

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



Eight Days on Kingfisher by Barry Oconnor
The Essex Quarry Campaign
by Luke Phillips
Popups, Particles and PVA by Dan Cleary
The Elusive Carp Part 1 by Lee Brooks
Back on Roundabout at The Park
by Nathan 'Snowy' Sharp



The Brackish Pit by Will Mant
The Urban Myth Exclusive Spring Diary 2015
Rob Maylin talks with Terry Dempsey
Big Hit and 42lb-plus on Southern Venue by Jon Baczkowski
More Clay Pit Tales from Rob Gooch
Winter Whackers by Mark Webster
Chronicle Fishing Fryerning Diary
Spring Tactics by Rick Golder
Spring Carping by Steve Briggs
Elstow Session an extract from Ian Stott's book
Bronzy - The Estate Lake Common by Jake Lund
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5	ANGLING DIRECT NORWICH
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7	TACKLE UP
8	ANGLING DIRECT CHELMSFORD
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3	MAINLINE
4	TARGET
6	NUTRABAITS
5	CC MOORE
7	NASH
8	BAIT TECH
9	URBAN
10	DAVE MALLIN

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2	SAVAY
3	YATELEY
4	WRAYSBURY
5	FOX POOL
6	HORSESHOE
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 307

TARGET CARPING

**Barry Oconnor
– Kingfisher
Mega Session**

**Nathan 'Snowy'
Sharp – Park Life**

**Lee Brooks – The Elusive Carp
Luke Phillips – Essex Quarry Campaign
Dan Cleary – Increase Your Winter Bites**

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Target Carp

As we look forward to the spring, many of us will be setting targets, sometimes two, three or even more special carp that we have set our sights on for the coming season. This month most of our articles feature just such carp. Carp which some of our authors eventually slid the net under and some which evaded capture and once again will feature on the 'Wanted List' for another season.

Let's take a look at this month's offerings and start with the welcome return of Nathan 'Snowy' Sharp, one of our regulars with his first article of 2022. No one could deny that Nathan is a very good angler, his articles are always informative, humorous and stuffed with big carp and this article is no exception. It starts in 2020 with a Northey Park target 'Cannon' and continues to 2022 on the park with a previous target recapture 'Two Tone' a superb forty plus, caught from this testing venue.

A massive welcome back to Lee Brooks this month. You never know exactly what to expect when you get a piece from Lee, Off the beaten track, tales from the river bank, or unknown monsters. One thing you can depend on is that they will be special ones. Lee's targets come from hard graft, grinding away the hours looking for these special ones. 'The Elusive Carp' is a tale of just such an encounter.

Luke Phillip's set his sights on the Essex Quarry, home of some very special carp. His campaign spanned many months and resulted in the ultimate success. Also this month the third article in succession from big carp catching machine Barry O'Connor. Nobody would argue that father and son team Barry and Ben can catch 'em. Whether it's the big scallies of Cottington, the incredible stock of Bluebells' Kingfisher or match fishing, something the boys have been very successful at. This month we have a mega session from Barry on Kingfisher.

Finally, Dan Cleary gives us some of his tips to put some extra carp on the bank at this time of year. Dan is writing a piece on his 2021-2022 season for a future issue. An article featuring that upper forty UK target which featured in last month's catch reports!

Add to this lot the best in advertisers, Tac-Tec, Carpy News in Shock Leader, lots of Carpy Humour, Catch Reports and product reviews and this month's FREE Big Carp ticks all the boxes.

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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COTTINGTONS



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Darrell Peck.



News & Reviews

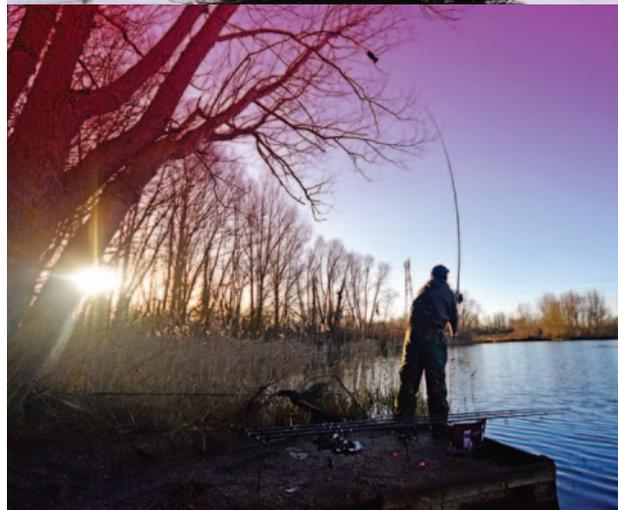
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ShockLeader

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

Angling Trust welcomes hard hitting Commons pollution report

Ofwat and Environment Agency told to improve regulation and enforcement

The increasing threat of pollution of rivers in England is once again in the spotlight with the publication today of a hard hitting report on water quality by MPs on the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee (EAC). Their report concludes that poor water quality in our rivers is a result of chronic under-investment and multiple failures in monitoring, governance and enforcement - all areas highlighted by the Angling Trust and partners who have been pressing for urgent action to halt the decline.

The EAC report states: "Only 14% of English rivers meet good ecological status, with pollution from agriculture, sewage, roads and single-use plastics contributing to a dangerous 'chemical cocktail' coursing through our waterways. Not a single river in England has received a clean bill of health for chemical contamination."

They point to a lack of commitment by successive governments in tackling pollution saying: "There has been a lack of political will to improve water quality, with successive governments, water companies and regulators seemingly turning a blind eye

to antiquated practices of dumping sewage and other pollutants in rivers."

It concludes that the country's sewerage infrastructure is not fit for purpose and recommends a 'step change' in approach from both Ofwat, the water regulator, and the Environment Agency and an end to paying bonuses to executives of the worst polluting water companies.

They say: "The Committee calls for a step change in regulatory action, water company investment, and cross-catchment collaboration to restore rivers to good ecological health, protect biodiversity and adapt to a changing climate. MPs are demanding far more assertive regulation and enforcement from Ofwat and the Environment Agency. The report recommends that Ofwat examine the powers it may have to limit the payment of bonuses to water company executives until widespread permit breaches cease."

Environmental Audit Committee Chairman, Rt Hon Philip Dunne MP, said: "Rivers are the arteries of nature and must be protected. Our inquiry has uncovered multiple failures in the

monitoring, governance and enforcement of water quality. For too long, the Government, regulators and the water industry have allowed a Victorian sewerage system to buckle under increasing pressure."

Responding to the report, Martin Salter, Head of Policy at the Angling Trust said: "Phillip Dunne and his colleagues have pulled no punches in their condemnation of the state of England's once beautiful rivers. The lethal cocktail of sewage and agricultural pollution is slowly choking the life out of these natural assets and successive governments have been reluctant to release the investment needed to properly and safely treat increasing volumes of sewage from a growing population. They have also failed to take action against those farmers, and others, who wilfully use our rivers as open drains."

Stuart Singleton-White, Head of Campaigns at the Angling Trust added: "This report from MPs exposes the systemic failure in how we manage our water in England. Nothing short of a revolution is needed. The government, regulators, water companies, and the way we manage our land, are all at fault. All need to be part of the solution. With freshwater ecosystems and species among the fastest declining environments on the planet, those solutions need to come quickly, the time for waiting and more discussion is over."

The Committee wrote to the DEFRA Secretary of State in October submitting views on the upcoming Strategic Policy Statement Guidance for water regulator Ofwat.

The Committee called for increased emphasis on wastewater treatment in capital spending plans for water companies, including nature-based solutions. They referenced the call for increased investment in the Time to Fix our Broken Water Sector report produced by the Angling Trust and Salmon and Trout Conservation last September. ■



Polypipe gets in line to help environmental charity

Plastic piping solutions manufacturer Polypipe Building Products is pitching in to help keep the nation's waterways free of leftover fishing lines – in order to protect wildlife and the environment.

A team of volunteers from the staff at Polypipe toolmakers Mason Pinder, in Doncaster, worked over a weekend to create more than 100 plastic bins from Polypipe stock which will be used to collect unwanted fishing line across the UK.

The bins have been donated to the Anglers National Line Recycling Scheme (ANLRS) which distributes them across the country. Discarded lines can pose a serious threat to wildlife around our rivers and lakes or on the coast, and the only previous alternative for disposal was landfill or incineration.

ANLRS ensures that all donated line is safely recycled.

It was Polypipe Building Products' Technical Director and keen angler Adrian Bristow who came up with the idea that the Doncaster-based company could offer to help the ANLRS.

He said: "We were very happy to be able to offer some practical help for this worthy cause.

"At Polypipe we are committed to attaining the very highest standards of sustainability and environmental protection and this donation is a small part of our efforts in 2021.

"I would like to thank the volunteers who gave up their time to help make this possible in what was a real team effort."

Viv Shears, co-founder of ANLRS which is funded entirely by donations and run by volunteers, said: "A massive thank you to Adrian and the band



Adrian Bristow – Technical Director – on the left and Derek Howe – Development Technologist on the right.

of Polypipe volunteers!

"The incredible donation from Polypipe has allowed us to make more pipe bins available and the funds raised from their sale will all be put back into the scheme allowing us to expand even further.

"The support of companies like Polypipe allows us – and our volunteers collecting discarded line – to make a significant impact into the damage that line can cause to wildlife."

For Polypipe news see <https://www.polypipe.com/news> – to

find out more about the ANLRS email Anglersnlrs@gmail.com or visit www.anglers-nlrs.co.uk

About Polypipe:

Polypipe designs, develops and manufactures the most comprehensive range of plastic piping products in the UK, with more than 20,000 products available.

The primary focus of Polypipe is on developing and supporting pragmatic product systems through specific knowledge and understanding of the residential, commercial, civils and infrastructure market sectors.

Customers can trust Polypipe's significant sales and technical expertise to provide value engineered, fit for purpose piping solutions for the growing diversity and complexity of construction and building technology challenges they face.

For more information, please visit www.polypipe.com. ■



Polypipe volunteers working on the bins.



Natural England back down over Hoveton fish barrier removals should harm occur to bream spawning areas

After determined action by solicitors at Fish Legal, on behalf of the Angling Trust and the Broads Angling Services Group (BASG), Natural England have accepted a previously disputed permit condition. This will now require the controversial fish barriers that they are installing at the entrance to Norfolk's Hoveton Great Broad to be removed should harm to fish stocks be detected at this important spawning site for bream and other coarse fish.

This is the second successful challenge by Fish Legal to the decision by the Environment Agency in East Anglia to grant Natural England a permit to block off the major spawning site for fish at Hoveton Great Broad in the northern Norfolk Broads in order to combat turbidity and promote better weed growth. The permit was granted despite formal objections from the Environment Agency's own fisheries staff backed up by seven years' worth of fish surveys, studies and tagging costing more than £250,000 of rod licence and taxpayers' money.

In November 2020, anglers won the first round in their battle to save this important spawning site when the Environment Agency announced that it was conceding the first of four grounds in a judicial review lodged by Fish Legal. This included "unfair and unlawful public consultation as evidenced by the failure to place rele-

vant information, including the objections from Environment Agency fishery staff, in the public domain."

The previously 'hidden' Environment Agency Fisheries Team advice stated:

"It follows that the proposed bio-manipulation methodology, involving the installation of fish proof barriers to prevent fish accessing the habitats currently found within HGB [Hoveton Great Broad] carries a high risk of detrimental impacts to the fish populations of both HGB and the Northern Broads system."

Following a second consultation the Environment Agency eventually bowed to pressure from Natural England and granted permission for controversial fish barriers to be installed with a tough condition that Natural England tried to claim was unenforceable. They have now conceded to the condition and compliance will be closely monitored by local angling interests and Environment Agency fisheries staff.

In a letter to both Natural England and the Environment Agency, Fish Legal solicitor Justin Neal clarified the legal position of Condition 9 as follows:

"Natural England had said in their application documents that the condition requiring that the barriers be removed if they cause environmental damage was unenforceable. That was extremely concerning as it would

mean the barriers would not be removed even if bream numbers crashed because they had been expelled from their spawning grounds. However, they now say the condition is enforceable

He concluded:

"Therefore, we now hold Natural England and the Environment Agency to this interpretation. If, once the project is undertaken, the Environment Agency determines that significant environmental harm is occurring to fish populations in the River Bure system as a result of the exclusion of fish from Hoveton Great Broad and/or Hudson's Bay, Natural England will be required to open the gates in the three barriers to allow fish into Hoveton Great Broad and/or Hudson's Bay."

The news was welcomed by Kelvin Allen, Chair of the Broads Angling Services Group who said:

"This places the Broads Fishery on a sustainable footing moving forwards and through these legal challenges we have made some significant progress, but much more is needed in the coming months working in partnership."

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

"Faced with the prospect of further action, Natural England have now conceded that the permit conditions are enforceable and that action can be taken to save fish stocks that are threatened by their hare brained scheme. The Environment Agency, whose fisheries experts opposed these plans from the start, now have to do their job in assessing the project for environmental harm. We will be watching the situation intensely and the moment any problems are identified, the barriers must be opened up to allow fish to enter and complete their spawning cycles.

"I have reminded the Environment Agency that they have a statutory duty to improve and protect fisheries and we will hold them to this. It is good news that Natural England are now severely constrained by these permit conditions and we will ensure that they comply. With BASG a key part of the monitoring process both the Angling Trust and Fish Legal will remain on standby to support them and to intervene again if required." ■



GO Outdoors and Fishing Republic give Angling Trust their backing



The Angling Trust is delighted to announce that leisure and tackle retailers GO Outdoors and Fishing Republic have become our latest Retail Associate members.

The partnership will see GO Outdoors and Fishing Republic support the Trust's work, especially our campaigns to protect rivers and coastal waters from pollution and initiatives to get more people into fishing.

Marie Stewart, Partnership Accounts Manager at JD Outdoor, said:

"We are delighted to be partnered with the Angling Trust. We aim to support the Trust in any way we can so that they continue to carry out the invaluable work they do for the angling industry and anglers across the country. We are particularly keen to back both their Anglers Against Pollution campaign and their work to introduce more people to fishing, especially at a time when protection of the environment is more important than ever."

Fishing Republic have 21 outlets inside GO Outdoors stores across the country, with plans to install a further 30 outlets next year. They also have three standalone stores in Birmingham, Barnsley and Crewe.

With a purpose "to inspire and

equip everyone for life outdoors", GO Outdoors stock a huge range of great value items for walkers, campers and anglers in its stores and online.

As part of the agreement, GO Outdoors and Fishing Republic are offering Angling Trust members a 10% discount on items in store and online. Members can find more details, including discount code, when they login to the Angling Trust website.

John Cheyne, Angling Trust's Head of Marketing, Communications & Membership, said:

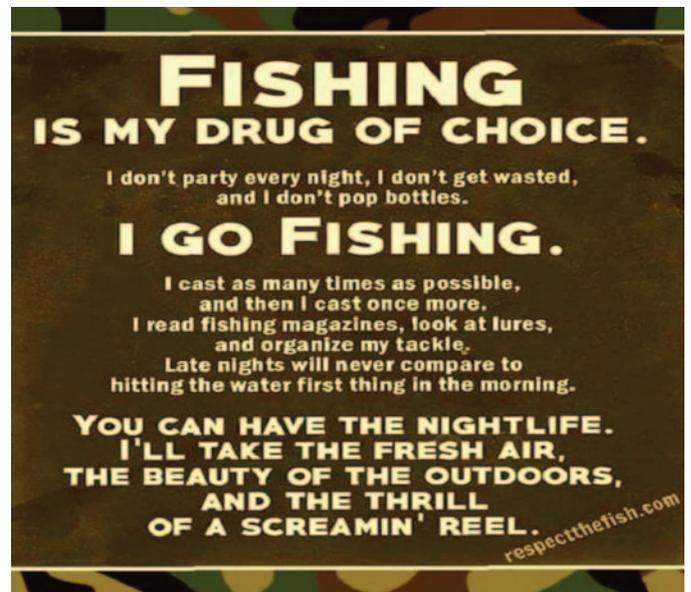
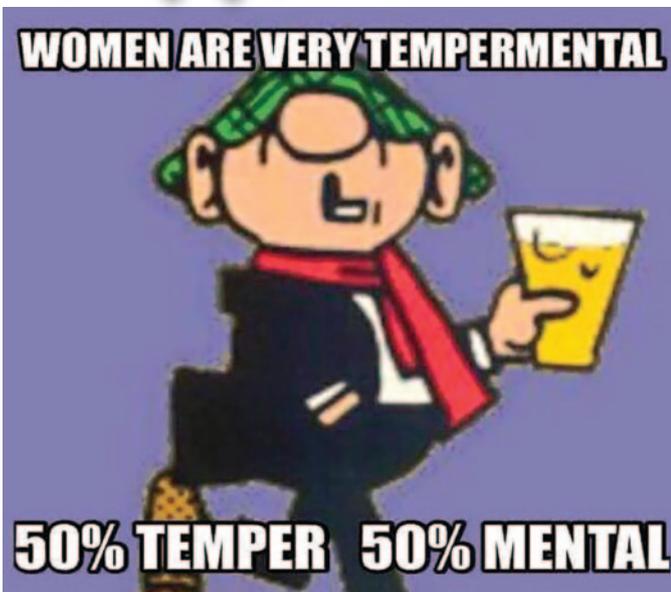
"GO Outdoors stores are a 'destina-

tion' shopping experience that almost every family in the country will visit at one time or another. The fact that they are expanding their angling offering is brilliant news for our sport and is another example of how fishing is growing in popularity and is reaching a new audience who are keen to experience and engage with our natural environment.

We are delighted to welcome GO Outdoors and Fishing Republic on board as Angling Trust members and look forward to working with them in the future." ■



Carp humour



After a successful launch in 2019, the Angling Trust in partnership with the Environment Agency, is pleased to announce a new Get Fishing Fund for 2022

An additional £100,000 of fishing licence income has been made available as part of a new Get Fishing Fund which opens for applications on Monday 17th January.

Angling clubs, fisheries and other organisations can apply for up to £2,500. Funding is for fishing tackle, equipment or other items to help run events and activities that create more opportunities for people to get into fishing. The type of items that can and cannot be funded are listed on the Get Fishing Fund page at

www.anglingtrust.net/funding/get-fishing-fund.

Applications are judged on a weekly basis, therefore funds may be allocated before the deadline of

Friday 17th March. Last year, the Get Fishing Fund was incredibly popular.

Do not delay in applying!

The Get Fishing Fund has already supported 140 projects all over the

Shakespeare®

Shakespeare is the Exclusive Fishing Tackle Partner of the Angling Trust's 'Get Fishing' campaign to get more people fishing, more often. There's no fish like your first fish. And nobody knows that better than Shakespeare. As more and more newcomers discover the joy of fishing, Shakespeare will be there, providing the gear and inspiration to make sure that the next bite will never be the last.

Funded by rod fishing licences



Going fishing is about much more than catching fish. It's a low-cost, fun and healthy way for families and friends to spend time together outside in nature.



Angling Direct

Getting Everyone Fishing

Angling Direct is the Exclusive Retail Partner of the Angling Trust's 'Get Fishing' campaign to get more people fishing, more often. This partnership encourages more people to take up angling for the first time, to get back into the sport and brings the health and wellbeing benefits of fishing to a wider audience, across all age groups.

Environment Agency

The Environment Agency funds the Angling Trust to provide more opportunities for people to go fishing and encourage sales of fishing rod licences. Money from fishing licence sales is spent on improving fisheries habitat and angling infrastructure through projects like the Angling Improvement Fund.

Get Fishing

Get Fishing is the Angling Trust's campaign to get more people fishing more often. It's funded by the Environment Agency from fishing licence income and Sport England to encourage regular participation and diversity in sport.

The Get Fishing Fund is only available for clubs, fisheries and organisations in England.

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. ■

Environment Agency delivers major fisheries improvements funded by rod licence income

Today (12 January), the Environment Agency has published its Annual Fisheries Report revealing that over 1 million licence sales in 2020/21 funded improvements to the environment and fish habitats.

Over 1 million (1,090,068) fishing licences were sold to anglers between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021, generating £24,583,342 in income which has been reinvested into incident response, enforcement action and habitat improvements to support fisheries.

This income was further boosted by government funding and partner contributions, allowing the EA to deliver a major investment of £33 million through the Water Environment Improvement Fund (WEIF) to enhance the environment which fish stocks rely on to survive.

The report outlines how licence income supported fish restocking across the country which helps fish populations to recover following environmental incidents. Almost 500,000 coarse fish were stocked into rivers and still waters around the country, including over 130,000 barbel and almost 82,000 roach.

Licence sales also helped to fund 45 fish pass projects, opening up rivers to encourage the free movement of fish. Installing structures to bypass obstacles, such as weirs, allows fish to access new feeding areas and breeding ground to spawn successfully.

As inclusivity is a key pillar of the EA's National Angling Strategy, the additional income from increased licence sales has been used to benefit the growing angling community and make the sport accessible for all. This includes the construction of facilities for less able anglers such as accessible toilets, safer platforms for wheelchair users and improved access to fisheries sites.

The EA worked in collaboration with partners, such as the Angling Trust, the Angling Trades Association and the Canal and Rivers Trust, to encourage more people to give angling a go. The relaunch of the Take a Friend Fishing initiative (TAFF) encouraged over 3,000 licence holders to take a friend fishing. Licence income was also used to support the training of new coaches and facilitate 495 participation events which saw around 5,000 people try fishing for the



first time Kevin Austin, Deputy Director for Fisheries at the Environment Agency, said: "It's fantastic to see that over a million people went fishing last year and are recognising the benefits of this sport. The Environment Agency uses licence income to maintain, improve and develop fisheries across the country.

"Whether it's preventing illegal fishing and poaching, responding to incidents or safeguarding habitats – all licence income is invested directly back into our fisheries and angling services.

"When you buy a licence you help us continue this vital work and create new opportunities for anglers."

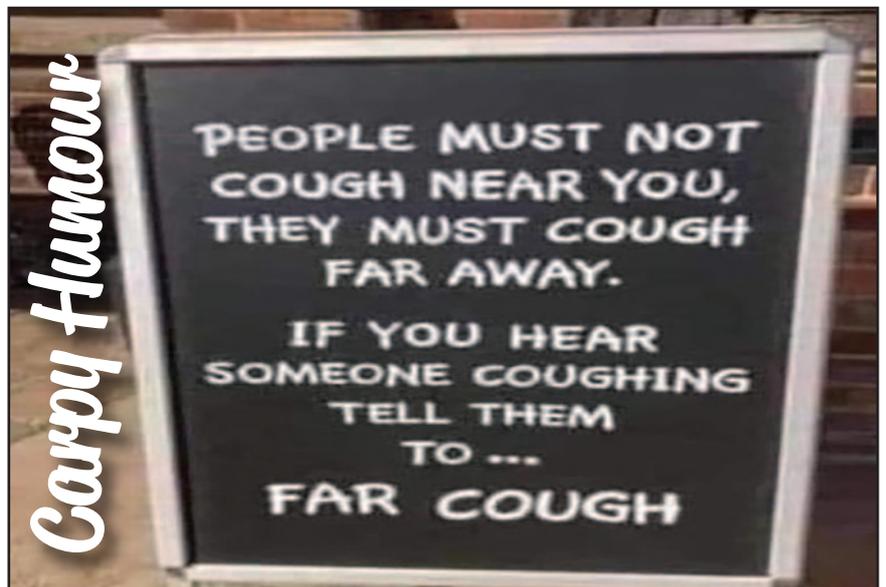
During 2020/21, fisheries licence income funded:

- 119 fish stock surveys
- 17,106 fishing licence checks carried out by Environment Agency enforcement teams with the support of the Angling Trust Voluntary Bailiff Service (VBS). 867 offence reports were issued, and 340 anglers were prosecuted for fishing without a licence EA response to 391 incidents involving dead or dying fish, including reports of pollution and fish disease Improvements to fish habitats on 575km of rivers in England
- Supply and stocking of almost 500,000 coarse fish including barbel, roach, bream, tench and

grayling

- Initiatives to provide facilities to anglers, encourage more people into the sport and make fishing more accessible for all
- Work with over 1,200 project partners to improve fisheries and angling facilities
- The Angling Improvement Fund (AIF) managed by the Angling Trust to protect fisheries from predators, such as cormorants and otters
- Improvements to over 153 hectares of still water fisheries
- Monitoring, research, and development work to deliver sustainable fisheries management
- Vital work at the National fisheries laboratory at Brampton, to check the health of fish stocks and minimise the risk of spreading fish diseases
- The EA has created a digital fishing licence, which allows anglers to purchase and display licences on their smartphones. This not only simplifies the process for anglers but has reduced spend on producing licences, allowing even more income to be spent on improving angling services.

You must purchase a fishing licence to fish in England and Wales. All income from fishing licence sales is reinvested to support the vital work of the Environment Agency to improve and develop fisheries across the country. Annual licences start from £30 and can be purchased online or by phone, more information can be found here. ■





More Pipe Bins

Berwickshire Marine Reserve, Scotland

Lauren and the team at the marine reserve up on the southeast coast of Scotland heard about the pipe bin project and wanted to get involved. They purchased 4 bins via the ANLRS shop, and these have now been installed at 4 coastal locations throughout the length of the reserve.

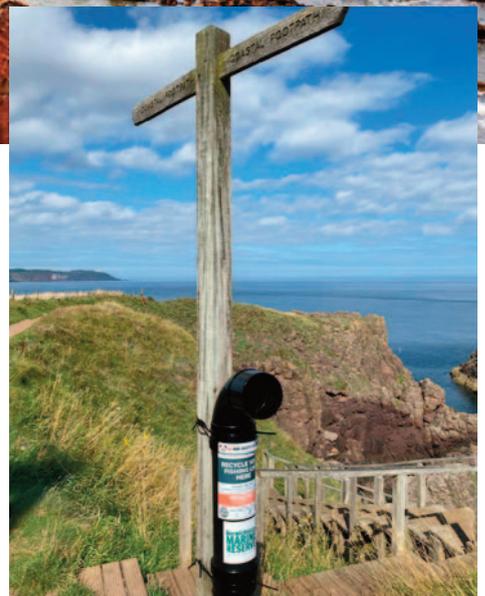
The 4 bin locations are:

Eyemouth Harbour - TD14 5SD (bin is positioned on the red bridge)

St Abbs Harbour - TD1 `4 5PW (bin is located in the car park opposite Ebb Carrs Cafe)

Coldingham Beach - TD14 5PA (beside the public toilets)

Weasel Loch Coastal Path outside of Eyemouth - TD14 5BE (at the top of the steps down to Weasel Loch)



CARPING RE-CUT

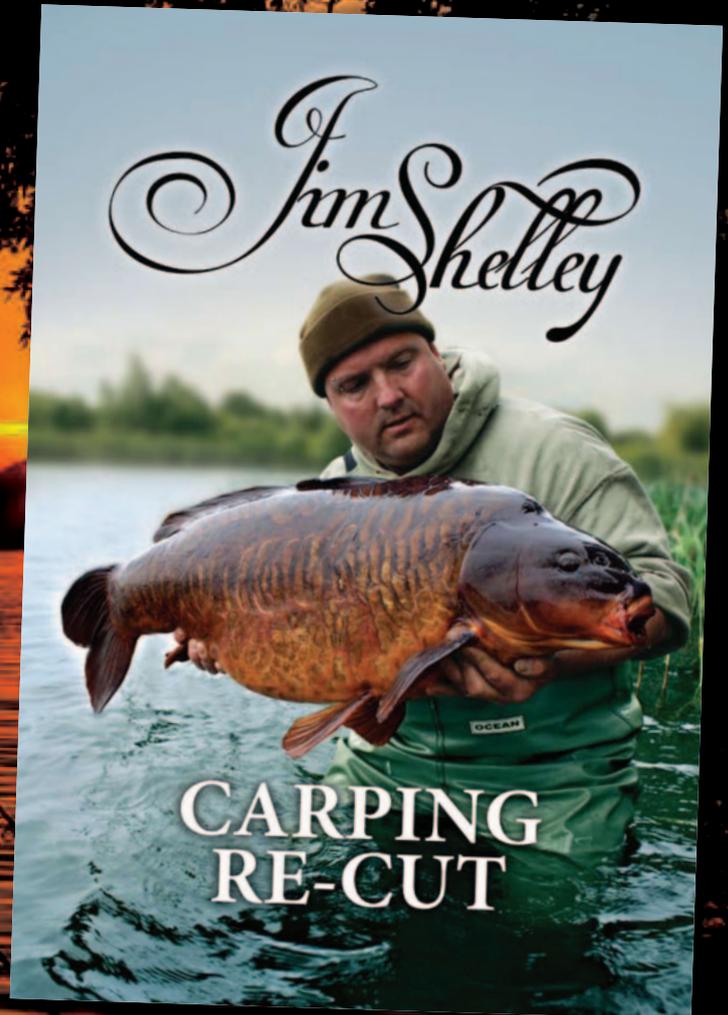
Jim Shelley

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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Other News

Gardner Tackle sponsor Portishead Marina bins

Hannah, from Gardner Tackle, has always been a great supporter of the scheme and approached her local Portishead Marina over in Somerset to see if they would like to put a couple of bins in the area around the marina and where anglers fish from the adjoining rocks.

They were very receptive and we are delighted to say there are two bins in place and these were bought by the Gardner Tackle team. Massive thanks to Hannah and we wlook forward to seeing how much the bins collect over the coming months. As per normal all the materials will be taken back to Gardner HQ and collected by the scheme when driving past their Guildford unit.



New Returns Address

In the last newsletter we announced the new address for all returns and correspondence. In a oversight by ourselves the PO Box address wasn't much use for Parcel Force or other couriers so please use the following addresses depending on how you are returning line to us

Parcel Force & Couriers

ANLRS, 12 Rosedene Close, Brighton BN2 6LE

Envelopes and Royal Mail

ANLRS, PO Box 96, Petworth, West Sussex GU28 8BU





New Supporters

A big ANLRS welcome to the following shops, clubs, fisheries and other businesses that have signed up since our last newsletter and now have bins in place for customers to recycle their old line, braid and spools via the scheme. Since the easing of lockdown the response from both fisheries and tackle shops has been brilliant as you can see below:

Fisheries & Angling Clubs:

Press Manor Fishing Lakes
Manor Farm Lakes
Brasside Pond
Jubilee Lakes & Anglers Lodge
Thornwood Trout Fishery
Dever Springs Trout Fishery
Pochard Lake Fishery
Tyram Fisheries
Bells Mill Fishery
Ledyatt Trout Fishery
Seven Lakes Fishery
Docking AC
Combwich Ponds
Stanley & District AC
Barton Fish Pond
Port Sunlight AC
Leckford Estate Fishery
Keighley Angling Club
Winsford & District AA
Willow Lakes Fishery
Burton Farm Fishery

Other non angling business sign ups:

The Environment Centre
Zero Waste on Wheels
The Wee Shop

Tackle Shops:

Tackle Dynamic
Outlaw Pro
Jakeman Sports
Baits & Weights Rhyl
Fleetwood Fishing Supplies
Valley Baits Ltd
CW Fishing Supplies Ltd
Fishing Tackle Direct UK
Dial a Bait
The Lure Lodge
John Norris of Penrith
The Keen Angler
Simply Pets & Angling Supplies
Nonstop Angling
Churchgate Tackle & Lakes
Quay Sports Fishing Tackle Store
Metcalfe's Fishing Tackle
Reefers Fishing tackle
Matts Bait & Tackle Ltd
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ANLRS Pipe Bin
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Carp Spirit D-Spool Line Stripper
£8.00

Online shop & new items

In the last few months, we have added a couple of fantastic items in the form of the new ANLRS pin badge and a branded monomaster waste line gadget.

The pin badge is a classy addition to any out fit and certainly one way to show your support for the scheme along with promoting it to others.

The ANLRS monomaster is a great addition to any tackle bag whether boat fishing, chasing trout with flies or coarse fishing and can be clipped to any tackle bag with a split ring or carabina. It is a small spinning tube that you can wind all those redundant hooklinks, tags ends and old leaders onto safely storing them until you return home. Once full its simply a case of popping the top off, removing the brush and snipping along its length to remove the line ready for the next visit to your nearest recycling bin.

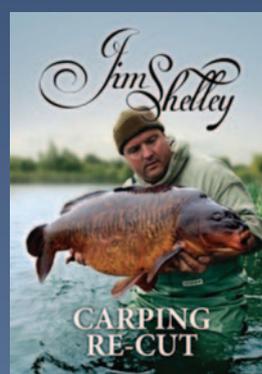
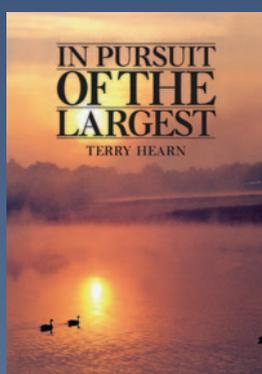
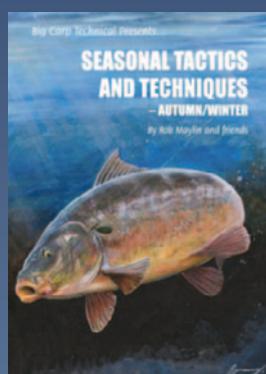
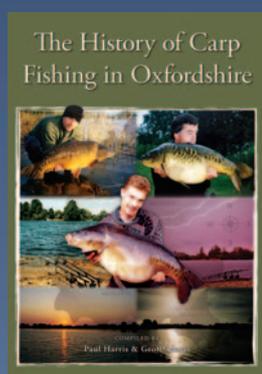
We are doing a bundle offer for £20 at present for a Monomaster, Pin Badge, Car Sticker and Tackle box sticker that saves you £3.65. Have a look at all we offer [via the shop](#).

Sales have been good in the last few months with the line strippers being most popular and please remember **every penny of profit goes back into the scheme and helps us continue our work.**



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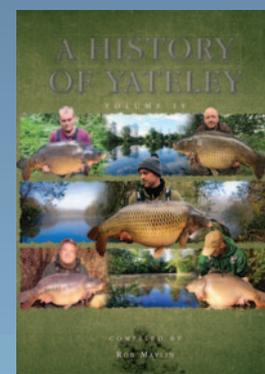
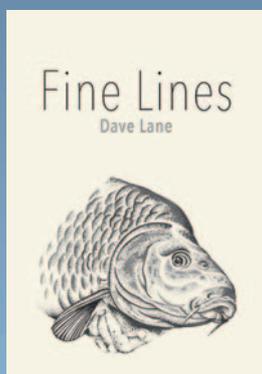
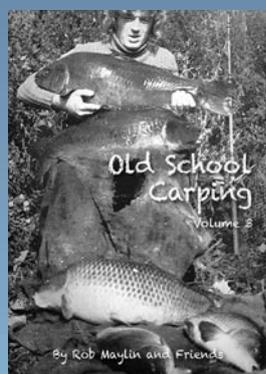


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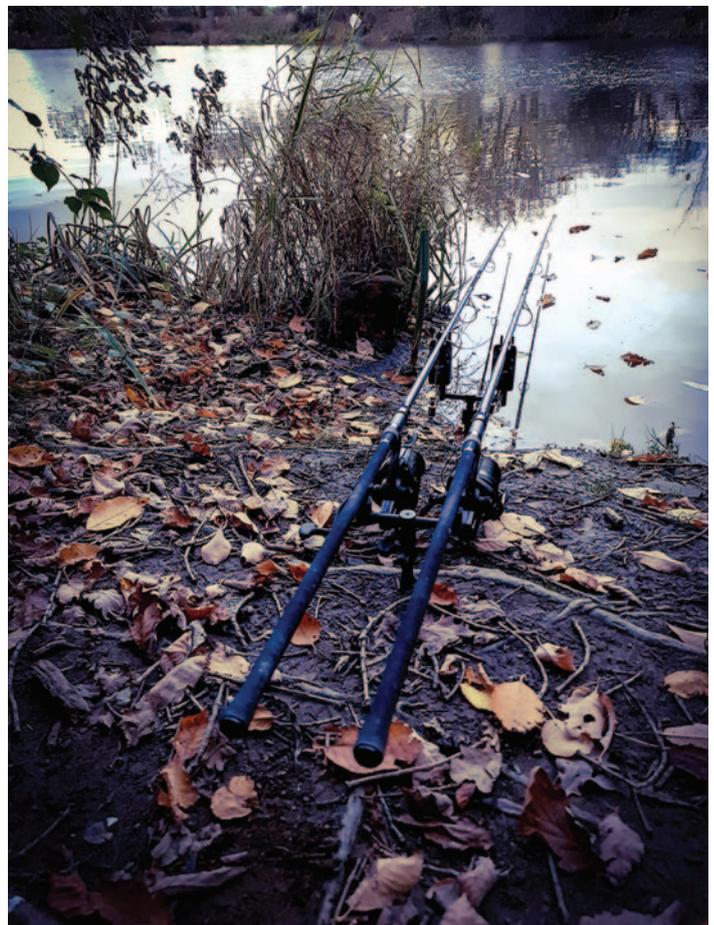


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Mighty Mirror

After taking advantage of the unusual warm spell on a recent Sunday in Sheffield, I decided to try luck on my local syndicate. With nothing showing whilst having a walk round, I opted for a peg we call The Fridge, as the cold air always blows through it. Fishing at short range with a Madbaits pear drops pop-up over RNT and Wicked Whites, my right-hand rod melted off, resulting in a lovely looking mirror weighing in at 18lb 4oz
Peter Conn @Carper_and_son



What about this mega 54lb Wraysbury 1 North Lake mirror banked by Ian Russell Carp Angler! It's the largest fish in the lake and proved to be the jewel of the session that also included three other cracking carp – all taken on our soon-to-be-released 12mm Monster Tiger Nut pop-ups fished over a load of Frenzier Hemp and sweetcorn. These new 12mm MTN baits have now helped him bank the largest common AND mirror from the North Lake... GET IN CHEMO!



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The Gaffers
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Track

Our monthly reviews on products currently on the market

In this issue:

- Nite Watches

NITE WATCHES New Generation MX10

The MX10 has had a refresh

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The first run is being finalised now which we expect to be ready from early January, or sooner.

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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.

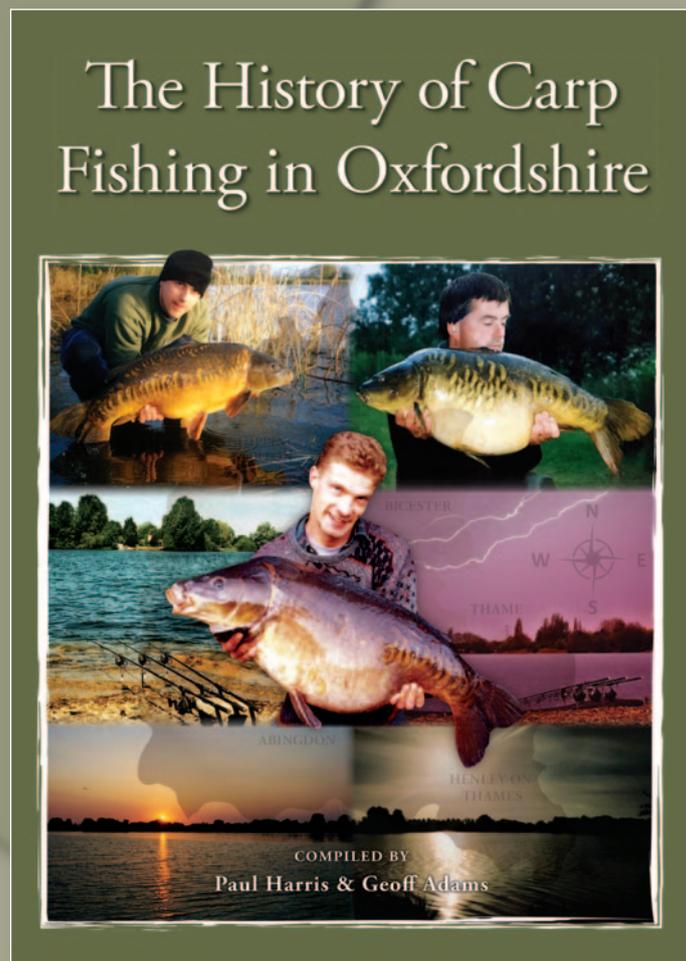
Nick Stansfield is a brilliant young Oxford carper who doesn't shout about his catches. We have two incredible chapters from him from two of the county's most iconic lakes, The Leisure Park and The Big S! Josh Chatfield has written a fantastic chapter which really gives you an insight into how fishing 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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A V A I L A B L E N O W

Exclusive

Eight Days on Kingfisher

By Barry Oconnor

Having been to Bluebell Lakes on a previous visit twelve months ago, Ben and I decided to make another pilgrimage to the famous lakes. Swan was our lake of choice last time but this visit would be to have a go on Kingfisher Lake.

The Bluebell complex has five lakes on it. All are well stocked and have big carp in them with some reaching over fifty pounds in weight. Our target lake this time was Kingfisher a lake of about eight acres that is lined with mature trees. The depths go from shallow to around fourteen feet and the water is crystal clear. Features include lilies, gravel spots, hard spots and overhanging bushes. The lake can be weedy at times and there is an abundance of naturals in the water. Kingfisher has massive head of forty pound carp residing in the lake with two or three fifties known to be in there as well. We intended to stay for eight days

It was a two and a half hour journey

for us to reach Bluebell Lakes. As we snaked down the lane to the entrance we could see there were ten vehicles in front of us waiting for the gate to open. Not what we wanted to see but I suppose not all of the anglers in front of us would be going on Kingfisher. Well we hoped not. We sat patiently waiting for the gate to be opened and pondered over our chances of success. Bluebell is like no other fishery that we've visited. For one it's extremely busy all the time. The system they have adopted here is quite unique. On arrival you have to queue up to get a sticker for your bucket which gives you two hours to find a swim. You can't drive round looking for a swim you can only walk. Once you've found a swim you put your bucket in it and it's yours. If someone is in the swim and isn't leaving straight away you can get an extended time sticker to put on your bucket. It's a bit of a race finding swims particularly if you want to go on one specific lake. In our case kingfisher is the furthest lake from the reception.



(Above) There were distant markers in every swim.

(Below) 28lb 8oz – we called him Stumpy.



Exclusive Eight Days on Kingfisher



Taking a picture of Two Tone.
(Below) 37lb 7oz – Two Tone.

Anyway after a long walk we found two swims next to each other. Two anglers were leaving that morning so we quickly put our buckets in the swims. We didn't know if they were good swims or not but we had to take them as other anglers were looking for swims too and there weren't many left. Relieved that we'd got the swims we went back to the reception to extend the time on our stickers because the guys in the swims weren't leaving for another two hours. We could relax now so we decided to have a breakfast roll at the chuck wagon. There were still anglers looking for swims so we were lucky to get ours.

We were now able to drive to the lake. The two anglers that were in the swims were packing up and they allowed us to bring our gear to the swims which was very kind of them.

Once we were set up and ready to go we had a coffee and sat back to





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25lb 8oz.

take in the atmosphere. Bluebell is an awesome place to be no matter what lake you're on. Some filming was done and before long we were launching our markers to find some fishable spots. The lake was fairly weedy but we did manage to find some spots. Our good friend Lee Birch who fishes at Bluebell a lot had given us some info about the swims we were in and where to find some spots. The info he gave us was invaluable and gave us a good start to the session. Thanks Lee we appreciate it mate. Its three rods max on Kingfisher so because of the weed, which wasn't too high, I put two rods out on solid bags and one on a zig. Hookbaits were Urban Baits Strawberry Nutcracker boilies which were placed in Castaway PVA solid bags containing chops, ground down Nutcracker boilies and Urban Baits Red Spicy Fish carp pellets. Castaway do ordinary melt bags and slow melt bags. Because of the depth we used the slow melt bags. These were fished with inline drop off leads. The bags were cast either side of the marker on a clear spot in thirteen feet of water. I then put six Spods of chops and pellets around the marker. My third rod which had the zig on was cast to the

right of my middle rod. Each swim on Kingfisher has a sign in it stating how far you can cast to. Both our swims had a maximum casting distance of seventy five yards. All our rods were clipped up to eighteen and three quarter wraps. By the time the line settled and was tightened we were fishing at about seventy yards.

Ben decided to fish two rods with solid bags with Urban Fully Loaded for hook baits on one and the other on

Tuna and Garlic. These were placed in a solid pva bag along with chops, hemp and Urban Red Spicy Carp Pellets. He also poured Fully Loaded Glug into the bags. Ben cast the bags either side of his marker onto a hard spot he'd found. He also put some spod mix around his hookbaits but not too much. His other rod was placed under a bush to his left in three feet of water again with a solid bag and a Fully Loaded hook bait. It



Urban Nutcracker doing the business.

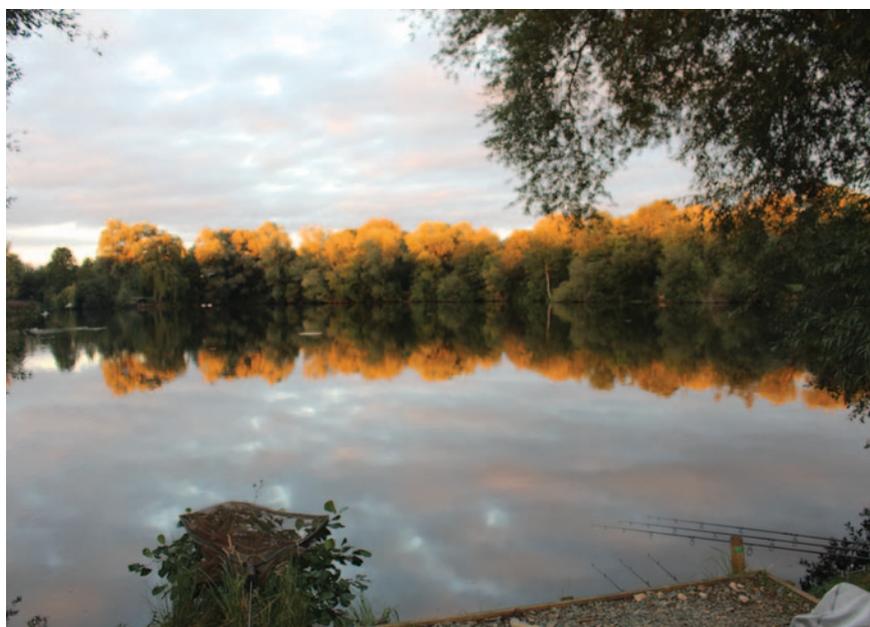
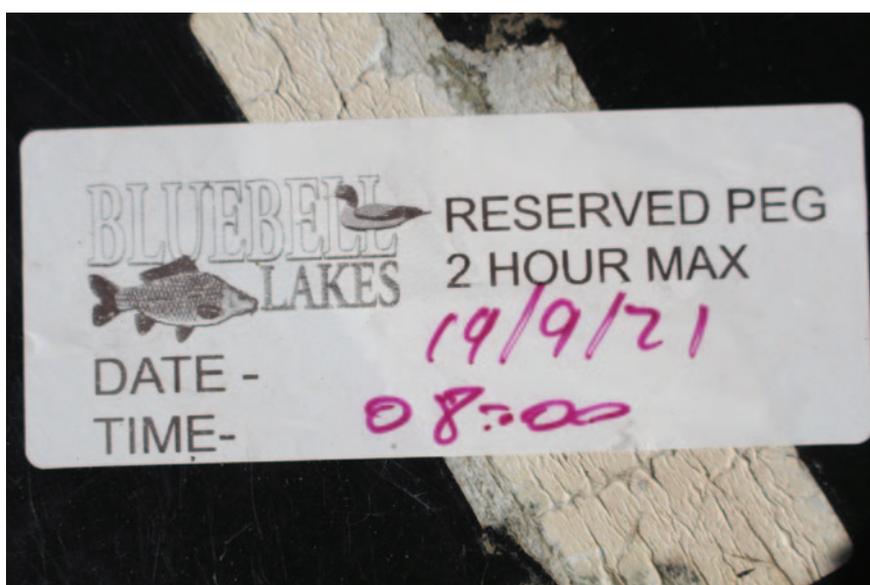
looked so carpy under that bush. Indeed it was the first rod to go off and whatever was on it wasn't stopping for anything. Try as he might Ben couldn't get control of it and unfortunately the hook pulled. It happened so quickly. Within minutes my right hand rod was away. A typical drop back bite that you would associate with a zig. Now my swim wasn't the best for landing carp in. There were lilies in front and to the left of my swim and to my right there was a bush and of course there were the other two rods on the goal post set up. There was only a small gap that you could guide the carp through and into the landing net. Ben quickly got the waders on while I leant the other rods up against the bush to keep the lines out of the way. Ben went in with the net. I was fishing the zig at a depth of ten feet in thirteen feet of water. My thirteen foot Free Spirit rods coped with it admirably. Ben managed to net the carp the first time which pleased me no end. On the bank we could see it was a Common. On the scales it went 28lb 8oz. It had a sort of deformity on it but was very healthy otherwise. We called it Stumpy.

It was the first day and after only a couple of hours we'd had two bites. One lost one landed. I was very happy but not so Ben. Nothing more happened for the rest of the day or night so the next day we changed the way we were fishing. I opted to go with two zigs one at ten feet and the other at eleven feet and one with a solid bag. Ben changed to one zig at eleven feet and two solid bags. There is a barbless rule here so our set ups included using Deception D-X Curve size 4 barbless hooks on our bag rigs tied to five inches of fifteen pound braid hooklink. Our leads were 3oz inline leads. We get all our leads from S M Leads. Their leads are superb. The outer coating on these leads doesn't break off like some leads do. Leadcore leaders finished our set ups. The zigs were tied with Drennan 15lb Double Strength to size 10 Deception ZWG barbless hooks. One of my zigs

(Top) Four bait stringers worked for me.

(Middle) A sticker placed on your bucket will reserve the swim for you.

(Bottom) A colourful sunset in Ben's swim.



Exclusive Eight Days on Kingfisher



(Top) It was very tight in my swim. (Middle) The view across the lake. (Bottom) PVA cable ties make tying bags easy.



had a small piece of Deception AsCent black foam on it dipped in Urban Tuna & Garlic dip. The other zig had a cut down Strawberry Nutcracker on it dipped in Strawberry Nutcracker glug. Kingfisher was now very busy and there wasn't a swim free. Anglers were coming and going looking for swims.

The next run came to my rod with the solid bag on it. Ben went into action putting on the waders and winding in my other rods. After a determined fight the carp came to the net. It was another Common and look bigger than the last one and it certainly was at 37lb 7oz. It had two shades of colour on it and was in pristine condition. We were told it was a carp called Two Tone for obvious reasons. Another day went by without any fish. Because Kingfisher is a notoriously hard water we weren't overly worried. We still had a long way to go. Later that day as we were sitting in Ben's swim having a coffee I noticed his bite indicator twitch. Before I could tell Ben the alarm roared into life. He grabbed the rod and began a tussle with one angry carp. It was the zig rod that went off. It came in slowly and as it neared the bank it shot off down the margin under some trees and bushes. Ben couldn't stop it! The carp came out the other side of the bushes and straight in to the swim next door wiping out all three rods of the angler next door. Unfortunately the zig line broke at the hook and Ben and the fish parted company. Ben made his apologies to the angler who to be fair was ok about it. If we didn't know any better we would have said it was catfish but there aren't any in Kingfisher or so we were told. Ben's luck changed later when he had another bite. After tiring the fish out Ben brought it to the waiting net. It was another Common this time 25lb on the nose.

Bites don't come that often on Kingfisher. We were averaging one bite a day two if we were lucky. At least we were catching. Other anglers were bite less. It was a very relaxing session for me and Ben and we were enjoying it. The next bite came to one of Ben's bag rods. A slow rise of the

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Barbless hooks.



Perfect for me.



Ben was on Fully Loaded.



The bags and stringers were glazed with these.



(Above) 41lb 6oz – The Big Ghostie.
(Below left) This was our home for eight days.
(Below right) The Big Ghostie returned safely.



Exclusive Eight Days on Kingfisher



bite indicator signalled something was happening. It then dropped to the floor and immediately shot up again. By now Ben was on it. The fish was taking line and Ben let it go. It went on powerful runs but Ben was in control. Ben was battling this fish for ages before it was slowly coaxed to the net and I scooped it up. The carp was covered by the net but I could still see it was a good fish. I opened the net and saw this large fish laying there. I managed to unhook it while it was still in the net. We both lifted it out of the water and onto the mat. Ben lifted the fish while I removed the net and replaced it with the weigh sling which had been zeroed on the scales. The fish was huge and surely would go over forty pounds. It was placed on the scales and we watched the needle go round to 42lb 6oz. Ben was certainly overjoyed with this Common but it didn't beat his PB which is a 46lb 12oz Common but that's another story. Nevertheless he was very happy to have caught it.

I decided to make another change to the way I was fishing. I kept one rod on a zig at eleven feet deep but the two bottom rods were changed. I decided to change from solid pva bags to four bait stringers. My reasoning was that because of the foul weed and detritus on the bottom the bait was getting contaminated. Also with the amount of anglers that fish here there must be bait rotting on the bottom all over the place. With the stringers I was going to recast every hour during the day. My thinking was that the bait would still have some smell to it before the hour was up. I made up several four bait stringers in advance. I attached one stringer to the hair by pushing the baiting needle through the boilie and the pva and attach a hair stop. The first boilie in the stringer now becomes my hook bait when the pva melts. It just streamlines everything. The stringers were dipped in Strawberry Nutcracker Dip before casting. Hopefully this presentation would bring some success.

Success did eventually come with the stringers when my left hand rod

(Top) The bags contained some of these carp pellets.

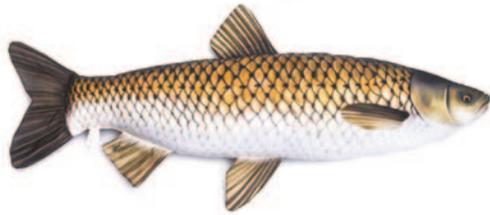
(Middle) Guiding a good one to the net.

Bottom) The barbie got well used.

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42lb – Birches common.

buzzed in to life. A slow pull bouncing up and down was all I got. I picked up the rod and pulled into something. The rod arched over and I was in. Ben immediately wound in my other two rods to get them out of the way. He then put on the waders, grabbed the landing net and jumped in the water. Something he'd done when I caught the other two carp. The fish was staying deep in the water but was pulling hard. I'd gain some line and then it would take it back. This went on for what seemed ages but was probably just a few minutes. As it came closer we could see the tail flashing in the water as the carp rolled. Sometimes it rolled on the line and gave me some heart stopping moments when the line pinged off it. You know what it feels like when it pings off it feels like you've lost it. Anyway everything stayed intact and I was still attached to this powerful but angry carp. As it came near to the net it was still making powerful lunges. Because I was up on the bank and the sun was reflecting on the water I couldn't see it clearly. Ben however being lower

and in the water could see it very clearly. Eventually it was close enough for Ben to net it and did so admirably. Because Ben had seen it he kept saying it's a good fish. He said this is something special. The folds of the net were unfolded and there we could see this massive Common in the bottom of the net and yes it was something special.

Now both Ben and I have each

been chasing a forty pound common for ages. My PB is a "The Heart Tail Common" at 37lb 8oz and Ben's was a 37lb Common called "Cluster" before he had the forty six. We'd both had plenty of thirties but no forties. Ben was saying to me I think you've beaten your PB Common, this one looks well over forty! It took both of us to get it onto the bank and into the unhooking mat. Ben had already



It looks beaten.



The Fighting Machine at 47lb.

removed the hook while the fish was still in the water. The sling was zeroed and the carp placed in it. Up it went on to the scales and we watched with anticipation as the dial went slowly round and stopped at 47lb. Wow we were jumping for joy with what the

scales were recording. My PB Common is now 47lb nearly ten pounds above my previous best. This was my third carp and boy was I happy. Filming was done and photos were taken before it was gently slipped back into the water. We found out later that the

Common was called "The Fighting Machine". I can vouch that it has the right name because it gave me a right row.

We still had a couple of days left of our session and although we were happy with what we'd caught we thought perhaps we might still get lucky. On the second to last day I did get lucky. I was busy tying up some stringers when the alarm on one of the stringer rods burst into life. I was on it in a flash and was calling for Ben to help me. He went through the ritual of winding in the other rods and donning the waders as he'd done before. Immediately a tug of war began between me and the fish. It took me all over the place and at one time I thought it was going to wipe out the guys fishing on the bank to my right. This fish was going mental trying to get free of the hook. After about ten minutes it was tiring and gradually was getting nearer to the net. It see the net and just took off again in one more attempt for freedom. That was the last lunge of the fish which was



Going back.

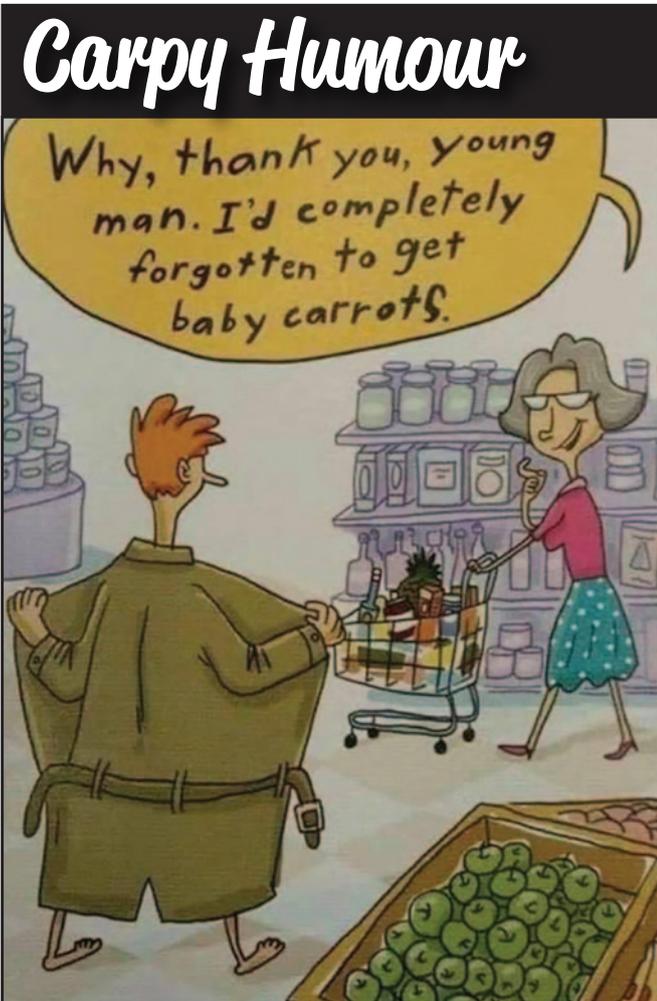
Exclusive Eight Days on Kingfisher

by now really tired and I could slowly bring it over the rim of the net. It went in and Ben engulfed it in the net. Ben said it was another good fish. Ben again unhooked it in the water and we lifted it on to the unhooking mat. Another Common but this time a Ghostie and it looked over forty pounds. We put it on the scales and watched the dial go round and stop at 41lb 6oz. It was called "The Big Ghostie Common". I was so pleased. If this fish had come before the other big Common I'd caught I would have broken my PB Common twice in the same session. I was definitely going home happy.

We never had anything on the last day and the session came to an end but it had been a good trip. We'd had six carp between us including three forties on what is known as a very hard lake. The Bluebell complex is well kept and well run by the owners and bailiffs. Kingfisher can be difficult but the rewards are there to be had. We'll definitely be back but not until next year. ■



Ben returning my Common.



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Those who have ventured out to Oak Lakes during December have not been disappointed. Winter Carp catches, some 30lbs and other good-sized fish, from the day ticket lake and numerous Pike caught over 20lbs and between 10lbs and 20lbs from both the day ticket lake and the predator lake. It's not too late to book your swims for January, you call or email or WhatsApp us, we do the booking, you pay and then turn up and enjoy the fishing. We cannot guarantee that you will catch but we can provide beautiful surroundings. So don't delay, contact us today. We are open 364 days a year.

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Another nice Pike caught on Oak Lake.



25lbs mirror for Buddhar.



Neil Blackburn.



Jonathon Cooper.



Harry Strutt.



Exclusive

The Essex Quarry Campaign

By Luke Phillips

May 2019 was the start of my Campaign. The two must for me were Orion and Hoover.

Orion was a stunner of a fish the purple hints on that fish was amazing, then Hoover, an old warrior last of its kind this was as old as me and a must catch. Plus, Shoulders, Bomb Head, Birch Fish, Pluto and Cassius.

So it began, on the first session just throwing a few chod around the pond and slowly found a few areas. but no fish came my way. The odd fish was being caught, but I was slowly working the place out.

It was a game of two halves – day time bites in the shallows and night time down the deep end. That first spring just fizzled away and the death of Shoulders was a blow and a sad time to be on the lake.

Then the carp started to spawn. By now I've worked out a little bit, so the lake closed to let them do their thing. Once the lake re-opened, I wanted to be there. Anyone who has fished the quarry will know how the lake just gets a hold of you. So, I was back down there. This time I went in a swim called 'Winters'. The plan was three on the spot and give them some feed as I knew they would be up for a feed.

That session I had seven fish and one of them was Bomb Head 34lb 12oz, an angry fish. Good start and I felt that it was all about the bait at this time of the year, they just love it after spawning, and this was the case.

The next few weekends were going to be key to the campaign. After the next few weeks everything started to fall into place with plenty of fish coming my way.

For some reason I couldn't fish Friday night, so Saturday was going to be a bit of a social with my good friend Paul Davy (Barty). The plan was to get down, have a barbecue, do the night then home, so I put 7kg of particles out with 1kg boilie, sat down and had a great barbeque and a few ciders and settled down for the night. 2.30am the rod absolutely peeled off. As I lifted into it, I knew it was a good fish as it slipped into the net. As I looked down, it was a fish called the Broken Lin, this wasn't on the list but it should have been what a creature 30lb 8oz.



Only a few hours later I was in again. As he kited round to my left, I knew it was something big. After a great battle it was in the net. The fish that I had joined the quarry for was in the net. I shouted to Bart it's Orion mate! It was only 5.30am, so we left her in the net to recover, sat down, made a cup of coffee before we dealt with her. 38lb 8oz – she was spawned out but she was looking good – I was

buzzing. Sadly, I was the last one to have her as 18 mouths later she passed away – a very sad day indeed.

The next weekend came and I was back on the spot baiting it again with 7kg of particle and 1kg boilie. Late morning the rod was off and I couldn't stop it as it stripped 50 to 60 yards of line. A 30 minute battle commenced, then she was in the net. I couldn't believe my eyes – Pluto was in the net





at 37lb 14oz spawned out, but I would take it.

The summer passed with plenty of bites from some really nice looking fish. September was a busy month at work, so I really didn't get down, but

October I managed to and it was a typical autumn night, winds were blowing and rain was lashing down when the rod ripped off with a nice scaly carp in the net.

Before I could deal with it, the sec-

ond rod ripped off. So, with only one net both were sitting in the bottom. The other fish was a grey looking fish so I weighed it, took a few pictures and put it back and then dealt with the lovely scaly fish before going to bed.

After waking up, looking at the pictures again, it dawned on me it was Hoover at 32lb 4oz and I didn't even realise.

I just put my hands into my head knowing that I should have taken more time with the camera. To say I was gutted didn't even come close to the way I was feeling.

I Fished hard till the end of November with the odd fish. With work being busy and a new extension going on the house that was my winter over. Then what happened next came COVID-19, so no fishing that spring.

Then things started to re-open and we could travel. Then the carp started spawning, but once the lake was open, I was back down there. I fished a swim call Pipes and got it rocking with plenty of fish, nothing that big



apart from the Upfront Common and Broken Lin again.

To say the lake was busy that year was an understatement, and due to furlough it would stay that way. I did try and get something going in a swim call Stoney late summer ready for autumn as it seem to be left alone most of the year. So, I spent most of September in there just feeding it up, knowing that the big fish would turn up at some point.

Early October, I had a single beep about half two in the morning. Up I jumped and went out to investigate. It was still in the line clip. I put my two fingers on the line and give it a little pull. I felt a little tug back so I pulled a little bit harder and it pulled back that was it I pulled into the rod and there was a fish on the other end. After a battle lasting ten minutes, I pulled it over the cord of the net. I knew it was Hoover. I wasn't going to make the same mistake twice.

This fish just blew my mind. It wasn't gray like the first time – it was looking good with a chestnut colour. This fish had been around nearly as



long as me – two old gits together. For the record 32lb 10oz. A big thanks to Aidan Sharp for some great shots that night – thanks mate.

I couldn't wait to get back down after a long week at work. The weekend was here, but that was the last time I got in Stoney, as It was taken that autumn. It had done all the big fish, but that's the way it goes sometimes.

I drifted around the lake from swim to swim that autumn and didn't get anything going. Then winter came only for a few fish.

So I took the rest of the winter to spend some time with the family and get some bonus points with the wife, so I could fish it hard in the spring.

I had done one trip that spring, then out of the blue my wife found me collapsed on the sofa. I was rushed to





hospital. I had had a stroke so that was the end of the spring campaign before it had begun.

It fished well that spring, one of my good friends, Jim Chisnall and Loz

Huff had a spring. It took me weeks to recover so I spent my time just cleaning the gear down and waiting for the time I could get back down there.

So, as I couldn't fish, I looked for a new bait, something that complemented peanuts, tigers, buckwheat and maize. I found a bait company called Excel baits and at the time I didn't realise how this would turn my third season around. What I like about Excel, is that they only do two boilies – a nut protein boilie call VNF and a fishmeal called KSC. The VNF is on a birdfood, vanilla meal and milk protein base with the inclusion of roasted peanut meal, tignernuts, crushed hemp, vegetable proteins, with the addition of CSL, digestion aids, laced with two unique feed inducing palatants and finished off with a vanilla and fudge flavour package. This one was the one for me, knowing I could use this all year round.

It was now June and I headed back to the quarry. It was the first time the rods have been out for several months. I was buzzing, it took me

hours to set up and my casting was all over the place. This was so frustrating, as I knew how to do but just couldn't.

It's only times like this when you've done fishing for over 30 years, then to have something happen to you it's a long hard road back to yourself but what better place to be.

I was worried to sleep on the bank just in case it happened again, but there's one thing about the Quarry – the people who fish it are the best! I had many people popping down to see how I was and because of this I felt safe knowing if anything did happen it wouldn't be long before someone came along. Plus, Jim Chisnel would always text in for a coffee on his walk round the lake – top man.

Somehow, I managed a bite on my first trip, not big but it was the first carp I ever had out of the quarry three years previous, and on my return, it was most welcome.

The second trip was much the same. I still wasn't myself so kept it simple with short casts out in to the





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pond, so I knew I was fishing the best I could and that night I had two.

I was just thinking to myself that it seemed like the new bait was working then it was that time of year the carp had started to spawn. I think it was four weeks before I was down again.

Walking around the lake, I had seen a few fish fizzing in a swim called 'The Dugout' so I jump in there. It was amazing how far I had come in three months. I think it was the best thing to happen them fish spawning.

I got the rods out, everything just seemed so much better, I felt more like my old self.

That trip I had three, so on leaving 15kg I went out there on the spot a week later. I was back straight back into The Dugout. The weather was warm and the weed was coming up fast and a weed bed had come up between me and my spot. So, line lay wasn't the best. I had three that trip up to 35lbs, but I had also lost two, one being Elliot's.

I had to take to the boat as it had gone in the back of the weed bed. I got over the fish and was just teasing the line and clearing the weed when I pulled the weed back and there it was

– Elliot's looking big to! But it saw me at the same time and just shot off.

I let the line go, but as the fish shot, the line just caught my little finger and the hook pulled and that was that.

Everything was working right, so I just pressed the repeat button and put 15kg out before I left that week.

Work seemed to last forever. A few people had heard of the captures. Would I get back in there?

So, the following weekend, I travelled down to the Quarry, pulled into the gate and went and got my net and mat. Dugout was free. I didn't even look round the lake as I knew that I needed to be there. Got the rods out and the drop was unbelievable. It was rock hard now and that night went by. But at first light, they turned up. The middle rod ripped off and a great battle commenced.

After a short battle, it weeded me up, so I jumped into the boat and got over to the fish.

I broke free of the weed that was towing me round the lake. After 20 minutes, it found another weed bed. I got over it and started to tease it through the weed, clearing it as I went. I could now see the fish

through the weed. It looked big! Freeing a bit more weed and teasing it up, the net finally went under. She was the Big Lin, heavily spawn out at 37lb 3oz.

That session went great with another three fish, so why change anything – 15kg on the spot on leaving.

Next weekend came and on getting down to the Quarry, Dugout was taken. So off for a walk round the lake to see if I could find anything. I got down to Peg 15 and a few fish were on the top in the weed. So back to the car, got the gear and barrowed round.

Out with the leading rod and after a few casts and not really finding any clear spot I decided to fish low-level weed. 7kg went out and three pop-ups over it.

At first light, the spot was clouding up. It was two fish that trip and the next few weeks saw fish every time.

I was on a bit of a roll with ten 30lb in a row. I was starting to feel close to the only fish left to catch – Cassius.

The trip back in peg 15 the stop out there was rock hard by now with three rod on the spot I was feeling confident then late morning I was in it felt big was this Cassius?





The fish ploughed into the weed bed, so on with the life jacket I jumped into the boat. The power was immense and seemed like hours. It was finally in the net. Peeling the weed back I couldn't believe it – the

Big Lin again. She had put on a bit of weight – 38lb 8oz and was starting to look good. I put her back and that evening the left-hand rod ripped off which ended with a 32lb on the bank.

By now the weed in peg 15 was

growing fast. This would be the last time I fished it, but then over the weeks that I had spent in there, I've seen a lot of fish over the other side of the lake.

The following weekend I was in there and the weed was now right up, so that meant that the other side of the lake was now unfishable, which was good for me.

I had a lot of water to go at in Bonds – two rods fished towards sticks and the other close in on a nice gravel run that trip had two more so straight back in at the following weekend fishing the same two to sticks and one close in.

That weekend, the spot out to sticks was rocking, so my near side rod went out. So there was now three on a spot. I feel most confident when fishing this way.

Jim Chisnall was doing a lap of the lake so on when the kettle. As we were sitting there chatting, the fish



shoe on the near side spot which I had only moved from a few hours ago and as we sat there chatting, we must have seen another six or seven shows.

I remember Jim saying: 'you gonna put that rod back on the spot?' I was reluctant, as it was shallow water and a lead going in there would just scare them.

Jim left and they kept on showing. That was it. I needed to get a rod on the spot. I reeled one of my rods in then looked for the smallest lead I could to try and get a rod out there without scaring them.

All I could find small enough was a back lead – that would have to do. So, on it went. I remember the noise of the rod when I cast it – sounded like I was fly fishing – but it went out there sweet enough. So, I backed the line right off and didn't even bother with a bobbing and just sat on my hands.

The fish were still showing – it had worked. 30 minutes later, the line pulled tight, I looked out to the spot the water just dipped on the spot then all hell let loose.

This fish just ripped the line in the shallow water, ploughing through weed bed after weed bed.

Life jacket on, I was in the boat. Was it just a small fish on steroids or was this something a lot bigger? After getting on top of the fish many times, it just ploughed on to the next weed bed. It popped in my head that this could this be Cassius.

This battle just kept on going and going. Every time I got close, it ripped out the weed bed into the next. Now it was pushing me down towards some snags, my heart was in my mouth, I haven't even seen the fish, yet luckily it turned at the last minute and dived into a weed bed. This time I got over the fish and started to slowly tease it up, pulling the weed away as I went. Then I saw a little bit of colour, so the net was in with a massive scoop and a half a tonne of weed, the fish was in the net.

As I reached down, pulling the weed away, I knew this fish was very big. It was a fish called Pluto which I had two years ago, spawned out, but it was looking really big this time.

So, I dealt with the fish out in the boat, unhooked it and put him into the mat, rowed back, set the net up again and put him into rest.

I knew Rob was just fishing up the bank so I asked him if he would help. He came down and weighed it 39lb 8oz. What a creature.

The next morning, the left rod out towards Sticks went and a fish called 'Flip' was in my net. Another 30lb-plus fish.

It couldn't be long now till Cassius was in my net – I was feeling really close now.

The next session was a blank. It was now September and I needed to find somewhere for the autumn. Looking round the lake, I settled on a swim called New Summers. The plan was to get the bait going in, even if it meant a few blanks, and wait for them to turn up.

New summer point was a swim which was overlooked by most, and I was hoping it would stay that way. So, the weekend came and I headed for New Summer. I had leaded around, and most of the swim was







choked with weed.

But there was a lovely clear spot out in open water so that was the starting point. It soon became apparent to me that the fish will track round the island, but it was solid weed and to make it worse, old weed bed had rolled in against the weed. I needed to be by that island, but the weed was too dense. But between the weed bed and the weed bed that rolled in between, it wasn't so thick. About 4ft high.

So, at the end of the session, it was off to the van to get some bait. I rode out with four buckets and dumped them all on top of the weed. The plan was for the coots to get on it and clear a hole and that's what happened. On my next trip I chucked the lead and it went down with a crack. It looked like the carp had got in on the party too.

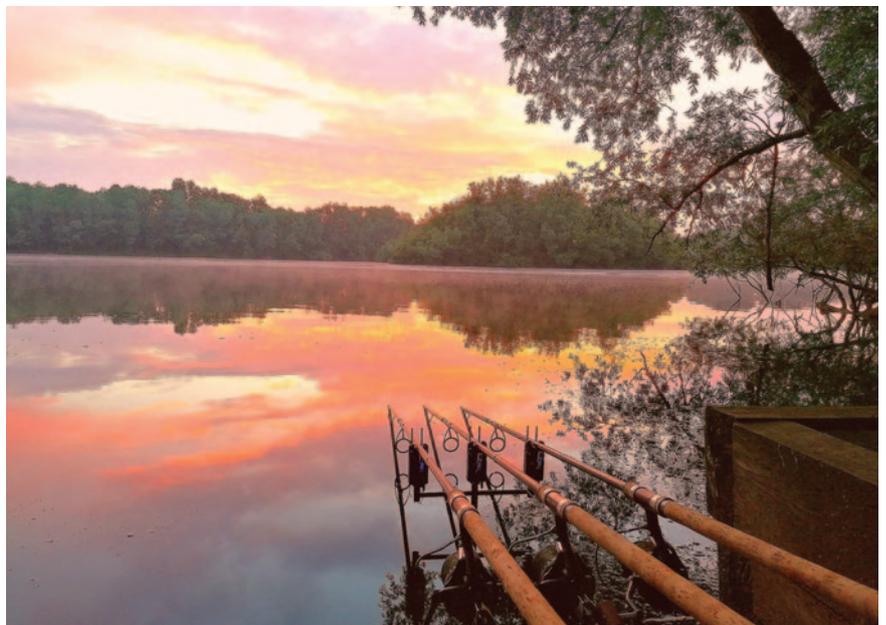
The hole wasn't big and I wanted it that way with 6ft of weed all round. The carp had to drop down into it, which would make them a lot easier to catch. So only one rod on it, one rod in the middle of the channel and one in open water. Not the way I like to fish, but it was the only way.

It was an eventful night. The sun came up, the mist rolled across the lake with a few fish showing. My spot in the channel started to fizz. I sat there watching, the plumes of bubbles as big as my bivvy, wondering why the rod hadn't gone off.

By now, Rob had popped down for

a coffee. I showed him the bubbles and we just sat chatting and watching. Nothing happened and by now the sun was high in the sky.

Rob left to go and set up in Winter. With the swim still fizzing it was now 11.00am, so with it getting hot, I retreated back to the bivvy for a lie



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down. At 11.30am, the rod let out a few beeps. I looked out, the bobbin was wedged into the bite alarm so I went out and lifted the rod. It was solid. I bounced the rod tip a few times but it was locked solid.

Going through my head, I thought it was just a tench as this is what normally happens – a few bibbs and in the back of the weed bed. Great, so off I went into the boat, reeling in to get on top of it.

I got on top, still thinking it was a tench. I looked down and out of the other side of the weed bed was a very large shadow of a carp. My hands went clammy and my heart began to race. I had to put the rod down and started to clear the weed.

I had removed most of the weed from my line, when the fish woke up and went on a run. I picked the rod up, the line pinged off the weed and I was being towed across the lake towards the island and the snags. I was just a passenger as I headed towards the snags. If it made it to them, it was all over...

The rod was bent in two, but there

was nothing I could do. This was a nightmare! I was only 2 or 3ft from the snags when it decided to dive into a weed bed. The boat stopped, I just sat there wondering what to do next. If I pulled it might pop out and go into the snags. I put the rod down and rowed very slowly into the snag. The plan to get the boat between the fish and the snags. The line was slack, I didn't even know if it was still on.

The boat was in position. I started to clear the weed and tighten up the line. It was still on, but it was under the boat. I pulled on the branches of the snags to get the boat into them more. The fish was now on my right-hand side, so I cleared more weed.

Suddenly, the fish saw me and the boat and went for it. Back out into the lake I gave a sigh of relief as I picked the rod up it towed me down the lake and after that it was a textbook landing straight into the net.

I peered down and looked in. I couldn't believe it, – the Big Lin again! What was the chances of that? This fish only does three to four bites a year and this was the third time this

year. The only difference, it was looking a lot bigger. I rowed back to the swim put her into the retainer. I rang Rob, but no answer. I rang him again and again and again. With this, I picked up my receiver and ran down the lake. He was in the boat looking for a spot for his night fishing. I shouted across the lake "Rob got a 40 in the net!" "OK mate", he shouted back. "I'll be round in a bit."

We weighed her 41lb 4oz – a new PB. Nothing happened after that. The day just fizzled away and it was time to leave. But before I went, I jumped into the boat and dropped one bucket of particles and a bucket of boilies out over the spot.

To say that week went slow was an understatement, but the week went and I was travelling back down to the Quarry wondering if the carp would still be there and the peg was free.

So, with my gear on the borrow, off I went. It was now dark by about 7.00pm, so it was a race to get the rods out. That night passed with nothing but in the early hours of the morning the rod just peeled off. A

good fight commenced and I was in – a nice 30lb.

A short time after the second rod ripped off, but the hook pulled. I can't believe it. And that was that, nothing else happened that day.

Then about 2.30am the next morning, a one toner – it felt big! It was a good strong fight. I saw it roll in the moonlight. It was big then as I pulled it over the net the hook pulled. What was going on? Two hooks pulled one after the other. I looked at the hook and the point was bent over, so it had gone right.

I was pissed. Just sat in the bivvy thinking: were the fish feeding more cautiously due to the lower water temperature or was it just bad luck?

I decided to make the hair just a little bit longer, to see if that would help. So, I changed two of the three. At first light, I put the new rigs on and cast out. A few hours after that, the rod was off. Not much of a fight, but what a fish! A 32lb called the 'Birch Fish'.

What a stunning old creature this fish was. Rod back out now, it was late morning and a few bubbles were popping up on my far rod. It looked like there were three fish working the spot.

I left it a hour but nothing. I had a gut feeling something was wrong, but what? In the end, I decided to reel it in, wrapped it back up. I recast it bang on first time, but as I felt for the drop, the lead bounced of a carp back the spot just sheeted up.

Great, I thought to myself, that's done it. I left the rig where it was as I felt the second drop, just sitting there thinking it was all over.

The rod I just cast, ripped off and I leant into the rod. The clutch just started clicking slowly, then the fish started to kite round to my right. It was heading for my over line and I tried to stop.

It just kept on pulling. My other alarm sounded, I caught my line, I tried to go under the rod but by then the fish doubled back on itself. So now I was in a right two and eight!

It was a slow ponderous fight. I got the fish two rod-lengths from the net. I had waded out as far as I could, but now I was trying to pull the other lead off the spot to gain some ground, but wasn't really working the fish. It just wouldn't come any closer.

I could see the other line wrapped around the rig, any minute now this was going to pop the hook so with a

quick lunge and going over the top of my waders the fish was in the net.

I went into the net with my other line and pulled it in by hand then dealt with the fish. By now, my mate, who was fishing far side to me, was ringing my phone. I believe the first thing you said to me is that the rod you just cast out.

I said yes mate and it's a bit of a chunk too. He said don't worry, I'm reeling in and coming round. Loz took some great pictures of that fish. For the records, it was a fish call Chantelle at 39lb 7oz.

That was it for that trip, but what a trip it was. It was all coming together. The fish were on the VNF, so before leaving out in the boat and feeding the spots, I had them going well and wanted to keep it going as long as I could.

Next week passed and I was back. We had some big winds and rain all weekend which resulted in another three fish that bring it up to date.

Will I get Cassius this autumn or winter as she is the only one left? Who knows, but if it carries on the way it's been going, hopefully yes. But there is the saying you can't catch them all, or can you? ■



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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.

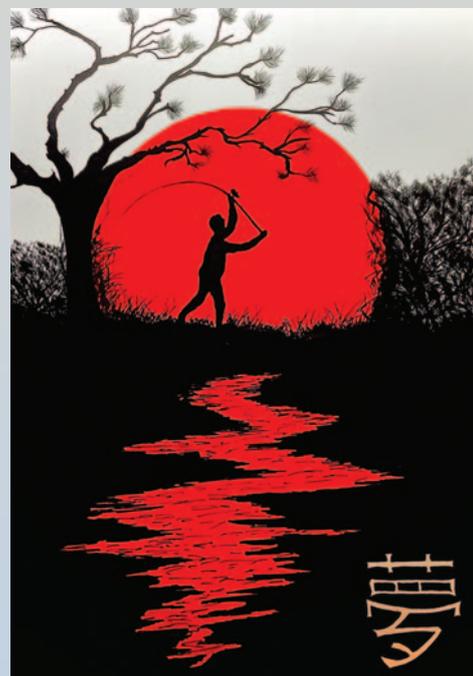
Karen, my partner, looked at it and said: wow that's amazing, you are improving all the time. So, I did what most do and posted the drawing on Facebook. I had loads of lovely comments and that gave me the confidence to push harder and stepped it up a notch trying more challenging



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



Exclusive

Popups, Particles and PVA

By mixing things up, Dynamite Baits' Dan Cleary reckons you can keep the bites coming all winter...

Words Dan Cleary, pictures Mark Parker

During the colder winter and early spring months, I like to keep my options open as it were and vary my tactics until I discover what is working on my chosen venue that year. The trouble is that it's not always the same year to year, it could be little PVA bags one year and zigs the next! I therefore tend to believe this all comes down to water temperature, and the amount of weed still present.

With this in mind, I tend to stick to three different presentations – Pop-ups, particles and PVA.

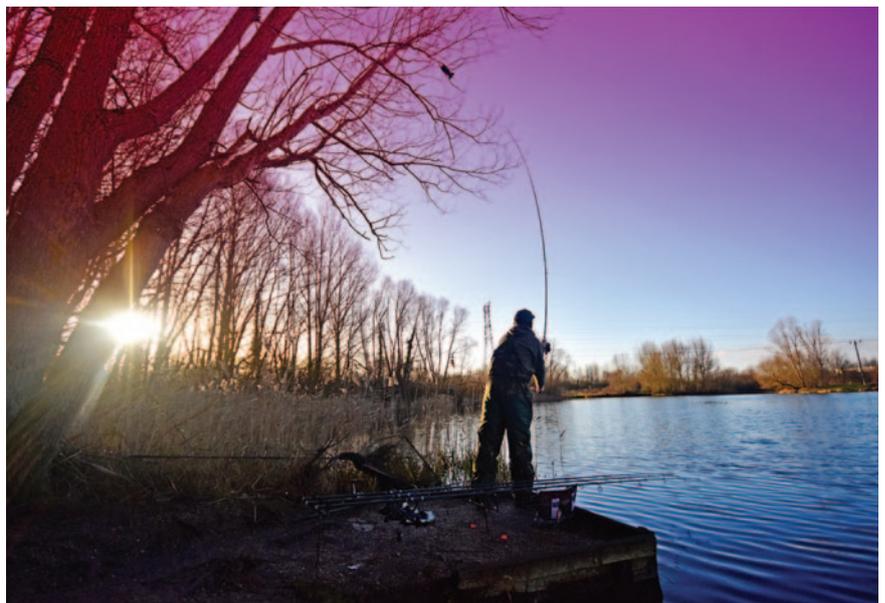
During the start of winter, with all the leaf matter collecting on the bottom, I will generally stick to pop-up rigs. These can be any of the following – whatever you prefer in other words – Chod, Hinged Stiff, Multi, 360 or the Ronnie rig. It just helps to keep the hook point away from the leaves laying on the lakebed and provide me with the confidence I need that I'm fishing affectively.

That said, if I'm fishing three rods, two rods will have a pop-up presentation, whilst the third will be fished with either a pva bag, stick mix or if conditions and the water allows it, a zig rig.

With the two rods, I will use a food bait pop-up on one and a visual pop-up on the other, be it white, pink, yellow or whatever, until I find what works. Then once I've been lucky and caught a couple, I will switch both rods to that pop-up. If it appears just the one tactic is working – last winter for example it was Dynamite Baits' Red Amo food bait pop-up that produced for me all through winter – I'll stick with that on both rods from the start.

I will often start with a Chod or a Hinged Stiff rig, depending on how clear the lake bed is of weed. If either of these doesn't produce within the first few sessions, I will look to lower the height I am fishing at and switch to using either a Multi rig, 360 or Ronnie rig, where you can fish the pop-up section a lot closer to the bottom.

(Top) Rods all set and ready to go!
(Centre) Spombing out particles can help hold the fish until your next visit.
(Bottom) Keeping a note of your rod wraps can get you back on that sweet spot, everytime.



Exclusive Popups, Particles and PVA

I like to use a small PVA stick with the 360 or Ronnie, and just a PVA nugget with the Multi rig to stop the loop from slipping down the hook shank, as it would if you tried using a PVA stick.

It has been said many times, but observation and the right choice of venue is key, to have any level of success during the winter months. A visual sign of a carp showing, bubbling up, or sheltering in a marginal snag or set of reeds is often key. Past experience and an understanding of the lake topography will put you on a good starting point as well of course. The weekend just gone and although I didn't catch after I had packed up around Sunday lunchtime, I continued to watch the lake from a better vantage point than where I was setup fishing and at around 3pm, three different carp showed in small area in a short 30-second period. I stayed until

five o'clock, when it got dark, but that was it, the only give away all weekend, but I now have somewhere to target on my next visit in a couple of day's time for a midweek overnight trip. If I were to be sat there on a mobile or tablet I would have missed them.

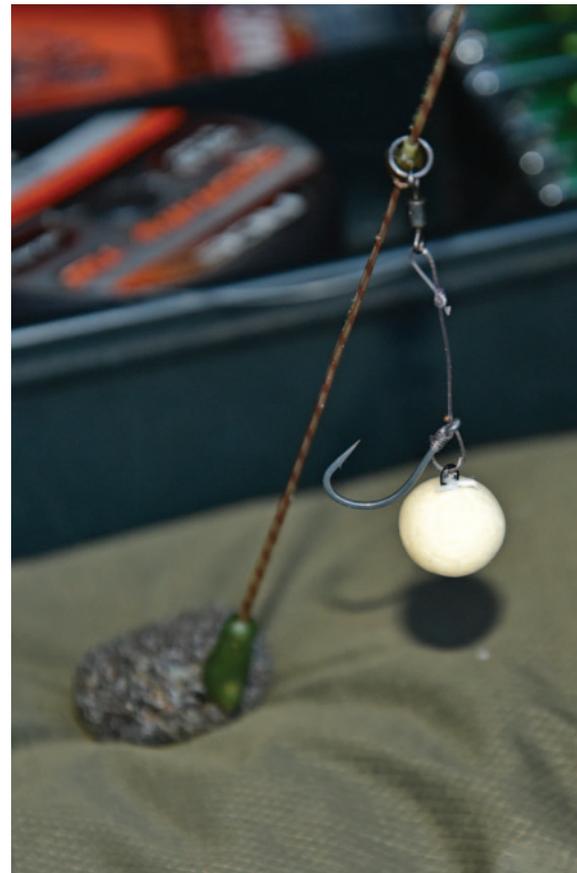
I tend to find a lot of anglers will fish with boilies or singles, but I like to use particles, particularly hemp, specifically Dynamite's Hemp & Snail range, in 500gr (1/2kilo) tins. I will use a tin every week along with my chosen boilies, the last few winters, that being the Red-Amo range in 15mm and 18mm sizes. By breaking and crumbing up some with the hemp, this also has the benefit of not getting picked up by the birds, so the hemp and crumb at least should be left for the fish to find. If this starts working for me and I have had a couple of fish, I will then try PVA bags and bottom



A Snowman rig can work really well too.



(Top left) Dan forms his PVA bags starting with a few whole and crushed boilies. (Top right) Next, add a palmful of Dynamite's new Tiger Nut pellets. (Bottom left) Once the bag is formed, he finishes it off with a glug of Hemp Oil. (Bottom right) The final presentation, with the PVA nugget wrapped around the hook .



The Chod rig is one of Dan's go-to rigs.

baits as hopefully the fish feeding on the hemp and crumb will start to create clear areas and push the leaf matter away. I will then have two rods on that area with each a pop up and bottom bait.

Also, don't forget maggots. I like to soak my maggots in the flavour/attractors used in my boilies and Spomb them out to the area or spot.

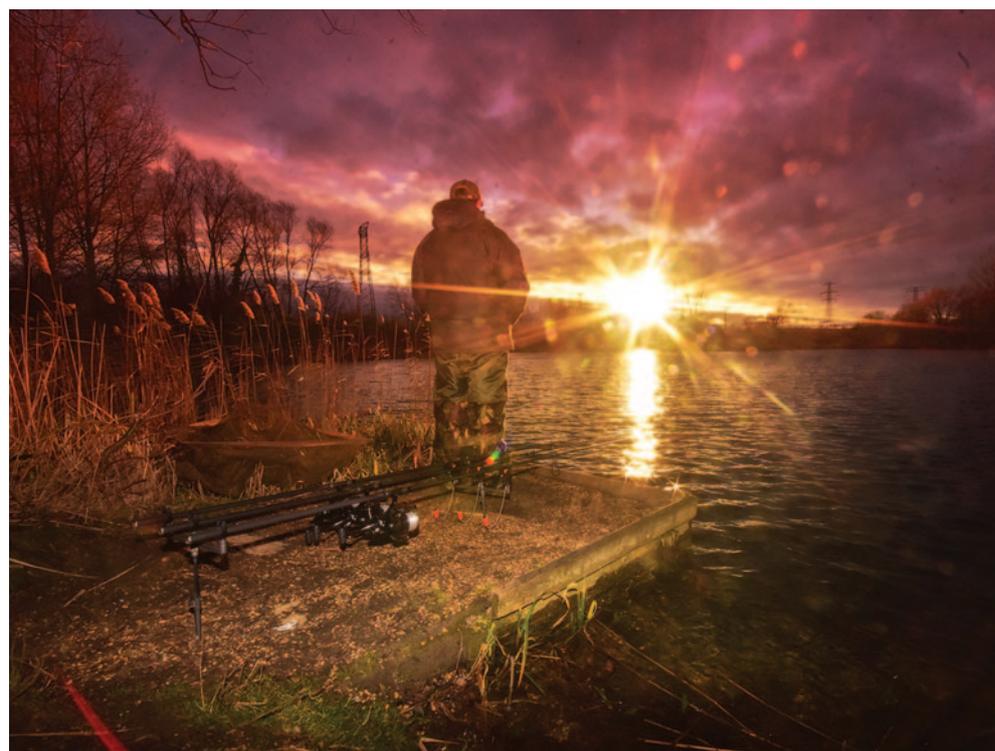
My PVA bags are fairly small, containing three or four whole 15mm boilies, three or four boilies crumbed up and a few 4mm or 6mm pellets too. I will also coat the PVA mesh in the Red-Amo liquid, so it creates a food signal as it is cast into the water and as the flavour continues to seep out onto the bottom of the lakebed. I like to use the same method with the liquid or hemp oil regards my small PVA sticks also.

It can be hard work and you need to be mentally prepared, but I will generally do one midweek overnigher every week, as long as the lake is free from ice of course. This

allows me to be in regular contact with the water and keep the bait going in regularly. The quantity will vary on venues and stock of course, but regular feeding I believe is one of

the keys to keeping the carp active and feeding during the colder periods.

As I say, you need to be mentally prepared and have your tackle organ-



(Right) Keep an eye on the water for signs of fish.

Exclusive Popups, Particles and PVA

ised. As I will generally arrive and leave during darkness mid-winter. I'll take whatever I require to stay warm and comfortable too.

It's only ever going to be an extra couple of minutes setting up and packing away at the end of the day with extra clothing, hot water bottle, four-season rated sleeping bag and so on. You won't find me shivering under a brolly trying to be some sort of action man! The last thing you want is cold feet or hands warning you down, otherwise you will soon start thinking about a nice warm living room.

Once it all clicks into place, you can have some good results, however cold it gets. Last winter, I managed to catch a lovely 22lb scattered linear one night, with half the lake frozen over and the ice actually working its way towards my swim as I played the fish in the moonlight. I can tell you that result felt good, even if my hands were freezing as I held the fish up for the camera! ■



Dan's bait choice for cooler conditions.

Urban Baits Nutcracker Session Pack Competition

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

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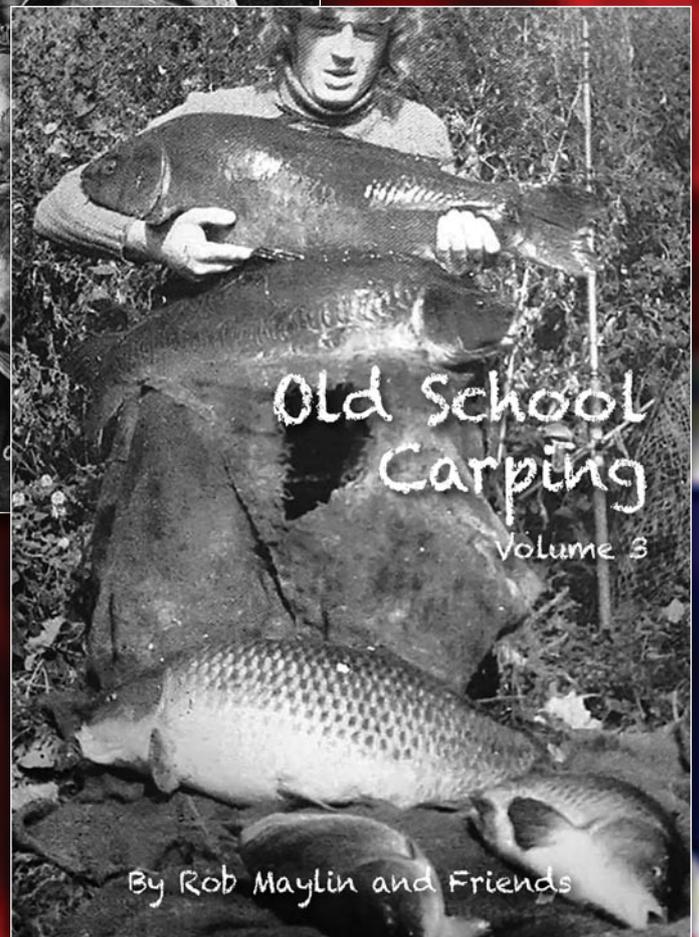
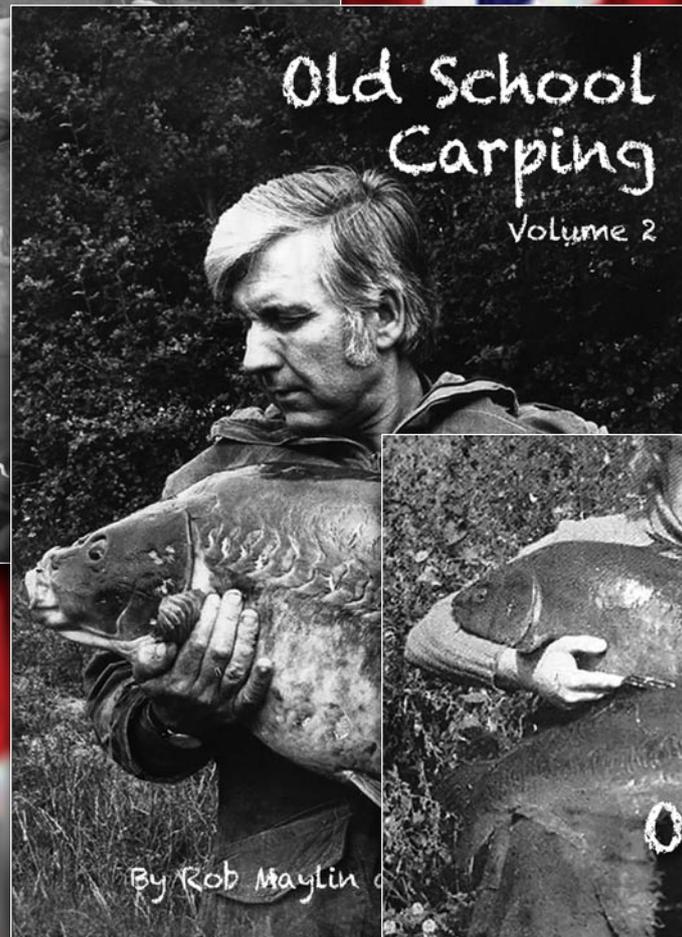
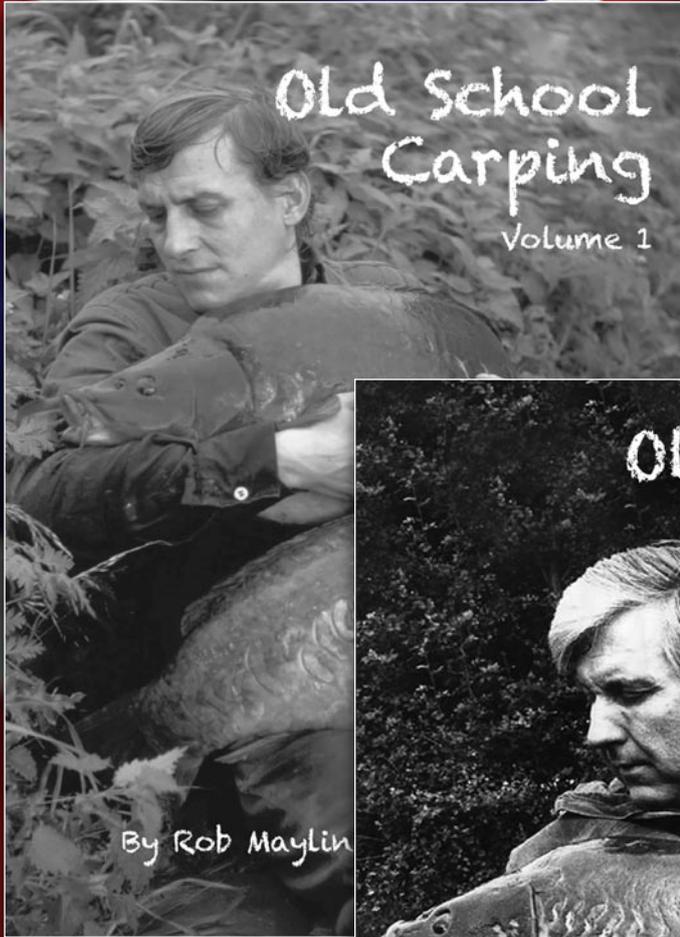
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Exclusive

The Elusive Carp

Part 1 by Lee Brooks



Winter Time.

After having a few years away from fishing I knew it wouldn't be long before the buzz started to come back. A good friend of mine called me and was telling me about a lake he was fishing and asked if I fancied popping down for a cuppa. The lake wasn't far from where I lived, probably a 15 minute drive from my house. I headed down to the lake shortly after our conversation and was greeted by a nice warm cup of tea.

My mate was blanking his tits off, which didn't surprise me for the time of year which was March time. We both used to walk our dogs round the lake most winters but for some reason I never felt like fishing it.

The lake didn't hold any value to me and I had never really heard of any carp being caught from there. I had heard of stories of big fish but like most lakes the stories were probably years old past down from one angler to another. I think every lake has a story or two to tell but no photograph



Hard Times On The Lake.

to go with it. At the time I wasn't fishing anywhere let alone planning to, but after a few cups of tea the lake actually rubbed off on me. So I decided to get myself a ticket and within a few weeks I was on the bank fishing.

The lake itself was a fairly strange

shape, with fingers, islands and 80% of the lakes margins were covered in snags. The fish had a million and one places to hide on this lake and I knew it was going to be a challenge. I started out by taking regular walks round the lake to see if I could see any sign of fish.



First Fish from the lake .



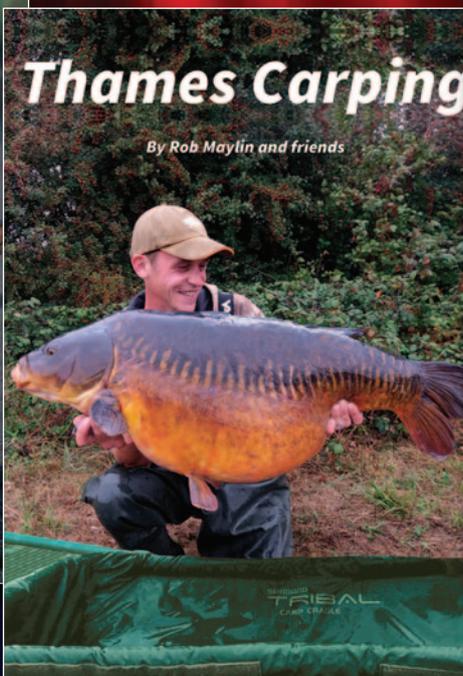
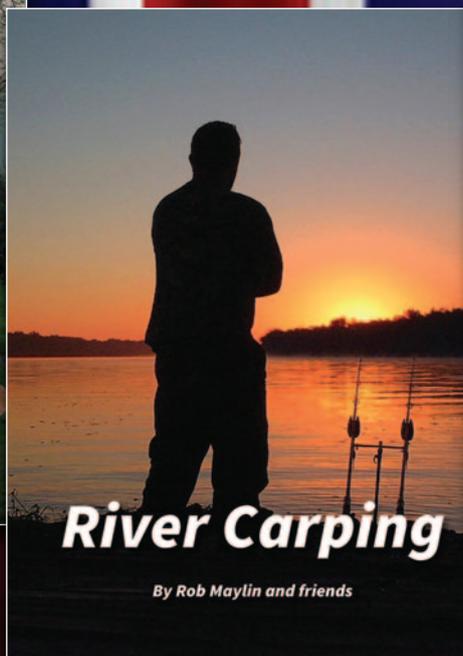
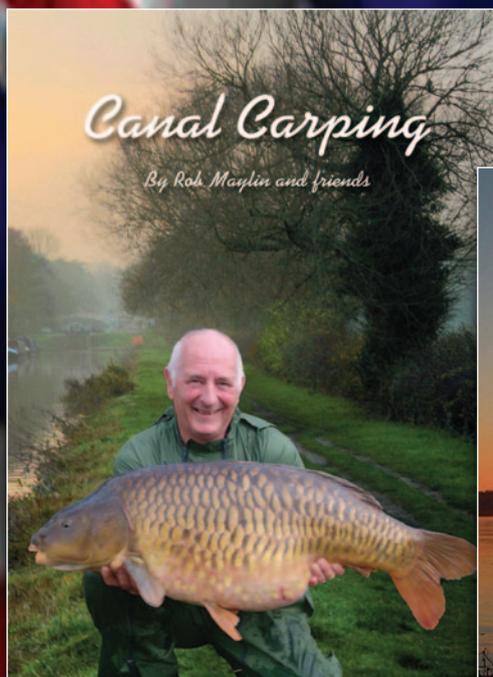
Apple Slice Scales.



Early Morning Common.

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A rare visitor on the bank.

The lake had plenty of silvers and small fish and the odd few pike, but there were no signs of carp anywhere. As the weather warmed up slightly I decided to start doing a few nights. My first session was a Friday night. I had not long finished work and couldn't wait to get down the lake. I had a quick lap of the lake and noticed a few carp patrolling a snaggy margin.

This part of the lake was very narrow, and the far island bank was only 6-7 rod lengths away. I scattered a few handfuls of boilie along the far margin and placed to single hook baits on fairly clear areas. The night was really quiet without any signs of carp. Because I hadn't seen any carp on the lake I decided to do a few more sessions on this peg with regular pre baiting. Unfortunately nothing came of it and I needed to up my game and start fishing other swims. At this time I had done a fair few sessions with no results so I started speaking to a few anglers.

I was getting the same stories every time; it's a difficult lake with very few fish in it. Now on one hand

this made sense because I was seeing hardly any fish and hardly anything was being caught from the lake. On the other hand there was so many places these fish could hide it was

unreal! I noticed one particular peg on the lake was always busy, literally every time I finished work and visited the lake the peg was taken.

It was the first peg on the lake and



Like a football pitch.



Old Warrior.



One of the Old Originals.



The Friendly Common.

you could park your car directly next to the swim, which like on most lakes is always going to be the favourite. My hours at work varied consistently and I could never guarantee being at the lake on certain times. There was however a few quiet weeks at work and I managed to get down the lake early enough to get in the popular swim. I knew nothing about this swim, so I had a lead around and started to find a few clear areas.

At this point the weed started coming through, it wasn't too bad, but I heard the weed normally makes the lake unfishable in the summer months. Not only that but the surface weed "duck pond weed" was extremely bad and put most anglers off. Once I cast out I baited lightly with boilie, nothing much probably a few handfuls over each rod. I had three rods in different areas of the swim, I was trying to target certain patrol routes the carp would most

likely take. Like most evenings on the lake it was really quiet, it wasn't until around 5am I had a take on my right hand rod. I was using Nash H-Gun reels at the time, and the silky smooth clutch went into meltdown.

After fighting with the sleeping bag zip, I hit into what felt like a decent fish. It was holding deep with constant heavy lunges, and after 10 minutes or so I caught glimpse of a stunning linear. It went mid twenty and I was over the moon with finally landing my first carp from the lake. After a few sessions I started working out where the carp were in the day and where they would be travelling to at night and most importantly where they would be feeding in the morning. This was going to be a massive edge for me as most anglers weren't that serious about the fishing, they would turn up to do a night then blank and leave. I had seen the odd angler return every now and then but very rarely

did I see anybody being consistent. I kept everything close to my chest, after all I was working my arse off to try and catch these carp.

To put my theory into practice I kept the same approach every time I went fishing. Find the clear spots, put a few handfuls of bait on each rod and wait till the morning time. I booked a few days of work and planned to fish the popular swim, which is where I caught my first carp from. I got there mega early only to find someone fishing there, so instead of looking for somewhere else to fish I waited. After half an hour another angler made an appearance and I started to have chat.

He said he had been fishing for the past three days and blanked, but did say he had caught a few fish from the lake over the years. Only 5-6 fish but they all looked really old warriors from the pictures he had showed me. After an hour of waiting I jumped in the peg

Exclusive

Back on Roundabout at The Park

By Nathan 'Snowy' Sharp

The view from the 'Causeway' swim.



Let's rewind... Back to May 2020, Boris had given us the green light and every man and his dog who had either been furloughed, out of work or was working from home descended onto the bankside. The lakes were waking up and nature was singing her tune. I was no different, straight on the bank and over the course of the proceeding week I managed three nights on Northey Parks Patstons syndicate. During these nights I had some great angling, managing quite a few fish including my main target the big girl known as 'Canon', although recently spawned she still looked mega. My time on the park seemed to be up, I'd managed a decent chunk of the fish I joined for, so my ticket was handed in.

The rest of the season was spent bouncing around a couple of lakes between work and lockdowns. And by the start of winter, I knew I had to think about the following season, but where to go?

I thought long and hard and came to the decision I had been a bit hasty in giving up my Northey ticket, especially with there still being three rather special fish left for me to catch, two of which were 40lb-plus stunners and the other a very old powerhouse of a mirror. So, a message was sent to Elliott Symak the owner and he must have taken one look at the message and realised his syndicate needed at least one hunky monkey so gave me my ticket back.

It was still middle of the winter so let's fast forward to May 2021. During the beginning of the month a work party and rudd match were participated in and it's fair to say it was a struggle for most, and I could only manage the 6th which gave me 6th choice of swim for the opening night on the 4th June.

All of my main picks of swim had gone but with what was left I decided to pick a swim I had never fished. Regardless, I believed it could throw up a fish. The swim is known as 'number 1'.

Throughout the rest of May I made the journey to the lake three times a week to rake spots and bait up, the spots I'd found were all fairly small with the biggest being the size of a small coffee table, but by the start of the season they had grown with the biggest being the size of a small broolly. The consistent trickle of Trent-baits freshwater shrimp boilies, pellets and tiger nuts had really got the fish visiting the spots and tearing them up.

I'd decided not to work the date of opening, and decided to go get supplies and take a leisurely drive over and quietly set up. By early afternoon I was ready to go, but with us not allowed to cast in until 7pm, I spent the spare time looking about and making sure everything was ready to go. When 7pm arrived all three rigs were shipped out using the bushwacker to three different spots, the right-hand rod was in a small channel off the main swim on a clean spot in a deep 6ft gully, the other two rods were on clean spots in the main



On a baiting mission during the close season.



Watching their every move during May, when they knew they were safe.

Exclusive Back on Roundabout at The Park



First night back in 'Number 1'.

swim in around 2.5ft of water (pretty average depth for the lake) all rigged up with my normal multi rigs and Trentbaits freshwater shrimp wafers, each baited with a couple of handfuls of shrimp freebies and half a handful of tiger nuts.

Going into dark the swim seemed motionless, but through the channel I

had seen the odd fish push their backs out, so I remained confident that they would move into my little bay during dark.

Around 10.30pm I decided to get in the sack and try and get some sleep. I had just closed my eyes when out the blue the right-hand rod that was in the small channel went into melt-

down, picking up the rod the fish darted left and through several clumps of weed, but it had now ground to a halt.

With steady pressure, I managed to get it moving with every weed bed that parted, the fish surged down into another. After this happening several times, I could tell she was about beat, it was at this moment I caught my first glimpses of her and there was no mistaking which fish it was – fish called 'Twotone'.

She was soon safely in the net and with the help of my mate Ivan, we hoisted her up and couldn't believe my luck when she registered a weight of 41lb 8oz! Although a repeat capture it was still a great way to start back on the park and almost 10lb bigger to when I had caught her previously.

Later that night, I managed a 18lb linear before the small bay completely died a death and the following night only rewarded me with a good night's beauty sleep.

With the opening weekends success, I could not wait to get back. The difference with the next session was I could choose where I wanted to fish instead of relying on a draw.

My plan of attack for the season



First night success with the big brute that is 'Twotone' at 41lb-plus.

was to concentrate on the few swims that did the bulk of captures of the fish I had returned for. So, with that in mind, on my return I was soon setup in a swim called 'The Causeway'.

This was used mainly as a spot finding and baiting session, I did manage a lovely scaly fish, but unfortunately on trying to draw the net to my hand the net became snagged on a set of reeds and with the net dipped for a split second the fish rolled back out and was gone. School boy error!

The session was used wisely though and I now had three or four spots marked up and baited before I left.

I was able to make it back on the Friday and with my plan of only fishing certain areas, it wasn't long before I had checked out all these areas and decided on the same swim as the previous week. There were several fish pushing through the weed in front of the swim and I already had the spots marked up so it was simply, wrap the rods up, attach a freshly sharpened Korda Krank X onto my rig and tie a freshwater shrimp wafter on.

One of the rods was cast to a clearing in the weed, I noticed several paths through the weed led to this



Set up in the 'Causeway' swim before the heavens burst.

and the fish seemed to pass over fairly regular. But at around 18 inches deep, I knew the bird life would be a pain. When I'm fishing spots like this I prefer to bait lightly and spread the bait, so there isn't such a target area for

the birds to focus on. I baited with just 10 boilies and 10 tigers and once the rods were in position, it was time to get the brolly up before the heavens opened.

The lake was fairly busy that night



Second fish from the 'Causeway' swim was this mega dark common.



Confidence in a tub. The hookbait that has caught me more fish over the last few years than I can remember.

so I had several visitors during the evening, until the clouds completely burst, the rain was in mid flow and the swim had started to flood when, yes you've guessed it, the rod on the shallow spot came to life.

By the time I picked the rod up, I was already soaked, but with a fish determined to make it into the thick weed, my mind was focused on deterring it rather than the constant drib-

ble of rain down my arse crack!

After the first couple of lunges the fight was pretty much over, with the net dipped a beautiful linear passed over the cord and it wasn't long before a few snaps were done and she was back on her way. I was convinced there was another chance of a fish so despite the wet weather, I got the rod out and change my clothes afterwards.



Captain, we're gonna need a bigger boat.



The awesome lean mean 'Friendly Mirror', the third fish of what was already a productive session.

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Exclusive Back on Roundabout at The Park

The night passed quietly with only three or four bites from the 'mozzis' that had somehow got through the mesh, but as my eyes opened around 4am, I could see signs of fish amongst the weed in front.

Shortly after the same rod was away, bucking in the rest as I was using a tight clutch. It was a similar fight to the previous fish with a mad couple of minutes lunging for the weed before giving up. Once in the net, I could see it was one of the stocky commons that Elliott had introduced a few years before, but this one had really matured well with its looks and its weight. She was a stunning dark common weighing just under 23lb.

Again, once she was slipped back the rod was cast back to the spot. I only had until midday so with around five hours left I was sure another fish could be on the cards.

I was ready for a brew after the excitement of the morning and I enjoyed a couple of Chelsea buns for a healthy brekky. I was halfway through my first bun when the rod was away again, on picking it up it



You know it's been a productive session when your swim turns into a washing line.



While the good Lord was pissing on me, I was smiling with this lovely linear.



Scar looking awesome and a fine way to top off my nights angling.



Between sessions on the park, I managed a day bream angling with the old git (aka 'grandad').

was evident this was a different kettle of fish (love a pun!), with harder runs that tested the tackle to the limit. Eventually, it ended with the fish burying itself into a weed bed at the side of the spot.

Although we can use a boat to free fish, I was hesitant as I was fishing in such shallow water it could completely destroy the swim. I decided to just keep the pressure on and hope either the fish would pull itself free, or the weed would start to break up. After several minutes of no movement, suddenly I gained a few inches so I started walking backwards to keep the momentum, once the ball of weed was moving freely I dipped the net down low and engulfed everything inside the mesh. Ripping away at the ball of weed I soon saw my prize and recognised it immediately as a fairly rarely caught fish known as 'The Friendly'. She was well spawned out and again a repeat, but more evidence what I was doing was right. Besides, no one can be unhappy with a mid-30 stunner.

I had hoped that I hadn't completely wrecked the swim with the bit

of commotion of playing the fish, so again the rod was re-cast and a few baits scattered in the area.

My tea was now cold and I was gagging for one, so again the kettle was on and the Chelsea buns destroyed.

Life was good, already three fish in a overnighter with a belly full of tea and icing but unbeknown to me, the session was about to go to a different level.

I was just sat watching the spot with another brew in hand when I noticed a few small pinprick bubbles over the same spot. I had just stood up to get a closer look when the rod belted off! And I mean belted off – the bite from hell you could say.

On plucking up the courage to pick the rod up, I was met with a power surge that made me take a step or two forward. As much as I tried to hold this fish it still made it into the same weed bed as before, the only difference was this time, after trying every trick in the book she never moved.

I had no choice but to grab the boat. The boat was in the swim

Exclusive Back on Roundabout at The Park

nextdoor that my mate Tony was in, so with a bit of help from him, I was soon doing my best Captain Pugwash impression and floating across the lake.

The only trouble was in my haste I hadn't emptied the boat of the gallons upon gallons of water from the down-pour the night before. With my mind focused on landing the fish I pulled myself towards it, once above the fish it pulled straight and tried to power off. I on the other hand wasn't having any of it and just held firm as it tried to pull the boat towards yet another weed bed.

I could clearly see her by now and was sure it was one of the big framed old mirrors, one of which being one of the three I had returned for. Within a minute or so I had shuffled her into the net and she was mine. At this point I thought it was a fish I had had several times before, so just rowed back to the bank toward my mate Tony who was stood in my swim waiting.

Once back at the bank, I passed him the rod and as I went to pass him the fish, all the water I had forgot to



Like a rose between a bunch of thorns at the rudd match.



The awesome old powerhouse known as 'Scar', one of the ones that I had returned for.

bail out, flooded the front of the boat where I was stood. Before I could move the front had sunk and I was left in a boat that had nestled on the bottom of the lake. I blame it all on the water in the boat, but I guess my 22 stone toned body didn't help matters! With Tony now in hysterics and me stepping out of a sunken boat, I decided the best thing to do first was to drag the boat out and empty it, so at least if anyone else needed it, they wouldn't have to pop their snorkel on first.

Then came the time to sort the fish out. Once we took a look at the fish there was a bit of confusion as it was not the fish I originally thought, instead it was one of the mirrors I had re-joined for. A fish known as 'Scar', a fish which is well-known for causing spectacular fights.

I was mega pleased by this, only a few weeks in and I had managed to tick one off the list and under my terms by fishing one of the known swims for the fish I was after. On the scales Scar weighed a very healthy 36lb 10oz and looked awesome in the morning sun. Between my mates Tony and Callum, we got some great photos and soon Scar was powering back out into the lake. I was now brimming with confidence and knew that if I could stick to the game plan that anything was possible this season.

Till next time keep them alarms singing, SNOWY. ■



In the torch light 'Twotone' looked a chunk as she was returned.

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.

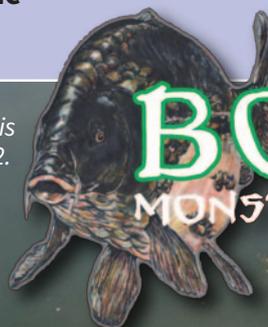
And it could not be simpler to enter... All, you have to do is go to the BOSSARD Facebook page...

- 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!



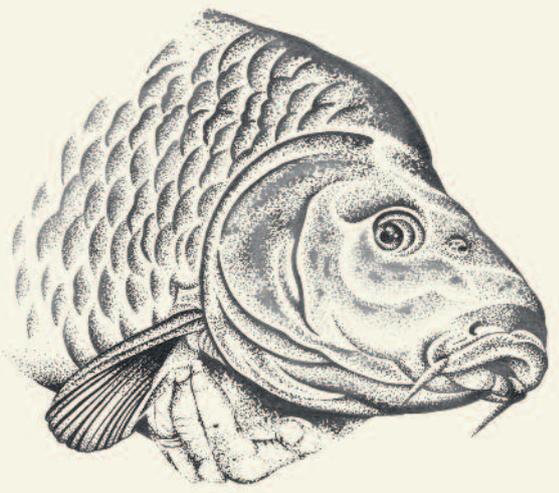
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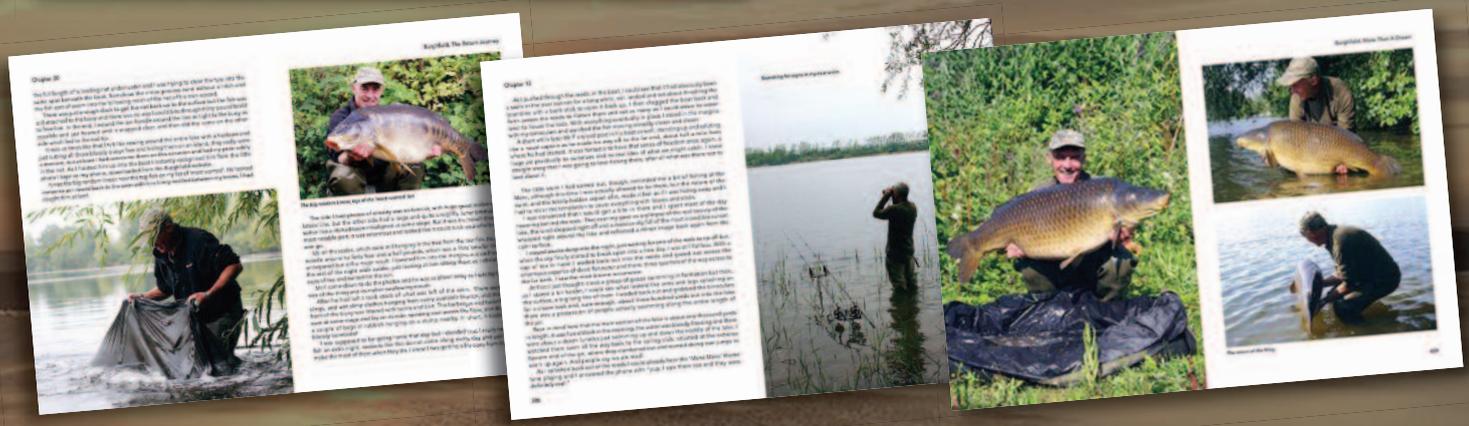
Price £30

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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Lee Brooks - The Elusive Carp
Luke Phillips - Essex Quarry Campaign
Dan Cleary - Increase Your Winter Bites

Competitions

Still the proper carp angler's favourite read

Also available this month,
Big Carp Issue 307.
Miss it and miss out!

HS2 takes another major step forward

The construction of the UK's longest railway bridge took another major step forward this week with the start of work on the first of 56 giant concrete piers that will support the Colne Valley Viaduct as it crosses a series of lakes on the outskirts of London.



HS2 creates first of 56 giant piers for UK's longest rail bridge: The Colne Valley Viaduct's first pier under construction December 2021

Stretching for 3.4km, the viaduct – being built as part of the HS2 rail project – will carry high speed trains travelling at speeds of up to 200mph between the outskirts of Hillingdon and the M25 on their way to Birmingham and the north.

The first pier was cast by engineers from HS2's main works contractor Align JV – a team made up of Bouygues Travaux Publics, Sir Robert McAlpine, and Volker Fitzpatrick – and working in partnership with Kilnbridge.

Weighing in at around 370 tonnes, the 6m tall reinforced concrete pier was cast on site by a team of engineers who used a specially-designed formwork to create the shape of the structure. This was then removed after 4 days to reveal the final prod. Each pier is designed to support the full weight of the deck above and rests on a set of concrete piles going up to 55m into the ground. This foundation work began earlier this year and will require the construction of 292 piles and 56 pile caps across the whole length of the viaduct. In another visible sign of progress on the project, the team have also completed the construction of the first of four jetties across the lakes to get equipment into position to support the construction thereby taking construction vehicles off local roads. Where the viaduct crosses the lake, the piles will be bored directly into the lakebed, using a cofferdam to hold back the water while the pier is constructed. HS2 Ltd's Project Client, David Emms, said: "The Colne Valley Viaduct will be one of HS2's most iconic structures and it's great to see how much has been achieved already. I'd like to thank the whole team for the huge amount of work they've done to get us to this point." Align's Project Director, Daniel Altier, added: "I have no doubt that the viaduct will become one, if not the most striking element of HS2 phase 1 once complete. The way it will be constructed is going to be equally fascinating for engineers young and old. The sections for the deck will be fabricated at our main construction site to the west of London just inside the M25, and using a huge launching girder, the deck will be formed from north to south, along the line of the route, thereby keeping unnecessary construction traffic off the roads. "I would like to thank the whole team, including our supply chain partners, who have worked very hard to enable us to meet this important milestone in the viaduct's construction.

"The design of the Colne Valley Viaduct was inspired by the flight of a stone skipping across the water, with a series of elegant spans, some up to 80m long, carrying the railway around 10m above the surface of the lakes, River Colne and Grand Union Canal. Set low into the landscape, wider spans will carry the viaduct across the lakes, and narrower spans for the approaches. This design was chosen to enable views across the landscape, minimise the viaduct's footprint on the lakes and help complement views across the natural surroundings.

The main deck of the viaduct – which supports the railway line - will be built in 1000 separate unique segments at a temporary factory nearby before being assembled from north to south, starting next year. As part of a push across the whole HS2 project to cut carbon in construction, the design and construction teams working on the viaduct have also cut the amount of embedded carbon in the viaduct by around a third, by narrowing the width of the structure and applying lessons for the design of highspeed railway bridges in Europe. Over the last six years, HS2 has worked closely with Affinity Water and the Environment Agency to monitor water quality and agree working methods. These are being monitored by a team of specialist engineers during construction in order to protect the natural environment.

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CARP CHAT

Carpy News

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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/>. ■

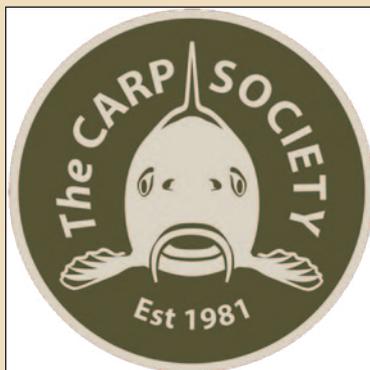
Carp Society AGM 2021 Director Election Results

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!



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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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 Popup, tied to a 360 rig, cast 30 yards to a clear silt channel.

Dan Cleary



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

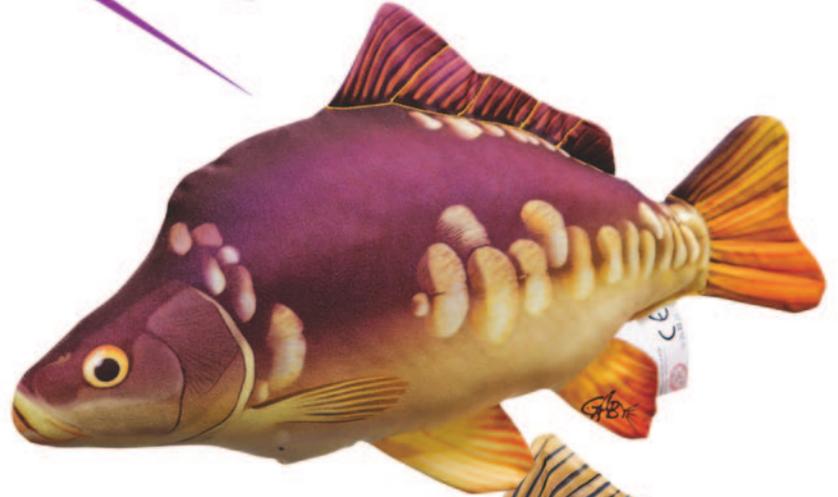
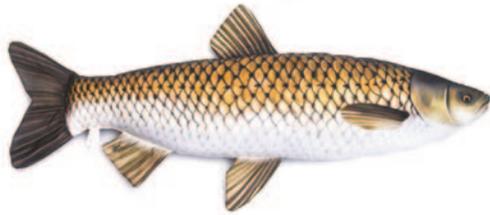


From the staff and boards of the Angling Trust and Fish Legal, we wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and hope the new year is packed with lots of PBs! Special thanks to Kevin Hamill for the wintry picture.

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CARP SCENE

Reviews

EDZ: Hooded Ultra-Shell Windproof Jacket

EDZ's Hooded Ultra-Shell Windproof Jacket (RRP £49.99) is an essential item of clothing that will help to protect outdoor enthusiasts from the elements this spring.

The lightweight, packable jacket is not only ideal for leisurely pursuits such as hiking and golf, but is also perfect for high intensity activities such as running and cycling, thanks to its fast drying and highly breathable properties.

Made from Pertex Microlight, EDZ's Hooded Ultra-Shell Windproof Jacket weighs just 120 grams, and despite the material being ultra-thin (0.6mm), it is incredibly durable and provides outstanding protection from the wind and light showers. The hood also has a drawcord to ensure a comfortable, snug fit.

For further information and to buy online, please visit www.edzdirect.com – or head to the EDZ outlet shop in Keswick on Derwentwater. ■



Press release

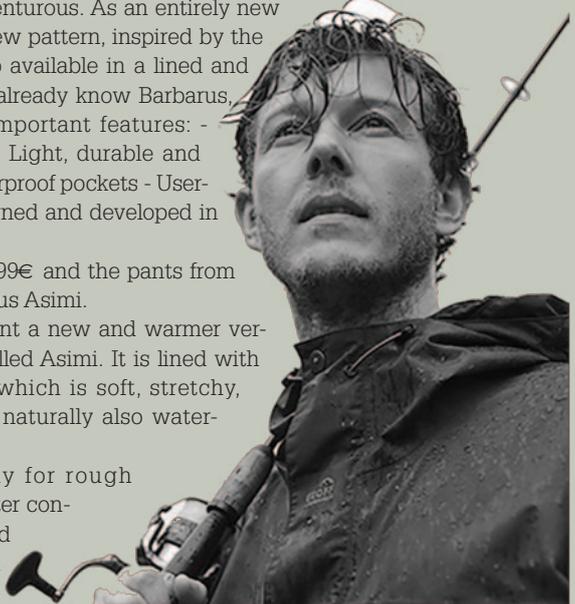
After 5 years on the market, the conclusion is clear: Barbarus has come to stay. That's why the time has come for Barbarus2.

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



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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.

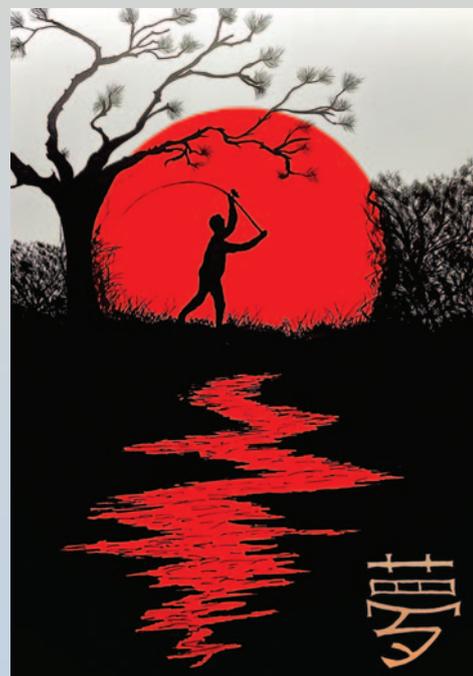
Karen, my partner, looked at it and said: wow that's amazing, you are improving all the time. So, I did what most do and posted the drawing on Facebook. I had loads of lovely comments and that gave me the confidence to push harder and stepped it up a notch trying more challenging



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



The Brackish Pit

By Will Mant



I think I needed a new sense of adventure, as my fishing had become a bit stale at the time, and I was feeling uninspired. I love fishing my local syndicate, but I needed a new challenge, something completely different, and by chance I found just what I was looking for. Working in my local pub, I got wind of a certain lake that was rumoured to contain a few carp, but from what I could gather at the time, the fish were quite small and didn't warrant the effort of actually trying to angle for them! I hadn't given it a second thought until months later I started to hear about sightings of much larger specimens! Then one evening, after a few drinks and a couple games of darts with a good friend of mine, I told him all I knew about the pit. The prospect of fishing such a vast sheet of water, maybe eighty acres or more containing an unknown quantity of carp, the sizes of which were only limited by our imaginations was too good an opportunity to miss, and soon became an obsession.

John and I spent countless days walking the lake just trying to find some fish, but they seemed reluctant

to give away their presence. The lack of climbing trees and the colour of the water also made spotting anything difficult. But bit by bit, we began to rule out certain areas of the lake, eventually deciding to concentrate our efforts on a small, reed lined corner at the far end of the pit. The water here seemed that much deeper than anywhere else, and on the end of any southwesterly winds, it seemed a good place to start. It also provided us with the necessary cover to get down to the lake hopefully unnoticed.

The lake was fascinating to us, and with an abundance of naturals present, it was clear the fish were thriving in the brackish water. Hundreds of shrimp were visible in the margins, along with bloodworm beds found out in the silt, but we were still sure that boilies would be the way to go, so we began baiting the area every other night for a few weeks, with around a hundred or so 18mm'ers each. We resisted temptation to fish for some time, just trying to get the fish used to finding the bait, but eventually we set a date to start our campaign.

Friday nights were the only option for us, and that first trip in the middle

of August really couldn't come quickly enough. As we kept the bait going in little and often, the excitement and anticipation grew and grew. As neither of us drive, we were dropped off maybe a mile or so from the swim, and with barrows quickly loaded, our journey began under the cover of darkness, first along the local canal, then onto a narrow and overgrown path around the lake, with only the moonlight to guide us. We eventually arrived, dripping with sweat, arms and hands cut to shreds after fighting our way through the hawthorn, but none of that mattered; the atmosphere there was electric.

Doing our best to stay as quiet as possible we wasted no time getting our rods in position, as two baits each were cast at about 40 yards range with a scattering of offerings around each one. Simple bottom bait rigs were all that were needed, and after placing the rods up high on storm poles amongst the reeds in maybe a foot of water, we sat back and took it all in. Before long a gentle southwesterly had sprung up, and out of nowhere a few single bleeps had me scurrying for my waders, as I made my way down to the rods, I knew



It was one of the best looking carp I have ever had the privilege of seeing, let alone catching, and one of my favourite captures to date.

something was on the other end. The fish had kited quickly down to my left and round the back of the reeds; before I could turn it the line had parted on something sharp below the surface, and I was left standing in the water a shaking wreck, not knowing what might have been.

I still couldn't believe I had actually got a bite already, and while trying to convince myself it was just a small fish, I tried to get some sleep, which was never easy down the pit! We tried to travel as light as possible that night, but no sleeping bags or bed-chair covers meant we were easy targets for swarms of mosquitoes! Though it wasn't long before we were up again when this time one of John's rods were away, resulting in an immaculate double figure common. It really was in perfect condition, and there was every possibility it had never before graced the net of another angler. Not a bad start we thought; those two takes certainly had our confidence up, and we were off the mark at least. But as dawn was

upon us we packed away with bleary-eyed haste and made our way back through the hawthorn, only more eager to return the following week.

We kept the bait going in steadily as always, walking down to the lake in the evenings after work, another hundred or so 18mm boilies each were scattered around the area in preparation for our return. Before long we were loading the barrows once more and beginning that arduous trek down to the swim. All I could think about was the week before and what might have been, gutted as I was, I had no idea what I was attached to and that was what made it so exciting!

That night I checked and double-checked everything; it all had to be perfect. As I stood amongst the reeds my simple bottom bait rigs were cast with minimal disturbance, a small scattering of free offerings over the top, and the traps were set again. Our tactics really couldn't have been simpler: long hooklengths coupled with small, lightly packed PVA sticks were

essential though just to allow the hookbaits to lie gently amongst the silt. The night passed uneventfully, but just as we resigned ourselves to defeat, one of my rods was away, and after a powerful fight I had a very angry mirror in the net. It wasn't until we lifted the net over the reeds and onto the mat in the half-light that we realised what a special creature it was. A stunning fully scaled mirror, again in immaculate condition, had more than made up for the loss the week before, and for the record it went 31lb 4oz. It was an incredible feeling, but with dawn fast approaching, we barely had time for a celebratory cuppa before we had to be on our way.

The following week was less eventful. All was quiet during the night, and other than a mid-double ghostie at first light, not a lot happened. In fairness the conditions were poor with high pressure, clear skies, and a cold, still night, so we didn't expect much, but due to the circumstances we didn't have the luxury of picking



A rather plump looking fully-scaled.



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It was hugely unexpected; never did I dream of catching such an immense looking carp

where and when we fished on the lake. It was Friday nights or nothing, but any time spent at the lake was time well spent, and though the fish were clearly not in a feeding mood, we did spot a number of fish cruising around in that corner of the lake, and some lumps at that! It was becoming clear they spent a lot of time in this area.

As usual we kept making the walks down to the lake in the evenings after work, eagerly awaiting our next pit adventure. Neither of us could have predicted what would happen next though, and our fourth night was a night I certainly won't forget in a hurry. I remember feeling confident, and conditions were far more favourable this week, but the night got off to a strange start. I received a fast and erratic take on my right hand rod only an hour or so after casting out, but the fight was strange, and I never really felt in contact with the fish. Whilst playing it though, my left hand rod started to go, then to our amazement, into the net rolled a small common, with both of my baited hooks found firmly in its bottom lip!

That night my baits were placed maybe 30 yards apart, yet there laid this tiny common with both my rigs in its mouth. After slipping it back safely, and cursing it for wiping out both of my rods, new rigs were tied and eventually the traps were set once more.

If I'm honest, I didn't expect to catch anything after that; I really thought my chance for the week had

gone, but before long my right hand rod was away again, resulting in a very clean looking mirror, and at 27lb 4oz it was more than welcome! Once carefully sacked up in the deeper water the other side of the reeds, a new rig was quickly tied on and cast back out onto the spot, a slightly firmer area in the silt. Another pouchful of baits over the top completed the trap, and I tried to get some sleep





22lb 8oz ghostie and 23lb 8oz common being the pick of the bunch.





A very clean looking mirror, and at 27lb 4oz it was more than welcome!



A very distinct 27lb 2oz mirror.

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The next trip a breathtaking mirror with huge apple slice scales turned up right on last knockings.

before the all too familiar journey home began!

No more than an hour passed though before the dull tone of my Delkim broke the silence and quickly had me back in my waders and down to the rods. This time though I knew I was attached to something a little bit

special! Initially it came towards me at an alarming rate, and I had to wind down furiously to regain contact. Once under the rod tip the fish made a series of deep and powerful runs for what seemed like an eternity! By far the most powerful fish I have ever encountered, but it was eventually

subdued. John was on hand to do an expert job with the net, and after leaning through the reeds somehow managed to scoop up my prize first time of asking. I still hadn't seen it though, but John's reaction told me all I needed to know, and as he cradled the fish in the net with both arms over the reeds and on to the mat I laid eyes on it. We both knew immediately that it was over 40lb, and just laughed like children, shaking with excitement.

On the scales she went 42lb 12oz and was my first UK 40! It was hugely unexpected; never did I dream of catching such an immense looking carp, and certainly not so early on in the campaign. After placing the beast safely in the margins until the light was slightly more favourable for few pictures, we sat and took it all in once more.

There was no way I would get any sleep; I couldn't stop smiling to myself, but once again though it was over all too quickly. As the sun came up we packed everything away and took a few snaps in the beautiful morning light. Could it get any better than this? What other surprises could the lake possibly have in store for us?



It wasn't until we lifted the net over the reeds and onto the mat in the half light that we realised what a special creature it was.

As always, over the course of the next four or five weeks, we continued baiting up during the week and fishing every Friday night, but had decided on a move after hearing fish crash in the reeds down to the left of our original swim. Though the new swim was far from comfortable and a bit more awkward to get to, it was the only way we could get our baits to them, and we knew the extra effort would be well worth it.

From then we started arriving at the lake a bit earlier, just as the sun was setting. It was a bit of a risk, but the remaining light made it easier to cast tight to the reed line. The move really paid off as well, and those few weeks the lake gave up more of its hidden gems, the first of which in the form of a very distinct 27lb 2oz mirror. A wonderfully unique scale pattern was only blemished by a nasty wound on one of its flanks.

The next trip though a breathtaking mirror with huge apple slice scales turned up right on last knockings just as I was about to reel in, and at 33lb 2oz it was an impressive creature. We had already stayed longer than we probably should have, just trying to see what we could get away with really, but I'm so glad we did.

The following week was by far the wettest either of us had ever experienced. By the time we arrived we were already soaked through after the

long walk down to the lake, but it was well worth it. Amongst the strong winds, relentless rainfall and white capped waves crashing against the bank at our feet, we could hear fish frequently crashing along the reed lined margin. With baits in position it didn't take long to get my first bite and though there were no monsters, a further four fish came my way that night, with a 22lb 8oz ghostie and 23lb 8oz common being the pick of the bunch.

Saying that though, it really was tough going. We only just had enough room to put an old one man Armo up; even then part of it was actually in the lake, and I remember waking up to see John sitting cross legged on top of his sleeping bag in a huge puddle of water. As our bedchairs were sticking out of the bivvy door all night, it was inevitable we would get a bit of a soaking, but there was nothing we could do about it. It didn't make for the most enjoyable of nights for him, literally having no sleep, no dry clothes, and unfortunately no fish either.

But he didn't get all the bad luck that trip, as in the morning I woke to find the tire on my barrow had blown! Pushing it home in the morning, loaded with soaking wet gear on sodden ground with a completely flat tyre wasn't easy.

It couldn't get any harder than that

though, and as we persevered during the final few weeks of October, I managed to winkle out a few more stunners, including a recapture of the 27lb 2oz mirror I had only caught a few weeks earlier! But the others were really quite special. First came a rather plump looking fully-scaled weighing in at 30lb 8oz, followed by the most spectacular looking mirror of 31lb 12oz.

The weight really was irrelevant though; it was one of the best looking carp I have ever had the privilege of seeing let alone catching, and one of my favourite captures to date. I could not have asked for a better way to end our short adventure. Work commitments leading up to Christmas made it a lot harder to stay dedicated, and we only managed one short trip in the middle of winter, but it was bleak, and seemed almost lifeless.

It was the most demanding, but also memorable and exciting fishing I have ever experienced, and I feel very lucky to have caught what I did during our time on the pit. It will be three years ago this summer, and though we did sneak back down once the following year, we haven't returned since.

It was more out of curiosity than anything else; a night under the stars reminiscing about the year before, just hoping for one more of the lake's gems. ■



The next trip a breathtaking mirror with huge apple slice scales turned up right on last knockings.

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The Urban Myth Exclusive Spring Diary 2015

Rob Maylin talks with Terry Dempsey

Rob: It is the first week of February, and there are a couple of inches of snow this morning. I had the Brentwood show at the weekend. I had to dig the car out of the snow on the Saturday morning and drive up in an absolute blizzard on the M25. I thought, 'Oh no, the show is going to be closed when I get there.' But when I got to the other side of Enfield there was no snow at all, and it was a really good show. Funnily

enough I was right opposite my good mate Terry Dempsey; he had his Urban Bait stand there with a few of the lads. There was a crowd around his stand all weekend; it was like a big bulge in the corridor. He is always there at the Brentwood show and normally does really well. I had a chat with a few old friends that come along and sold some of the new books. I had the new Watercraft book out. Terry is in the Watercraft book and a few other mates of mine; it's a nice little book.

It was a good show as always, but there were some problems with the parking unfortunately; they really need to do something about that in that muddy field. One guy spent all day pulling people out of the mud with his truck. Anyway, here I am for my monthly meeting with Tel. We will be meeting up every month going forward for the spring and the summer as he gets back into his fishing again. Not much fishing has been done at all; you have to be keen to be out at the moment. Most of the lakes have



Chris Meaton landed this winter cracker on the Nutcracker!



Colin Woolfall and his son with a part of his big hit at Carpers Paradise.



Paul Weller just keeps on landing winter chunks on the Nutcracker!



This winter peach was landed by Sid Squid on the deadly Nutcracker once again!



Urban bait consultant Tom Morrison landed this stunner on the deadly Nutcracker!

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Camo Carl landed this winter beauty on the Nutcracker!



Tony Preston with one of his crackers landed on the deadly Nutcracker!

got ice on them. I spoke to John Harry this morning about his new Savay book, the follow-up to his first one that he is writing at the moment and he said Savay is frozen, and I guess most places will be. We have had snow for the last week or so, and I know Terry hasn't been doing much fishing himself; he's just been tied up with the shows and work. We had Sandown before Christmas and we are right in the middle of show season now. But saying that Terry's bait has been flying at the moment with so many fish being caught on it over the winter that we could probably fill the whole magazine up with captures. People are continually on the phone to me about what they have caught.

Since my trip out to Carpers Paradise at the end of October, we started doing the subscription offers with Terry's bait, and it has absolutely flown and I can't thank Terry enough for doing this, because I know the other magazines must be jealous as hell. To have Big Carp have someone like Terry on board supporting us with the subscription offers is great, but it is a two-way street, as I am here to help Terry too. As I said I can fill the

magazine with his captures. So we are going to talk about what has been caught on his bait by his mates and some other people using the bait, the show season and also Terry's plan for the spring. It's only a few weeks now, and we will all be fishing again. I can't wait; it can't come quickly enough for me. Even my little lad Max is dying to get out of the door. Anyway I have rabbitied on long enough; it is Terry you want to hear about, so over to the main man, The Urban Myth.

Terry: Good to see you, Rob. Another month has gone by quickly. Every day seems to go so quickly for me lately; it just seems like I have so much to do in preparation for the spring. The bait has been going mad, as everyone can see. I have had so many messages coming in through the Facebook page and through the Twitter page and the website; it is unbelievable, and we know that soon we are going to be snowed under with orders as soon as it starts to warm up. The amount of fish that the bait is catching in the winter doesn't surprise me because last winter was exactly the same. Every month there have been English 40s out on the bait

through the winter. Some keen lads who have been going out there, people like Adam Francis, Jim Shelley a few young anglers I would like to mention, George Robinson and Tomo McFahn, have been out there constantly catching on the bait. Paul Weller is another angler who is constantly sending us pictures of fish. He has had some cracking fish. Only yesterday he sent me a snow picture of a fish caught on the Nutcracker, and as you know all three of our baits work throughout the year, winter, spring... even the fishmeals will work in these cold temperatures. I have known people who have caught them under the ice on the Tuna Garlic and Red Spicy Fish.

The main thing for us really is getting everything ready for the Nutcracker. The Nutcracker is obviously our biggest bait; it is a brilliant spring bait and gave me some of my best ever springs. Two years back when I fished Wingham in the spring I had loads of big fish out. Last year I did not do as much fishing because of the amount of orders, and this year I am sure it will be the same. But I am still looking forward to going out



Tony Preston with another chunk on the going bait!



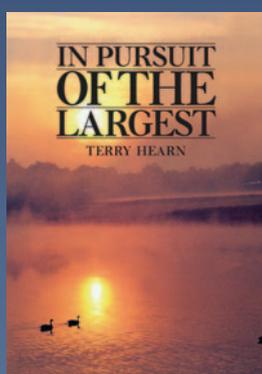
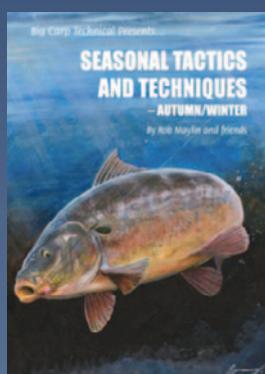
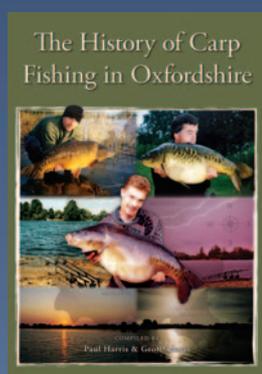
Steven Pearce smashed the Labyrinth lake record with this monster on the Nutcracker!



Ben Goodman landed a massive haul of lumps including this 48lb mirror on the Nutcracker!

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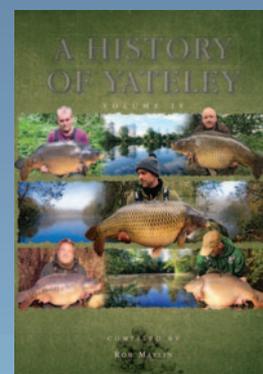
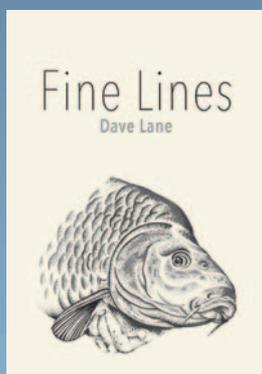
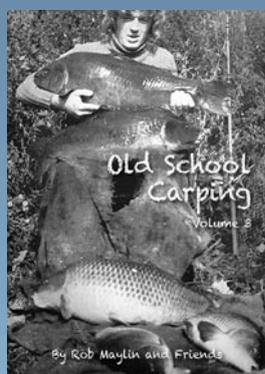


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Ben Pointer landed this beauty on the Nutcracker!



Joe Lambert landed this stunner on the Tuna and Garlic!



Tom Hermitage landed this mint looking beast on the Nutcracker!



Matt Hart with a beauty on the Nutcracker!

myself – my Wingham ticket is sitting there waiting for me, and as soon as March comes and the nights begin to get a bit shorter, I'll start getting a few nights in. One of the reasons I have been working so hard is to get in preparation so I can get a few nights in.

There's another thing that has been keeping me really busy. A lot of people know that previously our bait was rolled by a third party. We subbed that part of it, but now most of it is being done ourselves. Many nights I have been there till 10pm keeping up with the Nutcracker orders. That has been a great experience though; I love making bait. I have been making bait since I was thirteen years of age, so to me it is just normal to be covered in it and go home smelling of the ingredients. So that has been nice, and I am sure I have plenty of that to come but it won't be long until I am out there fishing.

A lot of the lads have been going to Gran Canaria this year as well; they have been catching out there through the winter. There have been a few lads going out to France catching, and we have a few Dutch anglers as

well who have been catching through the winter. They have been to France, going into different places, which is a good thing. I am not going to the Zwolle show this weekend, but I went there last year. A lot of the Dutch anglers want us to go out there, but we are going to be too busy. Next show will be Italy, and we are off there in two weeks. We have had a lot of interest from Italy for the bait, so we are going to see how we can push it out there and get things going. Hopefully, I will be able to get out fishing for a day with you, Rob. It's been quite a long time, and hopefully we will get a few on the Nutcracker.

Rob: That sounds good, Tel. Well, Tel was on about the demand that's undoubtedly going to come once the spring comes round. So what I would suggest to people is that if you have already made up your mind to use it, get your orders in sooner rather than later because you know what it is like once the spring comes round. He is going to be inundated with orders, so now is the time to do it. If you fancy just a bit to try, why not take out a subscription with the Nutcracker subby? You get a few kilos of boilies

and a few pop-ups, and you can give it a little try on a session, and if you like it, then it's time to get the order in.

Terry: When we get out fishing, Rob, we can have a go at using the new barrels we are going to bring out and the stick mix as well. We will have a little plough around with them and see if we can get a few fish on them. Another thing that is going to be going live around now is the website, which is going to be a lot easier to use.

We are going to be more interactive on our new website, and people like Jim Shelley and some of our big tester consultants are going to start doing blogs and stuff like that on there. We are also going to have some clothing on there, some of our products, it is going to be in other languages as well so some of the lads who are in Belgium and Germany can look into it as well. That's going to be exciting; we are going to try to get as much on there as we can.

Rob: Good idea, and if you haven't been over to Terry's Facebook page, there are over 20,000 likes on there and loads of pictures of the fish being



Rick Townley cannot stop catching on the Nutcracker!

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.

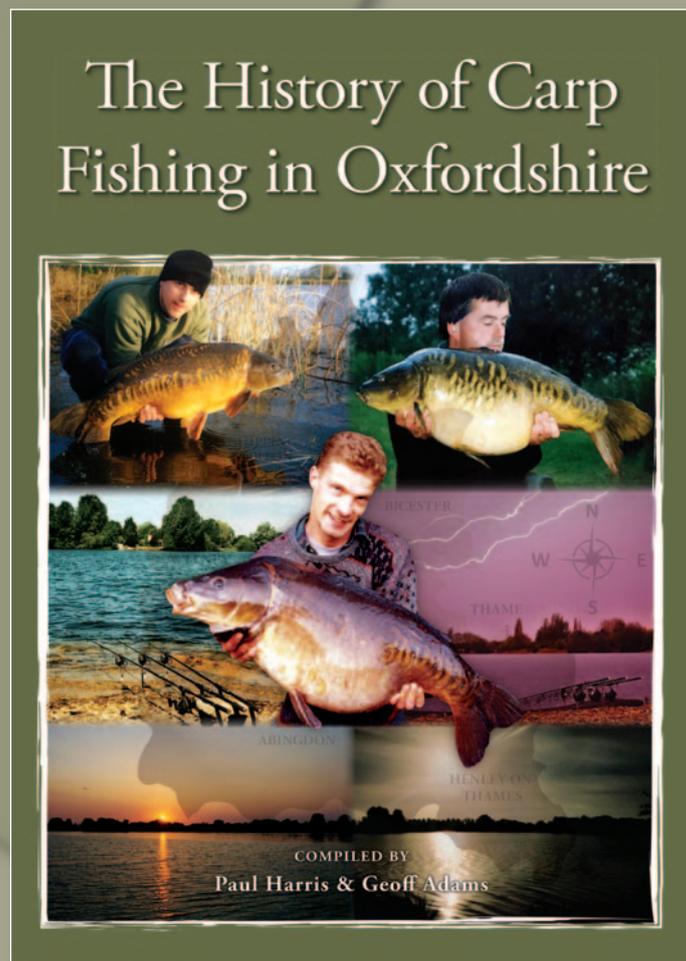
Nick Stansfield is a brilliant young Oxford carper who doesn't shout about his catches. We have two incredible chapters from him from two of the county's most iconic lakes, The Leisure Park and The Big S! Josh Chatfield has written a fantastic chapter which really gives you an insight into how fishing 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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A V A I L A B L E N O W



Adam Francis with a stunning personal best mirror on the deadly Nutcracker!



Adam Francis with some of the crackers he has landed through the winter on the deadly Nutcracker!



caught on the bait. There are also loads of ideas and little tips on there, with this new website coming along, that sounds exciting too.

Well that's all for this month. I will

be meeting up with Terry next month and be back fishing too. Hopefully all the snow will be gone by then, the clocks will have gone forward as well, so the nights will be drawing out

again, and we will be back on the banks again. Thanks very much Terry for meeting up today.

Terry: Cheers Rob. I look forward to next time. ■



Big Hit and 42lb-plus on Southern Venue

By Jon Baczkowski

I had a big result at the end of last week – eight fish, two thirties (the 33lb'er was an unknown fish) and a forty. I finally bagged Vern's Fish at 42lb 10oz – over the moon!

It's been five years hunting Vern's, which had slowly turned into an obsession. She was the last on my list, and it feels extra special, as I had photographed her a few times for others, had certainly been close to catching her and had probably lost her at least once as well.

I had started to think I would move on without getting her. Funnily enough, I texted my mate at beginning of the week when I saw the weather forecast swing to a warm spell and a big southwesterly. I told him where I was going to fish and that I was 100% certain I would catch her. I wish it worked like that all the time!

31lb 2oz.



Overall, I had exactly 80 fish from there in 2014, 62 of which were over 20lbs, including 11 thirties and the 40,

which considering I did not fish between June and the end of September is a bloody decent result. ■

33lb 8oz.





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Good luck!



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More Clay Pit Tales

From Rob Gooch

I arrived at the Beds Clay pit during the afternoon on Saturday 27/12/14. Only four or five other anglers were present so plenty of room. After a lap of the lake in the freezing northerly winds with no sightings, I decided to jump into the same swim as last time out and fished the same bar that produced a couple of fish for me, at 54yds range in 12ft of water, surrounded by deep water.

I despatched a couple of kilos of my usual mix of Krill 16mm freezer boilies, chopped and whole, along with some mixed size bloodworm pellets and a good dose of the Pure Krill Liquid to the spot and put three rods as tight as I could get them out on the spot. This was all done just before we lost light for the day.

What a cold night that was; within an hour of darkness everything was white with frost. My alarm woke me just before first light. Just as I was putting the kettle on and swinging my legs from the bag, one of my

alarms let out a single bleep. On closer inspection, I could see the right hand rod's tip pulling down and nodding away.

The frost turned out to be quite serious, and it quickly became apparent that my clutches were frozen with the fish not being able to take any line! Rod in hand, it soon doubled over as a slow moving heavy lump made its way through my swim. After a slow, lengthy battle, a nice sized fish crossed my net cord sporting its orange winter colours.

I called on a couple of mates fishing close by to give me a hand lifting the fish from the water and to help with the weighing and photos, as the little wooden platform at the front of my swim was literally a sheet of ice! It was seriously cold out, the cold water instantly numbing your fingers! Adrenaline soon took over though and the cold was temporarily forgotten.

Up on the scales, my Xmas present weighed in at 33lb 10oz, showing

lovely winter colours. I could hardly believe that anything would feed in such low temps, and it just goes to show how much they really do like the Krill! I really was over the moon with that one, and repositioned the rod shortly after returning the fish.

The rest of Sunday and Monday passed without event or any signs of activity whatsoever, and it wasn't until midmorning on Tuesday that I received a slow run to my middle rod. The fight was lively, and a lovely recent stockie of around 12lb paid me a visit.

With the rod quickly back in position, the same rod was off again within the hour with what turned out to be another recent stockie of around 15lb. I packed down during the afternoon as my 72 hours were coming to an end and sat watching the sun set over what has been a fantastic 2014 for me. Again, I couldn't believe my luck – three bites in those sort of conditions made it a very special session, and a nice sign off for the year. ■



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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

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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!



Winter Whackers

By Mark Webster

Well here we go again... This article is going to be a follow-on from the last one where I had put all my other angling aside and concentrated on my carp fishing through what became one of my most successful big fish winters I had ever had where the bites just kept on coming! I normally drop out of the carp scene come November and spend more time chasing barbel, perch and big roach, but I was enjoying my carp fishing that much I just couldn't bring myself to hang the rods up and found myself bivvy bound right through till February!

I was flitting between three waters just to keep it interesting rather than brain numbing myself to one particular water. One of the lakes was the one I was getting guesties on in the last article. I had somehow managed to wangle a free ticket on there over

the winter, which was well handy. It was a nice winter water; it stayed clear and weedy and had a good stock of cracking dark old mirrors.

One of the other waters was run as a pre-book day ticket, but I managed to get free fishing on here too, as it was local to my house and there had been a few eastern Europeans sniffing about, so I had to keep an eye on the place for the fella. The other water was owned by a nice guy called Pete. The water was cracking – crystal clear and full of snags and weed. It used to be a thinking well for the Romans, as it was spring fed and he ran it as a 12-man syndicate, so it was or nice quiet place to be. He had given me free fishing seven years prior where I had done the spring on there, and I managed to land some right crackers, but there was a handful left to catch.

So I thought I would have a dabble through the winter and try and tick them off the list. He had done me a

right squeeze on the ticket, which was well handy. I had three good winter waters, and it had cost me next to nothing to fish them. The only thing that was going to cost the money was the bait as I'm not one of these guys that sits behind yellow pop-ups, hoping! No matter how cold it gets, I constantly prime and prebait my spots right the way through. I was spreading ten Kg over the three ponds every week to try and keep the fish looking for it rather than switching off.

I was making a shrimp and pre-digested bait with krill and L.O just to be different, as most blokes were on either a nut or bird protein based bait. As I was baiting heavily and getting in amongst the fish, I didn't want people jumping on my back and having something similar to what I was using. I was knocking the bait up fresh every week and rolling it in barrels just to be different again, and the small factors alone was what had given me a big edge over the others



This cracking old scaly was the first fish to fall to my winter campaign. It was a lovely start indeed.



Pukka chunky number that was part of multiple takes on a successful night's angling where everything fell into place.



This rare old two-tone mirror couldn't resist the scoff! He and a couple of his pals tripped up that morning.



Just shows they don't all have to be scaly to be special! Winter colours just starting to come through show her in all her glory.

anglers around me.

I consistently caught all winter and never blanked once; in fact the colder it got the more I caught, right down to -5°C, but rather than tell you about every session I am going to pick out four particular sessions that stood above the rest! The first one was on the guest water. I rocked up on a Monday morning and managed to drop into a swim I had been priming the previous week. It looked bang-on – there had been a new wind, and it was blowing straight in. I sat there for about an hour with my gear still on the barrow watching the birds work my spot. Then a flat spot kicked up and the birds pushed off. I thought here we go by the time I got my Kens out. Two had showed on the spot, so I cast two rods past them and pulled them back to the spot and let them drop in. It's always a worrying time after casting to showing fish in case you have blown it and spooked them, but I decided to set up camp and dig in!

I couldn't put any bait out, as the birds were sat ten yards off the back spot waiting their turn, so I put the kettle on to make a brew. As I looked up I saw another flat spot kick up over my rods. I was sat there eyes glued on my tips waiting for one to pull up. I

saw a big cluster of fizz hit the top, and as I looked back at my rod the bobbin hit the deck and my line dropped slack. I jumped out of my brolly, grabbed my rod and started pumping the slack line in. As I was winding, I could see the fish was charging round to my left to these big marginal snags.

I managed to tighten up to the fish and I leant in hard trying to turn it. As I did, it exploded on the top just in front of the snag. I just clamped down and hung on; it was shit or bust. I could feel my line stretching as it was trying to bore under the roots. It finally gave way and hit the top again as it kited away from the snag. I could feel bouncing, and I thought no way is that one of the little nutty commons in there as I bullied it towards the net. I saw my lead was wedged up the line in a load of dead blanket weed, and it was the weed that was bouncing as the fish came up in the water. I got a glimpse of a pukka looking chestnut common.

As I tried unclipping the lead off the line it charged back out into the lake and nosed down into a dead weedbed and locked up solid. I was thinking, don't let me lose you now. I just kept steady pressure on, and after a couple of minutes, I could feel it

start kicking, and with one big steady pull, I got it moving as the weedbed hit the top in front of me. I couldn't see the fish, so I just scooped the lot up as I pulled the net towards me. I could feel her kicking in the net and she was mine. So I hoisted her up onto the mat, parted the weed and was greeted with this pukka old looking common. She pulled the scales round to over 30lb too – what a cracking start. Just as I was about to recast the rod another stuck its nut out over the spot, so I decided to hold off with the cast in case I spooked it, as I still had one rod out there fishing.

I was glad I did, as I hadn't long finished my cuppa when the other rod ramped off. I was away again, and this one properly hung on. It didn't kite about like the other one; it just hung low and steamed off up the lake, leaving a plume of bubbles behind it! I battled it hard for ages; it was one of those where your arms start aching and you are wondering if it's ever going to give up.

But eventually I got a glimpse of a pukka old dark mirror as it hit the top in front of me. I slowly coaxed it into the net and peered in to be greeted with yet another 30 known as the Pretty One. I knew it had spooked the area, so I put about twenty pouches of



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It was fate with this one. As I was about to wind my last rod in it dragged along the floor, and I found myself cuddling this big, old mirror.



Proper stunning common, one of which I'd caught 11 years previously at 12lb. It was nice to be reacquainted.

bait over the spot and went on a wander hoping that I might get a chance elsewhere, but it was quiet for the rest of the day. I was just getting my rods out on the spots when a few pals turned up with curry and beers, so I put a pouchful over each rod and went about building a fire.

We sat around that night drinking and chatting bollocks till about eleven. It was a pukka old social. They made tracks, and I went back to my broolly. It was a proper fresh night with the wind blowing straight in the door. I was frozen, so I decided to go and sit back by the fire. I must have crashed out, as I was awoken to a single bleep on my rod, and as I looked I was laid on the floor freezing my tits off next to a pile of ash. As I made my way over to the rods I had a startling one-toner on my right-hander, as the fish went charging off up the lake stripping line off of a tight clutch.

It was a proper fighting machine that ran me ragged, how I never shook it off the hook, I don't know but somehow I managed to get it in. It looked a half decent fish so I bagged her up, flicked my rod back out, dived in the broolly, ramped my stove up, made a brew and dived in the snorer!

I received another bite on the same

rod as daylight was breaking, which resulted in a mid-twenty mirror. My pal came down to take pics, and the other one was a cracker. When I pulled back the sack it was a nice dark half linear that went 28lb 14oz so I was well glad I never slipped it back.

It went quiet after that, and I never saw another sign all morning, so I decided to pull the Kens in and go for a mooch. As I picked the right-hand rod up I thought don't be silly, so I put it on the deck and wound the others in first. As I went to pick the other rod up it started dragging along the ground. I was away – a proper stroke of luck. I saw this thing hit the top out in the lake and kite round towards the bars, and I knew it was a bit of chunk, as it was just plodding in nice and easy. I just couldn't seem to get it off the bottom.

As it came up in the shallow water in front of me, I could see it was a big, long mirror. It kept flanking up along the bottom, pinging the line, and the rod kept jolting back, giving me heart-stoppers. But I finally coaxed it into the net, and as I peered in I saw it was a fish called Bottom. Afterwards it pulled the scales round to 38lb 8oz, a nice old winter chunk. I belled my mate to do pics, and he ended up

turning up with another pal of mine. I quickly flicked my rods back out and put a couple of pouches over the top. We got the photos done and sat round having a social and a cuppa.

It wasn't long before I was away again, and it felt another good'un, but within minutes it had locked me up in a dead weedbed. The pond was choked with the stuff – even in the winter it's up to the top, and it's a right hellhole in the summer. The coots can walk from one side to the other without getting their feet wet! Anyway, I remember the fight going stalemate, and I just couldn't budge it from the weed it was well buried in, so I started casting the marker where the fish was stuck, and after a few casts I managed to lock into the weed with the marker rod and get it moving. I passed the marker to my pal, and we started winding the two rods in together. We pulled the weed into the edge, but I couldn't see the fish. I was frantically pulling the dead weed of my line, and as I did, my pal said, "Look at the size of that!" As I looked up I could see this big golden common, just sitting there 20ft behind the weed. As I started to clear my line it started thrashing about on the surface.



The Pretty One, another plain looker, but there's something about it that makes it special.

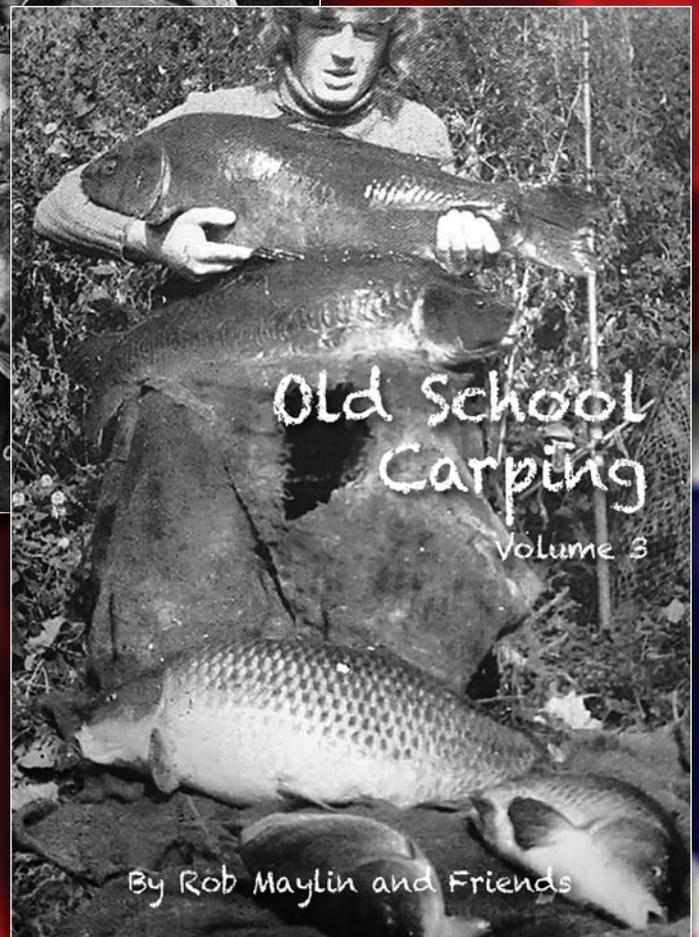
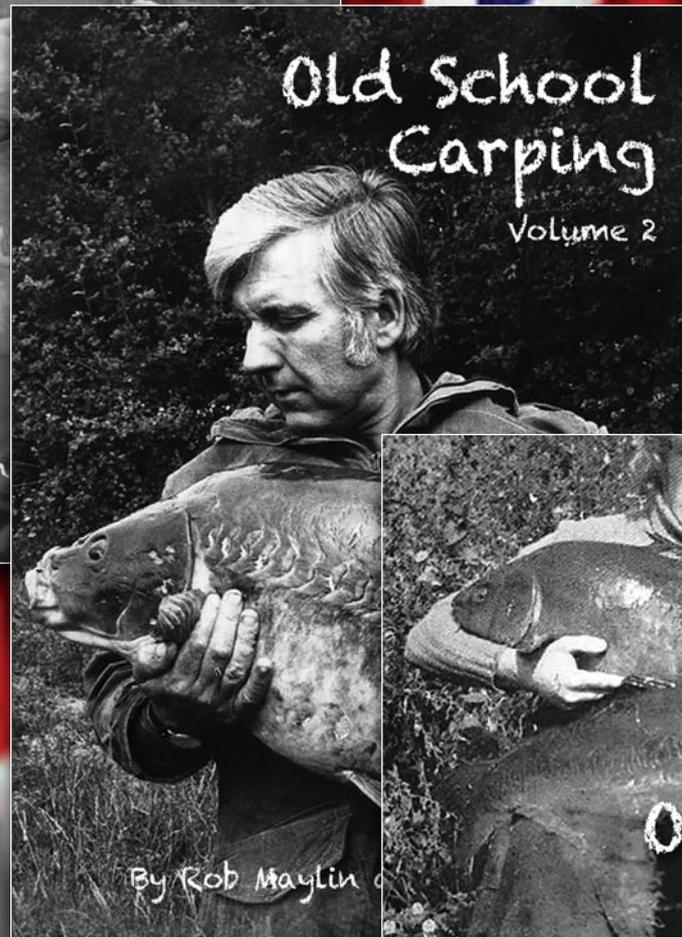
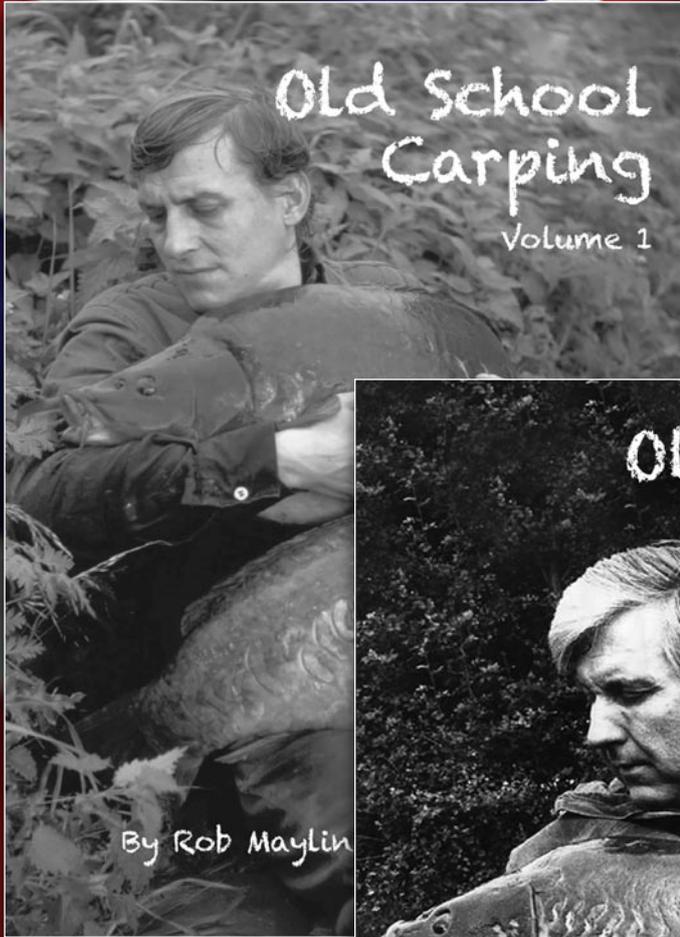


Just another one of many – I do love their winter colours.



The Swerve on my third night – mission accomplished. As you can see she's a proper old winter lump.

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I didn't mention this night in the article. Silly really, as I managed eight bites in a quick overnighter, this one being the smallest but by far the prettiest.



Yet another common. They began to resemble chub. I was getting bored of catching 'em.

My heart sank. I grabbed the line on the other side of the weedbed and started hand-lining it in. As it broke the surface in front of me, my pal swiped the net over the top of it and it bolted in first time – proper squeeze. I still don't think to this day I would have landed that fish if my mates weren't there. As we hoisted her up onto the scales, both my pals were saying that it was a good 40-plus. The frame was huge, but she went 38-odd. That will do me, I thought – a brace of 38s in the winter will do nicely. We got the pics done, and I slipped her back. I was going to stay on another night, but it got to about five and I was cold, wet and hungry, so I decided to call it nuts and I wrapped up and headed for home.

I returned four days later for a couple of nights, but it just didn't look right, so I decided to have a go on the little syndicate water, as I had done two quick overnighter on there and managed four 20s to 26lb and fancied my chances of one of the big girls. One in particular was called the Swerve, a nice upper-thirty leathery one. It hadn't been out for a while too, so I headed for there. When I got there, it was empty – proper result –

and I dropped straight into my baited spot.

I walked round to the out-of-bounds, looked in through the bushes, and I could see my spots polished off with not a boilie in sights. They'd been trounging, and as I looked to the snag to my right, I could see the culprits – five big lumps, just sitting there. It was going to be a problem getting my rods in whilst they were there, as I had to row them across. It was an impossible cast. I flicked a couple of stones near them, and they moved down to the next snag – perfect. I went back round, and as stealthily as possible rowed my baits across, trying not to make too much of a ripple in the process. I managed to get three hookbaits in position with a little scattering over the top and rowed back. I went down a couple of swims and got up the tree for a look, and the same fish was quite happily sat there, so I hadn't spooked them out the area. I set camp up and dug myself in for the long wait. By mid-afternoon, I had received my first bite, which resulted in a scraper 20 common, a good start, but not what I was after. I managed to get the rod back out quietly and was all set for

nightfall.

I got another slamming bite on my rod, and the fish picked up my other two rods and wedged me up in the snag. It was a disaster. I dived in the boat and went out to the snag to try and free it, but it was well bedded in, and it finally broke me off. I was gutted, as it was a fish called the Scarred Common, a real rarity to the bank. By the time I got the tangles sorted and rigs tied it was pitch black, so I had to get my baits out in the dark. Once I had finished in the boat with the head torch and disturbance I didn't think there was a hope in hell's chance of me getting another bite. I just sat there defeated.

By then the bailiff Ed and Cookie had turned up for a wonder. I sat there for a couple of hours chatting to them, telling them about the disasters I had had. As they were about to leave I had a single bleep on the middle rod, and as I looked it was well bent in. I just latched on and pulled for dear life, and the fish finally gave way and kited away from the snags out towards the dead pad roots.

As Cookie said, "What's happening? You in?" we heard a massive boil out in the pond. I said, "I'm in alright



An unknown pukka old scaly mirror was more than welcome! How fish remain unknown on pressured waters always baffles me.

boys, and it's one of the chunks." As Ed lifted the torch up we could see this massive framed fish lunging under a load of weed that was caught around my line. The water was so clear you could see everything. As Ed scooped up with the net, he got the weed but missed the fish. In a blind panic, I screamed and he went in for another big scoop, and she was in. I instantly knew it was the Swerve, and I let out a big "Let's be having yah!" My third night and straight in with the big girl – I was like a dog with two dicks.

After we got the photos done they persuaded me to get my rod back out. To be honest I wasn't really fussed, but I went out in the dark and dropped it back on the spot again and the boys said their farewells and left me to it. They had only been gone ten minutes tops, and the same rod was away, again with what felt like another one of the big girls.

I played it hard on the far snags for ages, and it finally gave in and started kiting left. It ended up making it to a big, snaggy bush in my own margin. I could feel it kicking, but it wouldn't budge, so I quickly jumped into the boat and made my way to it. When I got to the fish I shone my head torch down, and I could see this big orange-bellied mirror, twisting and turning

under the branches. It was only caught by one twig. I got above it, and managed to pull the fish and the weed to the surface, but it was impossible to net, so I started rowing back ashore pulling the fish and the weed with me! As I jumped out of the boat, the fish started going mad. I just dived forward and grabbed it in my arms and wrestled in onto the bank. It was not the best way to do it, but she was safely on my mat, and that's all that mattered. I quickly slipped her in the retainer, and made myself a brew and sorted the self-take kit out.

Once I got the pics done I felt like just crawling into my bag. I was soaked through to the bone. It was freezing, but whilst mucking about in the boat trying to land that fish, I'd caught the other two lines, so I didn't have any rods to fish. I decided to get them sorted before climbing in the bag. I am glad I did, as by the morning I had managed to bag another brace of 20 commons. Happy with what I had caught I decided to wrap up early. I put five kilos of boilies along the snags and planned to return two days later for another night.

In the meantime my mate had tapped me up for a guesty on there. I didn't mind, as it was a quiet, lonely old place to fish in the winter. So I sorted it for him, and we decided to

get there mid-afternoon, as most of the bites came through the night, and it would give us time to get the baits out and let the spots settle. When I woke in the morning the weather had turned. We'd had a proper heavy frost overnight, and the temperature had dropped to -5°C. Lovely, I thought, as I had been baiting in between 2½ and 3ft of water. So I decided to get there earlier before my pal and try to locate fish.

When I got there I walked round to the out-of-bounds to see if they had been on the bait. As I peered over the snags, I could see my spot glowing; it was polished. As I looked down to my left, there was a group of fish holding up under the roots with a couple of chunks amongst them too. I quickly snuck back out of the way and looked at the other two spots. They were exactly the same, clean as a whistle with the fish held up in the roots in the shallow water. They looked quite lethargic, but at least they were still happy to be in the shallows.

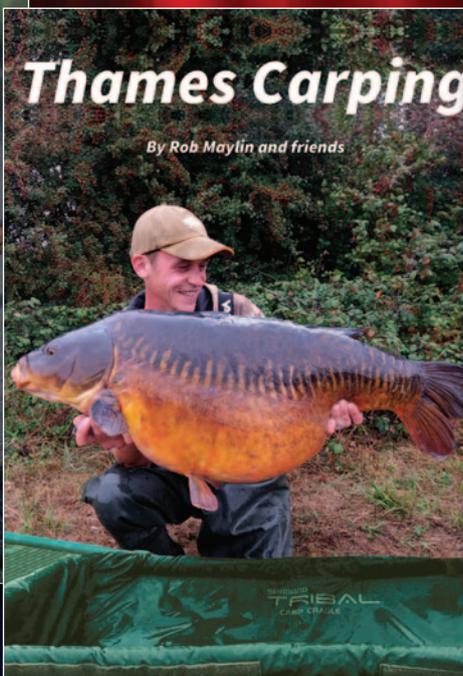
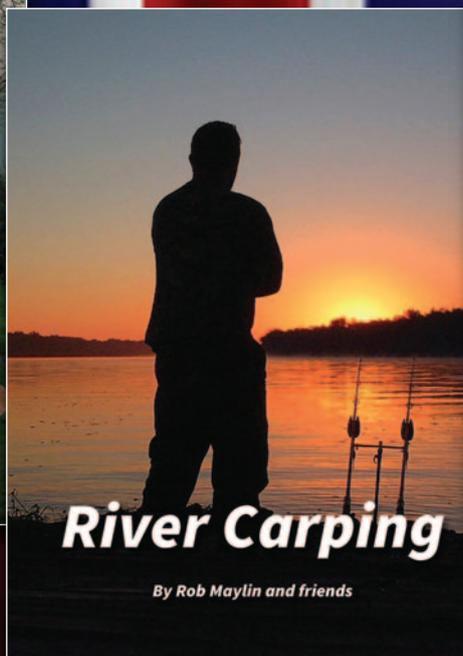
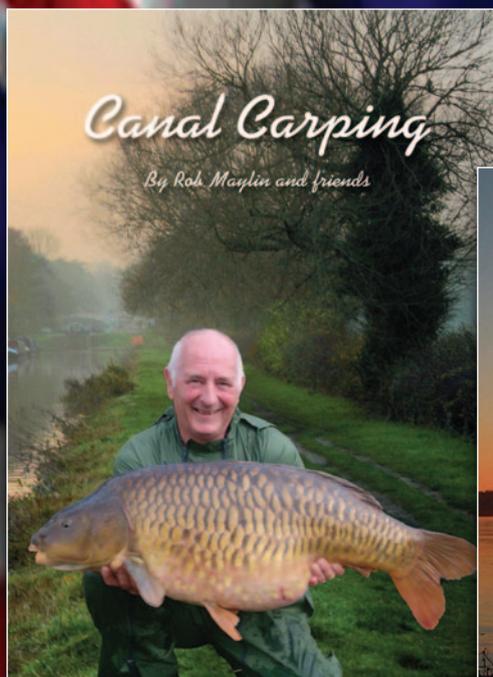
I got round the other side and slowly boated my baits across. It seemed as though the fish didn't even notice me. I got back ashore feeling confident of a bite. I had just set up camp when my pal turned up. He had only put one foot in my swim when my right hand rod slammed round,



Mirror, mirror on the wall, I didn't mind catching this common at all! It was a mighty impressive looking creature on the bank.

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The Orange that topped part of a big winter brace.



Poor self-shots, but this nice old slate grey was part of a big hit.

and a fish exploded on the top under the snags. I barged past him and caught on to the rod, trying desperately to pull the fish away from the branches. After three big lunges the fish gave way and went into open water. I found myself netting a cracking old mid-twenty common. I slipped her back and boated the rod back out to the spot. As I was trying to get myself out the boat I saw my left hand reel slam against the buzzer, and I was away again with a low twenty common! Crazy fishing. After sorting that rod back out I went and helped my pal sort his gear out.

It stayed quiet for the rest of the day, but just after dark, I received another bite and found myself hanging onto an absolute powerhouse. I just couldn't stop it. I could feel my line grating and pinging off the branches as I charged along the snags. I just clamped down on my reel, dug my heels in and pulled. Everything started cracking, and my pal was like "That's going to go, mate. Let some line off". But I was shit or bust as I was thinking something's gonna give, and it did; it was the fish, and it hit the top. As it did, I dropped the rod down low and rolled it over away from the snags. It slowly plod-

ded its way towards us, and as it rolled up on top, it looked like a good common, and my pal managed to scoop it up. I found myself having photos with another good 30. It was a proper angry old fish – I've never heard a carp grunt like it on the bank. We slipped her back into her home, and I went about getting my rod back out.

Once I got back, I cracked a beer open and sat there flicking my camera on and off looking at the photos he had taken, when suddenly my middle rod just slammed into the buzzer. My mate said, "You're taking the piss aren't you?" as I leapt out and found myself playing number four. It ended up being a crinkly old 20lb mirror. I got my rod back and said I'd treat my pal to a kebab, as I was getting all the action. Whilst he was picking up the kebab from the gate, I received another bite. I managed to play it in and sack it up before he got back. We sat there eating the kebab when my other rod ramped off. It was a proper joke.

It wasn't even eight o'clock and it was -3°C, and I was pulling fish in one after the other in three feet of water. It was proper head scratching stuff, but there you go. It ended up being a

lovely upper twenty common. After having pics with that my pal went to put the camera away, and I said, "Hold on, I've got another one here," and started pulling the sack in. He just shook his head in disbelief as I unravelled this cracking old mirror. We slipped them back and sunk a couple more beers before crashing out.

I remember waking in the night shivering, and when I checked the temperature was -7°C – by far the coldest night I had done in a long while. I thought, well at least I am going to get some kip, as I'm not getting more bites in this, but somehow I did. I managed another two by the morning and lost one of the big mirrors.

I tried everything I could to get him out of the snag, but he eventually bent the hook out and slipped away. It was a bit of a gutter, as it was my other target fish, but hey ho... My pal and I had to be gone early, as he was working and I had made plans. I did return a few times and caught quite a few more, but nothing that could compare to those two sessions. I think the other water I talked about is going to be another story.

Till then, take care people.
Tight lines! ■



Cracking half linear was showing a few battle scars, but she lightened up a dull old morning bless her and stopped me from having my first blank that winter.

Chronicle Fishing

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

Well, it's been a very tough month this February for the members of the main lake, with it seeing its first blank for a very, very long time. Some harsh cold spells, high pressures, icy winds and lack of angling pressure mean that this month no main lake carp got their chance of a picture in BC. But this rare occurrence has given the Valley and Car Park lakes their chance in the spotlight. They have not let the Fryerning complex down at all. The Valley and Car Park lakes have definitely woken up from winter first, so with spring around the corner there



Stuart Kilden with a beautiful 28lb Valley Lake mirror.



23lb Car Park lake stunner caught by Gary Little.



Lee England: 23lb and the biggest of three from the Car Park lake.

were six fish caught over February by the valley faithful and even more carp reaching anglers' nets on the Car Park.

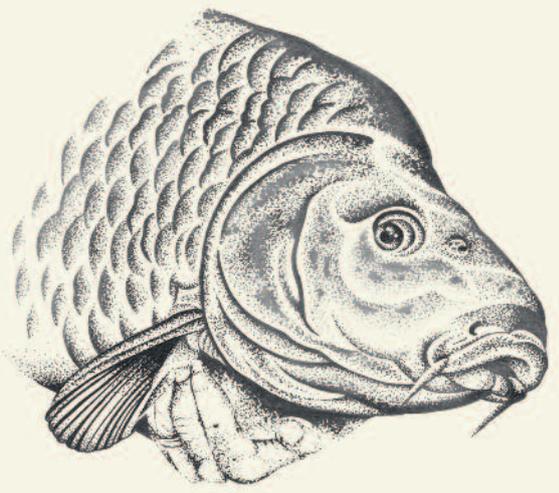
I will start in the Valleys with Stuart Kilden's new PB, coming in at dead on 28lb, a cracking looking fish and the biggest out this February, so well done Stuart. Also Carl Carlucci, Mark Hackett and Lewis Sherwood all managed to find fish from the Valleys at around the 22lb to 24lb mark- great work by all. Moving up to the Car Park lakes there has been some great action on here with two anglers in particular managing to find big Car Park lake stunners. Both with fish tipping the scales at 23lb, new member Lee England and veteran Gary Little have had a very productive February on the XL complex. The weights of fish in both smaller lakes have continued to increase dramatically. The Car Park Lake is now full of good upper doubles, 20s and even a sprinkling of 30s. The Valley Lake has an ever-growing head of large fish, with roughly nine out of ten carp now going 20lb-plus and a good head of 30s to back them up. It also has three stunning commons of over 30lb, the largest of which is the current lake record of 37lb 8oz, so all is looking good for another fantastic year on Fryerning Fisheries.

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 help showcase your lake in Big Carp magazine please visit www.chroniclefishing.co.uk ■

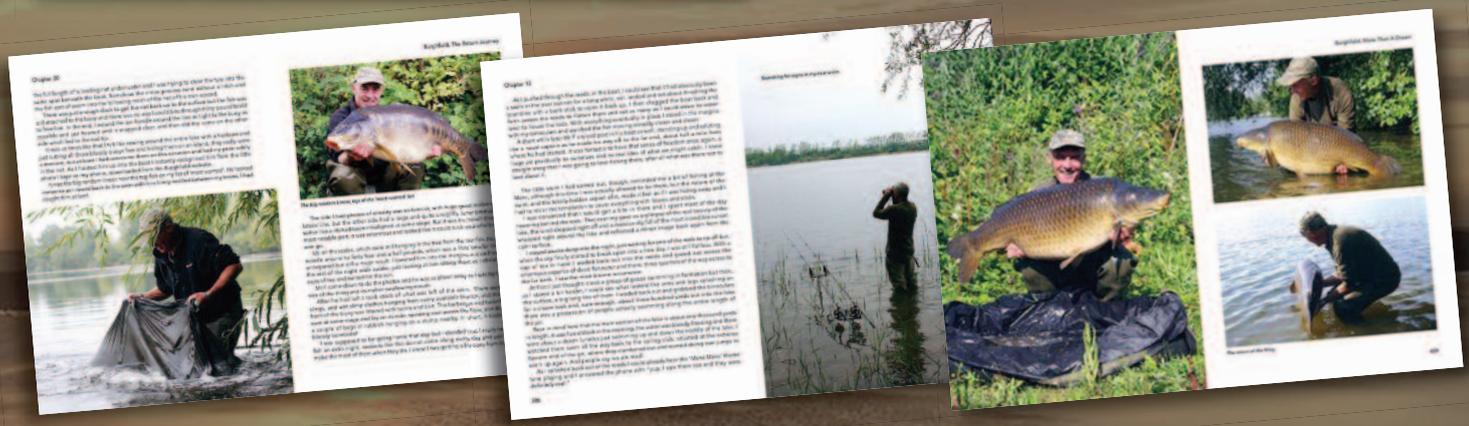
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Fine Lines

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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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Spring Tactics

By Rick Golder



One in the net from a quick bite.

I doubt that I'm alone in regarding spring as my favourite time of year, and as I write this, the first daffodils are flowering, and the days are starting to get that little bit longer. For the big carp angler it's certainly exciting, and in my case after weeks without fishing I can't wait to get out and back into it all. Spring should be the most productive time too, as with the fish just waking up they want food, and they're definitely not as cautious about rigs and baits as they become as the season goes on. Much has been written in regard to spring tactics, and many of these focus on the likes of zigs and single baits cast at showing fish, which really do work, but I wanted to base this around what I try to aim for throughout late March, April and May.

Carp anglers in magazines and other media outlets always talk about location, and in spring, as at any other time of year, it is vital. I always believe the fish are awake after winter regardless of when the days reach 12 hours of daylight and 12 hours of darkness, which is around early March. It's from this point on that frosts don't seem to have the effects that they do in winter, as I believe that once they are awake they will continue to remain active in some form or another. They are using energy and need to build up again they will continue to feed on. I remember fishing the old Cemex lakes that closed in mid March every year, and how that after months of blanking, they would produce a number of bites in that last week of the season, even though the



weather hadn't seemed to change; it was simply that light level hitting that 12 and 12 time. It was so frustrating, as everyone knew it, and each year the last two weeks of the season became more and more busy, and just as it all seemed to be going off the lakes closed!

I find spring location comes in two stages, firstly the initial wake up and the first couple of weeks after that, and then the first bit of prolonged warmer weather, both at night and during the day, as this in itself seems a trigger to change the carp's movements. Looking at the initial wakeup, I am sure that the carp can be found in smaller bays or snaggy areas that catch the sun. On one of my local lakes, I know every year where to find

(Above) Boosted B5 hookbaits for the spring.

(Below) Upper 30 linear when the open water started producing.

my first carp after the winter. The first is a small, deep and sheltered bay that has a mass of snags and overhanging trees. I don't think the fish overwinter in here, but I know that come the early spring in March, they get into here in numbers. It's not particularly shallow, but it's off the cold winds, and most of all has that cover that carp love. I have often spent hours in here drifting round in the syndicate boat, and when I've seen my first fish, I will always see more. It's not hard to see them in here, as at that time of year the water is generally very clear, but I've been surprised on many occasions when I've recognised a number of fish in there, only to catch one that I'd not seen at all, and had maybe just literally drifted in for those few weeks. It was nerve testing stuff fishing in there, as it was all very close-in underarm stuff, but when you hooked a fish that close they all ripped off, and it was hit and hold with the mass of marginal snags in there. However even if several of us caught in that short period, they seemed to hold and remain there until the weather became that bit warmer.

The second place I could always find them was a long, straight bit of a no-fishing bank. This too had the marginal snags and deep water, but more importantly it was the lake's real





suntrap, and was hit by the spring sun for most of the day. The fish love this sun, and as in the case of the snaggy bay they would spend those first few weeks travelling up and down this length of bank without venturing far away. I'd often watch fish along here that were covered in clay on their bodies and heads, and it was clear that they were happy here

both feeding and enjoying the sun. There was only one swim that could get you close to these fish, and again it was close-in fishing with strong tackle. I had a number of fish from here fishing a single rod just off the bushes, but any baits fished further than a few feet away never produced anything.

From my experiences above in

those early weeks I would be looking for this same deep, sun hit snaggy areas on any lake I was to fish. These factors seem to be the common denominators in where the fish want to be, and in the case of this lake the main body of water appeared dead and lifeless during those early weeks, as I'm sure the majority of the lake's population were grouped up in these two places. It was noticeable too that both these areas were unaffected by the cold winds like the northerly and easterly, so both got the maximum effects of the sun. This made a noticeable difference to my fishing there too, as I'd often be in a T-shirt and shorts in there when others in the wind would be in full thermals! I use these examples as my templates for spring location on other lakes now, as I'm sure it is the same in most other places as long as the lake holds these snaggy but deep areas. It's the angler who can find these spots just as the fish wake up that can really have a good few hits. It can literally be



(Top) One from the snaggy bay that was hit-and-hold fishing.
(Left) Tucked away in the small bay where they first wake up.

CARPING RE-CUT

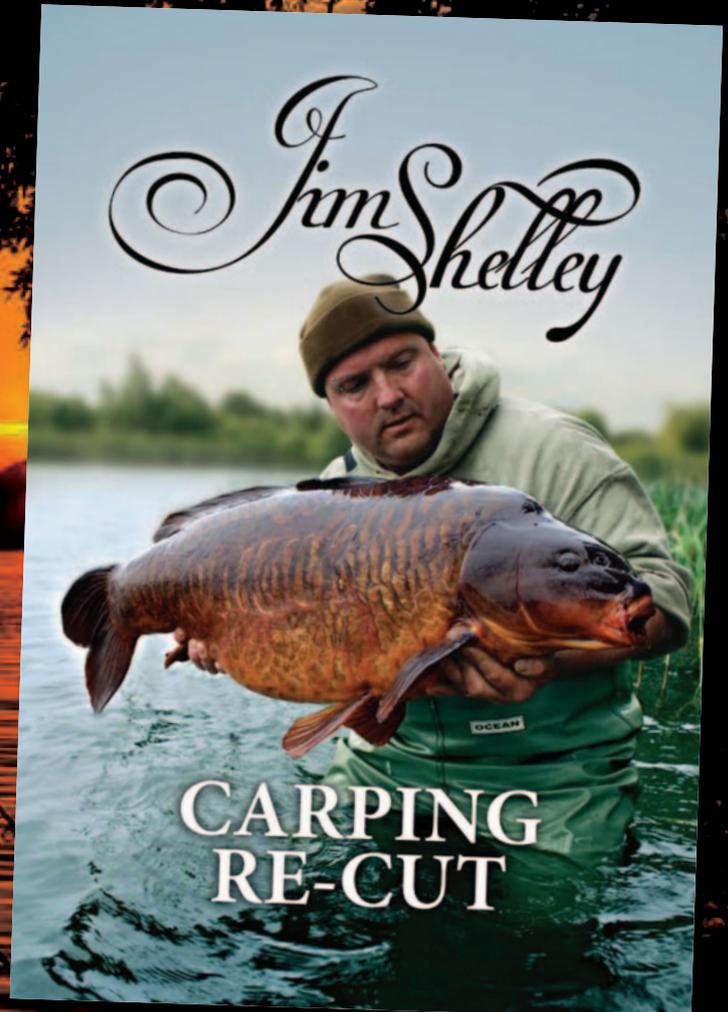
Jim Shelley

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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overnight too, as I learnt the hard way one year when fishing the Road Lake.

I had been concentrating on an area in the main part of the lake all winter that in all fairness had done a couple of fish, but sadly not to me I must add, and I was sure as we came into March I would have every chance of a fish before the traditional close in a couple of weeks' time. I arrived one morning certain that this was to be that trip when I would be rewarded with the fish I had spent the whole winter trying for. I had kept the bait going in as much as I could in my little swim in the main bit of the lake and was overly confident that this week's wake-up would see the fish out in front of me. I totally neglected a walk round and went straight in the swim that I was preoccupied with. However the following morning I'd not had a bleep, and although I was slightly disappointed, I wasn't overly concerned and figured I'd be rewarded soon enough. That morning another angler turned up and went straight into the area of snags that ran

**(Top) I always fish over bait in the spring, even only a handful.
(Below) Spring can bring fantastic results.**



the length of one bank. Five minutes later he was back and rushing to get his gear, as he'd seen almost every fish in the lake in there! It was clear that they'd only just appeared though, as he told me he'd been down looking every day and had even timed his arrival for mid morning to get the best chance of seeing them. He had three right next to me in the next 24 hours – a harsh lesson learnt that I've never forgotten, and all from finding

the place that they first wake up, and at that prolific right time. The angler who gets these two factors right really can reap the rewards, all by timing and observation.

As April comes into May and the weather warms, so the water temperatures climb and the main areas of the open water become much more productive. I find from mid-April onwards that carp are more mobile than at any other time of the year, and





it's then not uncommon to find pockets of fish all over the lake. Last spring I started on a new water, one that I really knew nothing about. My first trips were a real eye-opener, as initially in mid-March the fish were all grouped up in one area, but two weeks later when I returned they were all over, and I ended up moving around constantly to try to stay in touch with them. This was illustrated

one night when four of us fished, one on each bank of 12-plus acres, and we all caught despite being hundreds of yards apart. It's difficult when it's like this, as the fish don't remain static for long, and it's a balancing act whether to constantly move around chasing them or plot up and try and predict their arrival.

The tricky thing with the new lake was that they showed early in the

mornings, and then very little for the rest of the day. However my first fish from the lake taught me a good spring lesson. I had had a blank night on my first one of this trip, but early the following morning I saw a big fish jump out in a swim opposite; in fact it couldn't have been further away. Knowing that this window of them showing was a short one and very early too, I made sure I was up and about at very first light, which was soon rewarded by the sight of that one fish show. When I got around there for a look, another one showed in roughly the same area. That was good enough for me to move, and although I had seen the odd sign elsewhere, I was hopeful the fish would return at some point in the 24 hours I had left. The area the fish had shown in held a big central bar, one of the biggest features in the lake, and this had to be a pinch point that would act

(Top left) I moved on showing fish and hoped they'd return.

(Below) Big common over a fair bit of bait on a different coloured hookbait..





First one from the new lake.

as a roadway for the fish, even when they were at their most mobile. I did see fish show as time wore on, but I was confident that I was in the right area and that the previous sightings coupled with the main feature would pay off. Sometimes location can be a case of holding your nerve, and I was glad I did, as that night I was off the mark with a cracking upper 30. However I stayed put for another night in that same swim, which was a mistake, as sure enough the fish showed elsewhere, and I really should have moved again.

With location in mind, being mobile is definitely another edge over other anglers. I have really cut my gear down to as little as I absolutely need, and I know with what I now have, I can up and move quickly. Brolly systems like the Tempest, which go up and pack away really quickly, and bedchairs that fold with your sleeping bag inside are the way forward, as these are the slowest two aspects of packing up. It is amazing how much

gear we all take, that we actually never, or hardly ever use! Even leaving some of these bits in the car can save you time when packing it all away. The other factor to consider is being kitted up for every range that you may need to fish. Being a fluorocarbon lover, I know that its one disadvantage is its long range casting ability, although I love its clear, covert colour and sinking properties, which coupled together give me outstanding line lay. In the clear water of spring this is a big advantage, and if I'm fishing at ranges of 70 yards or less it is always my preferred choice. However at this time with the fishing being so spread out, I always prepare to fish at range too, taking my spare spools with 12lb GT80 mono with the Mirage fluorocarbon leaders attached, should I need to fish further out.

With the amount the fish move in the spring, I find that I actually use less bait than at any other time of the year, for hopefully more bites! I don't bother prebaiting lakes or spots in

them at all now, as I believe from my own results that arriving and finding the fish generates better chances than baiting up swims and constantly fishing them. Sure the fish visit these areas, but when at their most mobile will any amount of bait hold them for that long? I don't think it will. As the weed grows so the lakes become spottier, and baiting these can be an advantage, but prior to this, I'm sure the larders of natural food are so spread, and the fish travel all over to locate them. I do I put my faith in high attract and instant bait though, as I think bait wise you have to hit the ground running by using a bait that is instantly appealing to the fish. Long-term bait establishment is great, but from that initial wake-up onwards I want a bait that will start working from the off. I've used the Essential B5 for many years now, mainly because I know that it needs no establishing; the high nutritional value and crunch in it are instant anywhere I've taken it, and when bites are there to be had,

Spring Carping

By Steve Briggs



Carp anglers these days don't know how lucky they are... Why? Well, going back several years ago now I wouldn't have been able to write this feature at all as we had the old closed season enforced! All fresh waters (except trout and game waters) were closed between March the 15th and June 16th effectively meaning that the whole of the spring was totally missed out. There are still many people out there that don't agree with lakes being open all through the year for fishing, but there's no doubt that it can be one of the best times to get the rods out. When you look at the way things are now, the middle of March is when many people start out on their spring campaigns, and I have to say that those three months that I used to go without any fishing seemed like an eternity, and I'm quite happy the way things are now.

As many people quickly found out, spring can actually be the best time of the year, and many of the fish, which could be very tricky to say the least, all of a sudden became quite catchable. Of course things have settled down, and the carp have become used to being targeted all through the



year, but undoubtedly spring is a great time to be out there.

Mind you I've probably jumped the gun there a bit, as it can actually be a tricky time too. I guess a lot depends on the weather (as it always does). It's a topsy-turvy time for the weather generally, and it can go either way for us. Personally I think the most difficult conditions to contend with are when it's up and down like a yo-yo, lurching from high pressure to low pressure and varying temperatures. As I write this that's exactly what we've got, and although some good

(Above) A bright, fruity bait has caught me loads of spring carp over the years.

(Below) A rarely-caught cracker that was caught in what would've been the old closed season.

fish have been caught recently it doesn't seem a great time to be out there. It's all to do with the jet stream – as Carol Kirkwood explained so well the other morning on BBC 1. The jet stream is way up in the atmosphere and has a great bearing on what weather we get. In layman's terms it's





like a wavy line separating the colder north air from the warmer south. In the spring – or at least the early part of spring, we are more or less on the borderline of the jet stream, if it dips down over our areas then temperatures will most likely drop, and as the line recedes we will receive the warmer temperatures rising from the southern parts of Europe.

What we really need are periods of settled weather whether warm or cold. Obviously warm is better, but carp do have that instinct to ‘wake up’ and start feeding even when thick frosts are still on the ground every morning. I guess we all know the signs to look out for, such as the first new buds on the trees and the first plants starting to bloom. They are all things that we were told to be looking for years ago, but they are all true, and they are the signs that all of nature is starting to get going again.

The temperatures do make a difference to how quickly things get going, but the decisive factor in all of this is the amount of daylight. Longer daylight hours are what get the birds

feeding, the flowers blooming and the carp searching for our baits hopefully! Of course a lot happens in a relatively short period, and those three short months or thereabouts see things change from a barren winter scene right into the lush days of summer. Personally I love to see the fresh, vibrant colours of spring and love to be out there somewhere amongst it!

If I’m really into fishing one particular lake then I like to get out there from March onwards. Strangely

enough I’ve often found myself pretty much alone on some waters during that time, but there’s no doubt in my mind that it’s worth being there. If you are out there before everyone else then you have the chance of catching a good fish or two off guard before they remember what angling pressure is again. Carp can become surprisingly mobile quite quickly, and if the sun has got any warmth in it then the fish can be up in the surface layers for a fair bit of time. Obviously



(Top) A nice scaly mirror on a misty April morning.

(Right) The first signs that nature is starting to wake up.

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Zigs can be a very effective method in the spring, and I know some people who have absolutely taken lakes apart in the early part of the spring. But I'll be the first to admit that I'm not the greatest fan of Zig fishing; I will do it if I really think it will make a difference, and sometimes it does. I even caught my biggest UK carp on a Zig, but for me it's the exception rather than the rule, and I prefer the more conventional approaches for the most part.

If I could pigeonhole that early part of spring I would say that the fish would still be spending most of the time out in the deeper parts of the lakes, and they won't be feeding too heavily. There will always be exceptions to that, but those are the basic rules that I find apply. Catching fish that don't want to eat too much needs a bit of thought. For me it's one of the few times when high attraction baits can make a difference. In an ideal situation I like to get fish feeding heavily and trip them up that way, but I'll go with whatever works best at the time. High attraction can come in different forms. I guess we are all familiar with the glugged or soaked pop-ups, and they have produced plenty of fish for me over the years. Some flavours work better than others, but you can't beat a nice fruity flavour. I like to blend different flavours together to create my own unique 'label', and I have found in the

past that some definitely work better than others. In particular I've always done well by blending Scopex with one or two fruity flavours; they seem to complement each other well, and the carp seem to like the mixture.

Light baiting or singles are the way I prefer to go, and year after year the carp seem to find those small fruity offerings irresistible. There are other ways of using attraction though, and one comes in the form of paste wrapped baits like the Cultured Key baits from Nash. Using a paste wrap means that the attraction can leak out at a faster rate therefore sending out a greater message that something tasty is not far away! The Cultured Key has already caught me some very good fish in tricky conditions, including coldwater conditions, and it's a nice little edge to have, as although we've all heard about paste wrapped baits I don't see many people using them.

As time moves on the water will

warm up, things will start to change, and this really becomes one of the times of the year when the fish are most catchable. Once the water temperature gets up above ten or twelve degrees the fish start to feed more heavily, and it's when I start to fish more in my normal way by introducing a bit more food. I still don't go over the top unless it's been really warm for a few weeks, but the carp will certainly start to turn on more to what I loosely term 'summer' type baits such as those incorporating more fishmeal ingredients.

Of course there is one very important point to consider here, and that is spawning, which could take place at any time during the spring, but is most likely to be later on. Most things in the animal kingdom feed more heavily in the buildup to breeding, and carp are no different; they could go on the real munch a month before they spawn. The week before they spawn is perhaps the easiest time of the year to catch any carp. I'm not saying that I target that time, as I always feel it's a little unfair to catch them then, but to be honest I've never been able to actually tell when they are about to spawn and only know for sure when they do start thrashing about.

What I really love about the later spring is that on many waters the carp can start to move into the margins, and that opens up a whole new world of possibilities. On lakes that are not too pressured by anglers I love to walk the margins and bait up small areas just to monitor what is going on. Carp moving into the margins can happen almost overnight, and I guess



(Top) That great feeling when you've just put one back!
(Right) One of my favourite periods of the year as the fish start to appear in the margins.



it mainly has to do with water temperature, although it is also when any weed growth starts to take hold, so it could have something to do with them having a bit more cover. Either way when they are cruising the margins and eating baits that is prime stalking time, which is perhaps my favourite form of fishing and certainly one of the most exciting. By the term 'stalking' I don't necessarily mean standing there with a rod dropping the bait on a carp's nose, but more placing a bait in position at the right time. In my experience recognising those small windows of opportunity is the key to catching fish in the edge like that. If fish are there feeding or the bait is gone then there is no better time to get a hookbait in there. Some people prefer to keep building up the confidence of the fish, as we often get told with surface fishing, but I'm a great believer in striking while the iron is hot. In the days of fishing the Mere it was the way I caught most of

A good spring mirror caught over just a handful of bait.

(Right) A lovely spring morning and a great time to be out there!

my fish, including the Black Mirror, and it doesn't get much better than catching fish like that on a bait lowered from the rod tip!

I guess the way to be successful right through the spring is that you need to be adaptable and quick to see the changes that are going on in front of you. As I've already said the weather can change quickly, and that can have a big effect on the habits of the carp. I was fishing one deep

gravel pit last spring, and arriving in good temperatures I expected to find most of the fish in the shallow margins. 90% of the lake in question is fairly deep, ranging from 25ft to 30ft, but all around the edge runs a ledge about ten metres wide, which is much shallower at around 6ft to 10ft. The first night of the session went exactly as expected with two bites coming my way including a nice common! But the next day a real cold front



moved in and the rest of the day and the following night were quiet. What would you do in that situation? I could've stuck with what I was doing and hoped that the fish would return, or I could try something different. In the end I decided to try at the bottom of the ledge in 25ft. Most of the bottom down there was soft and silty, but there were just a couple of small spots that were a bit more gravelly. To be honest I really didn't expect the fish to be down deep in that early part of the year; it's normally somewhere I would look to fish much later in the year, late summer going in to autumn, but they weren't on the shallows anymore so why not try it?

At the time it was the best thing I could've done, as I received two bites from the deep water – one was from a stunning common of 43lb. As it happened a day or so later the cold front moved on once again to be replaced by warmer temperatures, and with it the fish moved back onto the shelf, and I had more action from there. If I'd just stuck to my tactics of fishing the shallows I could've said that I'd been

(Top) Paste-wrapped baits such as the Key have caught me some really good fish.

(Below) I wasn't expecting that! This one certainly brightened the day up!



rewarded for being patient by catching again in the end, but by changing tactics throughout the session I'd also banked a couple of what were bonus fish I suppose from the deep water, but the fact that one of those was also the best of the trip shows how it was more than worth making the changes.

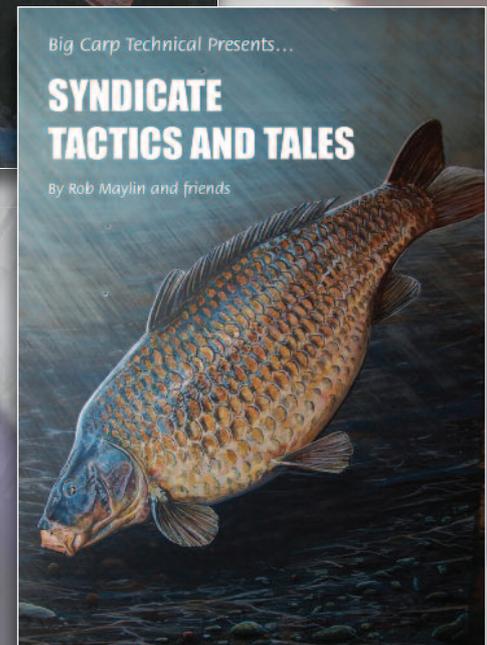
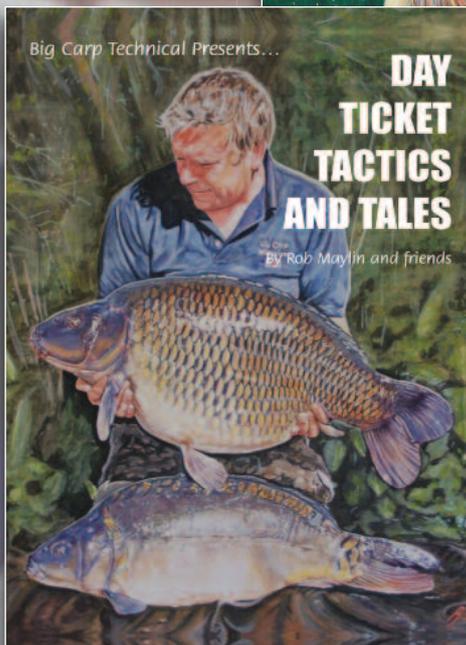
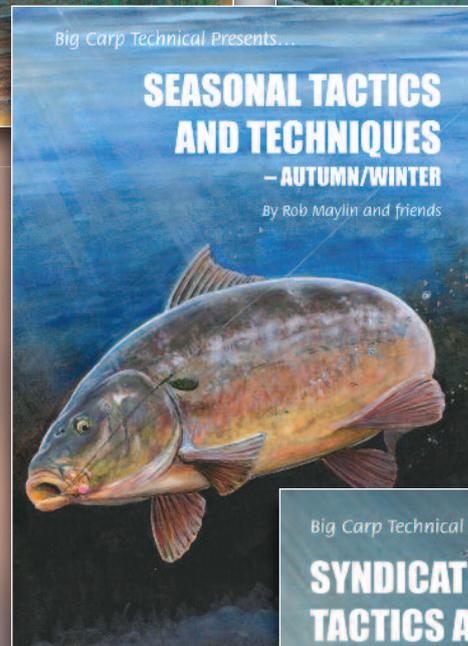
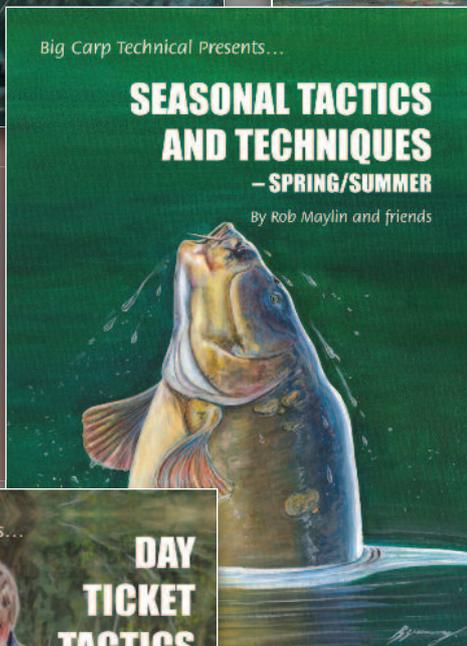
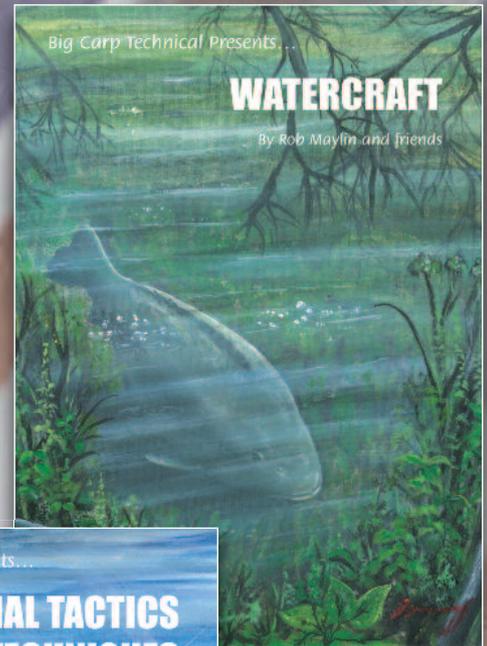
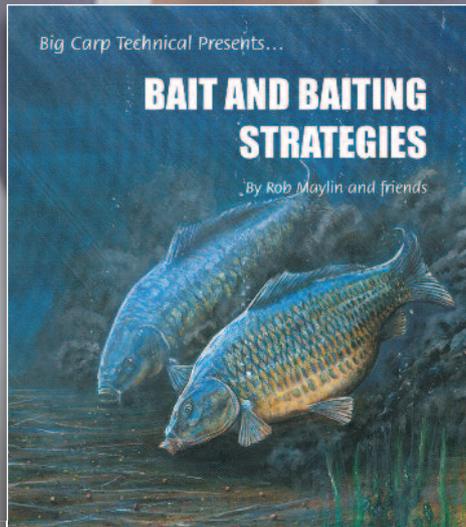
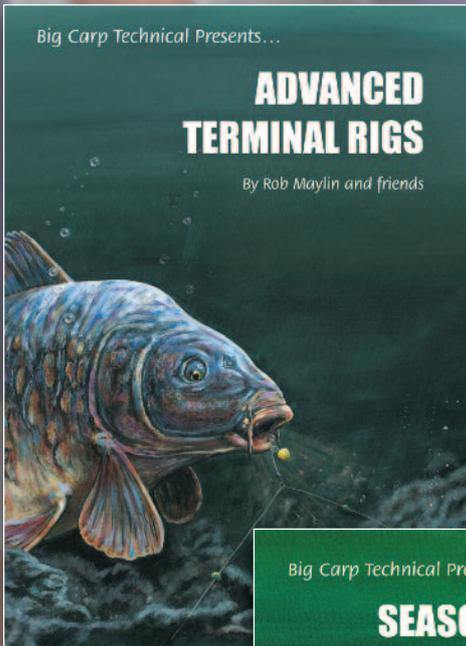
That last story sums up how spring fishing can be. The weather can be up and down, as can be the fishing too. Sure enough if you stick with one style of fishing you will catch fish, but I do find that watching what is going

on around you and adapting to the situation can bring those extra results. I'm sure that if you haven't been out much during the winter then most of us will be out at some stage during the spring; it is one of the nicest times of the year to be fishing, and the carp start to get caught in greater numbers. At least we all have the chance to head out somewhere these days instead of those old days where I had to sit at home and twiddle my thumbs for three months. How times have changed, eh? Progress isn't always a bad thing I guess! ■



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book in the Big Carp Hunters series

A glorious end to a beautiful day.

Very little happened during the course of the night except a period of perhaps ten minutes just before midnight when the water above the spot slicked up a bit. I was up at first light watching the water, but as much as I scanned the lake's surface nothing at all was showing as far as I could tell. It just seemed like the carp had totally switched off. I was hoping that some carp would pass over the feature during the next few hours and get their heads down for a feed at some point.

All I could do was carry on watching, and that's what I did for the three hours. Then out of the blue, without any sign of slicking up or showing, the rod with the bottom bait on let out a couple of bleeps before developing into a full-blooded run. I was soon down the bottom of the slope with the rod in my hands and just let the carp power off the feature on its first run. I had just started to tighten down on the clutch to try and slow the carp down when everything fell slack. Winding as fast as I could, I tried to regain contact with the carp, but I knew almost straight away that it had bumped the hook. Skimming the rig back across the lake's surface

I soon had the rig in my hand. The lead had been ejected on the take, and as far as I could tell the hook was still bloody sharp. You wait all that time for a run then the bloody thing falls off. I was not a happy chappy and made my way back up to the bivvy for a coffee and a smoke.

I had only just filled the kettle up and got that on the go when the rod with the pop-up on simply roared off. I soon had the rod in my hand, and after slowing the carp down after its first initial run things settled into a routine. I would gain some line and then the carp would power off and just plod around, allowing me to gain a bit of line before he would repeat the process again. It really did feel as if it was possibly a big fish judging by the weight of it when it was plodding about. This had been going on for some fifteen minutes before I at last got him somewhere near the margins; the net had even been lowered into the water ready. Can you then imagine how I felt, when once again everything fell slack? All I could do was look to the heavens and vent my spleen.

After calming myself down, I had a good think about the losses. Maybe I'm wrong, but I came to the conclusion that there hadn't been any slick-

ing prior to both of the takes, suggesting to me that the carp when they had arrived had not really been feeding that aggressively and therefore had only just been nicked when hooked. It certainly made me feel better thinking like that anyway! An hour later I wound in the remaining rod, having decided to rest the swim for a few hours. I spodded half a bucket of my mix out to the area before going for a walk around the lake and having a chat with one of the other lads, who was fishing in the Reedy swim.

After a few cups of tea and a couple of ciggies I left my mate and made my way back towards my swim, going in the opposite direction to the way I had gone to his swim. I needed to check if there were any carp in the Inflater swim snags. Going through the bushes in the out of bounds area of this swim I cautiously made my way to the water's edge and was rather surprised to only find one carp sitting there. That in itself wasn't unusual, however during my walk around the whole lake I had only managed to find three carp in total. They just had to be out in the open water!

Once I had got back to the swim I set about sorting the rods out and decided to put three new rigs on. One



35lbs 10oz – it almost looked prehistoric.



38lbs 2oz – I was just having a little dance when this rattled the alarm.

of the rigs – would once again be fished with a heavy bottom bait tipped with plastic corn, fished line-aligner style. The other two rigs were going to be fished with 14mm pop-ups tipped with plastic corn. This time though I decided to overweight the pop-ups and use an AA split shot as the counterbalance, I wasn't overly concerned about the weed out on the feature as it was minimal. All three rods were soon cast out to the spot and I retired to the bivvy to get some food on the go.

After getting everything cleared up, I grabbed my spod bucket and sat at the edge of the cliff determined that should anything show I at least would be in a position to see it. The trouble was even though I was scanning the water religiously for the next four hours I didn't see a single fish show, and it was with very heavy eyelids that I made my way to the bivvy and hit the sack. Hopefully the morning would be a little more fortuitous.

A bloody cuckoo decided it had to start making its call in the very early hours of the morning. What is it with that sound? It just seems to go right through you. The more you try to ignore it the louder and worse it becomes. There was no way I could sleep through that and decided to get up even though it was still pitch black. The kettle was fired up for a coffee and I got a smoke on the go,

and it was whilst sitting there that I heard a carp crashing back into the lake. Even though it was pitch black I could make out where the carp had shown from the light coming from the factories opposite. I was no longer cursing the cuckoo. Over the course of the next few hours there were to be quite a few more shows from the carp, and all the while that bird kept making its calling noise. My confidence level had gone up loads, as what I was watching is generally the prelude to a feeding spell.

The carp were showing to the left, right and at the back of the feature. Even though the plateau in this swim is prominent and comes up to a depth of about nine and a half feet I have yet to witness a carp show right above the top of the feature. As a matter of fact, in my experience of fishing this lake I would say that when the carp hit a feature it is an observation that they always show around the periphery of the baited area. There is obviously a good reason for this, and I think it could possibly be that the carp do not want to disturb the carp that are actually feeding on the area below them. It certainly was crazy watching them; I just wished that they would get their heads down and start feeding.

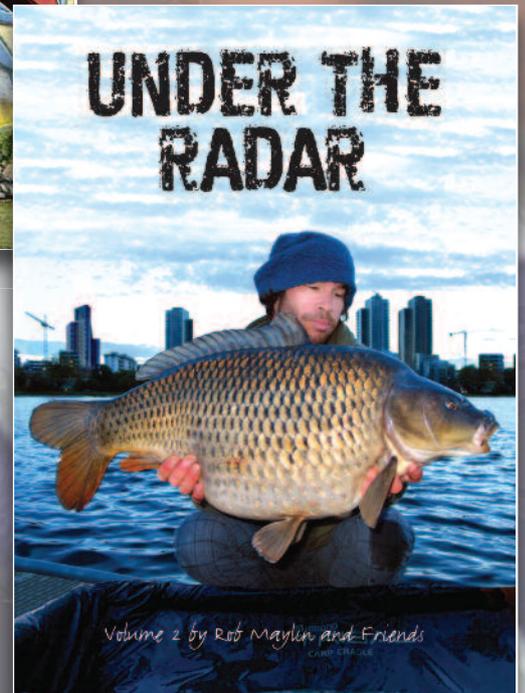
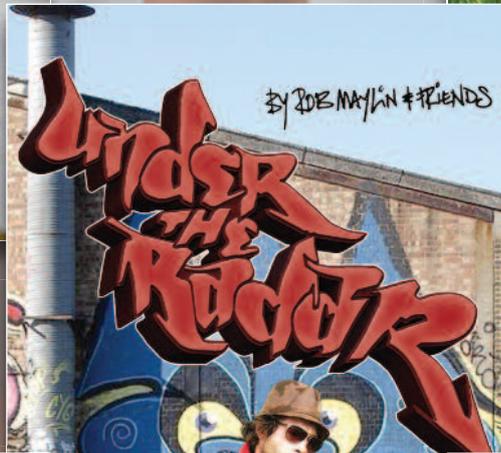
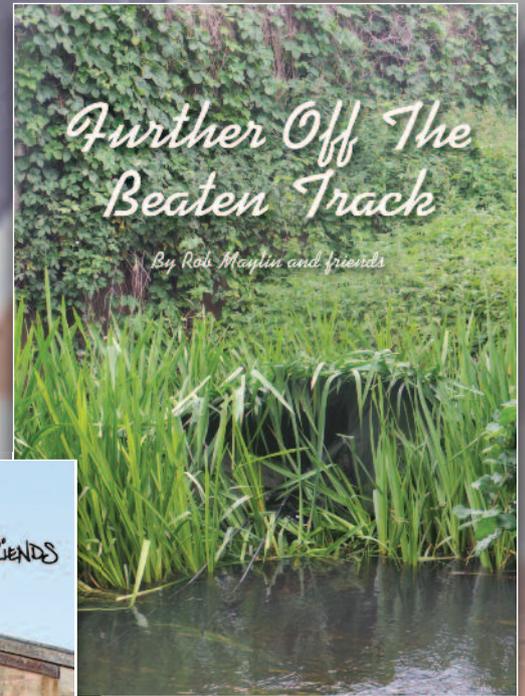
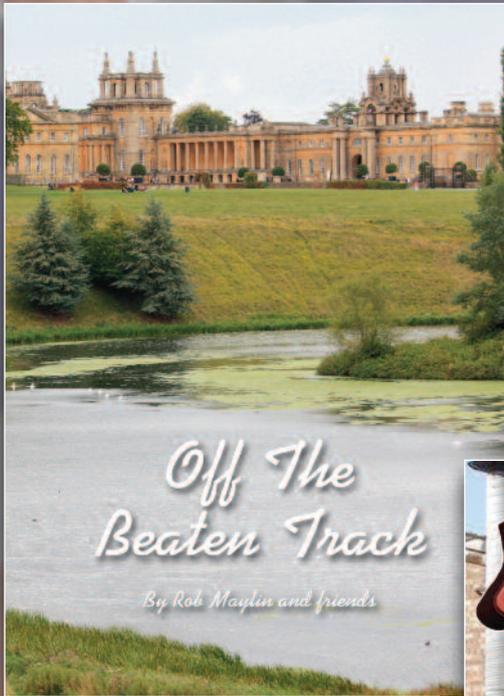
The cuckoo had stopped making its call and this had me thinking that it had only started in the first place in

order to wake me up. The carp slowly stopped showing and I was thinking that I had blown my chance, as I hadn't seen any slicking on the surface so maybe they had passed by the feature without stopping for a feed. Twenty minutes later I was running down the slope to the middle as it had just ripped off. Ten minutes later I was stood there contemplating throwing the rod into the reeds, as once again the carp had thrown the hook. After checking the hook and finding it to be okay, I attached another pop-up and got the rig back out to the spot. I made my way back up to the bivvy and got the kettle on the go for a cup of Gold Blend. I had almost finished the coffee when I started to see the odd little slick hitting the surface of the lake.

It seemed to take bloody ages, and it was fast approaching 10am before the left hand rod gave a couple of bleeps before turning into a one-toner. The offending rod was soon in my hands and the carp decided to exit the area at a rather rapid rate of knots, which had the rod hooped over nicely, forcing me into having to slacken the clutch off to give it some line. Once it had got the first couple of runs out of the way the fight settled down into a slow, heavy plodding affair, and some ten minutes after first hooking the carp I caught my first glimpse of the fish. My legs were

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already shaking, but when I saw what was attached to the end of the line they just went to jelly. Ohh, please stay on, what an absolute beauty. My heart came into my mouth as it powered off on a short run hugging the bottom of the deep margins giving me a chance to admire its awesome scale pattern. There were a few more twists and turns from the carp before it made its first appearance on the surface, but it wasn't quite ready for netting and it dived again, stripping a few yards of line before at last giving up the ghost and once again appearing on the surface where it was netted at the first time of asking.

I just stood there looking down into the net at what looked like a carp from another time; it just looked so ancient. So many different sized scales covering its flanks, broad across its shoulders and very deep bodied. All I could do was put the spreader block over one of the poles at the front of the swim. I just stepped back from the water's edge and started to dance around laughing making a complete and utter tit of myself. But, hey it had taken me almost three years to catch that carp and I was over the bloody moon.

You may remember me telling you about one of my first ever sessions at the lake and me mentioning that my mate had caught this lovely, scaly

carp that had given him an awesome fight. I had said that I would dearly love to catch that one day. Well, it was in the bottom of my net, and I was just looking around at where to do the pictures when I heard a bleep from one of the alarms. I turned round and watched as the middle rod screamed off. That certainly brought some sense of normality back to the swim. After picking up the rod it soon became evident that there was another good carp attached to the end of the line, judging by the way it was just plodding around at the back of the feature. I cranked down on the fish and it went off to the left, but I managed to gain a fair amount of line as the carp was cutting through the water at an angle. Things were going my way and the carp was behaving itself, and from here on in it came into the margins where it tried to pull my arm off. Luckily for me everything held firm, and after what could only have been ten minutes I was looking down into the net at another cracking big carp.

I had just about got everything sorted out for the weighing and photos when I heard someone say, "Alright Ian." What perfect timing. It was a mate called Leigh, and he kindly volunteered to lend a helping hand. We decided to weigh the one I had just caught first, and after hoisting the carp up in the weigh sling we

settled on a weight of 38lb 2oz, an absolute corking carp, perfect in every way except for some slight damage to one of its peccs. A few pictures were taken before releasing it back into its home.

After getting the other carp out of the landing net and unhooking it, I had to turn it over and just admire it for a few seconds. Pure quality – what a strange and beautiful looking scale pattern the carp had – mindblowing! The other thing I have got to say about the carp is that it looked prehistoric, and it was once I got it into my hands that I could really admire it. God, it looked so old, and the more I thought about it the more it made sense, as the majority of the carp in the pond are nearly as old as me. Well, not quite, but they are forty years old, and this carp looked it too! That camera clicked away for an age and some beautiful pictures were taken before we released the carp. Oh yeah, I forgot to mention that the carp weighed in at 35lb 10oz. I must thank Leigh for some mental pictures – cheers, fella. A short while later I was all packed up and on my way home, the 38lb'er being the final carp of the session. Once again lady luck had cast its spell for me; it had been a buggerance losing three carp, but the fish that I had actually landed had more than made up for that.



35lbs 8oz, Willow – a very rare visitor to the bank.

Sunday saw me preparing everything for the following three days, which would once again see me mooching around the banks of my favourite lake. As it hadn't been our rota over the weekend, I decided to wait until the Tuesday morning before making my way to the lake. There were already a couple of the other lads down off the other rota. One of them was a pretty good friend who was fishing in my favourite swim. I popped into the swim and had a quick cup of coffee with him before deciding it may be best to go for a walk and see if I could locate any carp. I made my way around the rest of the lake and actually ended up just sitting in the car park swim on Steve's bench watching the water from there.

I watched the water for what seemed an age before deciding to have a bit of a social and fishing in the swim next to my favourite. I hadn't seen a single carp since I had arrived, so this was going to be a simple social session as I hadn't fished with my mate for a seriously long time! I have been fortunate in the past to be pretty lucky in this swim. I knew pretty well where I needed to be casting and a few chucks later with the marker float and I was happy with the area where the float had popped up!

I got the spodding out of the way first, before sorting the rods out and getting them out to the area.

The left hand and middle rod had pop-ups on them and the right hand rod had a heavy hookbait attached to it. The rest of the camp didn't take too much longer to get set up.

I was so thirsty, I had to go and see my mate in the next swim and get him to sort the kettle out and get a brew on the go. It was good to have some company for a change.

As is normally the case when you are fishing with a mate, the teas and coffees flowed and the day just seemed to skip along at a pretty quick pace. We had observed a few carp crashing out in the big bay opposite both of our swims, but I wasn't going to hold my breath in the hope of a bite as I hadn't seen a bloody thing anywhere near where I was fishing. It was nearing dark when I made my way back to the swim for something to eat before having one final coffee and a ciggie before hitting the bedchair for some shut-eye. I kept waking through the night and scanning the lake's surface and listening for any sounds from the carp but I didn't hear or see a thing.

When I did get up I was once again sat on the side of the bedchair wait-

ing for the normal show to start up, but it just didn't materialise. The buggers just had to be somewhere. I just kept watching the lake and was rather surprised when the middle rod went into meltdown mode, as not even a tiny slick had appeared on the surface before the take (how do they do it?). I was over to the rod pretty quickly, and after lifting into the carp I was forced straight away to slacken the clutch and let it have some line as it tore off at a shocking speed.

The carp was to put up a hell of a scrap, giving me a proper tear up out in the open water. When at last I managed to get the carp into the margins, and I was once again left gobs-macked and shocked at the reserves of power it had. On two separate occasions I was left swearing out loud as it almost flat-rodged me. Things at last calmed down and the carp saw sense and decided that it had given its all and made its way to the surface where it was gratefully scooped up into the waiting landing net.

After ensuring that the carp was okay in the net, I secured it in the margins before making my way to the swim next door and getting my mate to come round and lend a helping hand with the weighing and photos.

We got the carp out of the lake and



37lbs 6oz – three moves in three days.



Over 39lbs – the ounces didn't matter – what a stunner.

got her on the mat. Neither of us recognised the carp, but it really was a cracking looking fish – deep, short and pretty wide with one big, distinctive scale on one side. The carp deserved a big cheesy grin in the photos and that's just what I did after the weighing had been done. As I lifted the weigh sling onto the scales I knew it was going to be a pretty big carp and I wasn't disappointed as the needle settled at 35lbs 8oz. The carp was soon back in the lake. That rod didn't get cast back out straight away as I just wanted to keep watching the water to see if anything at all would show around the area. By lunchtime I still hadn't seen a thing and so decided to wind the rods in and try to find where the buggers were hiding. Even though I had caught I really wasn't comfortable where I was, which for me was most unusual.

After a good walk around the lake, I did at last manage to find where they were, well about forty of them anyway. They were in the roped-off out of bounds area in the Inflator swim. I made my way back to my swim and got the gear packed up ready for the short walk up to where I had found them. I parked the barrow on the track and made my way down to the van to collect another bottle of water before making my way back down the path and pushing the barrow to

the Inflator swim. I had a quick peek through the bushes to make sure that the carp were still about, but I needn't have worried, as they were still there in large numbers and the water in that area was colouring up rather nicely. As I had fished this swim a few times in the past, I decided to put two rods out in the gully at about 80 yards. The third rod would have to go over towards the far margin where an out of bounds rope goes across the entrance to snaggy bay area situated to my right.

Before getting the rods out to the areas, I tied up some fresh rigs. This is something that has to be done on a fairly regular basis when using Teflon coated hooks on this lake. After the hooks have been in the water for any length of time they rust like hell; the hook points and barbs virtually melt away, I don't know exactly what causes this, maybe a high acidity level or alkaline level. Maybe even some of the different types of weed that abound within the depths of this lake cause this to happen! All I do know is that it doesn't happen to hooks that do not have any coating on them!

As I walked around to the far bank to position the marker float in the gully I had a quick look at the rope spot for the third rod and noticed a nice-sized clear area. A little plan

formed in my head, which I would try out when I got back to my swim. I first had to get the spot for the two longish range rods sorted out, and after positioning the marker in the gully I set about getting some twenty spods out to the float, which was just a case of under-arming the spod out to the area. I then made my way back to the swim and made a mental note of the position of the float. I cast both rods out to the float and got them clipped up and put pole elastic line markers on the line.

My plan for the third rod was to cast onto the opposite margin, then walk round to the rig on the bank, attach a small PVA bag and lower that onto the clear area. I made the cast and got the line clipped and marked up. I had to retrieve the marker rod for the gully rods first, so after this was done, on the way back to the swim I stopped at the margin spot and retrieved the rig that I had cast onto the bank, attached the small bag of goodies and lowered this onto the spot before quickly making my way back to the swim. I wound down on the rod I had just placed on the margin spot, took up the slack line, put another marker on the line and noted where this was in relation to the tip ring. This would allow me to be able to cast back out to the area accurately should I happen to get any

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action on this rod.

The reason I had decided to fish the third rod this way was because the carp can be very spooky when in this area and I didn't want to risk making too many casts to the area, and in doing so possibly spook them. The left hand and middle rods were soon cast out to the area, and all that was left to do was get the home and the rest of the camp sorted out. At last I could get the kettle on and have a well-earned cup of Gold Blend. Just as darkness was beginning to fall I made my way round through the hawthorn bushes, peered into the water and happily noted that the carp were still within the snaggy out of bounds area in large numbers. It was now up to them; I had done as much as I could. I managed to stay up for as long as my eyes would allow me, but I eventually had to admit defeat and get my head down for a few hours.

A couple of hours later there were a couple of bleeps from the right hand rod, which I put down to a liner. I must have dozed off again, and can vaguely remembering opening my eyes when I heard single bleeps coming from the left and middle rods.

One minute I was fast asleep then the next thing I knew I was holding the right hand rod as a carp did its best to evade capture. I was still in sleep mode on automatic pilot, and it took a few seconds to shake the wooliness from my head and steady my wobbly legs. Getting the carp away from the corner I had originally cast to was my major concern – to let it have any line would have been suicidal. After clamping down on the carp I watched as the rod hooped over alarmingly, and I was thinking that something was going to give, but luckily for me it was the carp.

I managed to get the fish away from the area and breathed a big sigh of relief. From there on in it didn't put up much more of a scrap until it approached the margins, where it suffered a touch of madness and decided that it didn't want to see the inside of a landing net. I was left just hanging on as the crazy thing just wound its paddle up to full speed and tore off so fast that I was flat-rodded. How the hell I managed to turn it I will never know, but a short while later I once again had the carp in the margins almost ready for netting. I was giving it the stretch, pulling the rod way past my right shoulder and my arm with the landing net was as far out as I could get it, when everything fell slack and I ended up on my arse. I was livid, and rather animated with the choice of swear words that

started to emanate from my mouth – b—cks and f—k being the two most popular!

I didn't even have the stomach to look at the rig, I went back to the bivvy, put the rod against it, got the kettle on for a coffee and rolled myself a ciggie. It was whilst sitting there drinking the coffee that I looked at the rod and decided to have a look at the rig. I hadn't been cut off, and I hadn't suffered a hook pull. The bloody hook had actually snapped – all I had left of the hook was a small part of the bend and the shank.

Time flies, and before long it was light. Just out of curiosity I popped round and had a good look in the out of bounds snags. The area was devoid of all carp. The liners that I had had the night before had obviously been the carp moving out of the area. A move was on the cards, and I gave it another couple of hours before winding my remaining rods in and going round to see my mate in my favourite swim. He hadn't had anything and informed me that he would be off soon. We sat and had a coffee and a bit of a chat before I went back to my swim and packed the gear up ready for another move.

After my mate had packed up and vacated the swim I set about getting the camp sorted out before getting the rods out to the area. The left hand and middle rods had 14mm pop-ups on and were tipped with plastic corn. The third rod was fished with a 14mm heavy bottom bait also tipped with plastic. Once the rods were out on the spot I put half a bucket of my spod mix out to the area. The remainder of the day passed fairly quickly, and throughout the afternoon I had only caught a glimpse of two carp. They had been down the bottom end of the lake on the opposite bank. I got my head down fairly early as the old eyes were struggling to stay open. Although I woke occasionally during the course of the night, I didn't hear or see anything.

I managed to get up just before first light and got the kettle on for a brew. It was whilst the kettle was heating up that I noticed a small slick coming from the area I was fishing to. All I could do was sit and wait, and just hope that one of the rods would rattle off. Eventually after numerous cups of coffee the right hand rod started singing its tune. I soon had the rod in my hand and I knew immediately that I was attached to a good carp. It hadn't gone off fast – just a steady, really heavy pull. I managed to turn the carp pretty quickly and from there it just swam straight towards me, which

had me winding double quick in order to take up the slack line. The fight began in earnest once the carp got near the margins, and it was to be some ten minutes later that a really long, dark coloured carp went into the folds of the landing net. I stood there peering down into the net and could not believe the length of this carp. It also looked mint with some really dark colours, almost a leather in appearance bar a few scales around its tail.

I soon had the carp in the weigh sling and once I got it up on the scales I watched as the needle at last settled at 37lb 6oz. It was a shame that there was no one around to help with the photos, but I think I managed to get some pretty good pictures of it with the remote before getting it back in the pond! My 72-hour time limit was almost up so I got all my gear packed up and hit the road for the short journey home.

I couldn't fish the following week as I had decided to go up to Scotland. I should have gone up at the end of August on my mum's anniversary to pay my respects. The trouble was though my head was pretty screwed up at the time, so I put it off for a bit.

Well, I arrived at the place on the river where we had scattered mum's ashes and I made this massive leap on to a boulder that sits in the middle of the river. I just sat there for a couple of hours kinda thinking to myself and sort of talking to my mum, if you know what I mean. To this day I don't



My catch rate went nuts when I started using this gear.

know or understand what happened to me when I was sat there. At one point I was as emotional as hell, the next moment I was calm and at peace with everything. I looked around and heard the birds chirping and looked up at the sun glinting through the trees and listened to the river roaring just a few feet away and all I could think was wow!

I spent a few more days in Scotland and even managed a day's salmon fishing! We think carp fishing is expensive – ha! A day's fishing for me and my uncle, with one rod each, came to £150.00. We didn't catch a thing; we came close on a couple of occasions but it wasn't to be. Before long I was saying my goodbyes and making the long journey homeward bound. For the first time in over a year I felt really good inside. I guess I had been bottling a load of emotional stuff up and I had needed to go up there! Once I got home there were a few odd jobs that I was asked to over the course of weekend. It was either that, or I would have to do them during the week, but I had this need to be at the local lake.

The northerly winds were still blowing when I arrived at the lake just before lunchtime on the Monday. It wasn't too much of a problem with swim choice, as within fifteen minutes of arriving at the lake I had witnessed three carp throw themselves out over the deep water, so I ended up setting up in the carp park swim.

After a quick plumb around with the marker I settled for a nice gravelly area in 19ft of water at about 45 yards' range. I sent two 14mm pop-up rigs out to the area and decided to use a heavy hookbait on the third rod.

The next half an hour was spent spodding half a bucket of my normal concoction out to the area. I got the marker rod back in and set about sorting the rest of the gear out. Sitting up on Steve's bench with a coffee, I was watching the deep water straight in front of the swim when I caught sight of something up to my right. I wasn't sure if it had been a carp or possibly a grebe. Ten minutes later I saw a smallish looking carp throwing itself clear of the water, once again up to my right. Things were looking pretty good as there were obviously a few carp around the area, and I knew from previous experience in this swim that it wouldn't take them long to find the bait if they were up for a feed.

I spent all day on the bench just watching the water and drinking coffee. Just before it started to get dark, I was brought out of my watching mode by the alarm on the left hand



This lot would go out every day.

rod rattling off. I kinda slid down the bank on my arse and managed to get to the rod in one piece. By the time I had picked the rod up the carp had managed to pick up a fair amount of speed and was tearing line from the clutch as it headed into the really deep water towards a couple of sunken islands. After clamping right down on it, I at last managed to turn it, but it was a fair way out and kiting round to my right. This wasn't too much of a problem or so I thought. I managed to gain a fair amount of line and had seen the carp down in the depths. I also caught a glimpse of a very bad snag that I had completely forgotten about. The bloody carp had seen it as well and before I could counter its next move, it powered off and managed to get round the snag. All I could feel coming through the rod was a juddering sensation before the rod eventually sprung back as the carp found its freedom after parting the line.

What a tit! I had completely screwed that up big style and I seriously berated myself whilst retackling the rod. I managed to get another rig out to the spot before the light faded, I got myself another coffee sorted out and went back up and sat on the bench above the swim to carry on watching the lake for a while. It was pretty late before I realised that I hadn't eaten, so I set about sorting my dinner out, which was going to be a spaghetti Bolognese. It was whilst rooting around in the barrow bag that I also found a bottle of Chateauneuf du Pape – oh what a touch – a nice meal followed by an even better bottle of red wine.

I was back up on the bench eating my dinner and having the odd slurp of wine when the right hand rod had a violent liner, which had me almost

throwing my plate of dinner up in the air. I watched as the hanger settled back down, and a few minutes later a big carp crashed out about thirty yards straight out in front of the swim. The night was flying past, and by the time I had finished the bottle of wine my legs were a tad on the wobbly side, so I decided I had better get some sleep.

What woke me up a little while later I am unsure of – maybe it was my bladder screaming at me to ease the mounting pressure, or possibly the sounds of carp crashing out. After a trip to the bushes, I sat on the bench once more as there were a few carp crashing out just in front of the swim. I had witnessed this behaviour from the carp before when fishing this swim and knew that my chance of catching would probably be after first light. I was just on my way back down to the bivvy when the right hand rod alarm let out a couple of bleeps before going into a one-toner.

As soon as I picked the rod up and tightened down on the carp I could tell that it wasn't going to be a big fish as it had gone off quite fast but just seemed to lack any weight to its runs. A couple of minutes after hooking the carp I was guiding what looked like a mid double to the waiting net. I sorted the weigh sling out and my earlier estimation of the carp's size wasn't that far away, as the needle on the scales settled at 17lb 11oz. I didn't bother with any pictures as it was still pitch black, settling instead to get the little fella back in the lake. After checking the hook and bait, I sent the rig back out to the spot and after a bit of a tidy up I decided to get my head down for a few hours.

When I eventually did get up my head was pounding, which I put

down to the lack of sleep. The thirst and god-awful taste in my mouth must have had something to do with the wine. The sun was up and it looked like it was going to be another nice day. The wind was still pushing straight into my end of the lake. I got the kettle on the go and sorted myself a coffee out and went and sat back up on the bench. I had just plonked my arse down on the bench when I was running back down to the rods as the left hand rod had rattled off.

Once again the fight wasn't that prolonged and a couple of minutes after being hooked another of the lake's young'uns was safely netted. This fella pulled the needle round to 22lb 6oz and he was soon back in the lake. I sorted out a fresh pop-up, got the rig back out to the spot and was more than hopeful of another chance, as there was still the odd carp showing not that far away from the area I was fishing to. The rest of the morning flew by, and I was buzzing on a caffeine high as I had necked loads of coffee trying to sort my dehydrated state out.

Just before lunchtime I started to see the occasional flat spot above the area I was fishing to as something was having a little feed on the spot. Twenty minutes later there was a continuous slick coming from the area as something really got its head down on the spot. I had a couple of liners on the middle and right hand rod and knew that it was just a matter of time before one of the rods would eventually rattle off. I went and stood near the rods as the left and middle ones were getting continuous little liners that had me pacing up and down at the front of the swim. The left hand rod hanger then went up to the top and the tip of the rod started pulling down, getting lower and lower before the line pulled out of the line clip on the hanger and started to peel from the spool.

As soon as I picked the rod up and tightened down on the carp I knew that what I was attached to was a different league to the other two that I had landed. The carp powered off past the big blue barrel before cutting right and heading out towards the submerged islands straight out in front of the swim. I couldn't stop it and just had to keep the pressure on him as he kited round on a long line. I managed to gain some line but he was off again, turning left and running away from me at a hell of a speed. My legs were shaking so much that the rod was actually shaking too. This was one seriously peeved off fish and it was on a proper mission, but I



The reason I include Sticky's awesome bloodworm pellets in my spod mix.

really laid into and at last managed to turn it. I thought to myself that maybe I had the bugger beaten. At one point I saw the carp as it broke the surface some fifty yards away before it once again dived down and the fight went on once more.

I slowly managed to coax him towards me and was more than aware of the snag just in front of the swim. He was almost ready for the net and as he broke the surface I thought I had him and was just guiding the net towards him when he just dropped below the lake's surface and went down into the deep margins trying its damndest to reach the sanctuary of the snag. I let go of the net and just held onto the rod as the carp powered away.

I watched as the rod bent over way past anything I had seen it do before. The carp was only a few feet from the snag, and watching him trying to reach it was terrifying. He would flap his tail a couple of times before easing off then he would give it another go. The pressure was telling though, and he slowly gave up the struggle and made his way to the surface where at last he was quickly scooped up in the waiting net.

I don't mind saying I let out a little victory cry as he went in. As I peered down on him in the net I thought that it looked familiar, but it was a lot bigger looking than when I had it the last time. After sorting out all the necessary gear I set about weighing the carp and was more than a tad happy when the needle went past 39lbs. I wasn't that bothered about the ounces as the carp just looked bloody perfect in every way. I was going to have to use the remote for the pictures, as I was the only person on the lake. I had just about finished doing the pictures when I heard the gate to the car park opening and so popped my head up to see who it was. Well, my cameraman and runner had

turned up just in time. We set about getting some wicked pictures of the carp and before long we had one of the lake's finest back in its home, so cheers D for some awesome photos!

Sadly for whatever reason that was to be the last carp of the session. The carp carried on showing during the remainder of the session but I couldn't buy a bite. I couldn't complain though, as I had caught a few carp and once again the heavy hook-bait had been the downfall of another fish. The pictures of the carp that went over 39lb are still some of the best pictures and some of my favourite that I have! Once I got home I checked the weather for the next few days. The northerly winds were still forecast, and to be honest I was praying for a change as the carp were pretty much staying put over the deeper water. All it would take to move em would be a change of wind direction, but it didn't look like that would be happening any time soon.

The following Monday I was back at the lake and after walking around the lake for an hour or so I made the decision to once again fish the car park swim. This is one of the things with this lake – when the carp are comfortable in an area they can and do stay around that area for weeks on end, and with the depths of water in and around this swim they have loads of places to hide.

Everything was still clipped up and the lines were marked from the last session so it didn't take too long to get everything sorted out and get fishing. That first day and night was to fly past and even though I managed to stay up until gone 2am, I only saw three carp and they were a fair way off where I was fishing. My hopes as I got my head down was that they would move a little closer to where I was fishing. Hopefully, in the morning, as I was in serious need of a few hours' sleep. ■

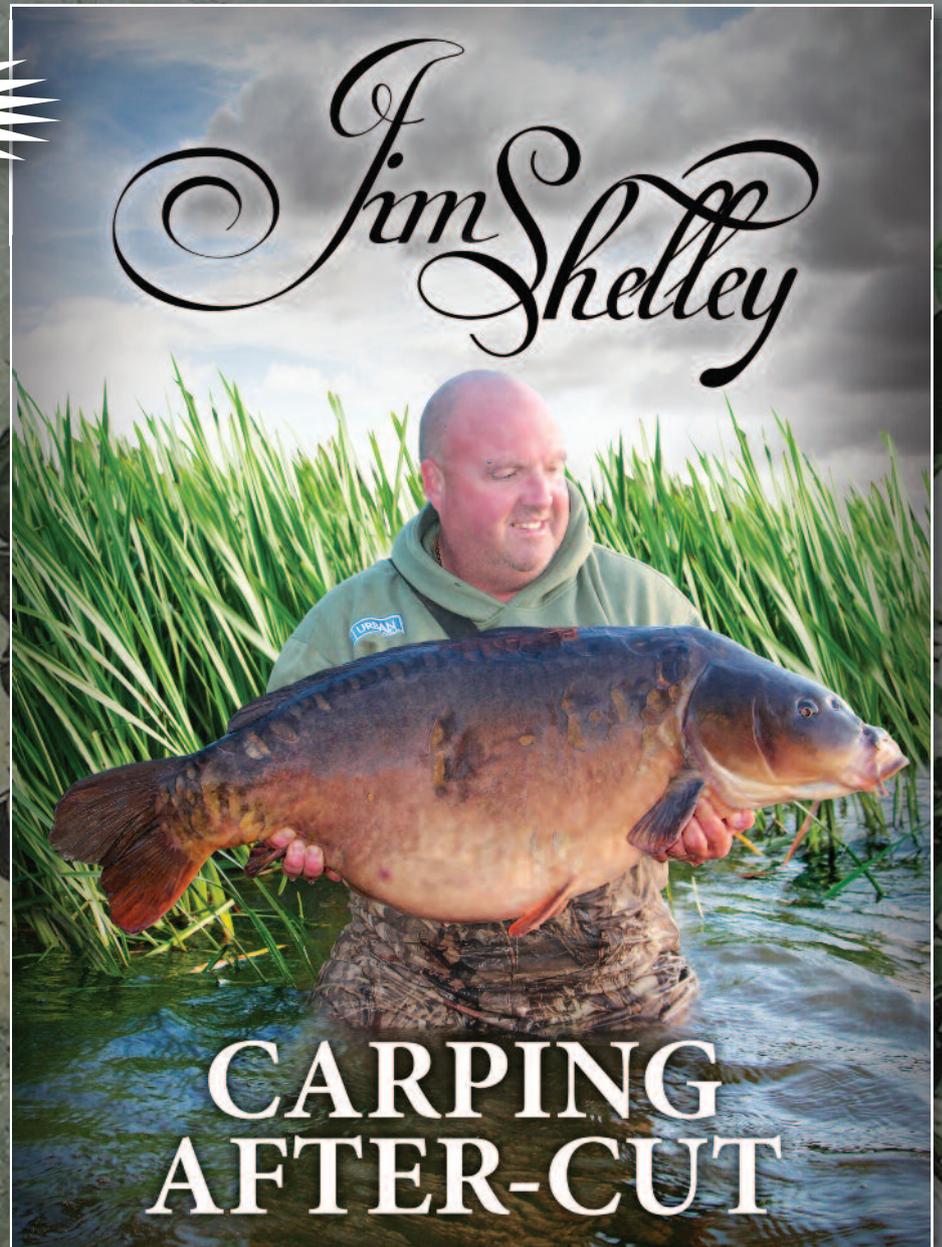
CARPING AFTER-CUT

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Bronzy – The Estate Lake Common

By Jake Lund

Ever since I was twelve years of age I've fished my local lake Goldsworth Park on and off. It's a small club water lake that is used by Thames Water to prevent the housing estate on Goldsworth from flooding. The lake itself is about 13 acres in size and has three jetties that pump water into it from all the local road run-offs when it rains. Feature wise there isn't a great deal; the margins are very lumpy bumpy with large rocks, then it drops into silt after the first shelf. There's also one small floating island as well as the three jetties.

The lake's stock is quite unknown,

but I guesstimate there to be about 60 carp resident, made up from mainly mirrors that were stolen by kids from the local golf course many, many years ago and put into Goldsworth Park lake (pic1) as well as a few koi that must have been released into the lake from someone's garden pond. There are also quite a few nice lean looking commons that were stocked by the legend Ron Palmer about 15 years ago. There was an A-Team resident, but being very old fish sadly most have recently past away. Only one of the A-Team is still alive today, and she's known as Bronzy, the lake's big common. She's a different breed to any other carp living in the

lake with her big golden frame and her over slung mouth she looks awesome!

After fishing the lake on and off over the years, I'd come to know it very well and knew where to target at what time of year. However, even though I had caught all the A-Team, and I'm quite sure all the others bar Bronzy, which had always eluded me. It actually became a bit of an ongoing joke with all the locals on there to be honest.

I would be the only person baiting up heavily until recently on Goldsworth, and it really worked getting multiple hits when others would only catch the odd carp here and





there. However being quite a social venue and close to home, good friends would often join me. On four occasions I put my mates' rods on my spot and each bloody time their first fish would be the big girl! It was unbelievable! Some would say I should have learnt the first time but you don't expect it to happen a second, third or even a fourth time!

Come 2014, I had spent the previous year fishing elsewhere, and after landing my target fish I decided to do one last year on Goldsworth before admitting defeat. I was determined to fish the lake really hard until I caught her, and even if she came out to someone else I wasn't going to get demoralised and stop fishing there.

It was early April, and I started fishing in my favourite swim, the Trees. In previous years baiting and fishing this swim it seemed when my friends caught Bronzy they were casting slightly to the right in the deeper water. I used to fish to the left, as I got more takes, plus it was shallower, which meant I caught less of the bream that dominate the lake. Going by her previous captures, it was defi-

nately obvious Bronzy liked feeding in the deeper areas where it's more silty. I guessed that was the main reason why I hadn't caught her over all these years!

I started a baiting campaign, where I would bait up every night with a large bucket of Dynamite Baits particle and 3kg of 20mm Monster Tiger Nut boilies. I used big baits due to the bream that often gave me sleepless nights in the past! After a week of baiting I was due to fish for a night, however I got that dreaded phone call! "She's been out." She was caught by my good friend Marco and at a new lake record of 41lb 10oz. I was made up for him, as I knew he really wanted it. It was actually his second capture of Bronzy because the first time he caught her she escaped from his retainer!

I wasn't going to let this put me off, as I had promised myself I wouldn't give up. I carried on baiting for another week and I'd promised to take my missus out, so I couldn't get down until 1am that morning! I had spoken to the boys down there where it was surprisingly busy – there were

three on in Roy's Bay, Dan Smith and Mickey Fletch on the Silt Bank and someone else a few swims down. With Dan being in Silt Bank I didn't want to set up in the Trees, as I didn't know how far out he was fishing since these swims look at the same water. So instead I fished the 20's and cast across.

I had to make one cast to find the spot where the hardcore lakebed meets the deep silt, fishing just into the silt. I walked both rods out and clipped them both up. I cast two small bags out and got straight in the bag. Moments later I got the dreaded bream bite. I dealt with the bream and got the rod back out, but just as I was sinking the line the other rod went with another bream! Now I would never spod bait out at night normally on Goldsworth, but I felt I had no choice, as I was already using 20mm baits and obviously wasn't going to get any sleep! I spodded out a kilo of 20mm Monster Tiger nut boilies and got the rods back in position. By this time I was knackered and hit the sack.

After two and a half hours' sleep I

was awoken to a screaming Neville! The fish started kiting to the left from the off, and by the time it was in the margins I was forced to walk out into the lake to get the line angle round a marginal bush it had gone around. Moments later I had a nice common in the net. It looked like one of the ones Ron Palmer stocked, and it pulled the scales round to 23lb. Happy days, and first fish of the season out the way! Nothing else happened that morning.

I baited all week again after work each day, just like the two previous weeks. I couldn't fish Friday night due to other commitments and was getting multiple calls from Dan and Marco saying, "They're boshing all over your bait." They don't often bosh on Goldsworth, but when they do you know they're bang on it. Nevertheless I couldn't get down until Saturday so had to just accept it.

1pm Saturday I arrived at the lake to find no one on, I power walked the barrow round to the Trees swim and

spodded my bait out straight away wanting to get it out the way. Marco walked round and decided to have a social and fish next door. That evening we were enjoying a take-away and a couple of beers when I started to get a few liners. Moments later it was bream on! Three bream later I decided to put on two 15mm Monster Tiger Nut boilies as opposed to a single 20mm Monster Tiger Nut boilie in an attempt to slow the bream down, and it worked!

By midnight I was a bit disheartened, as I had seen nothing show and missed their big feed-up the day before! Marco fell asleep around this time, and I was left sat looking at the lake. In my eyes it looks its best at night from the Trees swim with all the lights reflecting on the water from the Party Lodge at the other end of the lake. I had a weird happy feeling, not the feeling I felt I was going to catch Bronzy, but just felt that she wasn't far away. Half an hour later just as I was starting to doze off, my left hand

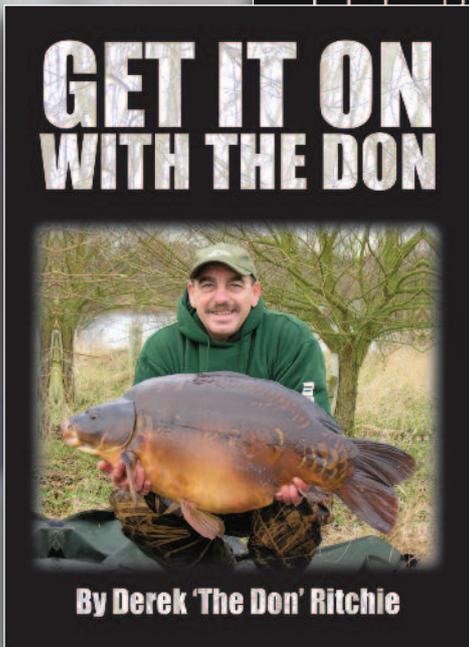
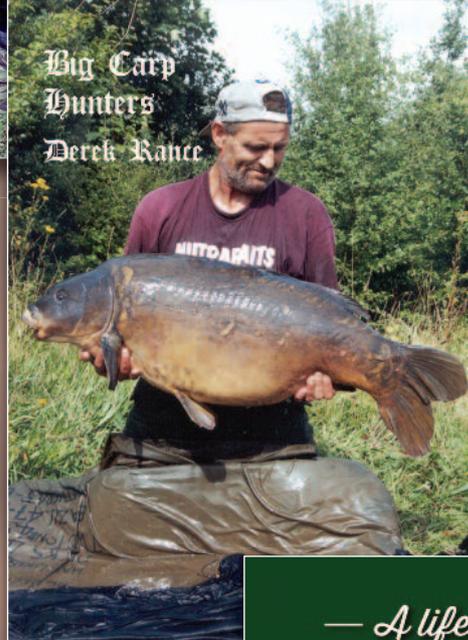
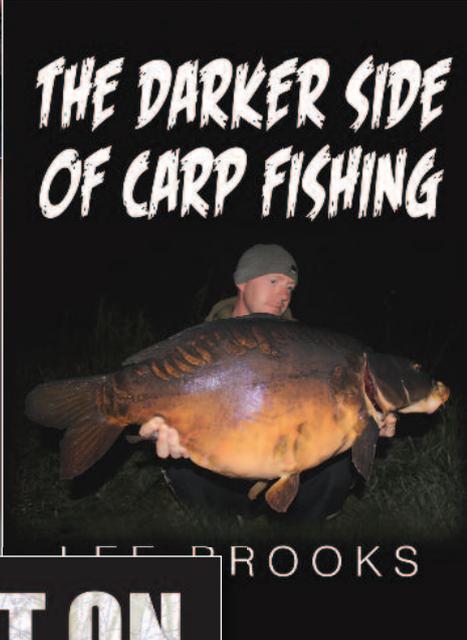
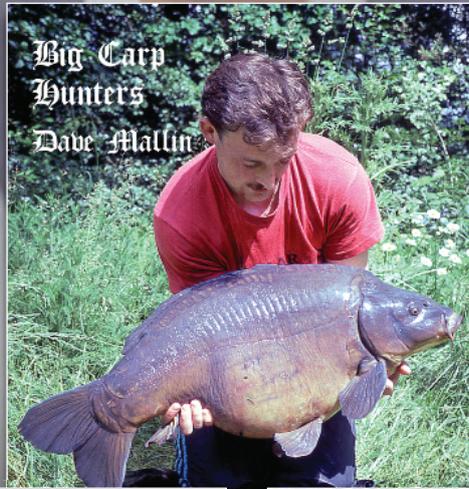
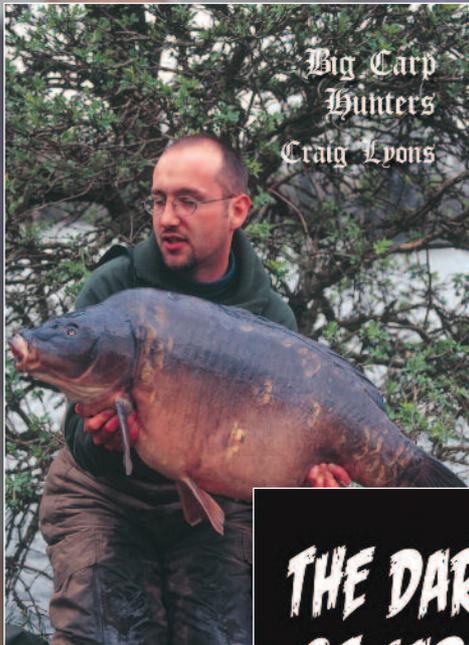
rod melted off. From the off I was forced to backwind. Marco heard the take and came over to give a helping hand. Since it was only a week after Marco had caught her I never expected it to be Bronzy, even though the fight was epic and all on the surface true to her form! Ten minutes later Marco slipped the net under a large common. He shouted "BRONZY!" I was in disbelief thinking he was winding me up, but after a look in the net myself I then shouted "BRONZY!" even louder. I Probably woke half the estate up. She had put on 8oz from the previous week! Going 42lb she had broken the lake record again!

After taking some lovely pics, we had a cup of tea to celebrate and Marco was soon back off to sleep, as by now it was about 2:30am. I couldn't really sleep due to excitement, so instead I sat up watching the water and in a way I said goodbye and thanks for all the good memories. ■

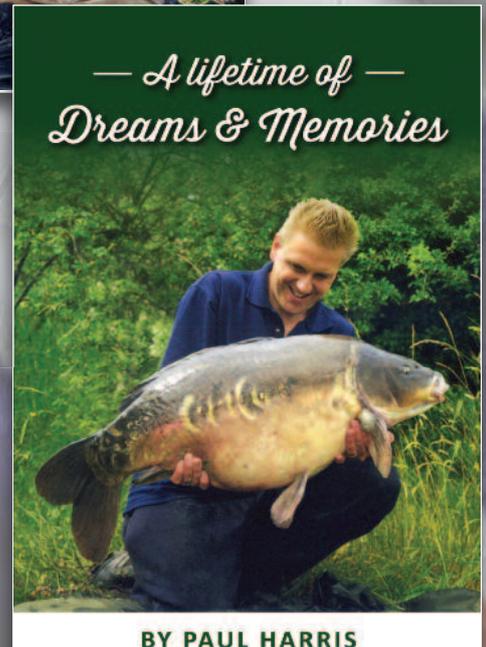


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Spring Tactics – Zigs

By Dave Lane



My personal best common at 46lb, part of a six-fish catch in February.

Over the last few years I have really started to appreciate the difference that fishing a bait in the mid-layers during winter, and especially spring, can make to your catch results.

In the past I have mucked about with zig rigs, and occasionally I have boosted an otherwise slow session with a bonus fish or two, but I realise now that I have only ever scratched the surface of the true potential of this method.

There is something about low water temperatures and air pressures that we seem to be missing in our winter and especially early spring fishing. The problem is that we already think we know too much, and personally I think that we are already resistant to the plain and obvious truth, particularly if it doesn't fit in with our current way of thinking. In the past, and I only mean a few years ago, we all assumed that deep-water pits fished better in the winter, as they were not affected so much by the change in temperature. We assumed, and believed, that any reasonable depth of water would stay warmer for longer and the fish would be more willing to feed in the deeper water.

**(Right) First find out the depth and halve it..
(Below) A whole spring's worth for seven and a half quid!**



The more we fished throughout the winters the more we realised that this was not exactly the case; in fact it was entirely the opposite. Shallow waters were a lot more susceptible to changes in the weather and would respond a lot quicker to a rise in air temperature; even a single degree could affect a shallow lake, and in reality the deeper pits were more likely to close down for long periods of time.

I have wasted entire winters sitting on big, deep pits waiting for bites that never came. Looking back now, with the gift of hindsight, I could kick myself for not at least trying to fish zigs for a few hours each day. After all, what have you got to lose if you are not receiving any bites on the bottom or, if you are waiting for a specific bite time that occurs once a day, what about the rest of the time? What are



the fish doing then? The truth of the matter is that the fish spend massive proportions of the time somewhere in the mid to upper layers of the lake and are perfectly catchable with the right approach.

Personally I think that they are only physically comfortable on the bottom for short periods of time in the winter, hence the short and exact feeding times. Whether it is down to temperature (which I doubt), air pressure, oxygen levels or some other common denominator really makes no difference to us – just the knowledge that they are is good enough. All we have to do is find the best way to utilise this knowledge to our advantage, and, most importantly, decide at what depth the fish are at certain times of the day, because this seems to vary incredibly as well.

There is no set depth (or height) at which a zig is ultimately successful, and a bait fished at the wrong depth will produce as little results as one fished on the bottom. Basically you have to hit the right level and be prepared to change it when the bites stop. On waters where you are only expecting the odd take, even with the zigs, it can be a leap of faith to change something only a short while after catching on it. Changing the depth of

(Top) Measure your hooklink against your rod so that you can remember exactly the depth you are fishing. (Right) Simply cut off the bottom bait rig and attach a zig.

a zig can, in the right conditions, bring instant results, but, if you go the wrong way, it can guarantee no more action. The obvious solution to the problem of finding the right depth is to fish all three rods on zigs set at different depths, and this, nowadays, is how I generally fish throughout the colder months, at least during the hours of daylight anyway.

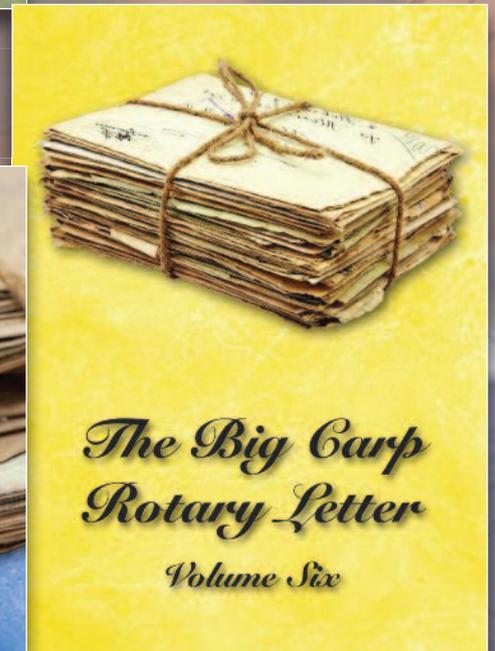
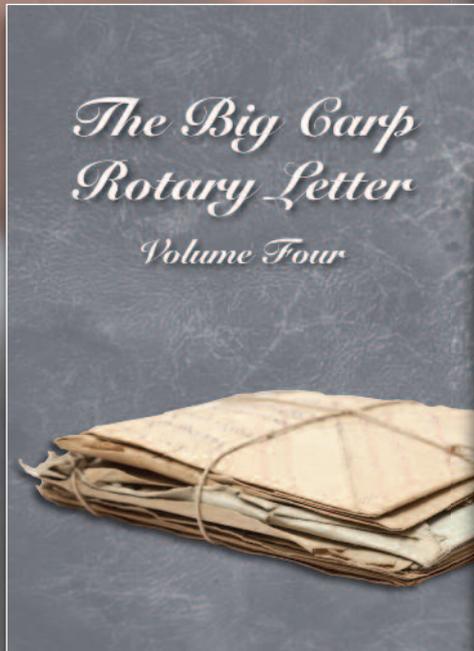
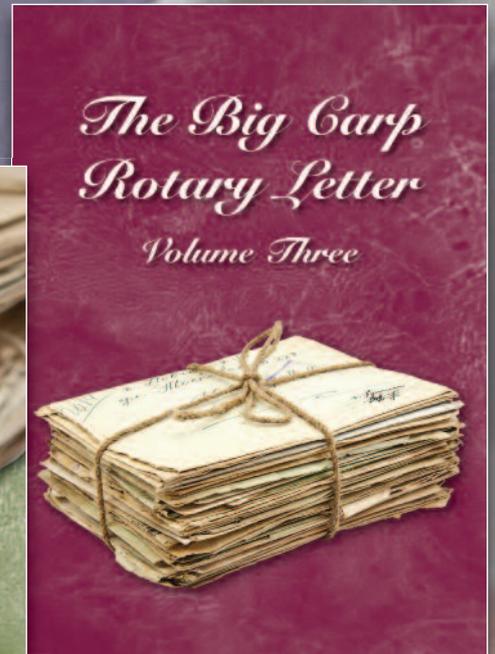
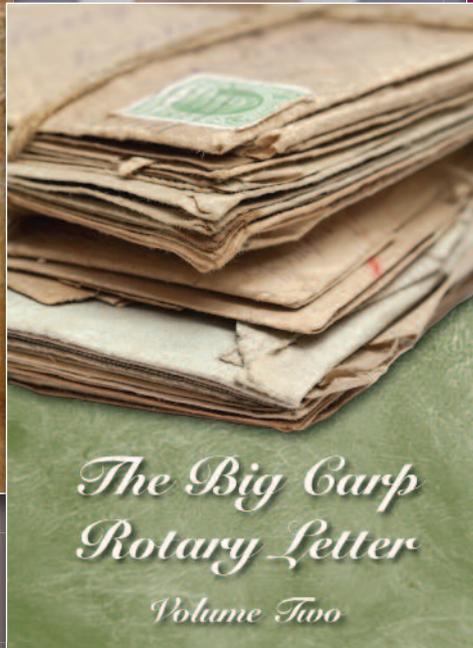
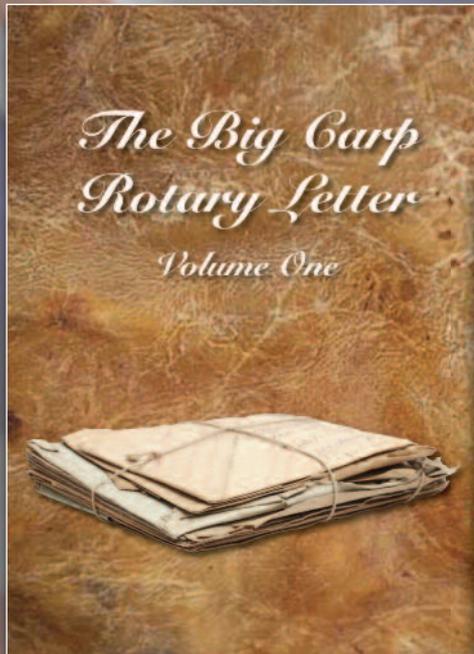
I usually fish bottom baits at night, and up until about ten o'clock in the morning, as there is always a good chance of action on the bottom at these times, and then I wind all three rods in and attach zigs. Nothing else in the setup needs changing; it is a simple case of cutting the rigs off and attaching the zigs, even the same areas can be fished, and often, if you have been getting any action on the bottom, this is the best plan.

So, what depths are best and



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when? It'll vary from lake to lake I'm sure, but, in my experience, a good starting point is always midwater or, more specifically, the middle third of the total depth. By this I mean, on a fifteen-foot deep venue, the area between five and ten feet from the bottom. I find that on lakes with depths of only five or six feet, zigs are not anywhere near as effective, although I have still caught from them using two and three-foot hook-links.

The deeper pits of over ten feet are much better though, and the fish spend a massive amount of time off the bottom in this sort of environment. I just plumb the depth in front of me and start of with one in the middle, and one higher and the other one lower. For example, in sixteen feet I would start with zigs set at six, eight and ten feet from the bottom. If I had a bite at eight feet I would then swap one of the other rods to eight feet as well, but leave the other to see if the bite depth changed.

Personally I feel that the bite depth is likely to get higher throughout the day, so I'd leave the ten-foot zig and change the six-foot one. If I then got a bite on the ten-foot zig I'd fish two at ten and one at twelve and so on, until the day cooled off or the light levels dropped, and then I'd work my way back down again, ending up with at least one rod on the bottom by early evening. As I have said before, there is no exact science to it, or if there is I haven't figured it out yet, but this is the method that has been most successful for me.

As an example, I fished a session back in early spring when the water was still freezing, and I'd moved onto some showing fish in a deep corner of the lake. As soon as I got in the swim I flicked out a couple of bottom baits at about sixty yards, and, within an hour I'd landed a nice mid-twenty and a thirty-two pounder. The next hour went by fishless, so I wound in one rod and changed to a six-foot zig and put it back a few yards from the bottom bait rod. Within ten minutes the zig was away and another mid-twenty hit the net, so I sent another six-foot zig out there, and that quickly

(Top) A few bits of foam will last you for many sessions.

(Right) Cut the clip back and only just push the tail rubber home.



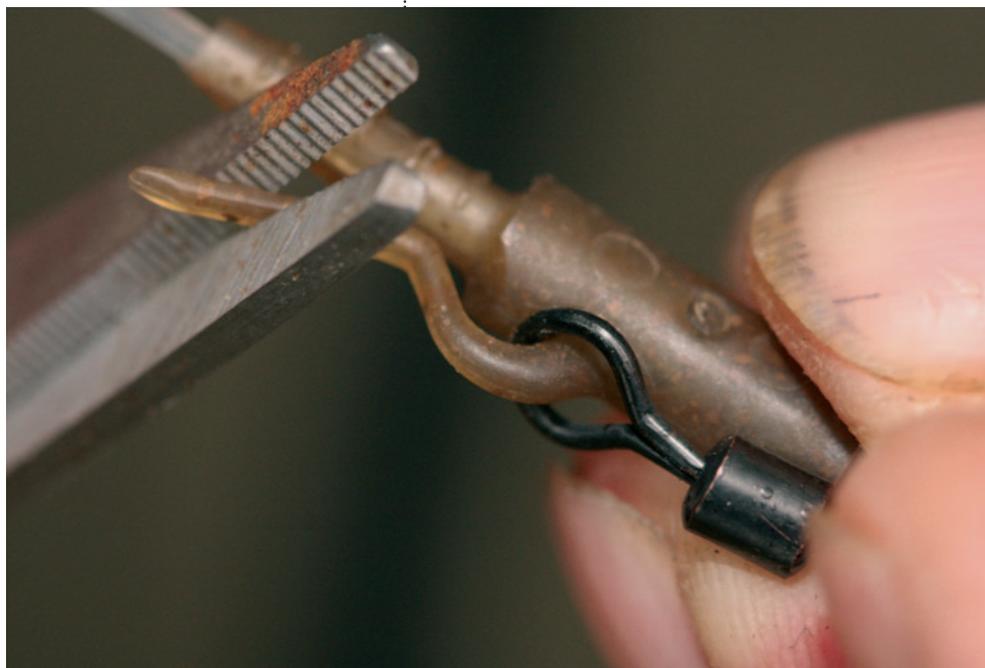
produced a scraper thirty.

Now, an hour is not a long time to wait for a bite on a big carp water, but, when the next hour passed by without a bite, I was starting to get a bit twitchy, so I changed one rod to a ten-foot zig, and shortly after received another two takes at this depth. All throughout this time my third rod was fished on a bottom bait on the spot I'd had the original two takes from, and that rod didn't so much as twitch.

In conclusion I'd had six fish in a day in very cold water conditions by adapting to where I thought the fish were feeding, not whereabouts in the swim, but what depth over the same

spots. Had I fished on with all my rods on the bottom I am convinced I would have only had two fish, but consider this: What if I'd hit more correct depth spots throughout the day? Maybe there was a time when four or eleven feet was the optimum depth. Might I have caught even more?

Bear in mind also that the guy in the swim next door never had a bite the entire time I was there. I think you'd have to admit that sometimes there is a lot more going on in front of us than we think, and I think zigs can definitely unlock some of those secrets. Quite why fish take zigs I have no idea, and the strangest thing



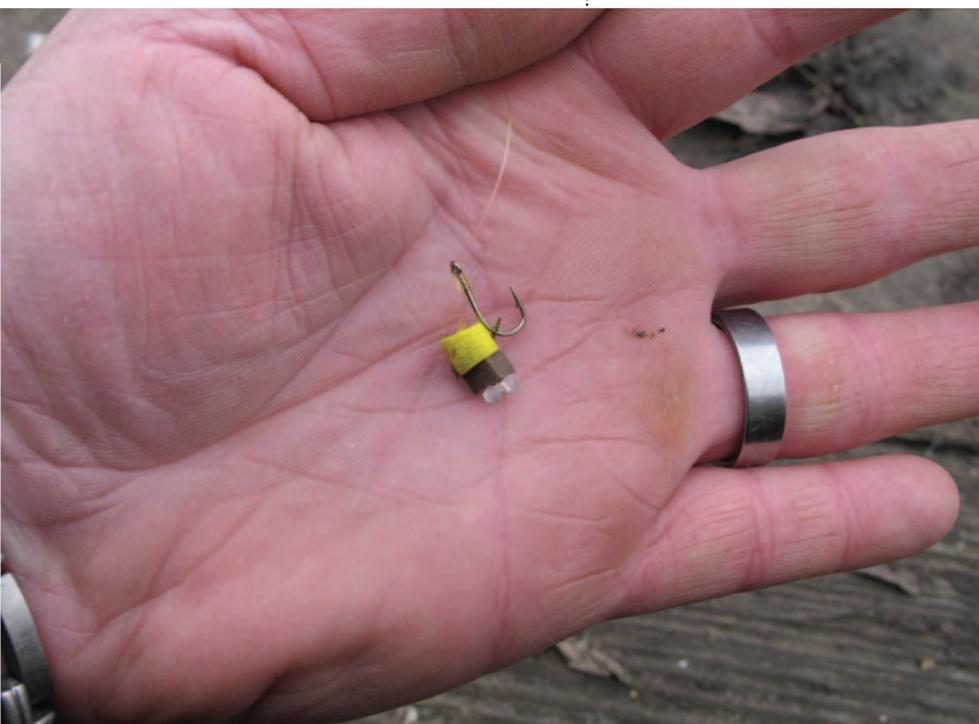


is that an actual edible bait seems to be the worst thing you can use. Plastic, cork, and foam will outfish a real bait every time!

Tying zig rigs couldn't be easier really... at the end of the day it's just a very long hooklink with a simple no-knot arrangement on one end and a swivel on the other. The more important aspect is to pick the correct material to tie it from. For a hooklink you need something extremely supple. Nylon is the best, and as light as you can get away with. A heavy link will drag the bait down and sag in the

water, and it's also obviously more visible. Avoid fluorocarbons, as they have a higher density rating in water and are more prone to sinking. Low visibility soft monofilaments are the best.

For hooks I still use the old Super Specialist because they are fairly fine wire and have the correct specs for zig work. You need a straight (or reversed eye) and a straight point, as this gives you a better hooking arrangement. I would avoid in-turned eyes and beaked points, as they are far less effective on a long link that



doesn't necessarily bring the weight of the lead into such instant effect as it does on the bottom. The rig needs to be able to prick a fish without any resistance from the other end.

Rather than mess around with adjustable zigs (similar to a plumbing rod setup) that are prone to tangle, I simply tie up a few different hooklinks and nick the hooks in the top of the bivvy, on the pole sleeve, leaving the links draped over the bivvy. This way I can pick any length I have and attach it quickly with a tucked blood knot to the swivel. A more organized angler might have a rig-bin full of them all marked up with the length, but I'm just not that organised I'm afraid.

For mounting the bait I find a short hair works the best. I have messed about with side hooking, but it's not as effective, and I think a longer hair just looks wrong, as the hook is too visible because it hangs apart from the bait.

Bait choice is easy: coloured foam works as well as anything I've tried, and my own personal favourite is black and yellow mixed. Although different colours seem to work better at different times, I would always start with black and yellow and maybe experiment if I thought I wasn't getting the results I expected. Plain black is also a very popular and effective bait, and strangely enough it is also very good at night. Quite how that works I don't know – a non-flavoured, non-coloured bait dangling in mid water in the pitch black – but it does! Small baits seem to be the most effective, and really just enough to float the hook is all I use. A small piece of foam can last you the whole winter, so it's very cost effective as well.

A common problem with zigs is tangling due to the long hooklinks; that and catching the trees and bushes on the cast, not to mention your jacket, unhooking mat, bivvy or anything else that gets in the way. The solution is simple: a tea mug! I just position a tea mug about ten feet behind my casting position and drop the hookbait inside. This stops the zig blowing about behind you before the cast and ensures it doesn't snag up on anything. The bait always leaves

(Top) Small baits work best.

(Left) Tiny bits of foam seem to work best.



the cup perfectly as the cast is made. I tend to cast a bit higher than normal with a zig. Using a bigger arc on the cast stops the hooklink wrapping around the mainline, and it is imperative to trap the line before the lead hits the water. Trapping the lead a few feet above the water will allow the hookbait to travel onwards, separating it from the lead and cutting down on the chance of it wrapping during the descent. A good zig cast should leave two splashes on the surface, a big one from the lead and a further, smaller one from the bait, and this second splash should be farther out than the lead, indicating that your hooklink has straightened out on impact.

Lead arrangement is also crucial; a big lead will tend to tangle more, but if you properly control the cast by feathering and trapping the lead then

(Top left) Use a cup to stop the hook catching on anything
(Top right) Light mono is best: this one is my own personal choice.
(Right) Cast straight out of the cup and trap the cast before it hits the surface.



the bigger weight will help to ensure that the lead is ejected from the lead release clip as soon as the fish hooks itself and moves off. A release clip is essential, as the effect of having a lead swing around up to ten feet or more from the fish can cause the hook to bounce out again, not to mention causing problems with weed and snags. I trim the clip right back and set it on the softest setting to make sure it always falls off when a fish is hooked.

The longer the hooklink you use, the more problems you are likely to encounter during the fight, particularly when netting a fish. Basically any hook-length over twelve feet long will probably need another angler to man the net, as there just isn't enough pull left to get the fish over the cord when the lead clip is against the tip ring. Even ten feet can be tricky, so be prepared. For serious zig angling an extended net handle is a good idea and will be well worth the investment.

Finally, bite indication can be a bit strange with zigs. If you imagine what is actually happening as a fish takes a bait six or ten feet above the lead, the lead can just swing back towards you, be dragged about on a slack line, or, hopefully, be taken away from you as in a normal take. To cover all eventualities I fish with the bobbin halfway up to show both drop-backs and forward takes, although sometimes you just get a gentle bouncing of the bobbin. Generally if you get any sort of erratic indication that lasts more than a couple of bleeps there is a good chance a fish is on the end, so be

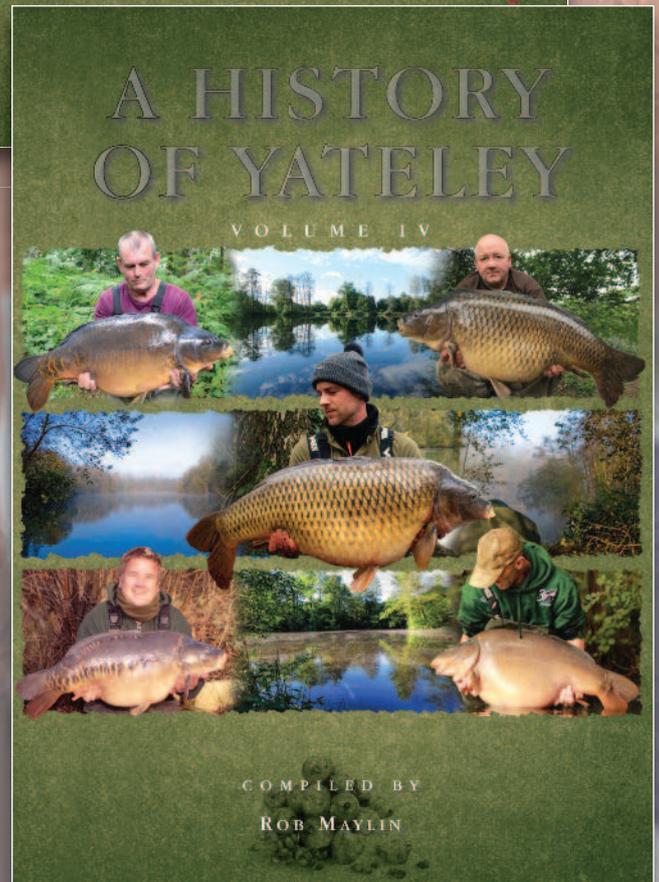
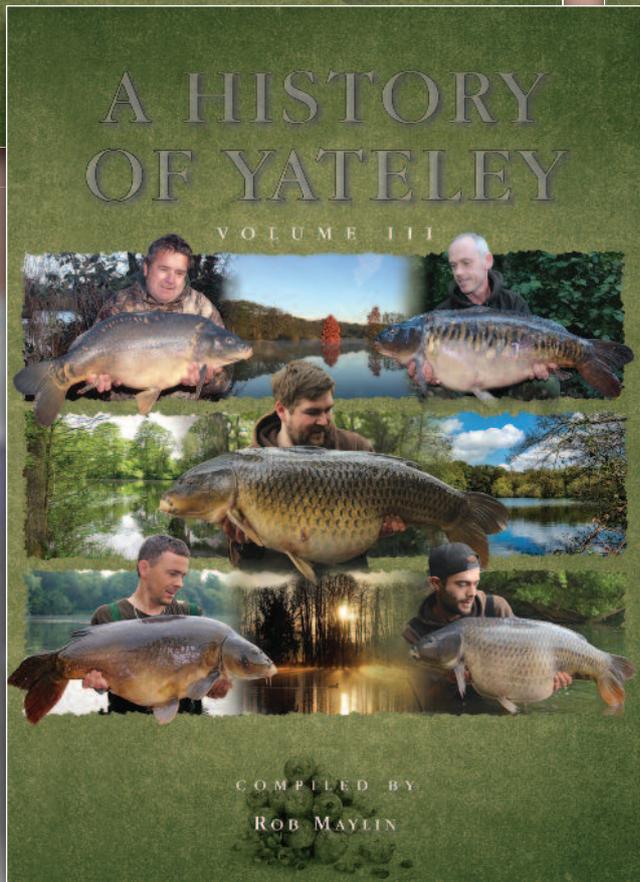
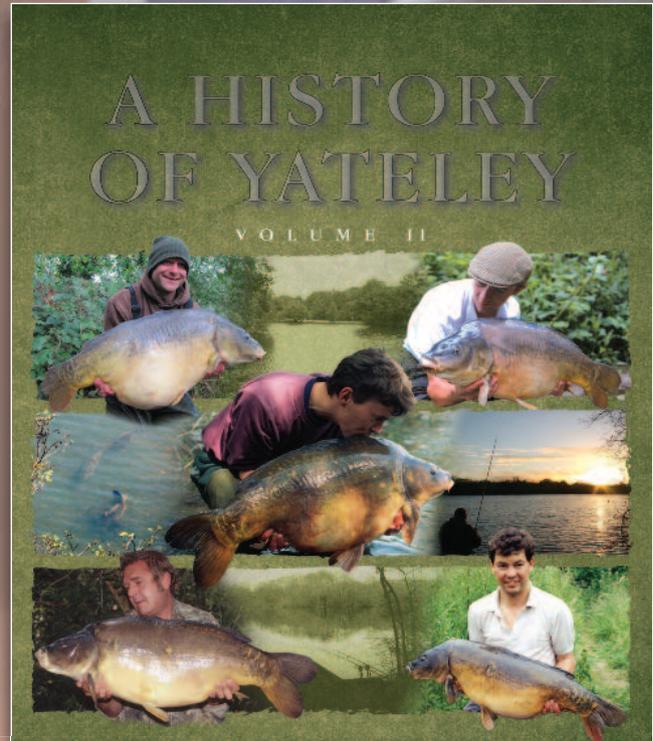
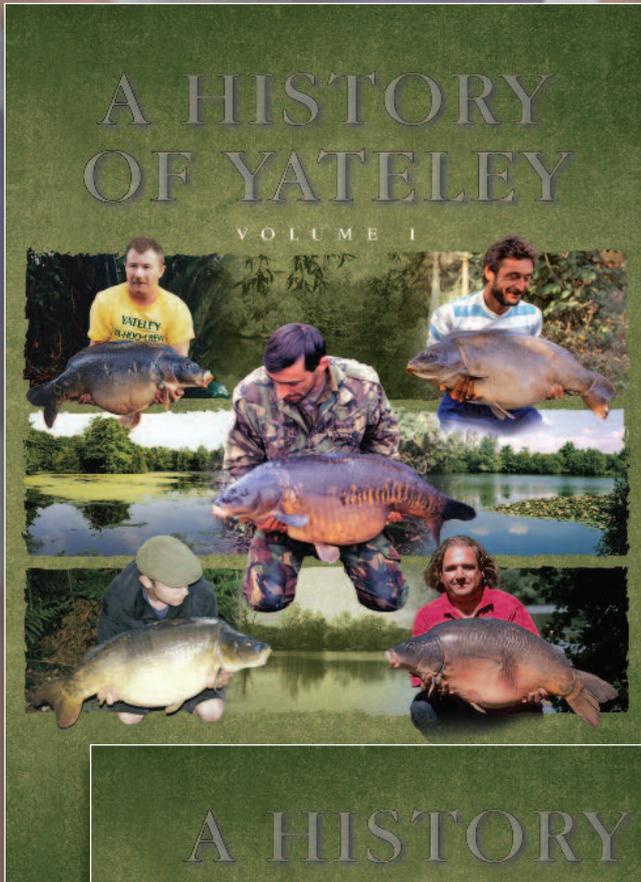
prepared to strike some bizarre takes and indications.

Try it out this winter and see if it makes a difference to your catch rate, but be prepared to give it a proper go. Don't just chuck a spare rod out for half an hour and declare it a failure. You never know; it might just be the magic formula you have been wishing for! ■



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