be complete without the story of Oxford's first forty and what a story it is. Richard 'Paddy' Paradine has never written or published any of his catches before and we have his interview here for you of his historic catch which was kept under the radar for so long.

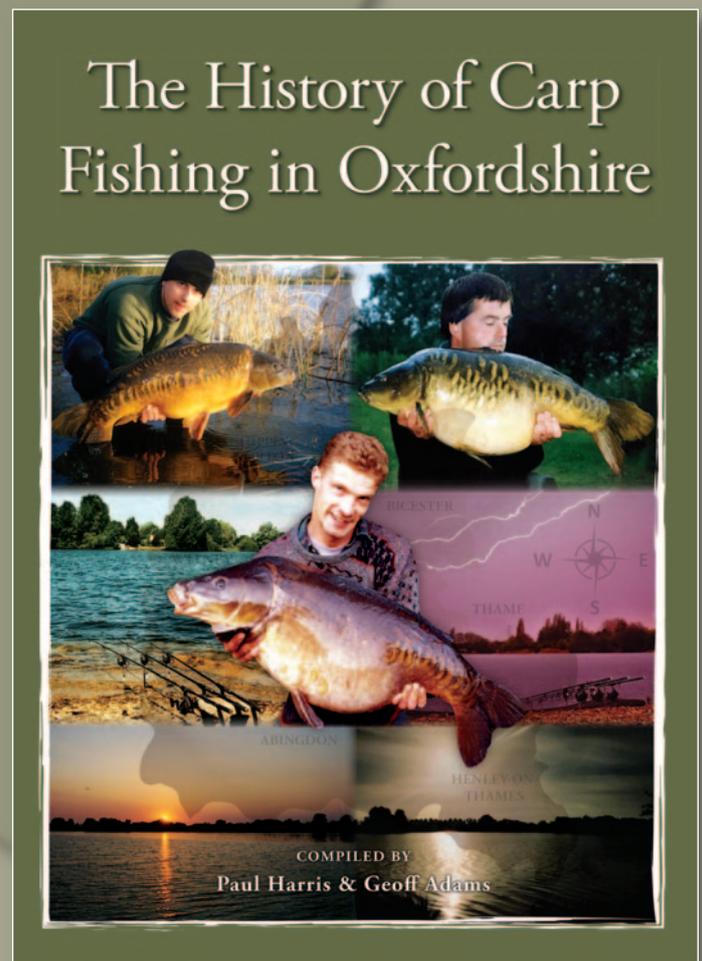
Nick Stansfield is a brilliant young Oxford carper who doesn't shout about his catches. We have two incredible chapters from him from two of the county's most iconic lakes, The Leisure Park and The Big S! Josh Chatfield has written a fantastic chapter which really gives you an insight into how fishing on The Leisure Park was back in the day when the Leney's were still about and culminates with his capture of The Big Leney at its biggest ever weight, the iconic 'Paddy's Fish'.

We have brilliant chapters on Newlands from Ginger Robinson and Milton Pools from Stuart Rothwell. Danny Aplin has written about his time on Linch Hill which will just blow you away! His pictures alone are worth purchasing this book.

Nick Franklin has written a lovely chapter on one of Oxfordshire's little known lakes and his account really hits home that carp fishing isn't always about the numbers game. Sometimes it's just you fishing for the unknown! There are superb chapters on Manor Farm from Paul Hathaway and St Johns from Stewart Roper.

If that wasn't enough Paul and Geoff have wrote chapters themselves which cover the stocking history of lakes, how the gravel company ARC played such a big part in the early stockings of Oxford's lakes, the early days of Linch Hill and Linear Fisheries and facts and stories regarding Oxford's other lakes, some very off the radar!

If you like your history, you like carp fishing and love stories of beautiful scaly carp, there is only one book to purchase this year. Here it is...



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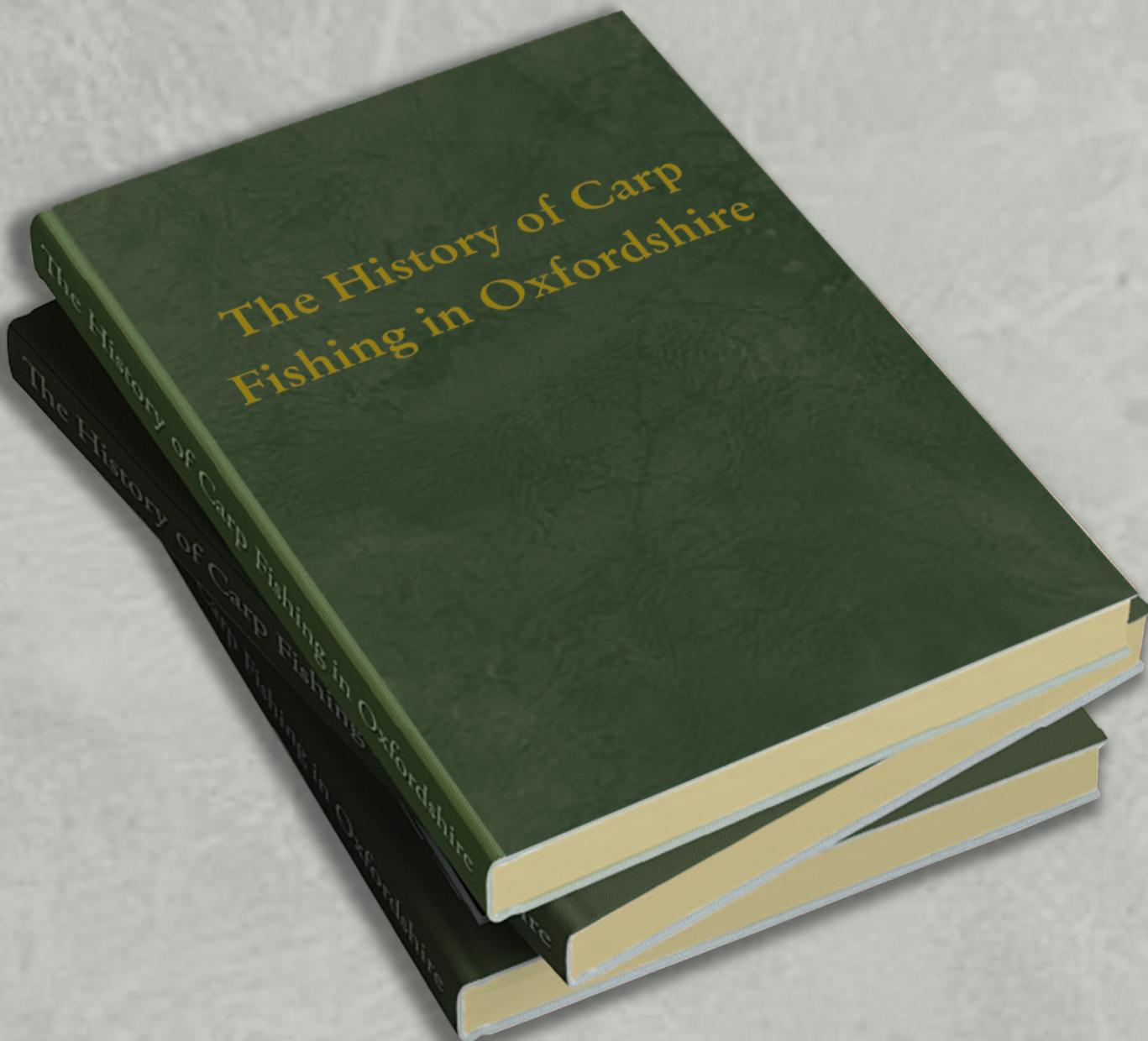
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A Golden Filling

By Jon Mills

Aerial observations.

I owe my dentist two drinks now: latterly for the speed and dexterity with which he managed to extract my problematic wisdom tooth, but firstly and most importantly for playing a vital role, albeit unknowingly, in the capture of a rather large common carp.

Tucked away in the Wensum Valley in the wilds of deepest Norfolk is a small overgrown old gravel pit, fed by a diminutive side stream off the main river, its clear water flows in over a gravel bed at the head of the pit into an overgrown bay, which opens into the main body of the four-or-so acre water. Roughly triangular in shape, around eighty percent of its summer surface is littered with large yellow lily beds, and the margins are criss-crossed with boughs of long since fallen trees reaching deep down in to the silt. At the furthest end from the inflow the pit narrows to form a gap, which leads in to another intricate pool full of pads with a series of small bays and finally reforms the stream of a few inches' depth, which burbles and spills its way along and into another larger water a short distance down the valley.

It was actually the neighbouring pit that took up most of my angling time from the early spring until late summer in pursuit of an ancient character of a linear. I had always intended to spend the last couple of months before the shutdown for the wildfowl shoots at the start of November on the top pit, trying to track down the big common that resided there. The little known and seldom caught old carp had been out the previous autumn at over 39lbs, and with only one chap regularly having a go up there, and with a relatively low stock I fancied my chances.

As usual, other aspects of life seemed to get in the way of my angling time, but whilst squeezing in my usual couple of weekly work overnights on the pit next door I would often have a quick wander around the 'Top' to get a feel for the place and try and spot some of its elusive residents.

It was on one of these brief recesses in early May before setting up next door that I stumbled across a pair of mirrors sunbathing in a shallow finger bay off the main body of water. They were sitting on a small clear patch between some emerging cabbages a

rod length from the bank and were to all intents and purposes 'asleep'. For five minutes I watched them not moving at all save for the slow regular puffing of gill covers before hatching a plan and scurrying off back to the laden barrow parked away behind the bushes.

A short while later I was back in position behind a clump of reeds with a freelined worm impaled on a size 8. That worm seemingly took an age to find under some rotting logs but was worth its weight in gold when, after carefully and quietly flicking it underarm a foot in front of the larger of the two mirrors, she stirred from her slumber, fanned her pecs, tilted forwards and in slow motion nonchalantly extended her top lip downwards and drank it in. For a second my world stood still before autopilot kicked in. A swift sideways strike and a short, explosive and violent struggle in the confined bay ended with me jumping into the shallow margin and scooping her up with the net like a salmon ghillie. First blood from the 'Top', some opportunist angling, and I was soon smiling behind the worm eating culprit – all 24lb of gnarly chestnut mirror with a massive single



First blood – opportunist angling.

scale adorning one flank, sadly showing some signs of recent otter attention – all too familiar in this part of the world.

The rest of the summer flew past chasing the Lin and his mates next door, but come mid August I started to think about the common again and put the plans I'd been mulling over for weeks in to action.

By now the main body of water in the Top resembled a scaled up version of Ashlea Pool, but a few deeper marginal areas remained clear. In the northeast corner was a spot, which, judging by its overgrown state, hadn't been fished for some time. There was a double marginal shelf, the bank dropping steeply onto a ledge of around a foot deep extending ten feet out, then where the pads started to emerge the bottom fell sharply to around nine feet. Leading around at the base of the second shelf was like prodding a MacDonald's milkshake with your straw. It felt rubbish for presenting a bait on, but with a good head of roach being present I was sure some steady baiting with particles would get a spot cleaned up nicely and hopefully get the few resident cyprinids interested.

To speed things up even more I also raked the spot repeatedly with a 4oz lead with a bivvy peg through it and removed a large amount of small

sticks and choddy decaying black silkweed. I knew the spot wouldn't be fished as to make the swim even less appealing to the casual observer. There was a large waterlogged branch anchored up in the pads a short distance out and extending back towards the bank. I planned to bait up with large buckets of hemp and pigeon conditioner with a few tigers for good measure and then remove the floating obstacle a couple of days prior to actually starting to fish.

Twice a week for the next three weeks I made the long hike across the meadow laden with a heavy bucket of fresh particles. Before the bait went in I had a feel with the lead rake and continued to 'tidy up' the bottom detritus. Most pleasing was that firstly I only ever raked in a couple of uneaten bits of maize the once, and secondly after just a couple of bucketfuls of grub the spot felt like it was firming up a treat. I made sure never to bait when anyone else was around and always dumped my bucket of payload off in the bushes at the gate rather than have to walk past any other anglers fishing the neighbouring pit whilst 'tooled up' to avoid drawing any unwanted attention to my little missions.

On the last baiting trip prior to actually fishing I managed to drag what turned out to be half a bloody oak tree out, which was attached to the 'floating' branch at the back of the swim. This exercise took chesties, a length of rope, a large dose of determination and a healthy sprinkle of blood, sweat and tears one hot and sticky late August evening. I skipped back to the car that night covered in silt, scratches and mozzly bites knowing everything was primed and ready and that the challenge proper was about to begin.

I was back a couple of days later on a half day finish from work, only this time the large white bait bucket was hanging from the handlebars of a loaded barrow. I parked it up at the back of the swim on the high bank, and despite my efforts to date, I decided as it was a scorching hot afternoon to go for a proper look round just in case an opportunity presented itself elsewhere.

A good hour or so later I arrived back at the barrow, having failed to spot anything on the shallows or in



(Above) Baits off the second shelf just yards from the rod tip.
(Left) Early spring on the neighbouring pit.

any of the finger bays or marginal snags, which was surprising given the climatic conditions. The reason for the lack of any carp sightings soon became clear when a couple of fish cruised along the edge of the marginal pads straight in front of me and directly over the prebaited spot. After looking so hard I virtually tripped over them right under my nose in the very corner I'd been lavishing so much attention on! Another fish drifted through the edge, then another appeared from under the pads to my right. It seemed the bulk of the stock were in the area, and I found myself hastily trying to get the rods together and sorted as discretely as possible.

With the coast clear for a few minutes and the first rod in hand I held my breath as I stepped into the edge trying to avoid any crunching gravel underfoot and carefully reached out and lowered a rig baited with a single cork-balanced tigernut nine feet down to the bottom of the shelf and onto the now clear spot I'd been cultivating for weeks. Half a dozen chewed up nuts were dropped in over the top, and I tiptoed back to dry land praying I'd not been sussed.



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A jet black head and a beady orange eye.

A decent common confirmed I was still all good a few minutes later as it picked its way through the shallow water in the margin, actually pausing for a look at where one of my footprints had disturbed the silt only moments before. As soon as he was out of sight, a second tigernut was deployed with a tiny PVA mesh bag of crushed salted peanuts onto a sandy patch right up on the shelf in eighteen inches of water along the route he'd just taken. With both rods now fishing I made myself comfy in as inconspicuous a spot as I could and sat back to watch aquatic events unfold.

Maybe twenty minutes passed without any more sightings, although I thought a couple of pinprick bubbles from the vicinity of the deeper hookbait looked suspicious. I was staring intently at this spot when from out of the corner of my eye I spotted the same common returning from the left. He was slowly coming towards the left hand hookbait, which I could clearly see in the shallow, crystal clear water. The next five yards of his journey seemed to take forever as he browsed over the silt-covered ground

at the top of the dropoff on a direct line for the nut. Closer and closer he ambled as I crouched stock still when suddenly the electric atmosphere was pierced by the urgent shriek of a Neville.

In a brief moment of total confusion I stared at the common who was now only a foot from the rig before realisation hit my overfocused brain like a tidal wave, and I rapidly switched my attention to the squealing Tourmie on the right hand rod. Something had sprung the trap laid in the deeper water and was making off towards the snags despite a tightly screwed down clutch. The common got the shock of his life as I almost landed on him in my haste to get a hooped over length of carbon over the top of the pads. The braided mainline did its job admirably, slicing off the leaves of the vegetation the fish attempted to visit, but soon with a racing pulse I was staring down into the mesh at a beady orangey red eye set in the side of the head of a sparsely-scaled, chunky, jet black mirror. At just under 26lb and in only half an hour's angling the prebaiting had shown its worth

already in fine style.

After all the disturbance I took the opportunity to get the broolly up and redid both rods at the bottom of the shelf a couple of feet apart with a few handfuls of particles on top. Sleep was easy to come by that night, and the hours of darkness passed undisturbed.

I woke slightly disappointed that nothing else had happened, and after a couple of brews, by seven o'clock I had everything packed down and on the barrow bar the rods. Whilst packing away I had clocked a few bubbles around the baits and was stringing it out as late as I dared before winding in for work. Literally as I stepped forward to wind in the first rod the right hander pulled up tight again, and I was on it before the braid had pulled from the clip.

Five minutes later carp number two was resting in the net, and I was cutting it very fine for getting to work on time! At 22lb and a few ounces a couple of quick mat shots of the pretty mirror on my phone sufficed, and I threw the slimy wet kit on top of the barrow, dumped the rest of the bait in



Cutting it fine.
(Below) Up close on the shelf.

and hightailed it off back to the motor with a grin on my face.

The next two overnights didn't really go to plan, and despite continued baiting and the spot now feeling like a paving slab I failed to get another bite. What was both interesting and frustrating was that I was consistently seeing signs, particularly fizzing, as I was having to pack up for work, much as on that first night of the campaign. I had also noticed that the bubblers tended to appear and move towards my position from along



the right hand marginal pads, and so I hatched plan B, and on the next evening baiting trip put it into action.

Picking the most prominent tip of the pads and using the 4oz lead rake I cleaned off some of the chod from the general area about twenty yards away from the main prebaited spot. I had decided against going through the same rigmarole with the particles, as I already had that spot beneath the rod tips primed, and it had taken three weeks to ripen. Also it was now the second week of September, and it had just been announced out of the blue that the Top Pit was to be closed to angling from the end of the month to allow the recently released young mallard to settle in prior to being blasted to bits come the 1st of November. With the thought of only having just over two weeks left to try and snare the big common I decided the new spot would be baited more sparsely with boilies only, and a choddie fished over the top would be my best presentation option.

After a busy few days at work and a hectic night on-call, my next night's angling was thankfully a rare Friday night, allowing me to stay later than usual into the morning on the Saturday. An increasingly familiar long walk, a paddle through the stream and setup culminated with a firm donk down on the particle spot and a soft drop on the short flick up the margin with a chod.

I struggled with sleep that night, partly through wondering and praying that I'd get a chance in the morning, but mainly because of the noisy flotilla of a couple of hundred juvenile

ducks who seemed intent on sitting the night out afloat on the water directly beneath my rod tips. They finally departed for some grub at first light, and with my eyes hanging out one brew was all I could muster before climbing back in the bag for some much needed shuteye.

The next thing I knew I was slipping down the steep wet grass barefoot trying to keep an angry carp out of the pads after a violent take on the now lucky right hand rod. Plan B had worked. The boilies had claimed their first victim. It was a little after eight o'clock and a 23lb common that looked as though it had come straight out of Redmire joined me on the bank.

This confirmed in my head that they'd been having a free feed on my spots later in the mornings after I'd left for work and again got the grey matter working. I had limited time; I needed to be there later in the mornings, and the pit was closing in two weeks. It was time for some decisive action. I booked off the last of my annual holiday allowance for three days at the end of the month and arranged a fictitious trip to the dentist for the Friday morning of the following week.

I informed my bosses my appointment was for 9:20, which, after some careful scheduling, meant it wasn't worth my while going in for 8:30 only to have to leave again fifteen minutes later to supposedly drive the ten miles to visit my dental practice. Work wouldn't expect me in until after 10. Ideal, and with a half day finish on the Thursday following my rota'd night on-call on Wednesday, the timing was perfect, and my dentist had just unwittingly earned himself a complimentary beverage!

Another bucket of particle and a kilo of sixteen millers went in on the Tuesday evening, and Thursday lunchtime couldn't come round quickly enough. I had a feeling that all the pieces of the jigsaw were now falling into place nicely.

Everything went like clockwork, and that bright and sunny Thursday afternoon both hookbaits were in place with no fuss by half three. A handful of hemp and tigers went on the left hand rod and twenty baits were spread over a bivvy sized area on the right. I couldn't wait for it to get dark so I could go to bed that night, itching for the morning to



arrive.

Disappointingly, but maybe predictably, another quiet night went by, the only bonus being that mercifully the ducks had decided to roost elsewhere, although they noisily broke the dawn's peace with their chatter around the pit and in the bay immediately behind me. I was on my second tea by seven and as yet hadn't seen a thing. I chuckled to myself knowing that now was the time I should have been winding in and leaving for work, although in the back of my mind I knew I still only had an hour and a half left behind the rods that morning before I really would have to be gone.

The sight of a cluster of frothy bubbles breaking up the right margin broke my work related musings and had my heart rate rising instantly. More bubbles appeared over the next ten minutes and it looked like a bite could well be on the cards. The third cup of tea had an almost instant impact on my bladder, and I stepped

behind the brolly to make room for another when a deep, loud slosh emanated from behind my recently turned back. As I spun round a big set of rings rocked the water directly above the boilies where a carp – and clearly a good one – had just head and shouldered. Typical. All that time watching and I'd missed the show for a leak!

Ten minutes later and proper fizzes of bubbles were now appearing in patches eighteen inches across right on the money. I felt like pacing up and down with all the nagging doubts niggling away in my head – was the rig sitting OK? Had the roach done the hookbait? With only twenty freebies, why hadn't I had a bite? I forced

(Top) Like it was straight out of Redmire.

(Right) A misty dawn sunrise heralds the end of another overnigher.





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myself to stay parked on the bedchair and put the kettle on again to try and take my mind off it all, but before I could spark up the stove the right hand Nev let out a slow series of bleeps as the little white PTFE bobbin rose slowly up to the blank and held there.

I was on it in a flash, lifting in to a heavy weight, tightening the clutch and sliding down the bank into the drink all in one fluid movement. What happened next will remain forever etched on my memory as a wide old set of shoulders broke the surface film and allowed themselves to be slowly

drawn towards me. What's more they were golden and crisscrossed with huge regular scales.

I can honestly say I don't recommend knowing that you're attached to your target fish approximately five seconds into the fight at very close quarters in an extremely snaggy



The final jigsaw piece.

water, especially when it's a possible 40lb common. My eyes took it all in and my brain processed it and sent a message to my legs, which immediately went numb. Fortunately my arms managed to stay in a functional state, and I'm sure if I'd had the speed of mind and the nerve at that moment I could have led her straight over the net cord before she realised what was going on.

That scenario however didn't happen. I reached for the net, sunk the mesh and bottled it at precisely the same time the fish woke up abruptly and decided to fight. I didn't enjoy a second of that battle – all within ten yards of the rod tip and the confines of the lily beds. Finally after ten nervy, arm-aching minutes an impressively built common with scales like burnished armour slipped into the long since readied landing net with a couple of torn up pad leaves for company. I bellowed out a roar of "COMMONNNN!" as loud as I could at the ever present audience of mallards, and suffering from nervous exhaus-

tion but buzzing with euphoric adrenalin, I broke down the net and staggered up the bank to the waiting unhooking mat.

The size 5 Stiff Rigger was just nicked in the corner of her mouth and was extracted with worrying ease considering the scrap we'd just endured. I hung the zeroed scales from a sturdy branch and hoisted her up in the recovery sling. She went 36lb 8oz – a little lighter than I'd expected, but more than large enough to justify my swervy dental appointment antics with work!

I settled her in the edge and hastily made a phone call to arrange a photographer, Pikey obliging at short notice, so thanks again, mate! Half an hour later and I was holding her up to the camera in the glorious autumn morning sunshine, the sun's rays bouncing off her deep mahogany back, rich golden flanks and creamy underbelly. On opening the bottom of the sling it was full of crushed fragments of tigernut and hemp husk. Clearly she'd been having it away on

my long baited particle spot despite eventually tripping up on a boilie!

As she slipped through my fingertips and away over the shelf into the clear depths I was floating on a big fish high, knowing that the whole campaign had just played itself out perfectly, and in just over three weeks and five nights' angling I had managed to achieve what I'd set out to do in one of those rare periods when everything just goes right.

FOOTNOTE

I still had my three days' annual leave booked for the end of the following week, and so having bagged the big common I decided to return downstream to the pit next door in my search for the big lin. Well, would you believe it, but on my second night back my very next take in the blustery early hours of the Friday morning turned out to be the old linear. Two bites a week apart on different waters and two target fish banked – a brief 'purple patch' in my angling I'll never ever forget. ■



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The Old Monastery Lake – A Short Story

By Jonathan Lungley

It was my first time at this venue, and I was bristling with excitement to get to the lake. I would be doing the weekend and driving straight from work. I couldn't keep my eyes off the clock all afternoon wishing five o'clock would come. Well eventually it did and I was in that car park quicker than you can say "Bolt rig."

My tackle was already in the back of my van, as I had got up extra early that morning so I didn't have to waste time later in the day; I could finish work and just go. I was on my way, it was midsummer and didn't get dark till late so there was plenty of time to get to the lake and set up before nightfall. I left the motorway and joined an A-road for a few miles then my sat nav told me "In two miles take the exit" as the junction approached it told me "In 800 yards, turn right" as I approached the junction the sky was beginning to dull in the late summer evening sunshine, and I remember being starving hungry but the excitement of fishing this long awaited venue far outweighed any chance of

stopping for something to eat.

I drove down lots of windy county roads that seemed to get narrower and narrower with high sided banks covered with thick with foliage and vegetation, then I saw a half covered sign with paint peeling off, which I could just about read. It said, "Monastery Lake".

I turned into the oak lined lane and followed it for about a half mile to a clearing in the trees. I was in luck; there was no one else on the lake, and I had it all to myself. I had a walk round looking for signs of fish and noticed how weedy the lake was. There were also lots of plants growing on the bottom that looked like palms, or a large open hand lying flat on the bottom. They had long narrow leaves that radiated from the center, where a large round bud sat about the size of a tennis ball. Although I didn't see any signs of carp moving, I found an area that just looked like it was home to a big one.

The bank between the trees was slightly overgrown, so I used a bank stick to flatten an area big enough to fish from. By now the sun was drop-

ping quite quickly, and rather than plumb the swim I just cast a lead in the weed channels feeling for the donk of the lead hitting a hard bottom. I attached my rigs, with a small mesh PVA bag about the size of my thumb, more for anti-tangle than anything, and cast it back into the open channels between the weedbeds. I then scattered a few free offerings around each rod. Both rods out, I set about putting on the kettle for a brew and a Pot Noodle.

As I ate, I sat and watched the last of the sunlight disappear from view behind the trees on the far side of the lake, and in no time at all the far tree-line had become a shadowy silhouette. I heard something leap out of the water in front of me as a tail thrashed the water to get aloft, followed by a huge splash. My heart missed a beat as I imagined a massive mirror gracing my unhooking mat. Around twenty minutes later I had a single bleep on my left hand rod, then a moment later the same on my right hand rod. A couple of minutes later the same thing happened again, and I realised fish were moving through the clear channel in front of me where I had set my traps.

My right hand rod suddenly pulled to the left and my bite alarm screamed with a single tone. I reached down and grabbed the rod and wound down. I was met with a solid resistance as the fish lunged straight into the weed. I sat the rod back down on the alarm and loosened everything right off in the hope the fish would swim out of the weed of its own accord.

As I stood waiting I felt a chill sweep over me, and I shuddered as the hair on my neck stood up. I didn't hear a single sound, but it felt as though a hand pushed me with force in the middle of my back, and in the darkness I lurched forward into the



inky black water.

I took a gulp of air as I hit the surface and went under. As I struggled to get back to the surface my legs became entangled in the weed and the harder I fought the more it pulled me down to the lake bottom. As I struggled I felt the long finger-like leaves of the plants I saw earlier slowly come up and wrap themselves around me pulling me down further, engulfing me like an insect in a Venus fly trap. I struggled to hold my breath and fought to free myself, but as I struggled I felt the energy drain from my body, and with each ebbing moment, my lunging attempts to get back to the surface became smaller and smaller until I could fight no more. I opened my mouth and allowed the lake water to enter my body. I felt it rush down my neck flooding my lungs, and as it did so I felt a feeling of great calm and wellbeing. My muscles relaxed, and as I sank through the layers of weed, the surface of the lake became darker. My eyes gently closed as the life ebbed away from my body and I accepted I had drowned.

My body lay cocooned in the lake's vegetation as summer went into autumn, and the leaves on the trees changed from russet to golden brown, then winter came and the deciduous tree-lined banks shed their cloaks, leaving just the skeletal structures that drew long shadows in the cold winter sun, like twisted tendrils that reached out into the lake, pointing accusative fingers at the deed done there months before. The days grew longer and colder as winter took hold with its icy grip. Little moved within the lake, or around it, and even the air seemed static and stale. Most of the lake's vegetation had died off or gone into hibernation, and each day came and went with no discernible difference.

As January came the temperature continued to drop, until it went beyond zero and the entire lake froze overnight. The next day the sky was grey, bleak, and with no wind, still. Then one after the other tiny flakes of crystal snow drifted down to the lifeless lake where they were welcomed on the frozen ground forming a thick white quilt that covered everything, and the lake went into a deep sleep.



It remained so through February, but as March came the temperature started to rise once more and the trees around the lake started to drip icy water onto the frozen ground below, forming holes in the snow that grew bigger, until one hole met the next and the snow collapsed between them.

Gradually the thaw had begun, and slowly the snow melted into the ground leaving a few stubborn patches of ice that remained in shadowy spots the sun couldn't quite reach. A patch of water appeared in the center of the lake, and day-by-day it got bigger as the ice receded back to the margins.

As the days got warmer and the sun remained in the sky for a little longer each day, bluebells and snowdrops started to sprout on the ground between the trees, as buds were forming on the branches above them. Spring had finally arrived, and signs of new life were showing all around the lake and within. Spring blended into summer, and a small area of water was disturbed by tiny roach as a pike swam through the area. On the far side of the lake a carp leapt out of the water clearing the silt out of its gills after a night of grubbing around on the bottom feeding on the lake's bloodworm. A sudden flash of electric blue shot through the reed lined margin, and a kingfisher settled on an overhanging branch watching the roach that had returned now the pike had gone. The lake was wide awake

once more.

It had been a year since I had died, and my body had joined the lakebed.

During that time, whilst the lake lay dead above me, changes had slowly taken place within my leafy tomb, and with a jolt, I gasped a deep breath and opened my eyes. I could feel the warmth of the sun above my head, and as I looked around I saw the leafy shroud had rolled back and lay flat on the lakebed once more. I seemed to be suspended in the water, and although my environment was alien, it felt strangely familiar. I had an unbelievable hunger, and in front of me there were around 30 to 40 little round balls that had a flavor trail streaming from them that was irresistible. I dipped my head forward, and one after the other sucked them up and sent them to the back of my throat where I crushed them up and swallowed. They tasted so good, and I hungrily looked for the next, and then the next. Soon I was hovering them off the lakebed so fast I was totally unaware of the one that looked slightly different from the others. It was suspended off the bottom slightly but gave off the same irresistible flavour trail. I snatched it up, and immediately felt a sharp stabbing in my lower lip. Without thinking I flicked my tail and ran, but there was something heavy attached to the food ball and the stabbing went in even deeper.

I might see you soon. ■

Norfolk Broads – Discover the Potential

By Keith Williams

Wroxham Broad... You could search this broad for years to find the elusive carp but they are there somewhere, as the broad next door has produced carp.

Moving from Essex to Norfolk ten years ago I was thrilled at the prospect of settling in this wonderful region of the British countryside and having the opportunity to fish some of the 193,920 acres of waterways that make up the Norfolk Broads. I arrived with great expectations in regards to my potential catches knowing that huge numbers of specimen fish had been caught in these Broads and their accompanying tidal rivers. My initial thoughts were that the best areas to target for carp were the many lakes (former gravel pits) that are situated around the west of Norwich. Whilst if it was pike I was seeking, my best chances were to be had in the splendid Broads particularly in the winter months.

My new home was the small market town of Stalham, which is located in the northern sector of the Broadlands. This area is certainly not famous for any large carp catches but that is not to say that perhaps a few elusive fish may not have ended up in this area. Of course before moving I had done my homework, researching where on the Broads I would be most likely to catch the kind of fish I wanted on the end of the line. Carp are thought most likely to be found in the Wensum and Yare (two rivers located in the southern part of the river system), so these naturally looked like good places to start. Then there was Norwich city itself, which



has over time produced some carp in addition to numerous quality bream and roach. However I decided early on to concentrate my efforts to the northern regions, as these were likely to provide the greatest challenge, and I was eager to feel that great sense of personal satisfaction knowing that I had discovered where the carp live and thrive. But to be honest I knew that I was really searching for a needle in a haystack in this massive area of water.

The Broads I therefore wanted to target were the likes of Hickling Broad, Wroxham and Salhouse whilst the rivers I wanted to fish were the Bure, The Thurne (and its system) and The Ant. I began with the River Bure, as it is regarded as the capital of the Broads, with its many busy boat yards and droves of tourists in the summer months. I knew from the onset that

(Above) My boat called Prey for Pike that I use on the Broads, which is stable and great to fish from and bait up the areas that I felt had potential. The entrance from the River Bure above the Railway Bridge.
(Bottom) My first encounter with a carp at Wroxham on the River Bure.

this would be difficult water, simply because of the disturbance that would regularly affect the fish. Also getting bank access would be problematic, but I felt confident that these problems could be overcome with a suitable boat and good fish finder.

A suitable boat need not be anything more elaborate than a large dingy, but in order to have adequate room for the rods I choose to fish from a 16ft aluminium flat bottomed boat with a very stable four-stroke outboard engine. The boat is equipped with back up electric to enable me to sneak up to shallow areas. The boat is currently called "Prey for Pike" but perhaps now it needs renaming to reflect its use as "Prey for Carp"!

My first encounter with Broads carp was actually in the autumn a few years ago while I was fishing for roach near Wroxham on the River Bure. The spot I had selected was close to Wroxham Bridge in an area popular with tourists who enjoy feeding swans. Holidaymakers can buy bread from the local shops, which provides a great attraction for many types of wildfowl, but luckily for me also attracts the fish. My favourite spot is a place where the bridge narrows and then widens quickly, as this causes the river to flow quite briskly thus creating a good area for fish





habitat. It was here that I moored up on this particular day and at the time I was actually fishing for roach. As it was late autumn the boat traffic had become very quiet, so I could moor up where the holiday boats usually stop for a pilot to take them through the

bridge.

I was fishing with a float rod with 4lb mainline and a size 14 hook attached to a lighter hook link. My bait was nothing more exciting than bread, but I was consistently catching roach up to a pound and half. At one

point the stick float was moving slowly with the flow when suddenly the float quickly shot under and the rod just bent over. I had to let my centre pin give line very quickly, as had I been using a fixed spool I would have been easily smashed up. The fish remained deep, so at this stage I did not even consider it could be a carp. My friend who had accompanied me on this trip thought it might be a pike, so it was a massive surprise when after 30 minutes a boil appeared and shortly afterwards it turned out to be a carp. The carp was clean and probably had never been hooked but weighed just over 10lbs.

Despite my elation at catching this first carp I did not pursue any more on the Broads that following winter. Instead I targeted pike on the Broads and returned to my syndicate water for my carp fishing. I did however spend the spring and closed season researching where and when other carp had been found. I spoke to local people asking if they had seen carp and took the opportunity to talk to match anglers that fished the region. The guys who work in the boatyards also offered a wealth of information discussing where the tourists like to feed the wild fowl and where they had seen fish coming up for food.

I was especially interested to hear of carp of up to 20lb being caught at Richardson's boatyard in Stalham and

(Top left) Pike also like to spawn in Bridge Broad. The area behind me is where carp were taking off the top. Shallow and a perfect environment for the carp.

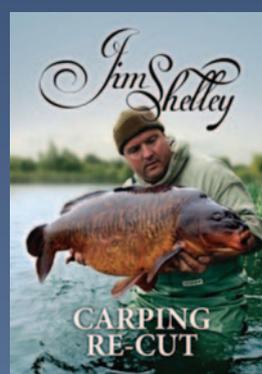
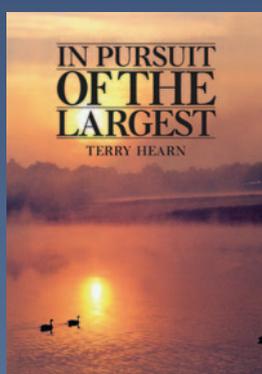
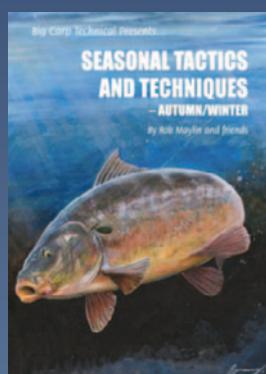
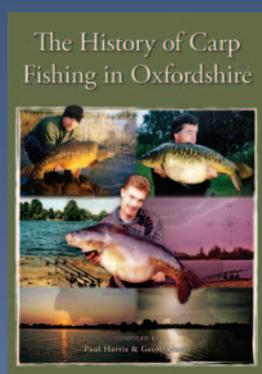
(Left) A tourist boat at Salhouse Broad entrance.

(Below) Richardson's Boatyard at Stalham where matches have been held with anglers having carp, probably coming through a pipe from a small lake stocked with carp a few years ago.



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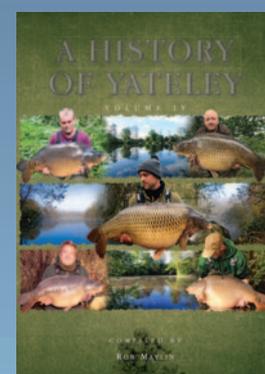
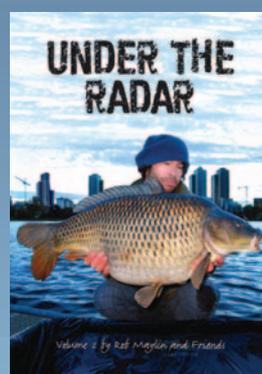
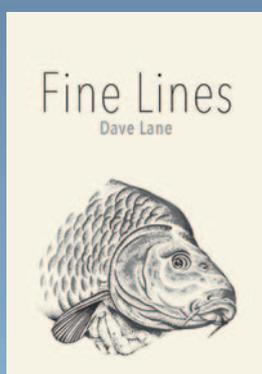
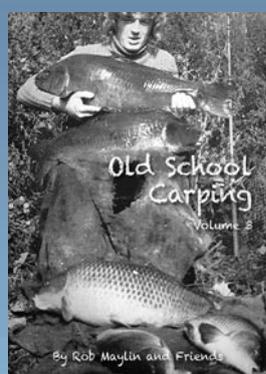
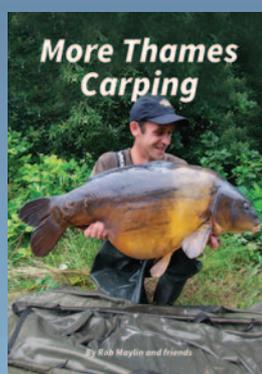


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match anglers having their line broken up during matches here. Interestingly there is a small lake just across the road from the yard that was known to contain carp. This small lake possesses an overflow pipe that links into the yard, so it is quite possible that small carp could have passed through the pipe. The holiday boats in the yard certainly churn the water, which would benefit carp, but the numbers to be found here really is anyone's guess.

Other sightings that I have investigated include those seen on Bridge Broad above the railway bridge. This broad is shallow with plenty of weed and lilies, which are perfect for carp. After being alerted to sightings I kept visiting during the closed season and fed bread to the ducks and wildfowl hoping to entice any carp residents to show. After a few visits during late May, I was rewarded for my efforts and spotted three carp taking bread off the top. They stayed there for a couple of weeks, but as the boat traffic got heavier I never saw them again, but others claim to have seen them since.



Sightings such as these I am pleased to say are becoming all the more common. I have heard of carp seen spawning on Salhouse Broad in the early season, but that they are then seen to move onto other areas. In order to attempt to see, or better still catch, my own carp here I pre-baited this area with pellet, boilies

The Entrance to Bridge Broad.

and maize for the whole month of May. I then proposed to visit on the 16th June and moor up, but unfortunately due to work commitments I was unable to get there.

A week later I was able to make the



A low twenty from The Broads.

journey, but by now I was wondering if it would have been better to go to Bridge Broad, as no one had seen even the faintest sign of any carp, and what's more I had obviously not prepared the site at Bridge Broad with bait. Along with my friend, I finally decided to give Salhouse the benefit of the doubt, and we fished a couple of nights but were constantly getting hammered by bream. Then much to our surprise one of the rods belted off and a carp was on. I prayed it would stay on, and after a strong fight the carp was in the net. The fish was a superb 20-plus carp in perfect condition. After this we tried for a month to repeat our success, but the bream were a continuous issue that eventually got the better of us.

Because of my love of the Broads and my thirst for a challenge I will continue to try to catch more Broads carp. What is really needed is a concentrated effort through a whole summer to really achieve good results, but if the bream were the problem before we now face a more serious threat – the otters. Natural inhabitants of these waterways, well yes, but now they are in such large numbers on the Broads they are becoming a problem that no one really knows how to tackle. Delicate and as yet not well-established breeds of fish in the Broads such as the carp are likely to be the first unsuspecting victims of wipeout. However I hope this will not come to pass, and then the potential of the Broads for carp angling... who knows? ■



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The Forbidden Nature Reserve

By Lee Brooks

It's one of the most secluded lakes I've fished to date, with very limited access and only a handful of carp in the lake... and strictly no fishing! It was going to be my biggest challenge to date. Get there late at night and leave at first light, and avoid the farmer at all costs!

A friend showed me a few pictures of the resident fish that resided in the lake, and after seeing a few nice commons and a really nice mirror, it wasn't long before I was down having a good look and scoping the place out. My target fish would be the mirror, an absolutely stunning fish, short and chunky with the odd scale here and there. Also it doesn't get caught much by the odd angler that wets a line in the place every now and then.

The first thing that came to mind was that there was really only one peg to fish, as the rest of the lake was really overgrown and access was very limited, especially being situated in between corn fields and having the River Trent nearby. The water was gin clear with plenty of weed, and it seemed like time had forgotten about the place. I was in my element and couldn't wait to start baiting up and getting a few sessions in.

**(Top) The winning combination.
(Below) First blood, first fish.**



Instead of just heading down the lake to get my first session in, I decided to take regular walks along the surroundings of the lake to get a feel for the place and also find out how often the farmer was down the area, as I'd heard if he saw you fishing or noticed your motor parked up next to the corn fields, he'd phone the old bill without question.

And there were also the local posh dog walkers that wouldn't hesitate to report you if you were seen obstructing their private dog path. There were always birdwatchers down there too, and quite a few to be honest, all with long lens cameras, and they could make life difficult if they were to get a snapshot of your number plate etc. All

this didn't bother me in the slightest, as it made the adventure more fun and exciting.

Once I'd worked out the regular routines and time frames to bait up it wasn't long before I was making my first cast into the depths of the reserve. I'd been prebaiting for one or two weeks and felt the time was right to test the water.

One thing I noticed from my early morning and late evening walks was that the fish didn't seem to show themselves very much – no fizzing, boshing or much activity, so out went two singles on the baited spots! Just being there was good enough for me that night, keeping close eyes on the water and over my shoulder as the



odd jogger passed. I knew it wouldn't be easy trying to unlock the secrets of the lake with such low fish stock, and also getting the fish off the naturals and onto the boilies, but without doubt this was carp fishing for me at its best! I was getting quite a lot of liners that night, which made it difficult for me to sleep, as the excitement was kicking in. My mate did say there were lots of tench in the lake and chances are I'd end up nailing one or two on my sessions down there. So after a few cups of tea I got my head down, as had to be up 5.30am for work.

I woke around 4am to an absolute screamer of a take on the right hand rod. It was fished around 80 yards out behind a gravel bar in about 6ft of water. As luck would have it the fish carted straight over the bar and headed towards the shallow part of the lake and weeded me up solid. First session, first fish, and I just prayed it hadn't come off. I'd given the hooks a good flick over with the file prior to the session, so I was confident it was just waiting there sulking with a hook in its mouth. I slackened straight off, put the rod on the

rest and made a cuppa.

Ten minutes passed, and as you can imagine the line tightened and the fish was moving again. This time I put a bit more force on and managed to steer the fish over the bar and in close quarters. All I could see was a long, dark common shaking its head in the margins with a huge amount of weed on its nose. After a couple of minutes of thrashing it was in the net! Result! I was well happy, especially with it being my first session on the lake.

I didn't waste any time; I got a few self-takes done and quickly, packed my gear away and headed home for work. I managed another three night sessions that week but blanked every time, so I soon realised it was going to be tricky catching these carp. After all I was the only angler fishing the lake, which made it more special, as it was just me against the carp.

A week or so passed, and after work calming down I finally managed another night session, I hadn't been down the lake or prebaited, so I wasn't expecting much, but the weather was bang-on with big winds and low pressure arriving, and I was

confident as ever!

After a busy day at work I finally arrived at the lake. I scattered a small amount of boilies on each spot and cast out. There were no signs of activity on the spots or anywhere for that matter, and the weather was starting to change for the good, so after setting up I put the kettle on and I played the waiting game. I remember looking through a few of the pictures my mate sent me and wondered if I'd catch any of the jewels swimming in the lake that night. Constant liners resulted in two tench that evening, so I put out half a kilo of boilies over the spots and spent the next few hours waiting before having to pack up and leave. As luck would have it, it wasn't 30 minutes until that magical moment happened when the left hand rod ripped off, literally screamed 20 yards of line off then locked solid in the weed.

I thought this was going to be a common thing from the previous capture, so I held on and changed the angle of the line a few times, and thankfully the fish started coming straight towards me. I could just see the fish boshing on the surface going

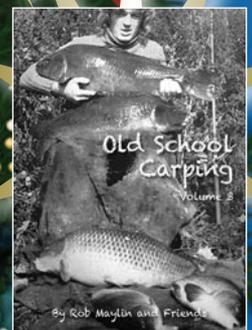
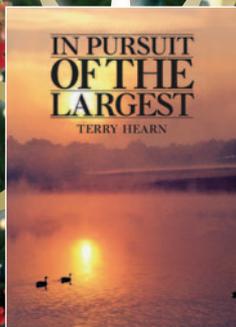
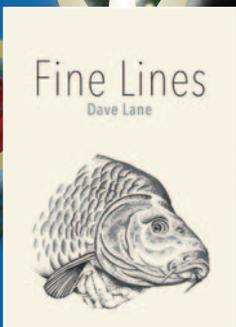
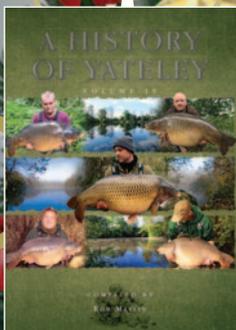
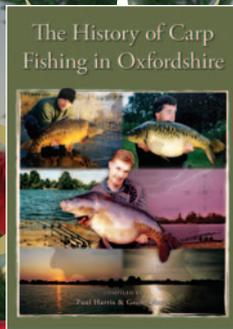


The second fish, black and chunky.

Dear Santa,
PLEASE NO
more socks this
Christmas!

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Common number three.

mad; it did this the whole 80 yards whilst heading towards me. After a few knee trembling moments I finally managed to catch a quick glimpse of a short, black common in the margins and just managed to slip the net under the fish before a hook pull.

After a big sigh of relief and removing the weed covering most of the fish I was looking at my second fish out the lake and was well chuffed with the result. At this point I was wondering what tactic to use, as pre-baiting worked but then failed. Then a few handfuls of boilie on a random spot produced a fish straight away.

Baiting up at night choosing two fairly clear spots was going to be my plan, chances are every fish I'm going to hook is going to weed me up pretty much straight away, as I was fishing large clear areas in the weed, but there was a good depth of water on top of the weed, so it wasn't impossible, just difficult.

After making a quick phone call to Shaun at Quest Baits a few days later I was stocked up on bait and in the zone. I was fishing the Magnum White scattered all over the clear areas and a small scattering on the edge of the weed, just to catch the carp's eye if passing by, and also

heavily glugging my pop-ups to get maximum attraction in the area. The nights were drawing in slowly, and my sessions saw my leaving the lake at 3am to get home in time for work, so it was going to be tiring, but hopefully worth the hard work I was putting in.

On my next session I arrived at the lake around 6pm-ish and quickly put a kilo spread over the spots and cast to the clip. No liners or sign of carp whilst watching the water, until I noticed a swan hissing at the water and doing the silly dance they do when fish are close by. I didn't waste any time; I wound in and cast straight to the area and lightly put out a few freebies over time. After a few cups of tea I got my head down for the night.

Around 12am the new spot I cast to slowly started taking line on the right hand rod so I gently tightened the clutch and started playing another reserve carp. It just kept pulling and pulling I couldn't do much but ease the clutch and gently let bit of line off, all of a sudden it went dead!! Weeded me up BIG TIME!! I kept gentle pressure on and still couldn't feel anything, so I put the rod down and had a quick cuppa. 30 minutes passed and still no signs of a fish being attached,

so I tried the angle change again and nothing was working, so just put the rod down and left it.

One hour later the beeps started and the clutch started moving again. I didn't waste time, and I was straight on it and really giving it some brute force, steadily gaining line and avoiding the snaggy, weedy bar to my right. After a few explosions on the surface a long, lean dark common slipped in the net! Yes! It's probably the longest I've ever had a fish on and definitely the hardest fighting fish I've had out the reserve so far! After a few pictures of the cracker it was swimming again and the kettle was on. I trickled a small amount of boilies on the spot and got a few hours' sleep before the dreaded 3am wakeup call.

3am arrived, and I was packing away and heading home again. So far I was happy with the slow, steady catch results I was getting. I also felt I was getting in tune with the lake and getting to grips with where the carp were moving at night and baiting just enough to get a bite and not waste it on the bird life.

After spending the next few weeks trickling the bait in and not fishing the spots for a while I was dying to get down to the lake for a session, but



Fish one of two on an overnighter.



Fish two of two on an overnighter.

everything was against me with work life, family life and just being generally busy. It was as if my target fish was going to have to wait till next year.

Thursday night arrived and permission was granted from the missus to go fishing, so the van was loaded and the reserve was calling me. A kilo of Magnum White was spread wide over the spots and the rigs were in place. I'd been fishing two rods all my time on the lake and managed to dig out a third rod, so I put a single hookbait on and cast to a random area of the lake that I hadn't fished or bothered with previously. Later that evening the tench became really active and I managed three over the space of a couple of hours, which wasn't what I hoped for, but I managed a nice 9lb 10oz, which was worth the wake.

Around midnight the third rod I cast out started chucking out a few bleeps, so half asleep I had a quick look and noticed a full-on drop back! I hit straight into it! This time it felt really heavy compared to the other fish, hugging the bottom and holding deep. The old legs started going a bit, and all I could feel was the line ping-pong out of the weedbeds as the fish came closer. I had it on for ages and it must have weeded me up at least five times – complete carnage!

The wind really started picking up,

and the margins close by were filled to the top with weed, so it was a case of getting in the lake to land the fish. I was waiting patiently as a big fat mirror popped its head out with huge scales along its shoulders and the odd scale on its body. The margins weren't deep, so I managed to walk out about a rod length and finally net the mirror! Result! After looking closely I realised it was my target fish and I'd done the job. I was over the moon; it was an absolute stunning mirror caught from a single random cast to nowhere. I took plenty of pics and back she went. That 3am wakeup call didn't matter much, as I didn't sleep that much as you can imagine.

Work the day after was a blessing. I was local and couldn't wait to get down to the reserve and hopefully catch just a few of the last fish left to catch before winter arrived. There were probably only a couple left to catch before recaptures occurred. So another call to Quest baits and my bait was here, the Magnum Duo this time. I also added the fruity trifle 10mm fluoro pop-ups to the hookbait for that extra colour and something different too. After loading the van and waiting for it to get dark, I was heading back down to the lake. A lot went through my mind that day about catching the big'un off a ran-

dom "non carpy" spot of the lake, so I chose to fish two rods on the area where I caught the big'un and see if it would produce any more fish on my last few sessions on the lake before I moved on to my new winter water.

So out went 1kg of Magnum Duo spread over the area, and I fished two rods; one rod in the centre and the other on the edge of the weed. I was fishing really tight lines this time; I wanted as much indication as possible to know if any carp were in the area, so after a few cups of tea and a quick chat with my mate I got my head down. The alarms were silent all evening until around 12.30 when the left hand rod on the new spot started slowly giving line. I had a feeling a tench might be on, and I started playing the fish. There wasn't much of a fight happening, so as the weed gathered on the line it was just like pulling a bag of sand in. Then just as the weed started to show on the leader I could see a common attached. I couldn't believe it was a carp, then all of a sudden there was a huge bosh and all hell broke loose. The fish pulled like mad and started carting to the left snaggy weedy margin and went face down and just lay there.

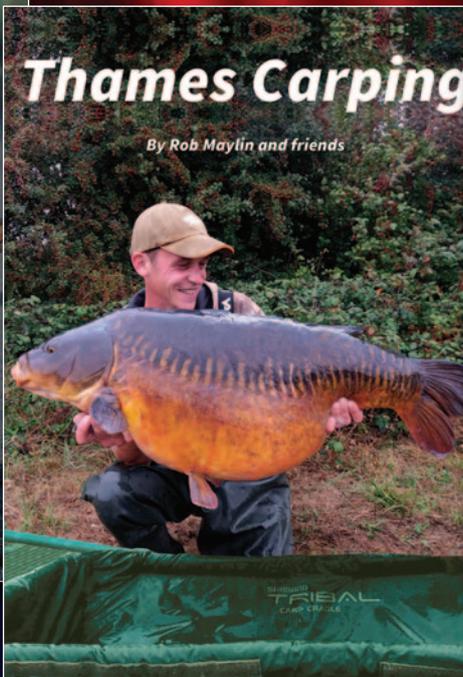
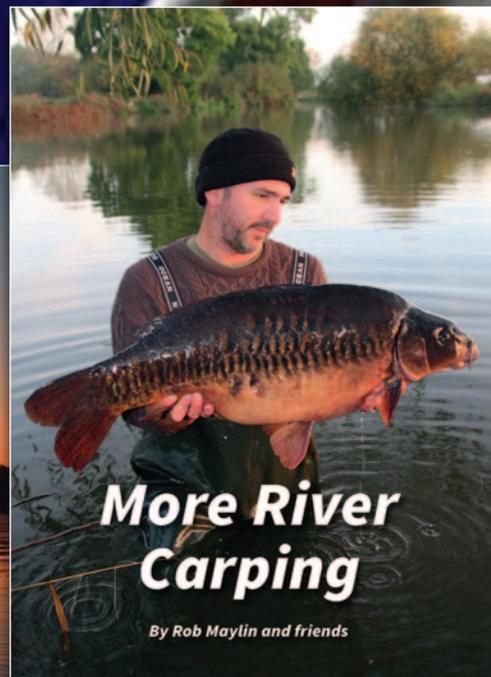
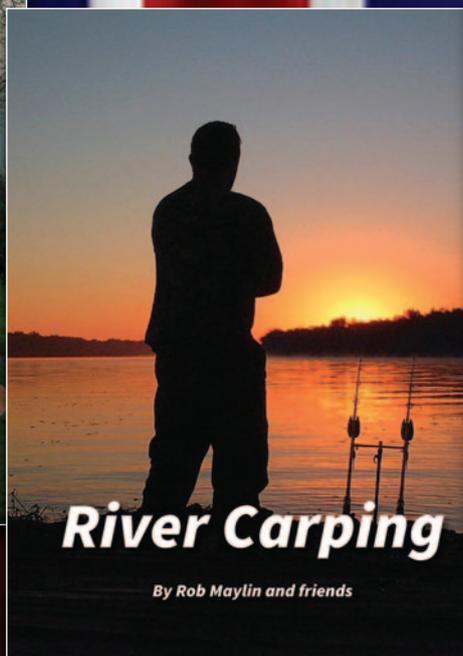
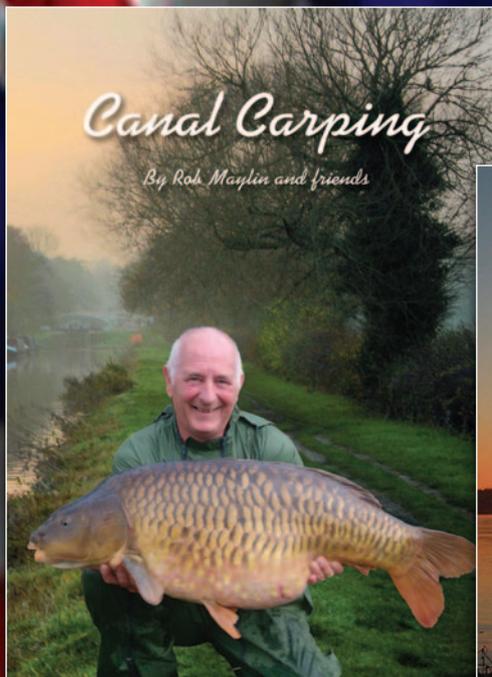
The rod went down and the chesties went on. I slowly walked the margin to my left and could see the



Long, lean common.

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The big girl.

common's tail buried in the weed. I gently started moving the weed from around the fish and saw it sulking deep down. I slipped the net under it, and it was another successful night's fishing. It looked around low to mid twenty but I wasn't weighing any of the reserve fish, and my mate gave me a rough idea of the weights from when he fished the lake previously, so it was take a few pictures and release the fish.

I started thinking this new spot might produce a few more fish seeing as the old spots had dried up and weren't producing any carp. This would be my last few sessions I had planned too, so just before leaving I put in 5kg of Magnum Duo over the area and planned to return in a few days' time.

The following afternoon I finished work early so I couldn't resist walking the dog and having a quick look around the lake. Just as I arrived I noticed several carp head and shouldering over the new spot. This carried on for the next few hours, and by then I decided tonight I was going to fish without a doubt, so I headed home and started getting some fresh rigs tied up and get everything prepped for tonight's session. I'd perfected my

setup time to just under ten minutes, and that included casting out to the spots too. You had to be quick setting up otherwise the mozzies would eat you alive. I'd always end up leaving the lake with latest five bites, so this was the only downfall about fishing this particular peg on the lake. But he who dares wins...

So a few hours later I was back down at the reserve; the kettle was on and everything was in place. There were no signs of carp over the spots, but I knew they wouldn't be far away or at least they'd return later in the evening. At 10pm the left hand rod ripped off and I was into another fish, pulling like mad but not enough to take line. So ten minutes of carnage in the weed and another common was slipped into the net, an upper 20 maybe, with perfect scales and not a mark on it!

I took a few pictures and back it went. I was really happy I'd decided to come back that night, especially after putting that 5kg of Magnum Duo in the previous morning. After having a quick brew and a look at the pictures I got my head down for some much needed sleep before the 3am alarm woke me.

Around 12am I woke to another

screamer off the new spot, this time on the right hand rod. With the wind and rain blowing like mad into the swim I was easing another fish my way. It felt a pretty decent size and was actually behaving itself, as it hadn't weeded me up or caused problems and it wasn't long before it was in the margins waiting to be netted. I just slipped the net under the fish and a big sigh of relief went out – a nice short dumpy common was nailed in the bottom lip. I managed a few pictures and back it went. I was well chuffed with the result.

I messaged my mate and told him the good luck I was having, and he said there's only one fish left to catch and that's the Scaly Fish. I only planned to fish one more session before moving on, and I wasn't too bothered if I caught or blanked my last session as I'd had a cracking time down there. Having the lake to myself and just being with nature was a thing I've always loved about fishing, regardless of whether I catch or blank. I didn't sleep much the rest of the night, so I packed up around 2.30am and put out 2kg of Magnum Duo for my last and final session, which would be the following night.

That day I popped down to see my

mate and have a good chinwag about the lake and just general fishing talk. I was looking for my next water to fish and couldn't decide where to fish. It had to be a lake where fishing wasn't permitted and there was a low stock. After a few hours on Google maps I was taking interest in a big lake nearby that may or may not have fish in, so I loaded the van and headed down to the reserve for my last session.

I noticed the farmer had been harvesting his corn fields, and the only field left to cut was the field next to the lake, which gave great cover for your motor. So all in all it was definitely my last session; I didn't want to be caught so late in the season after being so careful previously.

After setting up and making my last cast the kettle was on, and I was chilled and enjoying my surroundings. The night was cool, and the wind was blowing straight into my swim. The odd liner was being registered, and after a few cups of tea I was ready to get my head down.

I woke around 10pm to a steady take on the left hand rod! Before I could hit into the fish it was already weeded up, so after patiently holding a tight line and feeling the line come loose through several weedbeds I could feel the fish easing its way towards me. It took ages to get a



glimpse of the fish, but as it approached the margins I could see a scaly beast waiting to be netted! It was the last fish I needed to catch and sod's law I actually fluked it out on my last session! I netted the fish and just couldn't believe how lucky I was in catching it. I got plenty of pictures and returned it. I messaged my mate and even he couldn't believe how jammy I was!

After plenty of cups of tea and a

**(Above) Unknown common side shot.
(Below) Last fish, job done.**

good few hours' sleep I was loading my van and saying goodbye to the place. The whole experience was really enjoyable and I'd loved every minute down there with plenty of blanks but catching some stunning fish. It was time to move on...

Tight lines! ■



Aqua Liliu T-Shirts fr

It's the 23rd March 2020 and the whole country is sat on the edge of their sofas waiting for the blond man with the scruffy hair to address the nation.

Disaster, Britain is to go into its first full lockdown and I can remember standing there with my mouth wide open. I think the scariest thing was the unknown, the not knowing how we would come out of this the other side if we were lucky enough to escape this horrible virus. I don't want to dwell too much on this dark time but if the corona virus hadn't evolved, then the next part of my journey through life would never have happened.

I went to work the following morning and was summoned upstairs straight away to start deciding who was vulnerable and got to work sending home certain individuals to keep them and their families safe and it wasn't long before I was also put on furlough. My ex-wife was a key worker and although she could do her job from home, she was still working full time which left me to help my daughter with her school work, and like so many

struggled big time, not with being at home with her but the work. OMG!

Can I just say, school wasn't for me back in the day – I only went for the social side. To be honest, I had some of my best fishing days down the river on a school day. lol.

The problem with the home schooling, they were only set a certain amount of work a day so by lunch time my daughter was normally finished and bored and for thousands of parents I guess this was the hardest time, trying to keep your children up beat so they wouldn't get down although you, yourself inside were shitting yourself.

Anyway, my daughter, although very bright, (of course she takes after me), excels in things she is interested in with arts and crafts being one of them, had a drawing set that my mum and dad bought her the Christmas before. She opened the set and started to draw an eye which she needed to do for an art project at school.

I sat beside her and thought, wow this looks quite relaxing to be honest so I opened Youtube and found a tutorial on how to draw an eye and sat down with one of my daughter's sketch pads. before I knew it, four hours had passed and I had finished my first drawing. Now you're probably all sitting there wondering what the hell this has to do with carp fishing? Please bear with me and I will get to that later on.

Back to the story, before I knew it, I was on that very well-known shopping site ordering my own drawing set and proceeded to follow a few more tutorials in the process. Not thinking too much about it, I was drawing a woman on black paper with her hair waving in the wind.

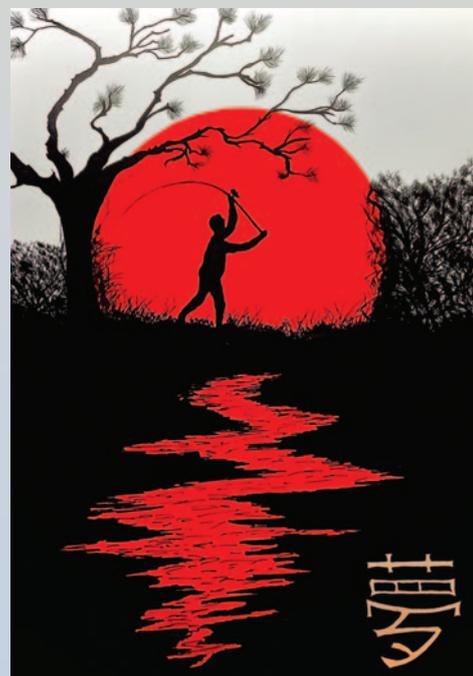
Karen, my partner, looked at it and said: wow that's amazing, you are improving all the time. So, I did what most do and posted the drawing on Facebook. I had loads of lovely comments and that gave me the confidence to push harder and stepped it up a notch trying more challenging



techniques and obviously buying better quality materials.

Like most anglers there are two birds an angler loves, one is the beautiful robin – a tame bird that will do anything for a maggot and the other the beautiful kingfisher with its striking colours and dart shaped head, the rest of lake fairing birds can do one. (lol).

I had an idea that I was going to draw a kingfisher in full colour on A3 paper – a size that would show every detail and a drawing that in the end took me over 30 hours to complete, well



om the heart

I wasn't doing anything else was I?

By this point I had joined a few Art Pages and one in particular was a page called Fishing Art. I clicked off a few images on my phone and posted. The response was overwhelming at the time, and even my close friends who would normally take the pi** out me for this had only nice things to say, all agreeing that I could possibly take it further.

Now I had no intention on selling the picture as it was by far the best thing I had ever done. But I was contacted by a guy called Mark Sargeant, asking if he could buy it?

The first two-three weeks, I continued to decline his offer. See the reason I was so protective of it is, I will only ever do the image once so if I let it go it's gone forever and yes I could do another one, but I think that's what makes art unique and special is one-offs.

I carried on thinking about Mark's offer and changed my mind in the end, the reason being how special is that somebody actually wants to buy your work from you, and that was worth more to me confidence wise, than the actual drawing its self.

Mark came to pick up the drawing and asked if I could draw his dog as well which I accepted and delivered.

A year has passed since that day and a lot has happened for me regarding my art and I have sold well over thirty drawings and commissions which has

now pushed me to a new chapter in my life (CLOTHING).

I have recently put pen to paper and started coming up with designs and have launched my very own brand – Aqua Liliium clothing. It's unique in a way that this is a piece of art on your back and not a computer created image.

I have one design on the market at the moment with a further two to be launched in January. Like most things you never know how it's going to turn out, so I was very cautious and nervous when ordering my first consignment, as you always get people who want to put you down.

The thing is, I'm a big believer in following your dreams and especially when it comes to my children, showing them that if you work hard enough you can make it come true and change your stars.

I am very lucky that I have good friends in this industry and one being Rob Maylin who I owe a lot too, a person that has always supported me and given me advice regarding my writing and would like to say thank you for believing in me.

If you do like documenting your fishing, give it a go and write your very own article, I write to show my kids. If I can do it, anyone can. Anything is possible. The only advise I would give is write from the heart.

At this moment in time, I am currently working on the website. Actually' re-phrase that, I am useless on a computer, Ellis, a good friend of mine, is working on a website. If you would like to get in touch, I have a Facebook page and Instagram, or you can purchase through the guys at Elmstead Fishing Tackle Shop.

I will also be stocking in other tackle shops so will keep you posted. Also, if there is a design or a piece of artwork you would like me to look at, please get in touch.

So, for thousands of people, Covid has been a horrible time with loved ones being lost and loneliness amongst the



elderly. Also, peoples' mental health taking an absolute battering over this. I guess you could say that I was one of the lucky ones and my cloud really did have a silver lining.

Take care and keep your family safe,
Mark Quinn



The Feral Way... The Reserve

By Leon



The windswept reserves, guesting as some would call it. I call it enjoyable fishing and peace and quiet in tranquil settings. I have ignored waters and pressured beasts of the deep that lurk in the better-known lakes. We are so spoilt around where I live with the amount of huge windswept pits full of uncaught carp and the chance to tackle them in the stealthiest of approaches.

Ultimate stealth approach is what is needed when trying to outwit these uncaught beasts and also avoiding capture from the wardens that control the waters.

A friend and I spent a week on a 100-acre reserve near to where I live back in the summer of 2013. This was my first encounter with guesting and a huge learning curve of how to keep myself hidden from the preying eye of



(Top) The setup.
(Below) Night of carnage... 30lb old scaly, one of three that my friend and I had.

bird watchers. My friend had done quite a few years on and off with this particular lake with some amazing results also. Using the most basic of tactics and simple baiting strategies

he managed to add up some huge carp and in big numbers too.

Well it was early June of 2013, and we had planned to do a session on the reserve for a week. About a week





before the session we had also planned to bait five days prior to fishing it, keeping a constant supply of bait going in over a plateau area at 75 yards' range, which was the biggest

feature in the lake. We had seen carp here earlier that week when we were snooping around, sussing good areas to concentrate on. The plan was to bait 2kg a day with bigger baits i.e.

18-20mm to try and avoid the huge shoals of monster bream that are present in these pits. With all baiting done and gear ready to go, there was one major thing to do, and not forgetting the camo netting was most important! No kitchen sinks either, only two rods, one T-bar bank stick, one broly, one net, mat and scales and terminal tackle – that's it – no bedchair, no cooker, no head torch!

We arrived at the lake at 9:30pm on the Sunday night under the cover of darkness, knowing exactly which area we were off to. We set about getting there undisturbed or seen by anyone. The cover of darkness was the best way of moving around on these huge pits. Within 15 minutes we were sat in our chosen plots for a week's guesting, both melting with excitement and enthusiasm on what we might encounter over the next five days. The idea was to stay up all night and blend in with the shrubs and bushes that surrounded us both. We had spent some time choosing



(Top) 35lb common after my op.
(Left) Darkness over the reserve.

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Legendary Carp Paintings



- Bazil
- Heather
- The Black Mirror
- The Royal Forty
- The Bishop
- The Burghfield Common
- Jumbo
- Two Tone
- Mary and Mary's Mate



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this area because of the natural camouflage that existed all around the swim and especially the big overhanging willows that drooped down over the water's edge. Really dense thistles and shrubs surrounded the area, so with the broly rammmed into the dense vegetation and camoed up to the highest levels it was time for rods to be cast to their chosen spots. All was very quiet on the 100-acre pit.

By this point it was now early hours of the morning and the cover of darkness was leaving. With the lake's spirits rising up from the depths of the old pit, the birds all came to life at once. Quite an amazing atmosphere was happening as the sun slowly started to rise and broke through the misty water's surface. Considering we had not slept yet I did not feel tired at all; in fact I was buzzing, gazing across to where my traps were positioned 70 yards out. There seemed to be some



activity from waterfowl over my area. I received a couple of bleeps and then a heavy liner. The coots became increasingly loud over the spot where I was fishing. It was just off the shelf

of the plateau in 7ft of water. There was an explosion in the water as a big bow wave rolled off the spot as the alarm screamed into action. With the clutch set tight I pounced onto the

(Top) White water waves.
(Below) 34lb zip lin.



rod remembering to keep myself hidden as well as I could as the carp was sprinting towards the shallow side of the plateau. I just knew I had to get on it quickly; these carp were hardcore fighters. As the carp and I were doing battle my good friend had a double take, there and then. "Oh my god!" I could not believe it – just mental! I managed to net my fish and left it to rest in the net while I tried to help my friend who was in a bit of a mess at this point. Lines were everywhere. This is the key thing, we only brings two rods because too many lines is too messy, and when the fish are on it, they're really on it, so multiple runs are in evitable.

Between us we managed to land all three carp, and with the fish resting I decided to get everything ready for pics and weighing. The funny thing is I never really took much noticed of



**(Right) The Reserve.
(Below) 30lb common.**

the carp, but when I did I was amazed – three 30-plus Reserve stunners – two commons and a real old scaly mirror. It was unbelievable; it really

was. With pictures done and fish returned we set about sorting ourselves out, as the swims were carnage.



It was around 7am when we spotted the first warden walking around the lake with their big old scopes and high-powered binoculars and their bloody scurrying eyes. My friend and I knew we had to keep ourselves hidden well. Most of the days were spent tucked up in the brollies hidden from any prying eyes. I knew of someone who had been caught before, but he was the sort of angler who had brought the kitchen sink. It goes to show – hide yourself away and respect the fact that you're not meant to be there, then it can be enjoyed by all of us. My friend and I had a really good week's fishing and we managed 40 runs, landing 37 carp to 40lbs in weight. It was unreal. It reminded me that this was something I could not do every day as the hiding all day was hardcore, especially with the long, hot days of summer.

In April 2014 I decided to return to the Reserve and do a long session on the 100-acre pit. A week prior to starting my session I had to go into hospital for a hernia operation, which was not good at all considering the recovery time was 12 weeks. Well just three days after the operation I got myself together and my fishing gear and got my arse down to the Reserve under the cover of darkness. Another friend of mine had kindly offered a lift and to give me a hand getting my gear to the lake. Thank you mate – always remembered. I set up in area at the pit that I had found previously through the winter months on scouting trips. The area was 25 rods lengths out, and it was a deep, silty area rising up onto a shallower plateau. The night I had arrived on the pit I was actually sat off the back of the wind.

Through the night it was quiet, so I applied bait to the chosen area. With rods out I sat back in my inconspicuous camoed-up broolly nestled neatly in the rushes. I was awaiting the morning rush of hungry carp. At first light the wind had swung, blowing straight into me with heavy gale and lots of white water ripping off the surface of lake. My two rods were motionless as I thought I was in for a chance that morning. The action didn't actually start until the following morning with the wind still ripping into my corner of the lake. That morning I heard multiple fish boshing out at range near to where I had previously baited. At 5:30 am the rod was

off with a torpedo attached. It was a Reserve common weighing 35lbs and I was over the moon. Two nights back on the reserve and I was already into big fish. It was awkward only being out of hospital for a few days and was really difficult lifting a fish of this size. Phone calls were made for a friend to help with pics and a celebration was needed as with every fish caught from the reserve.

“My two rods were motionless as I thought I was in for a chance that morning”.

The rest of the day saw no more action from the area, and the wind was steadily increasing, so I dipped the rod tips deeper to keep the debris off the lines. The following morning at around the same time as the last bite I received a belting run. There had been a couple of shows previously and then the same rod had torn off. Once played and landed, I noticed it was the big zip linear my friend had caught in previous years. It weighed in at 34lbs, and I was mesmerised by the sight of it; it was absolutely stunning. It was the right shape and had a perfect line of scales – a proper zip lin.

After all this I was even more keen

to get the rod back on the spot, as I had been getting liners on the other rod whilst doing weighing and pics. Within minutes of putting the rod back out, and before even being able to place the bobbin on the rod it was off again and bent double into something. As with most fishing situations, unfortunately you don't land them all, and this one I lost. I'm talking no more of it, but it was something seriously special.

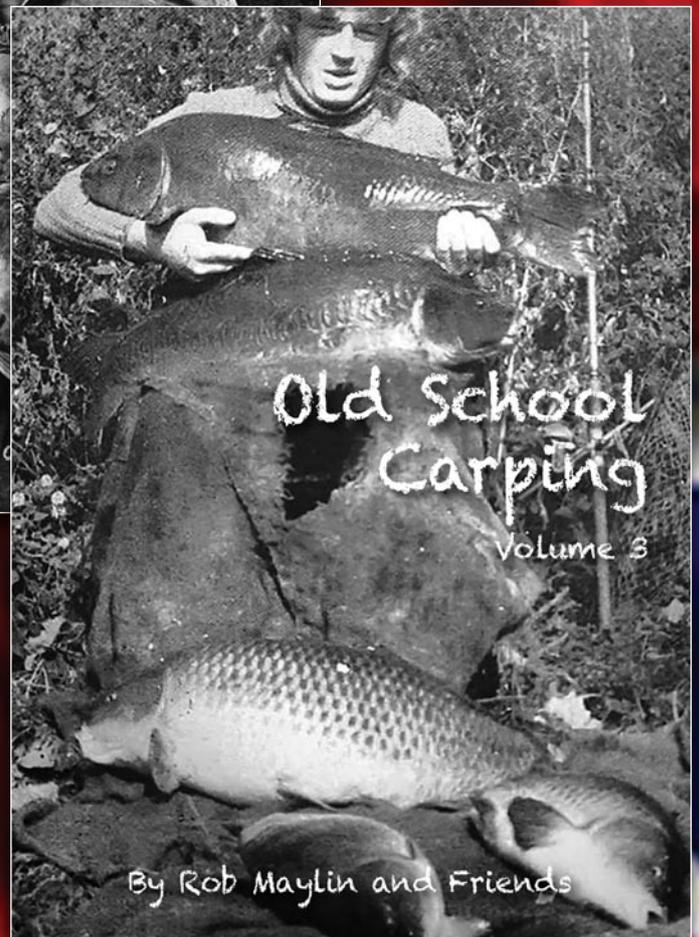
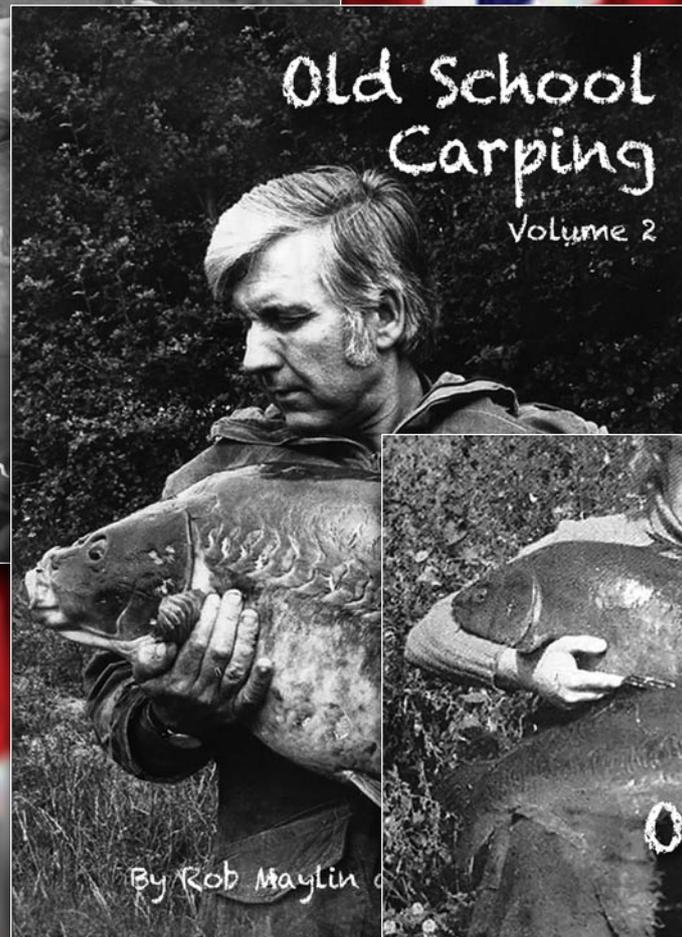
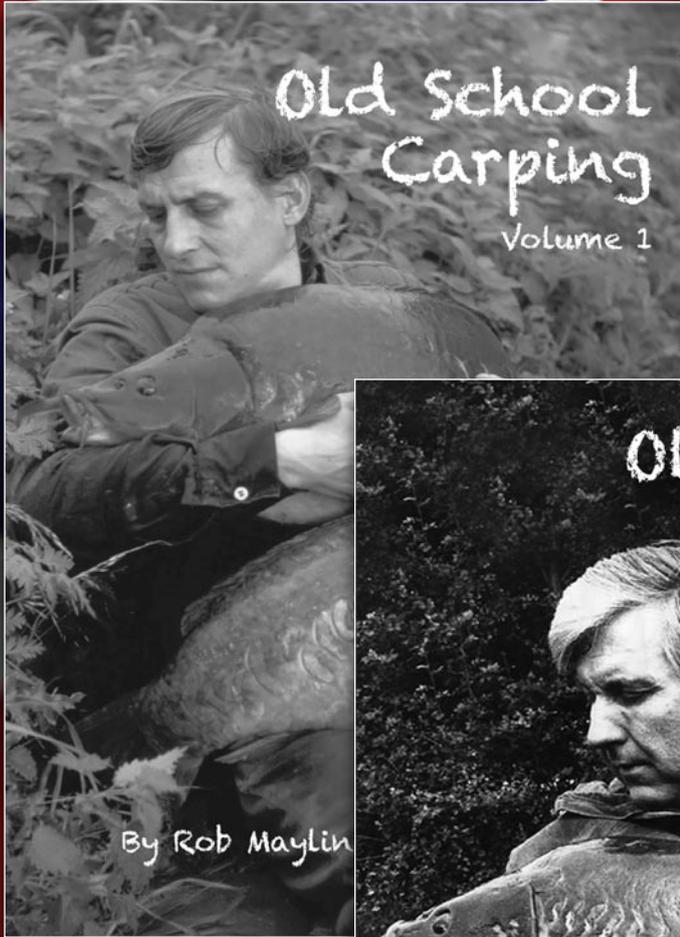
After getting my head back on track the rods were repositioned back in the area, and later on that day I received another belting run from yet again another 30lb Reserve common. Stoked is not the word, and crippled is how I felt after being beaten up by three Reserve lumps after a hospital operation, but this is the stupid sort of thing we do to fish for the things we desire.

I have certainly got unfinished business with the Reserve. The place takes me back to my roots and fishing wild and hearing stories about the water just makes me feel wild inside and forces me to pursue these fish and these kinds of waters. It's different out on the Reserves; you can't get caught or you won't get back on there and those fish you hear crashing at night will never be held or seen, so 'feral' is always the way! ■



For all of us to share as good friends.

OLD SCHOOL CARPING SERIES



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RK Leisure Wraysbury 1

By Jo Green

It's not often you get offered an opportunity like this so when I got an invite to fish Wraysbury 1. I couldn't believe my luck, but with a three-week fishing trip to Thailand looming I was wondering if I would be able to fit a session in before I left England. However as usual I found a way and work took a back seat. By the following Thursday afternoon I was setting up on the great lake, buzzing, and I just couldn't wait to start fishing. Although early September it was still very weedy, but it was possible to find spots with the marker and cast to them. The boat was moored up in the swim just in case I did manage to get lucky and hook a carp, and then I'd just go out to net the fish if it got weeded up. Not

really anticipating much action I settled down for the night, and then at 3am I had two bleeps from one of the alarms. Upon getting to the rod I could see the tip had bent around to the left and the bobbin was trembling slightly, so I immediately got in the boat and started make my way to where the fish was weeded up. Then when I got above the fish it finally came free of weed and decided to throw its toys out. Finally after an epic 20-minute battle out in the boat she was finally in the net – a beautiful mirror.

But then chaos erupted. On my way back with the fish I could hear a buzzer sounding, and sure enough the other rod had gone off. Quickly releasing the mirror from the net when I returned, I then proceeded to go on

another boat ride to retrieve the other fish, which by now was well weeded up. Eventually with a little patience the fish came free and shortly afterwards came to net. It was certainly interesting out in the boat when it's pitch black. I didn't bother to cast the rods back out; there was no need. I was more than happy with the result I'd had – two fish on my first visit – unbelievable. I wasn't expecting that.

I couldn't wait to get back and I squeezed in one more session before I left for Thailand, which went just as well as the last trip. I was overwhelmed when I managed to land this stunning Wraysbury mirror out in the boat. It was daylight this time, and it was quite a sight looking down at the fish, watching her in the clear water doing her very best to get





away. Thankfully she lost the battle and slipped over the cord.

One month later I returned to this magical place and couldn't have known how well my penultimate trip would go. I set up in a swim known as the Giant Footsteps late afternoon, just beating darkness as the last rod got cast into a cave along the left margin. By now the weed had subsided, and I didn't need the boat anymore.

It was just before 7pm, and I was

sat drinking my first cup of tea when the left hand margin rod screamed off. I was frantically reeling so fast as it was coming towards me, as I had to keep it out of the snag to the left. Then thankfully as I reeled in the slack it started to move away from the snag and out into open water then shortly afterwards, just as it was about to go in the net the other rod went off and chaos ensued. I managed to get the first one in the net,

then whilst playing the other, I was also hanging onto the net to stop the original one escaping, all I had to do now was net this one with the other in the net with a steep drop of about 4ft from the bank to the water in the dark. Well somehow, and I will never know how, I managed it without falling in.

The next problem I had was that there was no one else on the lake this time to do the photos, so I secured the net, got everything ready then took the photos with the smart phone remote. A little while later both fish were returned none the worse for wear. Having one more fish a few hours afterwards the session finished nicely just before midday with a stunning linear.

I have now unfortunately become addicted to fishing Wraysbury and cannot wait to get back in the New Year. Not once have I have ever been too worried about being down there on my own. The venue has now had extensive work done since its purchase by RK Leisure with security fencing around the boundary, major tree work and snag removal, a well laid track all the way around the lake, and now on its way to completion, major renovation of the ageing sailing club. I can't thank Jamie and RK Leisure enough for allowing me to fish here, and when it opens to the general public again in 2015 I hope you get as much pleasure fishing it as I do. ■



More Beasts from the Country Park

By Lee Brooks



After a mild winter I found myself fishing the local day ticket waters waiting for the close season to pass by so I could get down the Country Park and target some whackers! It never fishes well in winter, and by the sounds of it nothing had been caught either. I remember my mate saying he was going to start rolling his own bait this season, and was looking forward to trying it out on the lake. We came up with a plan to bait up several weeks before the season started and keep an eye on the spots for any showing fish. As luck would have it fish started showing within days of the bait being put in, and it wasn't long before we decided to give it a quick night session on the sly. Talk about excitement! We were itching to get down there.

I was putting a few finishing touches to the boilie I had been working on the previous season too, which was coming together nicely. We had baited the previous night quite heavily, so it was hit or miss for the first session in my mind. My mate had a rod in the margins, and one straight out 50 yards. I had all three rods whacked out 80 yards, fished on the edge of the baited spot. Not a bleep all night, then my mate's margin rod screamed off. Avoiding a few snags, a clean 20lb-plus common was netted –



result! After a few pics we were on our way home.

My mate couldn't fish for a while, so I decided to go it alone, still trickling bait in after dark and keeping close watch on the water. I had chosen to fish a neglected hole in the trees – not exactly a peg but it had great cover for any dog walkers or wardens patrolling at night. I felt proper carpy, tucked away with a flask of tea and a pack of custard creams! The downside was that to land any fish, you had to be in the water. The margin was about 3ft deep with snags both sides, so it was a case of tire the fish in the middle and straight for the net... and

bring spare clothes too!

After a sleepless night and a hard day at work I was heading down to the Park. I cast all three rods out with a few handful of boilies on each rod. It looked really carpy; it was just me against the fish! Both my left and middle rod were fished close to the floating island around 50 yards straight out, and my right hand rod was fished 40 yards to the right of the floating island into a small depression where it went from 12ft down to 14ft. I was fishing Mainline 10mm pop-up with the old faithful stringer. Backleads were a must because of the snags to the left and right of me.



Low twenty.

A few hours passed so I decided to get some sleep. I was working locally the day after so I didn't have to get up too early, thank God. Normally I'm up early heading for London or Scotland, so it made a change, especially with work being slow at the time. It wasn't till around 1am that I woke up to a screamer on the left hand rod! I jumped straight in the lake, hit into the fish and played it as calmly as I could. My knees were shaking like mad, but after a while the lead ejected and the fish came to the surface. After a few minutes a nice 20lb-plus common was in the net. I was well chuffed!

I did a quick self-take, recast the rod and put a handful of boilies over the spot too. I had a quick slurp of tea and then got my head down. That night I managed two more fish, both low twenties: a mirror and another common. 20lb-plus is the average size of the fish in the Park; there weren't many doubles at the time. As for the big'uns, well, I wasn't sure how many, but I guessed there were a few to nail.

The day after work was dragging big time, but it wasn't long before I was rolling a few kilos of boilies for my sessions at the Park. That night I took the dog for a walk, baited up just before dark, stayed an hour and generally watched the water for signs of fish. Nothing was showing, but I had



a gut feeling there were a few munching about. The forecast the day after was for a fresh, strong northerly wind. I knew full well that would bring a few fish down my end of the lake, so I decided another night session was on the cards.

I got down just before dark. The water was foaming at the margins with a big northerly blowing in my face. I pinned down the shelter and cast all three rods on the same previous spots I had fished the session before. The tea and biscuits were straight out – my typical diet for

sneaky sessions at night. I just make sure I hide the crumbs before I leave in the morning.

Straight away I was getting liners; there were fish everywhere boshing out all over my swim, I couldn't rest to be honest; I knew any moment I would get a surprise from one of the Country Park stunners. Then all of a sudden the left hand rod ripped off! Tea spilt everywhere, and the biscuits were all over the place. Within seconds I was in the lake playing another Park fish, and this one felt like one of the bigger fish, holding deep and not



Low twenty.



Low twenty.

CARPING AFTER-CUT

At last, the third book from the UK's most prolific catcher, Jim Shelley. Following in the footsteps of his sellout second book, Carping Re-Cut, this book documents Jim's fishing over the last few incredible years. No one comes within light years of Jim's captures over this time with numerous 50-pluses from some very testing venues and a shed full of backup 30s and 40s.

ALL BOOKS ARE
SIGNED BY JIM

Here is what Jim
had to say...

"My new book is finally here, 'Carping AFTER-CUT', after spending hundreds of hours writing it bankside. Come join me in the next installment detailing my highs and lows over the last few years, starting from Charnwood, Ellis, Dinton, Fen, Swavesey, Woolpack, Bayeswater, Sutton, Buchan plus some poaching for good measure. Like 'Carping RE-CUT', there will be plenty going on to keep you gagging for more."

Jim Shelley



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Low twenty.

playing the game like the others did. It took ages to get a glimpse of the fish; the lead hadn't ejected and the fish was in close, but as luck would have it, the fish went straight towards the snags on the right; it was carnage!

I had 15lb Adrena-Line on at the time, so with a bit of brute force and changing my line angle, I bought it near the net and saw a great lump slide into the net. It was a fat, dumpy 30lb-plus mirror! I remember shout-

ing, "Yes, ya bastard!"

After unplugging myself from the silty margins a few pics were taken, she was swimming and I was grinning. I managed another four 20lb-plus fish that night with the biggest being 28lb-plus. Everything was coming together for me now; the bait was bang-on, location was right and the bites were coming thick and fast! The floating island was producing the goods but still I hadn't had any fish on the right hand rod. I decided to have

a break from fishing for the rest of the coming week, and also to rest the swim, plus I was getting earache from the missus! I still baited up every other night, but this time put lots of bait in to keep them hanging around the swim that bit longer.

The close season was coming to an end, and I knew I was going to fish hard these last few weeks. With work being really slack and getting lots of local jobs it was just what I needed to catch a few more Country Park stun-



Low twenty.



Low twenty plus.



Low twenty plus.



Low twenty plus.

ners! I managed a sneaky Monday night session in after permission was granted by the missus. The weather was bang-on for bite – low pressure and plenty of rain. My addiction to catching these carp was growing more and more. The early morning wakeups didn't bother me; I just wanted more time at the Park!

I did the usual routine, casting all three rods on the spots and sprinkled half a kilo of boilies. The tea was flow-

ing and the custard creams were going down a treat. I had been reading Terry Hearn's "In Pursuit of the Largest" book recently, which made me realise why I spend so much time thinking and constantly daydreaming about carp fishing. Just being there is enough for me, and the carp are a bonus. I started getting liners straight away on the right hand rod, which hadn't produced anything all the time I had fished that spot, so I was curious

to what I might get.

Boom! The right hand rod bent like mad! I hit into the fish and it just kept pulling and pulling; it must have taken at least 50 yards of line. It was thrashing like mad in the centre of the lake; the lead popped off and it was on the surface in no time. It took ages to get it in close – definitely a Park biggie! Just as I scooped the fish into the net the hook pulled! It was a very close call I must say! It weighed in at



Mid twenty.



Mid twenty.



Mid twenty plus.



Mid twenty plus.



Mid twenty plus.



Low thirty.

35lb-plus – get in! It was a beautiful looking fish with a red belly with really nice scale pattern. I was over the moon, my biggest Park carp! I'd heard the biggest was 32lb-plus, but I don't always believe what anglers say unless I've seen the fish or trust the angler telling me.

I quickly recast the right hand rod to the spot, and before I could put the rod down the clutch was letting off line at a fast rate! I quickly hit into the fish, and this time it did a U-turn and headed straight for me. It was like I was reeling nothing in; it must have been moving fast. Then the rod bent double under the tip, and it was right in front of me. I could see a huge black scale on its side as it was going mental in the margins. The lead ejected shortly after and the fish headed for the centre of the lake, pulling really hard with lots of energy to burn. Then all of a sudden it stopped. It felt like it was snagged up on something, but moments later I felt a ping on the line and thought the hook pulled, but thankfully the clutch started twisting again and I slowly started bringing the fish my way. It was an epic battle to say the least, and I netted what looked like a decent upper 20 or maybe a low 30.

I remember looking in the net at how deep and wide the fish was with this huge black scale on its side – it looked awesome! It was just sulking,

CARPING RE-CUT

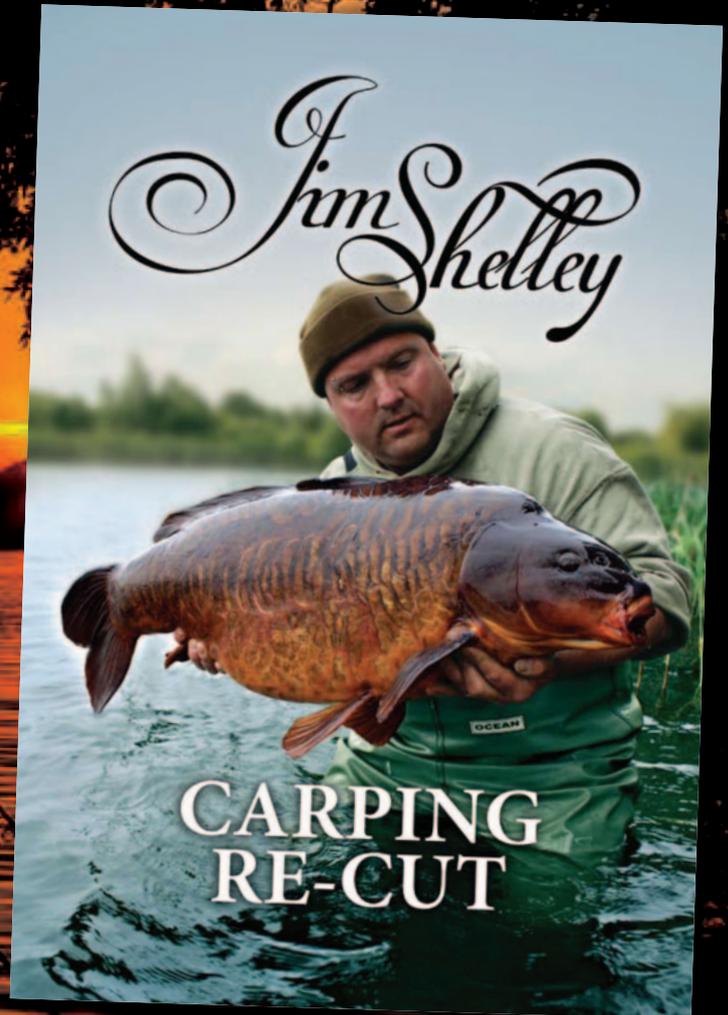
Jim Shelley

Jim Shelley is the UK's most prolific hunter of big carp. He is a carp fishing force of nature and no carp can withstand his pursuit for long. He has carved out a career in carp fishing with an iron will and perspiration, and this book is the physical embodiment of that drive. Every single word is testament to the fact that Jim won't ever give up. He taught himself to write so that he could genuinely say that he'd written this huge book unaided. That is just what he has done too.

Inside you'll find the truth... the whole truth. Nothing has been airbrushed and at times Carping Re-Cut can make for uncomfortable reading. It's gritty, it deals with difficult situations that Jim found himself on and off the bank. Let's not forget, throughout a portion of this book, Jim's wife Jane battled with cancer and if the strain took its toll, then Jim has written about the consequences, and left nothing out! Carping Re-Cut tells the story of a man driven to catch the biggest and best carp out there. There are colourful and touching moments along the way and of course, there are the fish! This book holds beautiful images of many of the fish that captured the hearts of carp men throughout the last decade or so. Eventually, Jim worked out how to catch them all, and the way that he did it is laid bare here for you to read.

So, join Jim on a journey that starts in 'bandit country' near Heathrow, passes east through Cambridgeshire and Norfolk before swinging back via Royal Berkshire, and plunging deep into the jungle that is the mysterious Colnemere, as Jim searches for the ultimate prize, the Black Mirror. One thing's for sure, it won't be dull!

At last the long awaited second book from carp fishing's No.1 angler is available direct from Bountyhunter Publications. Carping Re-Cut is the follow up to Jim's highly successful first book Carping Un Cut and is a mammoth size publication containing over 400 beautiful colour plates, exclusive stories and an incredible amount of huge carp from waters far and wide. Jim always was a great carp angler but over the past few seasons he has evolved



into the ultimate catching machine. Water after water, target after target and record after record have fallen to this sometimes controversial angler, nevertheless no one can deny his ability and no carp is uncatchable once Jim sets his mind to it. Jim's first book was a great read and it's sometimes hard for an author to match the quality of his first book, however this is not the case with Carping Re-Cut. This book is a revelation and no carp angler of any ability, age or status should miss out on what is definitely the book of the decade from the world's greatest carp angler.

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Upper twenty plus.



Lower thirty after spawn.



Low thirty.

waiting to swim back to its home. She weighed in at 34lb-plus. I couldn't believe it – another Park 30lb-plus – get in! Once I had calmed down from all the excitement I decided to recast all three rods with a good sprinkling of boilies over all three spots. The rest of the night was complete magic for me – the left hand rod and middle rod produced seven 20lb-plus carp and the right hand rod produced another two 30lb-plus fish. The Park was being good to me; the whole experience so far was immense! Before I left, I baited up with a few kilos of boilies and just looked at the water and finished my last slurp of tea with a smile on my face.

I hadn't spoken to my mate for a few days so I sent him a text message and told him about all the fish I'd had and he couldn't believe what I was catching. After sending him a few pictures he was ready to jump on board and finish the last remaining few days of the close season with me. I had a lot of local work for the next days so it worked in my favour for the remaining night sessions ahead of me, and getting up and leaving after bite time was a bonus too.

Anglers were coming down at evening times baiting up for opening day, and the few "clued up anglers" were watching the water for signs of fish moving and walking several laps of the lake, I guessed, to choose the



30lb 4oz.

peg they wanted for when they planned to fish. Luckily for me the fish weren't showing themselves too often and helped me make my last few trips that bit more special.

Two more night sessions were going to be fished with my mate, and we were hoping for just a few more good memories of the awesome Country Park fish! Wardens were on regular patrols, so getting to the lake that bit later at night was going to be the way forward, especially with the regular anglers keeping an eye out too. I picked my mate up just before dark, quickly popped to the pizza place and headed straight down to the Park. I couldn't bear another custard cream!

The coast was clear and the rods were cast out. My mate fished the usual margin rod and one straight in front. He had some knee high waders on, and as he cast out the waders dropped an inch under water and he was swimming. I heard him shout, "Help me then you bastard!" I was laughing my head off! He had turned

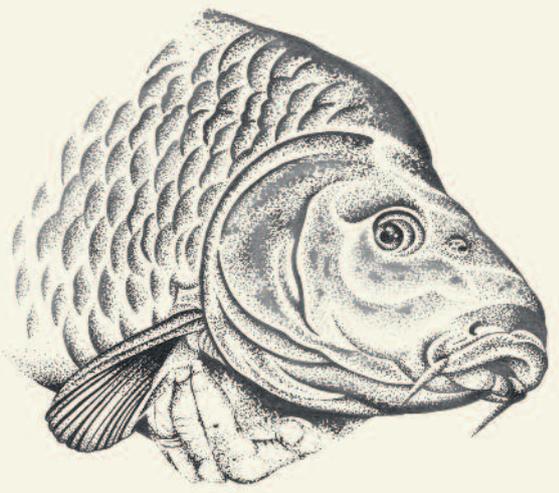


30lb 2oz.

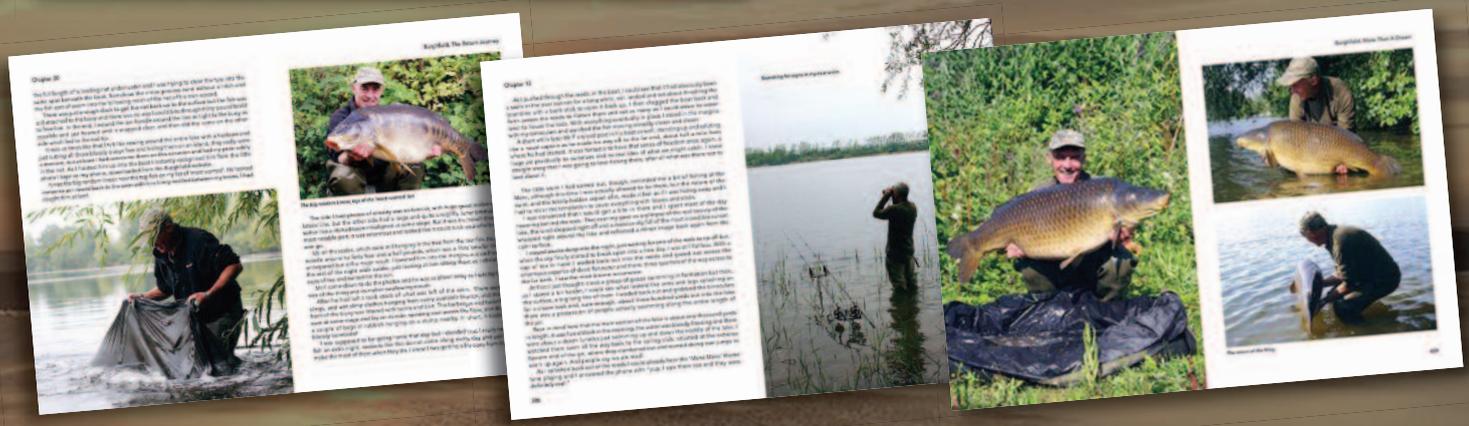
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Fine Lines

Dave Lane



Now available direct from Bountyhunter Publications is a signed copy of Dave Lane's fourth book, Fine Lines. Whether you are an avid fan and following on from Dave's first books or delving into his world for the first time, you are bound to be entertained, amazed and left wanting yet more of his adventures. Together with his faithful hound, Padwar, he has travelled the land in search of monster carp and catalogued his experiences in his own inimitable style, which is peppered with humour, disasters, bizarre occurrences, and, ultimately, success.



Dave's writing style has always focused on painting the entire picture so that you, the reader, can feel as if you are there on the bank beside him at all times, sharing in the experiences every step of the way. The big carp scene is a weird and mysterious place, and although Dave fishes right at the pinnacle of this strange world, he always seems to find time for a bit of fun along the way, so sit back and enjoy the ride. It's a must read for novice and experienced carp anglers alike.

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Farm Pond

By Joe Neale – Team PSB

Set in the midst of the lovely Devon countryside, the two and a half-acre farm pond, natural weed pit has everything. It looks stunning and has every feature you could imagine: two small islands, short range swims, margin swims, reeds, gravel, silt, heavy Canadian weed, and it is even great for chasing the very low stock of proper old English carp.

After spending a couple of months doing two nights a few weeks on my stunning low stock water, I fancied a change of scenery, so I decided to sort out a very short trip over to the farm pond after hearing a lot of good things about it. I spoke to the owner and few

anglers the week before while pre-baiting. After arriving at the lake nice and early it was apparent that it was very quiet. After a quick look around, I saw a number of fish sticking their heads out in a low water, so I decided to set up there for now. I quickly attached a single yellow Sweet Candy pop-up on the KD rig and cast to the showing fish. This had worked well for me in the past at Linch Hill, but then blanked the last two 24-hour sessions when I use the Sweet Candy. I know most other anglers were Spombing the Mainline Cell and Sticky Krill baits, which made things really hard for me. I did my homework, mapped out the lake in certain areas I like to be in after spawning

this year and set my target on some stunning carp.

After the blanks I was back a few days later for my day off on 24-hour session and lost a fish soon after arriving, which was bad enough in itself, but to make matters worse I managed to forget my bedchair and food. To anyone who has ever done this, and this being my second time in my angling life, it was bloody annoying. I decided to make a new blowback rig with SS4 bait. I don't think Sweet Candy suited this water because there are a lot of naturals. I decided change bait to use the SS4. I decided I would leave this rod for the night and moved my other rod onto the spot I had lost a fish from earlier. It



was very quiet for the rest of the night, but I did manage a common carp of 20lb 10oz landed in the very early morning, and what a stunner it was!

20lb 10oz Common Carp. (Is this supposed to be a photo caption, Colin?)

After I caught a stunner common on SS4 bait that which make me really very happy with the bait and seem worked very well on the low stock water. I have decided I want to stay on other 24 hours, so I texted my wife and asked if I could stay over other night, and she said yes – how lucky I am! But I told her I had no food, so she came down and dropped me a MacDonald's. The reason why I wanted stay over an extra night was because I knew I would catch another fish... my target fish!

I walked around to where my spot was and sat down on the bucket, watching, and I saw a stunning ghost common swim around my spot – perfect! I quickly opened the bucket and baited with SS4 boilies on my spot again. I walked back to my swim, set up a fresh blowback rig and cast out to my spots. But the fish were not interested in feeding due to a hot day, and it had been very quiet all the afternoon. Another two anglers arrived and cast out their rods. I thought it was game over due to line pressure. I was annoyed, but there was nothing I could do. One guy was really nice and talked with me about fishing. When dusk came I decided bait again with about 3kg of SS4 on my spots and tidy my swim around before I went to bed in my sweet bivvy!

During the night it switched on and fish started to become active because my bobbin kept dancing all night. It really annoyed me though, because my alarms woke me up many times. After about two in morning they started switching off and it became silent again. I thought it was very strange, but I could catch up on some sleep! At three in morning I had a very fast run on my left rod. I battled with my Fox Horizon rod for 20 minutes but the clever fish went in very heavy, deep weed. It wouldn't come out of the weed and the hook pulled. I was gutted. Again I'd lost two fish in three sessions, but I tried to think positive. I set up a rig in the same way, cast out to the same spot and went back into



the bivvy for a good sleep.

An hour later I had a run on my left rod run again. I walked backward to try to battle it in a different way from last one. I managed it well for 40 minutes, but the fish went in other different weedbed again. I was really annoyed and couldn't see where the fish was because it was still dark. I carried on battling with the fish in weed about other ten minutes, and finally it came out. I walked backwards behind my bivvy and kept fighting it for five minutes. Eventually I put my net in the water and shouted to the other anglers for help, but they were still asleep. I managed it myself in the end, but it was really very hard work in the dark!

I switched my head torch on and saw a huge, yellow common, which I knew was my target fish, and finally I got it in my net. I made sure the carp was safe and I woke another angler up to ask for help with weighing and photos. He came running around and I showed him what was in the net. He shouted, "Yes! You've got the big

ghost common!" He wet the sling, zeroed the scales, and we weighed the fish. The needle went straight over 25 – yesssss! It was 28lb 6oz. He said he would help me with the photos later after sunrise. I put the ghost common in a sling and lowered it carefully into the water. 40 minutes later I checked its mouth and body to make sure it was all healthy. The mouth was perfect, and it looked like it hadn't been hooked for a long time. He took the photos for me with this stunning fish! I've got three target fish, but that's one off the list! It was a good start with the SS4 and I am very happy! I texted the farm owner and they came within a few minutes. They said they recognised the fish, but it had not been out for four years. The fish looked old, and his tail had changed. It was an awesome old ghost common and the best-looking carp I'd ever caught, and from a very low-stock water. The lake is stunner and the stock is now up to 22 fish in two and a half acres – perfect! I will have a big smile on my face. ■

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