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Missing Out featuring Terry Wood
Reflections of the Year Past by Mark Laurence
Early Season Success by John Morgan
92lb Brace in One Net! by Ed Betteridge
I'm Still Dreaming by Spud Simms
Lady Luck featuring Tim Crump

Off the Radar Part Two by Sam Jefferys
Chasing Broadwater's Finest by Matt Wright
Return to Cottington Lakes by Ed McDermott
The Myth and the Mountain by Dave Little
Diary of The Urban Myth Rob Maylin
chats to Terry Dempsey
The Hunt for the Bulldozer by Nick Onslow



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BIG CARP

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4	OAK LAKES FISHERY
5	BLUEBELL LAKES
6	CATCH 22
7	SANDHURST
8	FRYERNING
9	FARLOWS LAKE
10	COOLE ACRES

Top 10 French Holiday Destinations

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2	LAKE BOSSARD
3	ETANG 5
4	RIBIERE
5	ABBEY
6	LAC ROSE
7	LAKE HERITAGE
8	DREAM LAKES
9	FISHABIL
10	JONCHERY

Top 10 Bait Companies

1	DYNAMITE
2	NUTRABAITS
3	STICKY
4	MAINLINE
6	TARGET
5	CC MOORE
7	NASH
8	URBAN
9	DAVE MALLIN
10	OUTLAW

Top 10 Carp Tackle Companies (Terminal)

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

Top 10 Carp Tackle Companies

1	DIAWA SPORTS
2	SHIMANO
3	REUBEN HEATON
4	FREE SPIRIT
5	FOX
6	TRAKKER
7	AQUA PRODUCTS
8	HARRISON
9	CENTURY
10	SONIK

Top 10 Carp Shops

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

Top 10 Iconic Carp Waters

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



As voted by Big Carp readers!

Big Carp Magazine! *a history of excellence*

BC
ISSUE 325

UK MONSTER CARP SPECIAL

**Mark Laurence
– Reflections of
the Year Past**

**Tim Crump – Lady Luck
Terry Wood – Missing Out
Ed Betteridge – 92lb Brace
Comprehensive Catch Reports
Spud Simms – I'm Still Dreaming
John Morgan – Early Season Success
Luke Stevenson – An Autumn to Remember**

Still the proper carp angler's favourite read



***KLS Tackle** is a brand-new tackle company to hit the carp fishing world*



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Steve Neville Alarm Moulded Hard Case

A moulded hard case purposely designed to protect your Steve Neville alarm. Made from a hard rubberized material. Supporting the KLS logo

KLS Tackle Windpan



KLS Tackle have designed the Windpan to act as a wind shield and also a pan support to eliminate your pan sliding off. It fits a wide range of pans and kettles' small and large. It's 150mm square and 100mm high to suit a wide range of cookers as you can see, two of the corners are slightly higher to accommodate the panhandle and to provide support. It's made from Aluminium and finished in black anodising; it fits together with its hook style system and packs down nice and neatly for easy storage.

Perfect to use with a Sandwich Toaster Pan, to stop it falling off a small round stove.

Visit our website to see and purchase our full range of products

www.klstackle.co.uk



UK Monster Carp Special

As you probably saw on this month's cover, we have an amazing issue for you this month, filled with massive UK giants. Three sixty plusses, more than twenty UK fifties and a ridiculous amount of back-up big forties. The amount of Big Carp swimming in our waters is incredible. To see this is mind-blowing for anglers my age, who began the hunt for a forty pounder back in the 1980s when you could count the number in the whole of England on two hands, its staggering just how many there are now.

Mark Laurence kicks us off this month with his Reflections of the Year Past. Mark had a mind-blowing number of big fish from his syndicate, all caught in a relatively short time by today's standards. Luke Stevenson also takes a look back on An Autumn to Remember, when two of his upper forty target fish succumbed to his expert watercraft in a timely fashion.

Ed Betteridge has also been amongst the monsters this year as his piece featuring a 92lb Brace, in the same net goes to prove. Spud Simms makes a welcome return to our pages this month and says "I'm Still Dreaming" as the big carp just kept coming, session after session. And what glorious carp they were too, well done mate. Also, this month John Morgan has some Early Season Success, Terry Wood makes up for Missing Out earlier on and Tim Crump has some Lady Luck.

Last but definitely not least we have our usual comprehensive water reports from across the UK. Don't forget you can send these directly to our email address info@bigcarpmagazine.co.uk or send them to our Facebook as many of you do already. Social media interaction is huge these days with not only catch reports but articles, news items and reviews being sent to us on a daily basis. A massive thank you to all the anglers, tackle and bait companies who take the time to send us their items.

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, 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 summer friends, catch a monster and send us the story – be part of the UK's fantastic carp angling history!

Rob Maylin

P.S. 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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Shane Bundock with a UK 48lb mirror.



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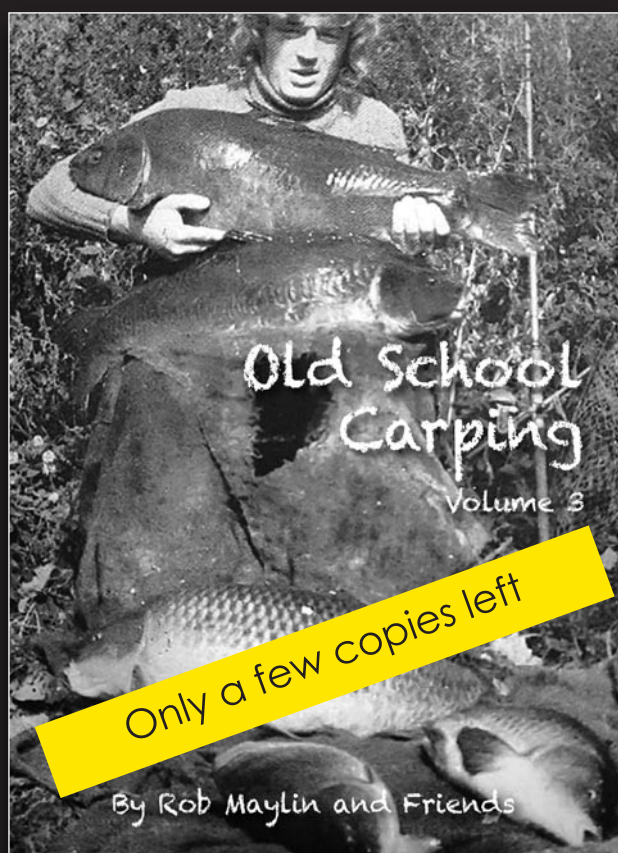
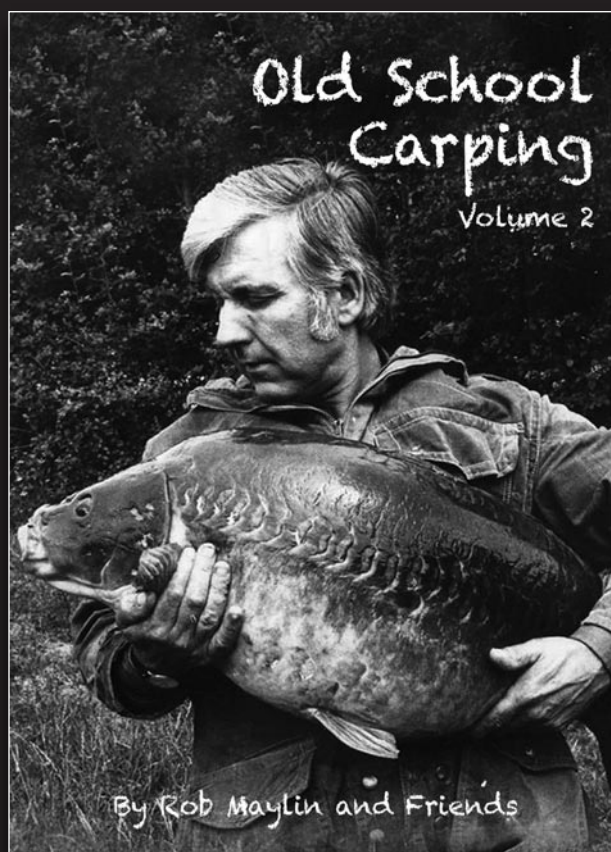
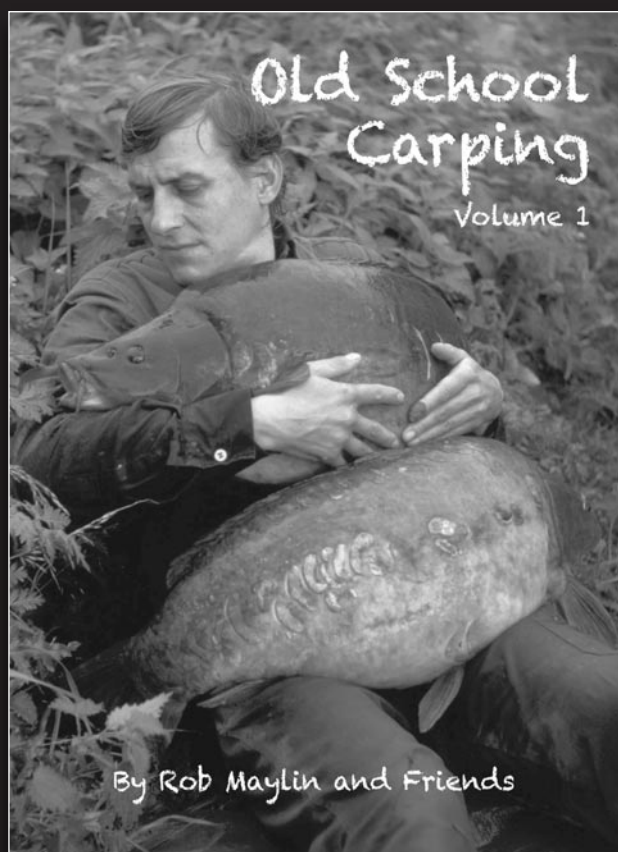
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ShockLeader

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

A new era for Angling!

Angling Trust launches 'Fishing for Good' 5-year plan

The Angling Trust has launched its vision for fishing and the environment in its five-year strategic plan, Fishing for Good 2023-28.

Through the pillars of campaigning, participation, competitions and supporting grass roots clubs and fisheries, the report outlines how the Angling Trust will play a leading role in achieving key goals that will enrich and benefit fishing including: Increasing recognition for the sport and promoting the joy that fishing brings and its proven benefits for participants and the environment.

Combating pollution, over-predation, abstraction, and other threats to fishing and the environment. Promoting the mental health and wellbeing benefits of angling to the wider community. Improving angling access and creating new opportunities for people to enjoy fishing.

Protecting the legal right to go fishing and challenging recreational and commercial over-exploitation of fish and the environment. Supporting efforts to combat illegal fishing and fish theft. Increasing the diversity of

participants and ensuring our sport is welcoming to all.

Creating opportunities for all to take part in competitions from grass-roots to elite participation. Ensuring good governance and safeguarding, so that everyone can enjoy our sport in a safe environment.

Establishing role models and pathways to participate through coaches, volunteers, and community leaders, both locally and nationally.

Jamie Cook, Angling Trust CEO, said: "Anglers have a unique connection to the environment. Our ability to participate is dependent on access to healthy aquatic environments with strong ecosystems of wildlife.

As a result, anglers have done more for conservation and preservation of the environment than almost any other independent stakeholder.

"Despite this, angling faces threats, as do the environments we depend upon and the fish we dream about.

The community requires a voice on big issues and our collective scale is not reflected in our level of influence as anglers – Fishing for Good seeks to



change that.

"Fishing for Good lays out a plan for angling and the community.

It is designed to provide clarity of the role and priorities of the Angling Trust and how we are focused on delivering against the core pillars which define our pastime and will support growth, representation, and visibility at all levels.

"This is not a journey we are on alone and this plan lays out how, by working together, anglers, clubs, fisheries, coaches, volunteers, partners and investors can collaborate and deliver greater impact.

Ultimately, this is a vision for all within angling, whether it is in salt-water or freshwater, game or coarse, for competition or pleasure.

More information: David Brookes, Communications Manager david.brookes@anglingtrust.net 07496 876996. ■



World famous chalk streams will benefit from expanded Environmental Farmers Group

Thirty-one farmers of the Test and Itchen catchments in Hampshire are set to join the 147 neighbouring farmers already supporting the Environmental Farmers Group (EFG) making 178 farms, covering 81,344 hectares, the largest initiative of its kind.

The EFG was set up to help its members navigate the carbon, phosphate and biodiversity offset market, giving them an opportunity to replace the loss of subsidy by implementing conservation measures on their land to mitigate developments elsewhere.

Simon Packer, director of regional planning consultancy Turley, welcomed the news: "The EFG is a very interesting and encouraging initiative and I'm pleased to hear that the Test and Itchen Group is joining the cooperative.

"There was an increase in nutrient mitigation schemes in the area a couple of years ago, but the credits available are rapidly being consumed and I'm not convinced there is sufficient alternative capacity coming through.

I can also see strong evidence of increased demand for off-site biodiversity offset solutions.

"Environmental track record and clear goalsThe group's expansion will make restoration of rare chalk stream habitats a key component of the EFG's three principle aims of biodiversity and species recovery, clean water and net carbon zero farming by 2040. The farmers involved already have a proven track record of delivering measurable improvements on the ground.



Joe Edwards, manages the Middleton Estate, which has dramatically improved the water quality along its three-mile stretch of the Test.

He said: "We set out to recover the river combining a wide range of measures including bringing back ranunculus and other habitats that the insects will naturally thrive in and encouraging wild brown trout reproduction.

"The result was when we tested the water for 300 chemicals, it showed that the water's cleaner when it leaves Middleton than when it entered.

"There are other private land managers on the Test who are starting to think about implementing similar management and I believe the EFG's conservation plan, led by GWCT

Chief Exec Teresa Dent, will succeed in protecting the river.

"Improving water quality will be a central aim, but the two catchments have many other spectacular natural habitats and species, which need protecting and enhancing, including rare chalk downland wildflowers.

James Hewetson-Brown runs Ashe Warren Farm near the source of the Test.

Alongside his arable operation he and his wife Claire set up Wildflower Turf Ltd. Watch and listen to James explaining the benefits of being part of the EFG.

James said: "Recently research showed that half our native plants have declined over the past 20 years.

Hampshire chalk downland is famous for its wildflowers and we have encouraged their return through managing margins round the edges of our fields.

"The EFG has great potential to unlock funding to create new and better networks of these type of measures and restore wildflowers to the countryside.

"Farmers are in so many ways best placed to deliver really good biodiversity because they have the equipment and practical understanding to make it work and by joining together, they can achieve it on a scale that will make a real difference.

"The EFG cooperative is a groundbreaking, farmer-led approach to landscape-scale conservation.

As well as meeting the challenges of nature recovery and climate change on a huge scale, it will support farmers to deliver increased food



Along this stretch of the Test, on the Middleton estate, a tree has been cut and left in the river to provide nursery for young trout. c.GWCT.

security through a blend of public and private funding, which would otherwise be difficult for individual farm businesses to access.

While benefitting from being part of a larger cooperative, the Test and Itchen group's local knowledge and cultural identity will be key to its success. Many of the families involved have farmed the same land for generations representing centuries of continuous connection with the local countryside.

They are experts at delivering practical land management and personally invested for the sake of future generations. Supported by a scientific organisation The EFG is convened by the GWCT, whose scientific research lies behind pioneering agri-environment schemes.

GWCT Chief Exec Teresa Dent said: "At the end of 2022 the Westminster government set out its legally-binding environmental targets.

For instance, it wants to reverse declines in species abundance by



This artificial island made of willow withies created on the Middleton estate is helping to increase the rate of flow of the River Test c.GWCT.

2030. At the same time there is an imperative to increase UK food security.

"We applaud these ambitions but note that government is going to

need to harness the environmental delivery of the farmers and land managers, the Working Conservationists, who look after the 72% of land that is in private stewardship in England.

"The addition of the farmers of the Test and Itchen to the EFG is an important step on the way to achieving this.

We just need every farmer to improve on their previous best and the combined effect of them working together could be significant.

"Accredited by a trusted body, brokering a blended finance model The environmental auditing and monitoring of EFG projects will be carried out by Natural Capital Advisory (NCA).

Funding will be a combination of public money in the form of Environmental Land Management Schemes and private finance from sponsorship, green investments and offset markets.

NCA chief exec Christopher Sparrow said: "In an often confusing and uncertain emerging market, which requires long-term commitments, landowners and investors can be reassured that NCA has the right professional experience to deliver the highest quality advice and ongoing monitoring service.

"Our partnership with EFG will appeal to investors who want to see tangible guaranteed environmental outcomes and contribute to the restoration of some of our most iconic landscapes, places they can visit to see the improvements for themselves." ■



Joe Edwards, manager of the Middleton Estate c.GWCT.



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- Toilet block with male/female/disabled toilets at the car park.
- Disabled pegs at two coarse lakes and 12 bark chipped pegs available for overnighting at the specimen lake.



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NATIONAL FISHING MONTH and TAKE A FRIEND FISHING are back for 2023

From 29th JULY to 3rd September 2023

The Angling Trade Association (ATA) is proud to announce that National Fishing Month is back with a new launch event for 2023.

A celebration of angling in all its forms, National Fishing Month 2023, in conjunction with Take A Friend Fishing, and our Get Into Fishing at the Game Fairs launch event at Ragley Hall, Warwickshire 28th – 30th July, represents the ATA's biggest angling engagement support programme yet. With more content than ever, more features more interactive tools and more great prizes to be won in weekly competitions, both new, current, and lapsed anglers can engage and reconnect with the pastime of angling.

Supported by top angling brands, TV fishing celebrities including Paul Whitehouse and Jeremy Wade, and many more associations connected to fishing and the angling environment, this summer's NFM extravaganza means that anyone can take time out to experience the wellbeing and ben-



efits of angling provided by major industry stakeholders whilst being entertained, coached, and maybe even catch a fish or two along the way.

Information Hub

In support of the above, ATA has designed a fully interactive media hub that provides you with all the information needed including downloads, useful contacts, links, and image resources. Our information hub facility will grow as we update with new resources, the latest updates, and newsflashes on exiting new

developments.

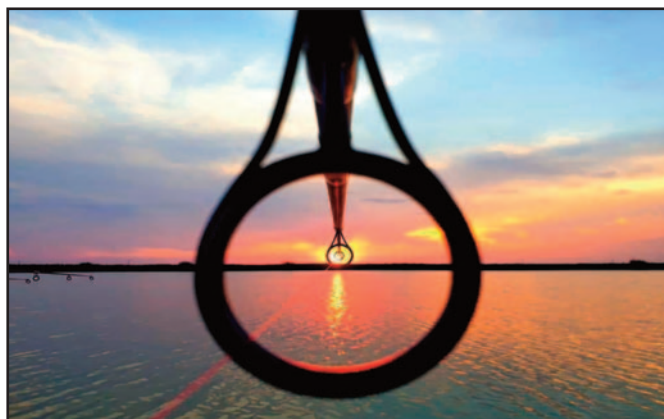
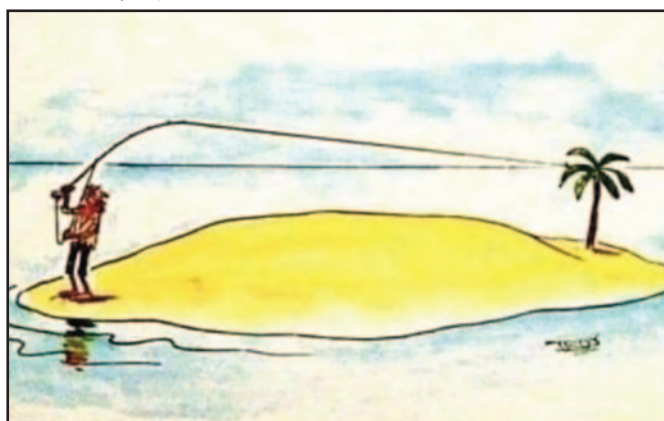
NFM/TAFF/GIF MEDIA INFORMATION HUB

The Angling Trade Association is committed to long term investment in angling to ensure access to angling for all. Get into the fishing habit with National Fishing Month and Take A Friend Fishing and take time out to connect with nature. You won't be disappointed.

Andrew Race, Chairman of Angling Trades Association,

Creators of National Fishing Month Initiative. ■

Carpy Humour





Welcome to your Members Newsletter

Welcome to the latest issue of the Angling Trust & Fish Legal Members Newsletter. Today we report on the launch of our annual Christmas Raffle which raises vital funds to support our work to protect fish, fishing and the environment; how sea angling can benefit from an £18m fund; our latest trade associate partner Zerofit who have a special offer for members; the fantastic film we have produced of this year's RiverFest final on the Trent; and loads more! Tight lines! John Cheyne, Marketing, Communications & Membership Manager:



Save £££s on DFDS ferry crossings - members only discounts to France, Amsterdam and a mini-cruise

Save £££s on DFDS ferry crossings - members only discounts to France, Amsterdam and a mini-cruise

Our new member partner DFDS have been voted the world's leading ferry operator for 12 years in a row - so you know you are in safe hands. Whether you are looking to book travel for your fishing trip, holidays for the family or superb mini cruises, our DFDS partnership gives you access to Europe with fantastic discounts! Simply login to your Members Dashboard to access fantastic offers including: 10% off Dover-France ferry crossings - car & up to 9 people. 15% off Newcastle-Amsterdam ferry crossings - cabin & vehicle. 33% off Amsterdam mini-cruise cabin - with breakfast included. ■



Anglers Against Pollution hits 2,000 samples milestone

The Angling Trust's Anglers Against Pollution campaign has reached a significant milestone with the 2,000th water quality sample taken from UK rivers.

The Water Quality Monitoring Network launched as a pilot project on the River Severn in May 2022 and was rolled out nationally just two months later. It currently involves over 470 volunteers from angling clubs taking samples from their local waters to better understand water quality and potential pollution issues.

The 2,000th sample was taken by voluntary bailiff Jonathan Swan on the River Chelmer in Essex and showed that phosphate levels exceeded the Water Framework Directive while nitrates were at the trigger level. ■

Tell us why you enjoy fishing so much!



The Angling Trust is supporting an Environment Agency marketing campaign to get people back into fishing. We know there's loads more to fishing than just catching a fish. Peace, headspace and relaxation are just as much part of the experience, as is tranquility and the feeling of being in nature.

To help shape the campaign, it would be very helpful if you could spare 5-10 minutes to share what it is you enjoy about fishing. ■

Fish Legal and Angling Trust at UK River Summit



Penny Gane, Head of Practice at Fish Legal, Jamie Cook, CEO of Angling Trust, and Jim Murray, Actor and Founder of Activist Anglers, were among the guest speakers at the UK River Summit, held earlier this month at Orvis Kimbridge Beat on the banks of the River Test.

The event brought together some of the country's most influential environmental experts to talk about the state of rivers in the UK and the action needed. Topics included water scarcity, agricultural and sewage pollution, and the environmental impacts of industrial practices in the countryside. ■

Is this the greatest prize in carp fishing? We think so!

Hosted by Reading & District Angling Association at their premier water Junction 12, the Angling Trust's Ultimate Carp Social prize draw gave four anglers the chance to win a 48-hour session of a life-time.

Big thanks to Fink Food Fishing for providing an amazing BBQ because what's a social without top tier food?

Thanks also to Terry Hearn, Nick Helleur, Oz Holness and Tom Stokes for giving their time and to all of you that bought a ticket, supporting the work the Angling Trust do to protect fish, fishing and the environment. ■

How we can help clubs & fisheries - download handbook



The Angling Trust has published a handbook outlining how we can support clubs and fisheries through advice, resources, and practical help. Much of our work to support clubs and fisheries is assisted with funding from fishing licence income through our contract delivery with the Environment Agency. However, many other ways we engage with clubs is funded through membership fees paid by clubs, fisheries, organisations, angling trade partners and individuals, including our fight against pollution, over-abstraction, angling bans and other threats to our sport. ■

Two freelance roles available for Catchwise surveyors



Catchwise will be the biggest single study of sea angling undertaken for over a decade - and you can be part of it. The aim is to deliver a site-based, face-to-face survey of shore anglers and those fishing from private boats and kayaks across England and Wales. Surveying will be delivered by 11 contractor surveyors with up to 150 volunteer citizen scientists assisting the research.

The Angling Trust is seeking two highly motivated, organised and experienced individuals for the final two surveyor roles available on freelance/self-employed contracts for the South West (ideally based in Dorset, Somerset or Devon) and South East (ideally based in Surrey, East Sussex or West Sussex). ■

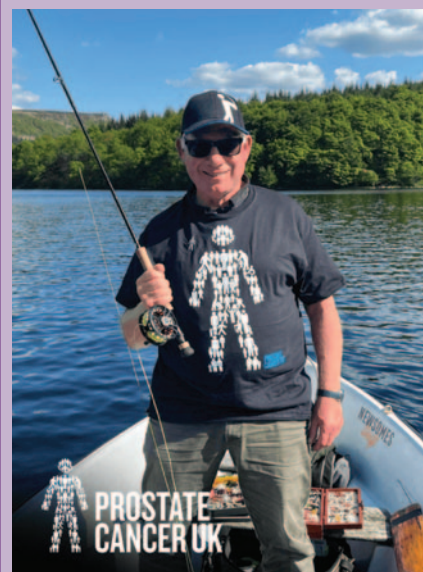
Silver for Raison as England go so close in the Euros



England captain William Raison led from the front at last weekend's European Championships in Hungary claiming the individual silver medal in a tough competition which saw the team fall just four section points shy of bronze.

William, who took the bronze at the same event last year, was one of only two of the 149 anglers fishing to win their sections on both days but lost out on the gold on a weight countback to Slovakia's Jan Samel. ■

What do you know about prostate cancer?



It's the most common cancer in men: 1 in 8 men in the UK are affected.

You're at a higher risk if you're over 50, or you're black or your dad or brother had it.

Prostate cancer can be curable if it's caught early. However, most men with early prostate cancer don't have symptoms.

That's just three reasons why Prostate Cancer UK is working tirelessly to invest millions into research to find better ways to diagnose and treat prostate cancer, offering specialist support to people living with the disease, and spreading the word about men at risk.

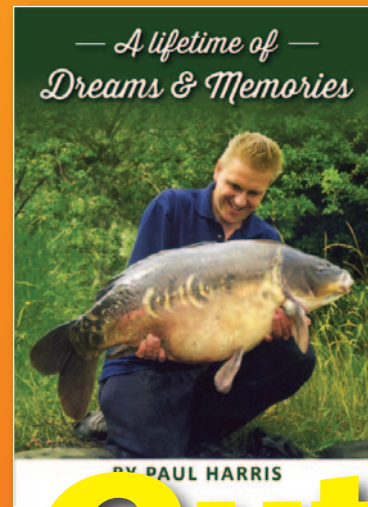
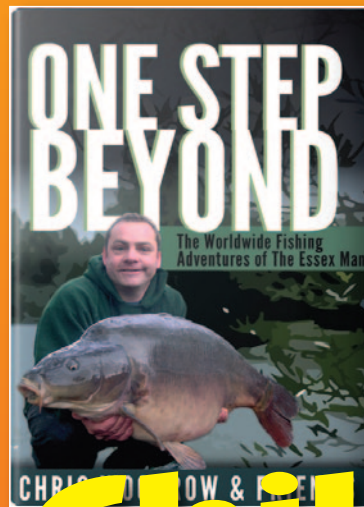
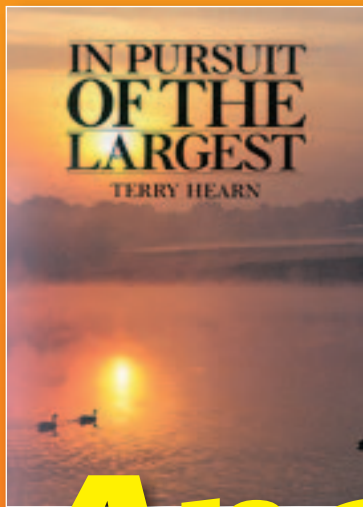
You can help, too. Check your own risk of getting prostate cancer using their 30-second online tool below - and share the risk checker with fellow anglers.

Angling Trust - supporting the work of Prostate Cancer UK. ■

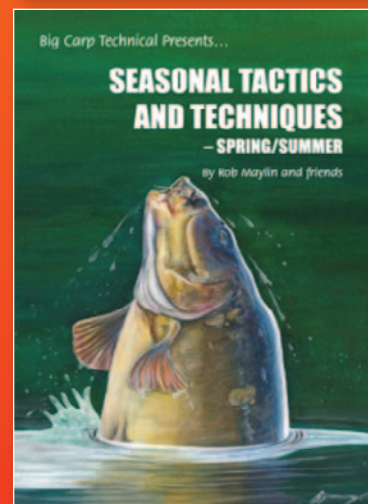
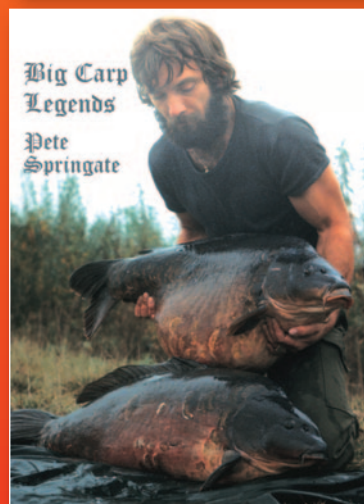
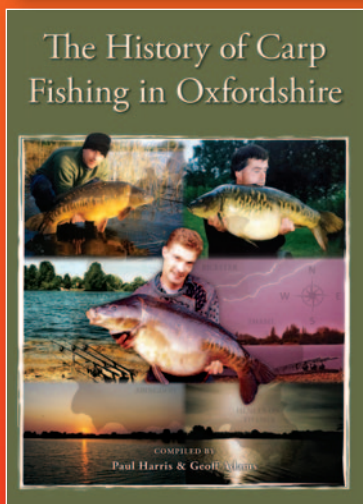
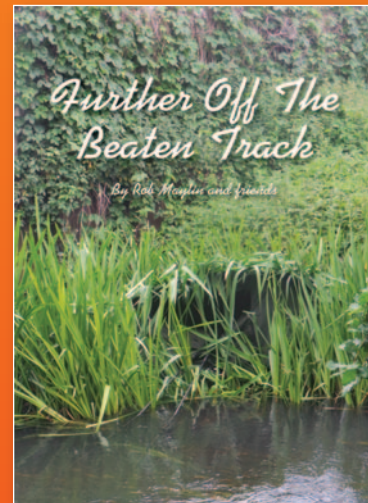
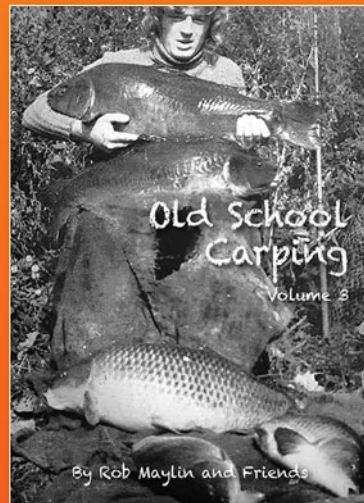
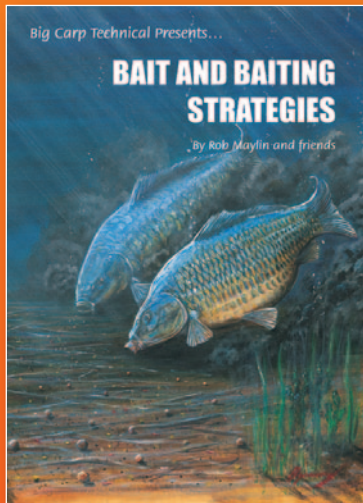
All your fishing info on one map!

Looking for somewhere to go fishing? The Angling Trust Find Fishing Info map features hundreds of venues for you to explore, including how to get there and permit details. You can also search for information on clubs, tackle shops and coaches - and if you are planning to fish a river you can check on the latest river level. There's also a facility to submit a new entry or amend an existing listing. ■

Bag Yourself a Score

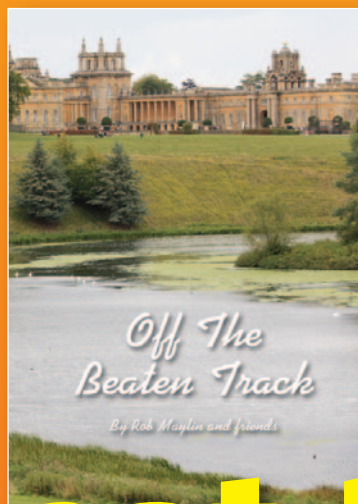
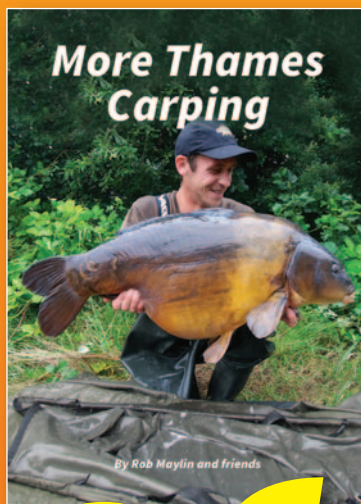


And Chill Out with

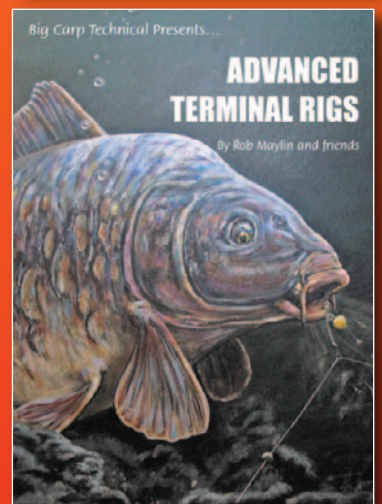
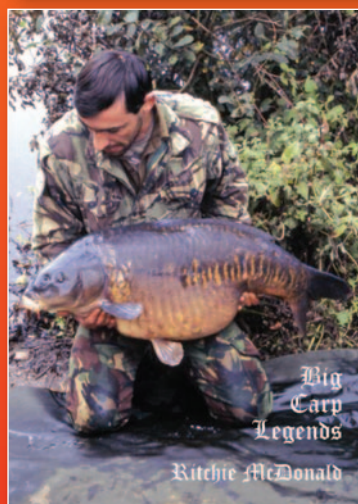
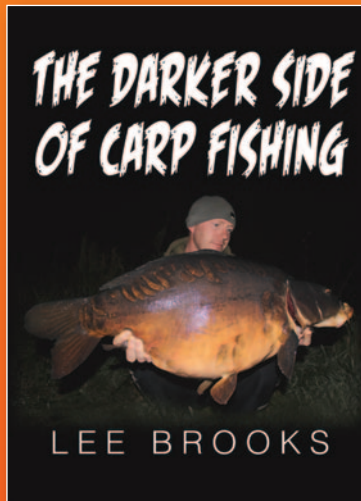


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Summer Scorchers



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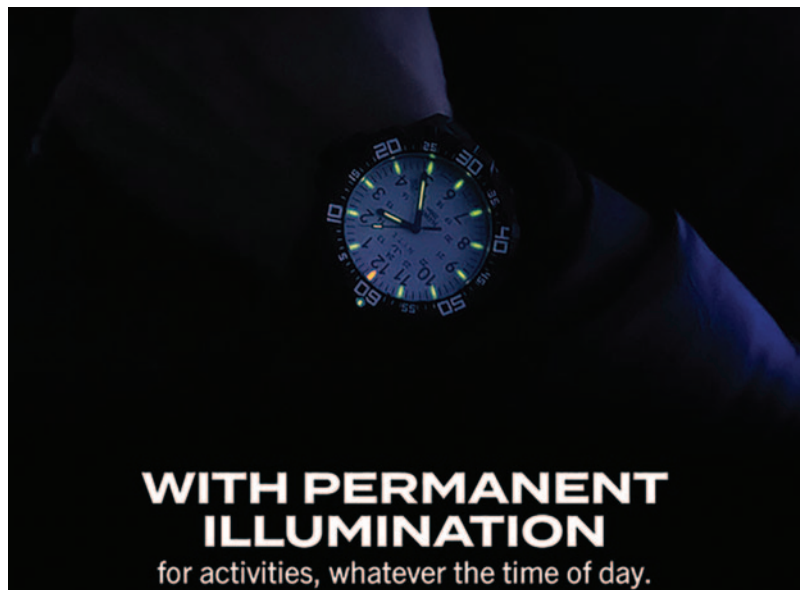
Tac-Tac

Our monthly reviews on products currently on the market

In this issue:

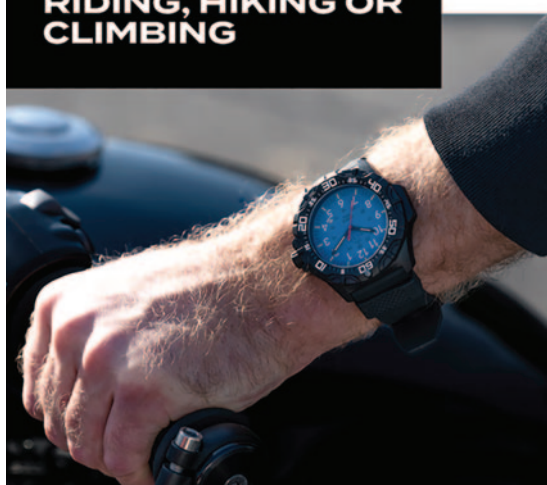
- Nite Watches
- Carp Lounge
- Nite Watches
- Whitby

BLACK, ORANGE, BLUE OR WHITE;
a colour for every scene
THE HILLS, VALLEYS, PATHS AND
TRAILS ARE WAITING FOR YOU





**WHETHER YOU'RE
RIDING, HIKING OR
CLIMBING**



Have you already seen the RT7 Reviews?

Pretty impressive, right? We're over the moon with all the positive feedback we're getting on the RT7 from all sides.

If you're still doubting whether the RT7 is the right baitboat for you, don't hesitate to send me an email or book a consultation with our product experts below.

We're always here to help you find the perfect bait boat configuration for your fishing needs. Time to elevate your carp fishing game to the next level now – with the RT7 All-In-One Baitboat Set

RT7 Carpology Magazine Review!

RT7 Baitboat impresses at Nash Days 2023! Sneak Peek: James Armstrong tests the RT7 bait boat!

Best regards from CL Headquarter, Simona BauerCarpplounge Tackle // Executive Assistant & Accounting Manager (EU/UK)

The RT7 is the most hyped new product of 2023.

Carpology's experts wanted facts:

Is it really a game-changer, or just completely overrated?



Here are some teaser quotes from the review for you: "Is the RT7 as good as we hoped? It's even better! The electronics are second-to-none, and the build quality is like Rolls-Royce!"

"Truly impressive: RT7 All-In-One - Luxury, tech-packed bait boat and this thing is clever - real clever!"

"Until you try the RT7 yourself, you can't fully appreciate just how good it is."

"Is the RT7 worth the monster price tag? The RT7 All-In-One is insane! If you have the cash, buy one!"

RT7 Baitboat impresses at Nash Days 2023!...more than 100 RT7 test drives in just one weekend!

Here are some teaser quotes from the review for you: "Didn't think I needed an upgrade, but the RT7 test drive changed my mind! Finally, there's an intuitive and user-friendly technology that everyone can use!"

"Who needs a manual when you've got the RT7? I feared I'd have to learn everything again, but the RT7 is incredibly user-friendly!"

"I was always worried about complex high-tech bait boats, but the RT7 Control is remarkably intuitive and so easy to use - even for non-techies like me!"

Sneak Peek: James Armstrong tests the RT7 bait boat!

"Ready for a game-changing bait boat? look no further than the RT7"

Als langjähriger RT4 V4 Besitzer wollte James genauer wissen, warum unser neues RT7 solche Wellen in der Szene schlägt. Bei seinem letzten Besuch im Carplounge UK Shop hat er die Chance genutzt und das RT7 einen Tag lang an unserem Testsee auf Herz und Nieren zu testen.

Für seinen Youtube-Kanal hat er seine Eindrücke auf Video festgehalten - das ab sofort online ist!

"Das Größte für mich ist der AIC-Controller, für das Handling muss man jetzt kein IT-Experte mehr sein! Jetzt kann jeder ohne Lernphase das volle Potenzial aus dem Raymarine QHD-Echolot und Mapping heraus holen, was definitiv für mehr Erfolg am Wasser sorgt!"

Read More...



...did you know? we offer a worry-free payment plan with just a 500€ deposit and the rest paid when the boat is ready for delivery. Plus, you have 30 days to test the boat and if you're not satisfied, we offer a full refund

P.S. Stay tuned for a detailed video review of the RT7 from Carplounge's product testers where they go in detail. Follow #Carplounge and #Carplounge on social media for the latest updates and insider tips.

GAME CHANGER? RT7 Bait Boat and All in one controller.

Regular readers could not have missed a new comer to Big Carp this year..... Carplounge and their RT7 Bait Boat and All in one controller.

A huge, highly colourful advertising campaign across all the platforms and magazines plus several editorial features in Big Carp and Free Line including: in April - Why should I use a bait boat? - What the experts said. In May - Custom Paint Jobs - Finance Option - Free All in One Controller Case, and in June - Flagship

CarpLounge UK Store Spot Light. Add to that field test reviews in both magazines and social media. Here is our honest review on what has been referred to as 'The Greatest Boat on Earth!'

Many carp anglers are still not fans of remote-control bait boats, in particular, many of the old school. But is it the boats or the ethics of their owners that is the problem?

There is no doubt that you will catch more carp using a boat in some situations than without. Even the greatest carp anglers in the land will confirm this and, in most cases, have used them to overcome, otherwise impossible problems. The accuracy, the distance, the stealth and the ease make using a boat essential in some scenarios. Even our editor has succumbed to their attributes when the



fish are all held up on features 200+ metres away and even he can't cast that far!

Like everything in life, the best is going to cost you. And the price ticket on these beasts is not small. But there are payment options and if you are going to use a boat you may as well get the best available. These are the ultimate in bait boat technology, just look at the portfolio of who is using them, and everyone says the same thing.....Amazing, a real GAME CHANGER!

We have lots more to say about the RT7 including: All in One Controller Review, RT7 Bait Boat Catch Reports, Getting the Best out of your RT7, What Top Anglers say about the RT7, Get an RT7 for Christmas? we have a



Location is without doubt the most important aspect of carp fishing -

it's 98% Location, 1% Bait and 1% Rigs!

DANNY FAIRBRASS



deal for you, New Year Special - Why you should start the Year with an RT7, Big Carp TOP 10 issue comments, New Season Special - Prebaiting with the RT7, RT 7 Bait Boat - One Year On,

Tactics and Edges with the RT7, RT7 Monsters and Myths.

Keep looking in Big Carp the longest running carp magazine EVER with the biggest readership EVER! ■

A WORLD RECORD HOLDER

Extreme athlete and adventurer, Jake Best is no stranger to putting himself through grit and hustle, to achieve extraordinary results. His journey is a testament to the power of pushing limits, embracing versatility, and making a difference for others.

Here are just some of his feats:

- Running 100 kilometers along the coastal path while carrying 35 pounds of weight in support of the Felix Brown charity.
- Cycling 1000 miles in just 7 days to contribute to the fight against cancer through the FFC charity.
- Conquering the height and dis-

tance of Ben Nevis while carrying a 15kg computer, all in aid of the DAFA charity

- 4 x continuous marathons over the Jurassic coast in 28 hours
- Setting five world records in the 5km, 10km, half marathon, full marathon, and furthest distance covered while carrying 40 pounds, supporting Rock2Recovery and the SBS Association.

His Next Challenge?

An official Ironman triathlon world record attempt while carrying his renowned 40-pound Osprey Pack.

To enhance his training, Jake

recently participated in a triathlon-focused training camp in Majorca, Spain, organised by NITE Watches, one of his sponsors.

With a water resistance of 100 metres, the ALPHA 229T100 fearlessly accompanies him on underwater adventures, while the scratch-resistant sapphire crystal protects its face from everyday wear and tear.

It's a fusion of elegance and resilience that exemplifies NITE Watches' commitment to quality, and one Jake is proud to wear on his adventures.

What's your next adventure?

JAKE'S WATCH OF CHOICE?



Petromax Cooler Backpacks deliver portable refrigeration outdoors

Outdoor, camping and bushcraft brand Petromax has extended its range of cooling products with the new Cooler Backpack. Designed for easy transport during outdoor excursions, the robust backpack will keep provisions cool for up to six or eight days, reducing reliance on power while in nature.

Available in capacities of 17L and 27L, the Petromax Cooler Backpack has been engineered to deliver extremely long cooling times, just like the brand's proven Cooler Bags. The pack is ideal for camping, fishing trips, or other outings where electrical power isn't available. The construction and materials ensure that ice cubes or cold packs can be safely stored so that food and drink stay cool, even during longer trips.

Designed to maximise storage, the small backpack can comfortably hold six 1L bottles upright, side by side. With a six-pack of cans, there's still enough room to accommodate food items and ice cubes. Meanwhile, the large capacity backpack can hold 13 1L bottles lying down. Thanks to the large waterproof front pocket, two side pockets and two mesh pockets, cutlery and other essential items can be safely stowed away and conveniently transported to the next stopping point or campsite.

With a weight capacity of 8kg or 15kg respectively, carrying comfort is integral to the Petromax Cooler Backpack design. The soft back padding delivers comfort on the move, while two padded shoulder straps and an



adjustable chest strap distribute the load evenly. On the larger pack, an adjustable waist strap provides additional flexibility of fit.

The durable nylon fabric is water repellent and is weather resistant while the waterproof zippers prevent rainwater from entering or melt water from escaping the pack. Like all cooling products in the Petromax range, the Cooler Backpack boasts a range of useful features, including an integrated bottle opener and elastic tension straps for securing additional equipment, making it the ideal companion for a wide range of outdoor adventures.

The 17L Petromax Cooler Backpack is 51.5 x 37.5 x 31cm, weighs 2.4kg and retails at £169.95. The 27L bag is 54.5 x 44.5 x 34cm, weighs 3kg and retails at £199.95. Both backpacks are available in a choice of Sand, Olive and Grey. The Petromax Cooler Backpack is available at <https://berryuseful.co.uk>.





Petromax

COOLER BACKPACKS

The Petromax Cooler Backpack is the perfect companion to keep your snacks and drinks fresh - whether you're camping, hiking or fishing. Combining the functionality of a cooler with the convenience of a backpack, these Cooler Backpacks allow you to be independent of electricity for up to 6 days (17L) and 8 days (27L).

Available in 17L and 27L and three colours, there's a Cooler Backpack for all your outdoor adventure needs.



To explore the range, visit www.whitbyandco.co.uk or scan the QR code



Loz East catch report

Loz East has been enjoying another prolific spell of fishing of late - visiting Old Mill and Brasenose 2 lake where a total of 52 fish combined hit the back of his net with nine over thirty-pounds, and one fish at 40lb! A variety of tactics doing the do, such as Cork Dust Wafers fished over Link or Essential Cell boilie crumb, and solid PVA bags super boosted with our new Squid and Pineapple Smart Liquids!

Well, here is a special one!



Innovate rod Nobby with Apples from the Blue Lagoon. This fantastic fish went 52lb 10oz and was the result of a 1.7-year quest to see it on the bank. Fishing with his 6ft rod, a stiff rig and KK Jaffa pop up fished over a few crumbled matching freebies close in got the job done. Well done mate, awesome capture!



Simon Whittle catch report

Kev's Lin – Top carbon consultant and all-around nice guy Simon Whittle has had his dreams made at Stone Acres on the Linch Hill complex. We will let Simon tell you the story below but a massive well done to you on the capture and thanks for trusting our products to help with your success. You're a top guy and we're lucky to have you onboard.

Simon now takes up the story: On Sunday I caught a carp that I had dreamed about. Kev's Lin at 50lb 10oz and a new PB. I've never felt a buzz like that when she ended up in the net. I gave it the big shout. I've never done that in all my years of carp fishing. Having fished the lake for a while now and into my third season and losing one early this spring to finally see a mirror in the net was an incredible



feeling. Now don't get me wrong I'm not complaining about the commons I've had over the past two seasons but they're not what you join Linch Hill for. There is a story that goes with this capture but we will leave that for another time. Caught over carbons hemp and chopped tigers power jars.



Bank Tackle Team Member Connor Gregory

Sometimes, certain carp leave you speechless. Just like this ridiculous looking 47lb 4oz and new UK PB mirror that fell to a carefully placed bait a few weeks ago. On a day where everything had gone wrong, a simple change of swims was all it took. What a lump! Congratulations on your new PB buddy.



Lakeside View record for Luke Langlois

New Complex Record. Archie was landed at 50lb 14oz by Luke Langlois. New lake record! A massive well done to Luke who landed Hayley at 50.10lb.



Crowy's Historic German Giant!

Black Spot at 76lb (34.5kg) A massive congratulations to Simon Crow for achieving one of his dreams of landing the mighty Black Spot from the historic Mary & Joe Pool in Germany.

Having read and written about this legendary venue for many years, Crowy has had the privilege to fish the lake in recent times and yesterday he got the opportunity to cradle one of the finest carp in the country, the lake's largest common at a colossal 76lb (34.5kg).

He said: "I'm fortunate to have friends that allow me to fish the legendary Mary and Joe Pool in Germany, one of the most famous carp lakes in the world.

"The fishing is far from easy, where every fish is hard-earned. The carp are under constant angling pressure from the best anglers in the country, and every time I go there all I ever want from a trip is one carp to make it worthwhile. The A-team fish are next level, but I make the 12-hour drive a couple of times a year in the hope that one day it might be my turn to hold one of the lake's special gems.

"Well, yesterday my numbers came up, when at first light I had a bitty take which resulted in the biggest common in the lake known as Black Spot. Weighing in at a spawned-out 76lb (34.5kg), it's a truly stunning fish, like a classic carp out of Redmire.

"Words can't describe how much this fish means to me. I've wanted a big carp from this amazing lake since the days when Mary was making headlines 20 years ago. A massive thanks to my bro, Nermin Caro, for his information and to my long-time friend Christian Finkelde for making it happen."

Crowy went in with a Secret 7 approach, tripping the fish up on an S7 snowman presentation.



Jon Williams catch report

Floater opportunities can be hard to come by on the Northants syndicate but I was fortunate enough to get some fish mopping up the mixers unhindered and in next to no time I'd nobbled one of the 40s heavily spawned out to 32.12 closely followed by one of the lakes real biggies known as Otter bait at 49.9. I couldn't believe my luck but it wasn't to end there as I decided to leave a night early and drop on a 80 acre pit close to home for a night which culminated in 5 bites a sleepless night but catching the lakes two biggest commons this morning at 39 and 34.12... what a session and one I doubt I will better for a while.



Ali Hamedi catch report

BOOM 54lb 11oz - NEW UK PB ALERT + Brace of UK 50s in 20 mins last night on the #omctackle Chods Away Ready-Made Chod Rig Ends + Product X at Grenville! <https://www.omctackle.com/collections/terminal-tackle> 54.11lb Mirror and 51lb Mirror Secret bit of product testing as we near a few key milestones in our OMC Life! Bait @mainlinebaitsofficial Link, Cell, Iso-Sweet / Hook bait White & Yellow Pop - Pop Up soaked in Isotonic and Buttercorn.



Greg Reagan catch report

Made up with this fish today, popped down to Richard Fosters Penns hall syndicate. A place where it matters not if you catch or not. Set in peaceful surroundings with some amazing looking carp to go at. Add to this the friendly people that fish here it's definitely a water you need to get you name down for, if you live in the midlands area. Here's one of 4 bites today 31lb 13oz. Amazing conditioned post spawning common!

Missing Out

Featuring Terry Wood

After missing out on a lot of angling last year, I was keen to set the record straight this year. It's unfortunate that I wasn't the only one going all guns blazing, but you can't expect to fish somewhere like Stoneacres and it not be busy. Following a game of chess on my first session of the year, I found myself in The Bins swim with a fresh south westerly blowing. I saw nothing all day and the fish had clearly moved on the wind.

"With nothing to show for my efforts, I managed to get a move into Island Point, which was where the fish were stacked up. I carefully positioned my rods going into the evening, one high up just under the

surface, and the others around mid-water, all on black foam soaked until they were dripping in Signature Squid spray.

"With the sun beaming on the island margin, right on my zig closest to the surface, the rod positioned there ripped off. It was a tense but short battle, and I soon found myself netting chestnut brown mirror. It meant the world to me, having lost 2 fish over my previous three seasons of angling, it was a major buzz.

"That night we ordered an Indian, Stoneacres style, but before I could take a bite, one of my short rods was away! An epic battle ensued, as the fish ripped me from weed bed to weed bed, before charging off into open water. It tried everything it could to get rid of that little hook. My





name must have been on it though, as Scotty Phillips scooped her up into the waiting net. The swim went super silent, I didn't know what was going on, until someone said, 'Baby Choco'! Everyone was elated, including me of course, an incredible creature that hadn't been caught in four years and was presumed dead! Not that it mattered, but she went 43lb 10oz and had me itching to get back the following week.

"The following week I received a twitchy bite, which I assumed was a tench as the Stoney Tench do like a Zig! It turned out to be a carp though, another beautiful, chestnut coloured one as well. I was absolutely buzzing, three carp in two trips, capped off by another cool Stoneacres character, what more could you want!" ■



Reflections of the Year Past

By Mark Laurence

Getting Christmas out of the way and with the New Year ahead, on the fishing front my thoughts were on the new season just around the corner. The lake that I'm on is around 15 acres and like an egg box with gully's, plateaus, drop offs, sand, silt, its hard clay features are unreal.

January and February came and went so I began getting my tackle ready for the new season, thinking March would be the right time to head up and do a couple of nights in two areas of the lake. My plan was to start the bait going in on the heavy

side. Loads of hemp, corn and crushed boillies to start with. So having a choice I chose two areas, one fairly close-in, where I could load up with lots of particle without too much disturbance and the second, an area I could use a bait boat to drop off bait. So, the first trip was just to find these areas.

On the Sunday morning I had my first fish of the year, a 24 lb mirror which was more than welcome. The lake wasn't busy so I left thinking that the following week I could do the same and just get up there and get more bait in this weekend. I could only manage a quick night on Saturday, so the plan was to get up there,

fish the spots and keep a spare roaming rod.

With it only being the second week of March, I started off with a small amount of bait, just going for a bite to start with. Arriving just on light, I got the first rod out to the close-in spot, then the next two. Once sorted I put the house up and the kettle on for a cuppa. It wasn't long before the right-hand rod hooped around which resulted in a low 20 mirror, again only being the second week of March I was happy with that. The rod was sorted and back out. I had two buckets of particle and 10kg of 'Innovate Nut Reaper' with me. My plan was on departure I would load the areas up









ready for the following week hopping that I could get back in the swim.

Saturday produced just the one fish. Sunday morning, first light, the right-hand rod was away again, resulting in another low 20lb mirror. I was happy with that, knowing that the fish were coming to the area. I sat the day out before leaving at 4 in the afternoon. All the bait I took went in on the areas. The week went by, and I was constantly messaging a couple of mates one who were in on the crack with me, 'laptop Simon' was baiting two swims as well, so plenty of bait was going in.

I got there Saturday to find 3 people were on, luckily the swim was empty, so I got my gear loaded up and went back on the point, everything was sorted and ready to go. There was a lad in 'the plates' just up to my left, he hadn't had anything, so rods were sorted and ready to go back on the spots.

The weather forecast looked like it was warming up slightly, this being the 3rd week of March. The afternoon came and we had a small spell of sun, which resulted in the right-hand rod

bending round, a welcome 28lb leather, again they were visiting the spot on the close-in rod. That was the only fish Saturday.

Sunday morning around 8.30am I had a single bleep on the middle rod, then nothing. A couple minutes later it went again, this time the rod pulled down hard and sat there. I knew then it was hooked and didn't know what to do, so I picked the rod up and bent into something rather heavy. It started to kite out into open water, this time I knew it was heavy, it stayed deep and pulled like a train, a few minutes later I had it around 40 yards out, it boiled over, it was huge! I didn't recognise it at first but once under the rod tip I knew then it was a fish called BB.

It looked big, once netted Lee came down to have a look. I got everything ready for the weighing, scales, tripod, two weigh slings, were all sorted, scanner camera were all ready. On transferring the fish to a retainer and lifting it I knew then it was up there over 50, the scales spun round to 58lb that was a new pb for me. I was over the moon, what a great start to the

year, photos were done, and the fish was put back into her home, she headed off to sulk. I was blown away with that result. I put the rod back out and thought about the week ahead.

The rest of the day went by and soon I was packing up and heading home, a very happy chap. The week seemed to take ages to get to Friday. Eventually I headed back but someone was on the point so couldn't get the swim, so settled for the plates for the night then move the following morning.

I had a 24lb common that night out the plates, which was a result. I was just getting ready to get the rods back out when a fish launched out close in where I had been putting loads of bait. Immediately I put a rod on it and half an hour later I had one bleep and the rod pulled around. It was a 19lb common. Then nothing happened until 4 in the afternoon when the middle rod pulled up. This was a 28lb mirror. The two areas were definitely working, that was it for that trip up, Sunday morning I was up early, I put another bucket of hemp, corn and 12mm barrels in on two spots, then



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'.

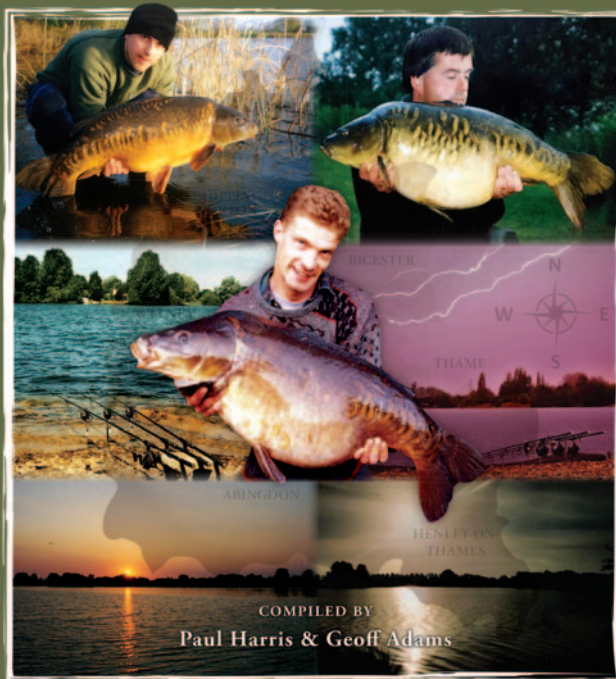
We have brilliant chapters on Newlands from Ginger Robinson and Milton Pools from Stuart Rothwell. Danny Aplin has written about his time on Linch Hill which will just blow you away! His pictures alone are worth purchasing this book.

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...

The History of Carp Fishing in Oxfordshire



CARD: 07768 731425

PAYPAL: www.bigcarpmagazine.co.uk

AVAILABLE THIS AUTUMN







headed home hopefully the next week I could get in there again.

I couldn't get up Friday after work, so went up early Saturday morning to find someone in the point, I went down and had a chat with 'minty' he was off early so I left a bucket there with him and went and had a cuppa with me old mukka captain who had a nice 28lb mirror while I was with him. Once they all departed, I went on the point and set my house up, putting my last bivvy peg in I bent down, put the peg in, on standing back up I was positioned looking at some reeds very close in, my eyes nearly dropped out my head, this head came up looked like a bucket, huge! I didn't hang around getting the rods ready and out they went.

Big Andy, 'The Cromer Crab' was in 'the plates' and 'laptop' was heading up, so I could feel a social coming on. Simon arrived and went in the social next to me. Anyway, all set up, we were sitting there chatting over a

cuppa talking about hooks, rigs and the normal stuff when I had a savage liner on the right-hand rod fxxk I thought I was going to lose the rod, then nothing, Simon said after 10 minutes I'd check that in case I'd lost the lead. I re-cast the rod, kettle back on, the rod hooped around and bang I was into something that was very heavy. It headed for open water, just stayed deep and slow, but within two minutes it was in the landing net. Omfg it was huge, I couldn't believe what I was looking at, the shoulders on this fish were huge. The crab came down and couldn't believe what I had in the net. Everything was sorted ready for weighing. It took two of us to lift the sling on to the cradle. We lifted it onto the tripod and transferred it to the sling, we zeroed the scales and lifted it on the scales ding dong they went round past the magical 60, fxxk they settled on to 60lb 8oz. I couldn't believe what was happening to me, another pb in less than

two weeks. I was blown away at the sheer size of this big girl, she was huge. We put her back in the water for 10 minutes why we sorted everything ready for pictures, the pics were done, and she went off strong back to her home, what a mental day that was.

I couldn't sleep that night. Sunday, we packed up and headed home, what an amazing night that was, memories made with two great mates. That week I was preparing more hemp and corn for the following week. I couldn't wait to get back up again. It was just a Saturday night for me. Saturdays seemed to be very quiet as most anglers were heading home. Saturday morning, I could see some fish on the plateau around mid-day, so I went in a swim called Andy's. I put two rods out just on the shoulder going out to the gully, one on to the plateau and one slightly closer. That night I had a 24lb mirror and a 19lb common off two different rods and a great result. The fish were

definitely on the maple cream for sure. I couldn't get up there the following week, so it was two weeks again before I got back up. My old mukka 'the cuckoo', Ian the accountant was on for a social as it was a bank holiday weekend coming up, so we decided on fishing Saturday morning until Monday.

We had chosen two swims, Andy's and the Spotting, it was a nice warm day and what was about to unfold were memories that will stay with me for life. A nice BBQ was had that evening with me and Ian. We had a few beers, some great laughs between the two of us. At 12 o'clock

we departed to our bivvys. The middle rod was off, a 28lb mirror, I took pics of it on the matt and slipped it back. Rod back out, then at half 6 laptop turned up and went 2nd tree. Bang! the left-hand rod was off, which resulted in me going out in the boat for an angry male 19lb common. I'm not kidding you; it fought like it was on steroids, mental little brat. That was sorted, then the rod was back out. The middle rod was away again ffs, a 24lb mirror that Ian sorted scanned and took a pic on the matt then slipped her back while I put the rod back out. Cromer was in the social he decided to move round to

the mozzzy. Me, Ian and Simon we're having a brew when my right-hand rod was away, this fish fought hard, once Simon netted it, it was a two-toned 30+common, what a stunning fish. The rod was sorted and then the left-hand rod was off! This was madness, I couldn't believe what was going on, a 26lb mirror again, Ian took pics of it on the matt, scanned it and slipped it back. So I sorted the rod, then laptops alarm started to sing, a one toner, he was off and running we went down to help him, a 40lb and oz's mirror, something was happening that I've never seen before on this lake, so he put his rod back out and





LIMITED EDITION • SIGNED AND NUMBERED

Legendary Carp Paintings



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



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my alarm started to sing off I went, right hand rod a 28lb mirror, this was a mental session. Rod back out and we all sat back in my swim having a brew when big Andy came running up." I need your help I got a huge fish in the net called pat" I need your waders, tripod, scales and camera, let's go.

Off we went to see it was pat alright, this fish was huge in the net, we got everything ready and lifted her out onto the mat, omfg huge wasn't the word, we weighed her 65.6, what a fish. I started to take pics when my receiver started to sing to me. I gave laptop the camera and I was off on my toes; my right-hand rod was screaming. I bent into something very pissed off, ten minutes later it was still 70 yards out not wanting to come in, the boys turned up and started winding me up eventually we saw this huge bar of gold, a big old original common, a fish we call the floppy belly common. what a stunning fish. The scales pulled round to 41-8. This season was something I probably wouldn't see happening again, pics were taken, and the rod was back out.

The day went on, evening came

around, at half 7 the middle rod ripped off again, this fish was over 80 yards out and took line from me, 20 minutes of pure battle resulted in a huge black common, that doesn't come out very often, 38 -8. Amazing, that session resulted in 9 carp for me two for lap-top and the queen of the pond for big Andy a weekend where some amazing memories were made with 3 great mates, some great laughs and some great food and beer.

What an amazing year it was panning out for me. I couldn't get back up for a couple of weeks, when I did get back up the weed had hit the surface, this was my type of fishing, finding holes in the weed. Getting back on the point I had another 3 fish to 30 lb but decided to concentrate on Andy's for a while. Back in Andy's I had a fish called 'split pec' my old mate captain took the pics of that 40lb and oz's.

The following week I got in 'the plates' where I had 3 fish to mid-30s. what a year, I was having. The fish were definitely liking the bait, the hemp corn and tigers we had a spell when martin closed the lake for spawning which did it really good as the big girls dropped their spawn. I

decided to drop on the trout lake for a while, a lake that I've not really put any time in to for a few weeks. I had 3 fish from there, biggest was an angry 38.8 mirror, a stunning 30lb black scaley mirror and a 23 lb mirror.

August was on us, and the weed was mental in woodys, so a lot of swims were closed, I decided to get some bait going in the plates again, a nice deep gully in front of me and the plateau around 80 yards out. I had one rod out there, a nice hard area, hard, stoney ground, around 4 ft. I managed 4 fish off that spot but lost a few coming back near the bank in the weed. Martin bought a rake down for me, I cleared two big weed beds and that solved the problem of me losing fish. I had the boat there but hook pulls and different angles with the line in the weed resulted in me losing 8 fish over a month fishing from that swim.

September was on us, and the Autumn was looming, my old bro decided to come up and camp with me that month, I had a few from Andy's and the plates up to 38 again the bait kept getting me bites. October, I kept noticing fish in shallow



water, which was strange, so again I decided to stick to the plates swim where I kept picking the odd fish up. Come November things began to slow up, so the 3rd week of November me and me bro went up and I went for a walk and saw a fish show over shallow water, so took the plates swim again, was it the constant bait I was putting in holding fish? we set up and I decided to put two rods out on the 4Ft area and one close in. Around 2-30 one of the long rods went off, a 31lb common that was a start, then the swans came so I pulled the two long rods in, I waited until dark. Les Marsh was on the point, at half 5 it was dark, so the rods were back on the spots. Les came up for a cuppa and a chat then the rain turned up, so it was in the bivvy, well the wind got up and it was raining hard, I had to zip up, me old bro was long asleep in his bivvy, at 10 o'clock I was off to sleep, the wind and rain was mental, at half 12 I got woken by a bleep on the middle rod, it's one of them, please don't be a fish again, another single bleep, piss off mate, it's pissing down. I'm all snug-gled up, door completely zipped up to stop the rain and it goes again, so up I get open the top right-hand corner and put a light on the rods, the middle

rod I'd pulled down tight and the bobbing is pulled into the alarm. I got my t shirt and boxers, out I go and bent into something very heavy. I'm soaked, so back in the bivvy zip the door 3 quarter up and I'm playing something big I kept it coming nice and easy seemed like ages then I put my head torch on and saw something huge, out I went, light off and netted something big, as soon as I netted that fish it stopped raining. I could see Les on the point with his light on. Thinking he's got a fish too, so my bro is woken up and I tell him what I got in the net.

Still in wet t shirt and boxers first thing I did was to get dried off, take my t shirt off and get into some dry clothes. Waders on, I got Les up to help me, I got a sling and got in the water and saw what I had, it was unreal! I knew what fish it was, a fish called 'cut tail', no way?, not another UK 60, can't be. We got everything ready for the weigh-in, it took two of us to lift her onto the mat, where we transferred her to the zeroed sling and lifted her onto the scales. Omfg round she went and settled on 61.12, I looked up to the sky and knew someone was looking down on me. I couldn't believe what I was seeing, Les and

Doug took pics of one amazing creature, back she went. I made us all a cuppa, the rod went back out on that spot, and it went off at first light with a 21 lb mirror, what an amazing year.

I was reflecting on that year, it was amazing. I'd put a lot of time in, a lot of bait, I learnt that also in cold conditions fish don't always stick to deep water, in 8 months I was on a role that accounted for 2 x 60s 2 x 50s numerous 40s lots of 30s and 20s, my mates I would like to thank for being there on that journey, laptop Simon, Ian Draper, Big Andy, my hero the Cromer Crab, my old bro you've been on a journey we will cherish for ever, love you, and Les Marsh for helping me on that mad crazy November night, and my long time mate Steve Slater the main man at Innovate Baits you are one great friend that does it time and time again with my bait you have one special bait company my friend, I will be with till the end and to Martin and Alex Dawson for allowing me in to your garden and putting up with me and allowing me to make some very special memories

Here's to another amazing year good luck to all you fellow carp anglers may all your dreams come true big love, carps and beers. ■



Oak Lakes Fisheries

www.oaklakesfisheries.co.uk



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



Thanks to Carl for sending us photos of his recent sessions on the day ticket lake. Nice to see the young angler taking part too.



18lbs 8oz from the gully last night for Grant Staines back for another session.



27lbs 4oz this stunner of a carp Top angling by Brian Milton.



Add nearly 10lbs to last catch as Brian Milton lands his new UK PB at 37lbs.



Cracking 26.5 catch for Alan Roberts. Nice angling.



In his own words Buddha said not quite a 40 but a 21 I'm still happy Well done Richard.



Mark Bird fished the gully on the day ticket lake on Sunday night. No weights as he had no scales with him. Nice looking fish.



Nice one Gary Pearman just over 20lbs.



The final catch of the record breaking session for Ricky Collett was this stunning looking fish weighing in at about 26lbs.



Wow again.

Exclusive

Early Season Success

By: John Morgan

I've been a member of The Carp Society's Horseshoe Lake for a good few years now. Initially fishing it on a day ticket basis then as a syndicate member once the opportunity arose. I absolutely love the lake, its historic surroundings and the style of fishing that it provides.

It's been through some well documented upheavals over the last decade or so but is back to its former glory, if not surpassing it in many ways. Its ran and managed to a high level, the facilities are excellent and it boasts an incredible stock of Carp. If you get amongst a few you can expect a real mixed bag of old originals, Commons, fully scaled mirrors, stocked VS fish and everything In-between. The average fish is now well into the low twenties with a good head of thirties coming through and the Carp are growing all the time.

Seasonal Angling

I mostly target Horseshoe in the late Autumn with the very occasional early Winter session thrown in,

through to early Spring. The banks tend to be a little quieter than the busy peak Summer period but the fish can be no less catchable with a little bit of effort.

My Spring sessions have noticeably began to start a little earlier year on year depending on the weather.

Initially it would be at the beginning of every April, then it seemed to move towards mid-March and in the last few years i have found myself loading the van in February, convincing myself it was almost Spring, the fish would be awake and feeding and I'd be in with a shout of a bite or two..... ever the optimist !!

This Winter was to be no different. I loaded the van and set off Shoe bound on a cold and blustery Monday morning towards the end of February. I had two nights at my disposal for my first proper session of the year and there was nowhere I'd rather be heading than The Carp Society's Horseshoe Lake in Lechlade.

I knew from recent reports that the lake had being throwing the odd fish up in the previous month or so since

Christmas and I felt a bite was definitely a possibility if I played my cards right.

The catch reports had been a bit sporadic with the odd carp being caught from Winter Bay and up into the Channel area of the Lake but with no real pattern as to where the fish may be holding up.

With this information in mind the biggest decision I had upon arrival was where to set out my stall for the first night. I decided to pick one of The Shoes most famous swims known as 'Winter Point' It was free at the time and gave me access to a central part of the lake almost smack bang in-between Winter Bay and the Channel. Being unsure as to exactly where the bulk of the fish were, I thought this would give me the best opportunity of nicking a bite or two should the fish pass in either direction in front of me.

I would as always keep my eyes peeled in the short hours of daylight though and If my bobbins remained motionless for the first 24hrs I could always move for my second night if I











was seeing fish elsewhere.

Bait and Wait

I know 'Winter Point' well having fished it several times in the past, in saying that I still had a quick lead just to make sure the clear spots were still exactly that.

Happy with my spot I put out a fair hit of bait consisting of mixed pellet, corn and the finest boilies Handcraft Baits has to offer. Three rods followed all fished on a simple lead system with Wafers as hook baits on short 6" rigs as I was fishing over clean gravel. I started with a variety of hook bait colours to see which the Carp would prefer. Horseshoe Carp can be very temperamental when it comes to hook baits. One year Orange can dominate the water and the next it could be white. I'd learnt it keep an open mind and let the Carp tell me which they preferred.

I was all set up and angling by mid-afternoon and although I watched the water intensely until I lost the light nothing showed anywhere.

Not to be disheartened I stayed up well into darkness to listen for any shows instead. I know at this time of

year the fish can often be more active during the hours of darkness than in the daytime and any clues to their location could prove vital.

Nodding off to a quiet lake and quiet alarms I was soon woken back up to a stuttering take around midnight on my middle rod, after a short fight in the pitch black I had my first Shoe fish of the session in the net. A lovely Horseshoe mirror at just over 22lb. With weighing and photographing done I sent the rod back out in the dark followed by a few spoms to keep the area topped up with bait. The Carp at Horseshoe can move in large shoals at times, it's essential to have plenty of bait on your spot to hold them should they arrive and start to feed.

No more than 20 minutes later and I was away again, this time my right-hand rod absolutely melted off with the culprit a chunky mirror weighting in at 27 and a half pounds.

Weighting and photos were again done in the dark before slipping my second carp of the night back. A fantastic start considering the time of year and the cold conditions.

Another few spoms were sent out

to top the spot up followed by a re chuck into the right general direction before I tried to get my head down for a few hours' sleep.

Double Take

Nothing else occurred during the early hours but I was starting to hear the odd Carp crash out in front of me as I was drifting in and out of sleep and was now super happy with my swim choice.

After the nights two 'best guess' casts in the dark I redid all three of my rods at first light to make sure they were landing exactly on the money. Several spoms were again sent out full of my boilie, pellet and corn mix. I was preparing to pop the kettle on for the first brew of the day when unbelievably, I was away again.... In no time at all I was more than just away as another of my rods signalled a take whilst I was still in mid battle with the first.

I managed to quickly grab my mobile and phone Karl the head Bailiff to ask for help and to ask if I could borrow a second landing net. I'd normally take two, but it was February after all and I was hoping for a bite to







be honest and not really expecting double takes.

He arrived just in time to net the second of the two fish for me with the first safely landed and sulking in my landing net.

The first bite was a stunningly dark low twenty pound broken linear Mirror and the second an incredibly long orange and chocolate coloured mid

twenty Zip Lin. A perfect example of the amazing variety of fish the Shoe holds.

I'm sure the re positioning of the rods nice and tight in the daylight onto my spot in conjunction with the introduction of more bait resulted in those two fast bites.

I'd now got my hook bait choice narrowed down to either a Pink or

White Wafer. The other colour hadn't gone at all so could be discarded as an option.

Morning Madness

Sorting myself out I got the rods back into position, new hook baits, sharpened hooks all nice and tight and on the money. Two spoms into topping the area up with more bait and a slow ponderous signal from my left hand Delkim had me depositing my Spom rod unceremoniously onto the floor and lifting into another of the Shoe finest.

A slow heavy battle was slowly won with me holding my first thirty of the year up to the camera at 30lbs and 10 ounces, a lovely smooth looking lump of a mirror.

No sooner had I put the thirty back and the righthand rod was away again with my first Common of the session at exactly 26lb

It had a huge paddle of a tail and fought like a much bigger carp all the way to the net. Commons are hugely outnumbered by the Mirrors in Horse-shoe so I was super happy to have caught one and at a nice weight.

By now my swim was a bit of a mess, rods were everywhere, nets were slung about, the swans were





trying to eat my Spom mix and I still hadn't managed that morning brew. Wonderful problems to have....

After getting everything back in some sort of order, more bait had been deposited onto my spot and the rods were re rigged and re cast.

It was bite time again within the hour with a cracking 21lb leather like looking Mirror. This took my current tally to seven Carp with five coming in a bonkers morning feeding spell. By now I'd moved from trying to drink tea to coffee and was in real danger of running out of bait. I hadn't brought that much pellet and corn with me (being as it was still February) but fortunately still had plenty of the good stuff in my bait bucket in the form of plenty of boilie.

Once again Karl the Head Bailiff came to the rescue with arms full of tins of sweetcorn and bags of assorted pellets from the on-site tackle shop to keep me stocked up should I run out..... I did.....

Double Take – Take Two

It was just past midday and nothing

had occurred for around an hour or so, it's not unusual for the morning bite time to produce a few fish at Horse-shoe, so although it was still very early in the year it fit the historical pattern of the lake to some degree.

No sooner had I finished a very late

but much needed breakfast my middle rod pulled up tight, the clutch kicked in and I was doing battle once again. A short but spirited fight had another Shoe Mirror in the net ready for the duel actions of weighting and photographing for the memory banks.









I put the rod back out shortly after, just as my left hand rod melted off. I plucked it from the rest then the righthand rod, obviously feeling left out, decided it would join in the fun.

Madness.

I tightened the clutch on that rod whilst I played the other in, doing my best to bully in into the net in double quick time so I didn't lose the second

of the bites. I needn't have worried though as the rigs were doing the business and both the fish were safely landed. A phone call to Karl was once again made to ask for his assistance as I transferred one carp to a sling quickly as possible.

The first bite went 16.08 followed by the second double take of the session with mirrors of 21.12 and my second thirty of the trip, a proper chunky

Mirror of 33.08

They were all weighed and photographed before putting them back to leave again a scene of rods, nets and slings in all manner of disarray spread all over the swim.

Since my first bite at around midnight I'd now managed 10 bites, landing all 10 Carp in a little over 12 hours of Winter Angling.

I was well into the shop brought bait by now and spoming over my recently repositioned three rods resulted in yet another bite. An upper double mirror was soon posing for the camera who just couldn't resist one of the pink Wafers that I had by now put all three rods onto.

All a bit of a Daze

To be honest, by now I was more than a bit knackered, the constant adrenaline hit of the alarms going off, the broken sleep of the previous night and the spodding, casting, lifting of fish had me in a dozing daze on my bedchair as the afternoon wore on.

Two more mirrors of 24.08 and 27lb exactly were added to the tally with a mid-afternoon sleep interrupting double take.

The first was a perfect leather carp which did its best to swing around the tree to my left and had me leaning





out over the water as much as possible with line pinging off over hanging tree branches before I managed to turn it and gratefully scooped it into the net.

The second was a most amazing looking Fully Scaled Mirror and most definitely one of Horseshoes old original strain of Carp that have battled on through the years. Alone that brace would make a session more than worthwhile on almost any venue at any time of year. And there were yet more still to come....

As Darkness turns to Light

The swim seemed to go quiet as the early afternoon quickly turned into darkness as it tends to do at that time of year. I loaded the Spom up once again and topped the swim up ready for the long hours of the night. Plenty of what the Carp love with three rods fished tight at 80yards over clean gravel. A lovely range and way to fish for feeding Carp.

At 8pm my righthand rod shattered the quiet evening with a blistering take, another of The Shoes old originals falling to a pink Wafter, at 30lb and 14 ounces it made it a hat-trick of February thirties and my fourteenth carp of the session.

Weigh, photo, recast and Spom, like

a well-oiled machine by now. The swim was still rocking and I was starting to hear carp crash and roll out in front of me again. I started to think I could be in for a busy evening.

Almost exactly an hour later and the recast rod was off again. This time a typical VS stocked Mirror of 27.08 was the culprit. It was followed an hour later by the smallest of the trip, a wonderfully scaled 13lber who I photographed on the mat as it was raining quite hard at the time. A possible escapee from the flooded stock ponds from the previous Winter. An unusually small sized Carp from Shoe.

The night was now well and truly into morning when my last fish in the dark slipped up. My second and biggest Common weighting in at exactly 27lb at 5am in the morning.

Even the re stocked pellet and corn was running out by now and the last of my boilie had gone in the night. The Spom had been working overtime.

Saving the best till last

Another few quiet hours went by and to be honest I was starting to think of home, I normally stay until midday but I was a bit fished out. Miles and Karl had asked if I could do a bit to camera for the February Carp Society

Monthly Blog on YouTube which they do. I agreed and thought I'd wait until I had done that and then be off. We had agreed to do it at around 10 o'clock.

It was 9am that I had another bite, a stunning 27.10 Mirror in its full Winter colours, as soon as the Carp slid over the net cord my second rod was away with another typical Shoe Mirror at 23.10 and to finish the trio off my third and remaining rod was away as soon as I had netted the second fish.

Topping the session off nicely with a triple take and seeing an old friend on the bank I had caught quite a few years previously. A Carp which put in an appearance in Tom Makers recent video from Horseshoe. A stunning and easily recognisable heavily plated Mirror of just under 20lb

I capped off the session with a good old chat with Miles for the video which was nice to have the session recorded on film with plenty of pictures of the fish to go with it.

I worked out in the end I'd put in around 10kilo a of bait, cast out over 160 spoms, caught x4 doubles, x13 twenties and x3 thirties and all in less than 48 hours of fishing.

An incredible Winter session indeed. ■

92lb Brace in One Net!

By Ed Betteridge

Massive congratulations to Ed Betteridge on banking two forty plus carp in a matter of minutes. He told us: "I had been chasing these fish for 5 nights over two sessions, especially my target "The Pretty Sutton", which without doubt is the best-looking fish in the lake! She had been visiting this one bay several times over my last two visits to the lake, but refusing to feed on her way through to the out of bounds area.

With several sightings and no action, I was starting to get frustrated, but then at dawn on 5th morning of







perusing these fish the bobbin on the middle rod cracked into the blank and the tip arched over as a carp fought against the locked-up spool. I picked up the rod and bullied the fish back from the tree line, it just kind of floundered on the surface and into the net in less than a minute, I assumed it was a small stocky after the fight, but looking into the net was a bit of a shock, with a mid 40lb lying there! It was a fish I had seen the day before in the area: Fluffy's.

I quickly grabbed the mat, but before I could get the scales the right-hand rod was away! Two bites in two minutes after 130 hours of waiting!

I powered this fish away from the snags and into open water, where it stayed low, just plodding under the rod tip and taking line slowly from the clutch. I now had a dilemma, there was already a big fish in the net (we are only allowed one from the Carp Care shed) and with the swim being snaggy there was no way I could get Fluffy's out of the net and in the sling, so I had to net them both in the same net!

I just couldn't believe what the sec-

ond fish was; The Pretty Sutton! One of my targets from the lake and one that I really wanted! Especially after watching it move in and out of the bay for the last few days!

On the scales Fluffy went 45.08lb and The Pretty Sutton went 47lb,

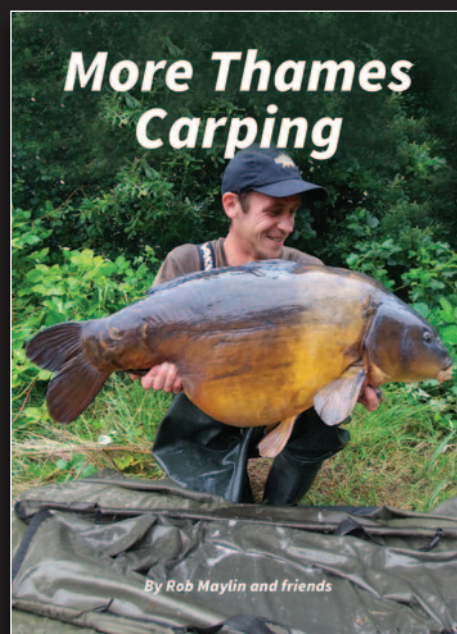
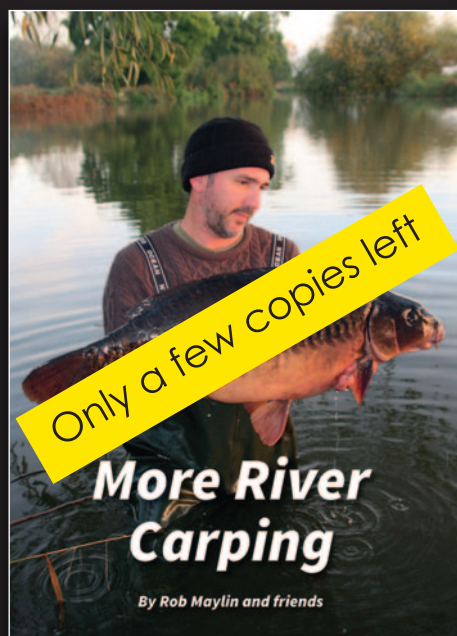
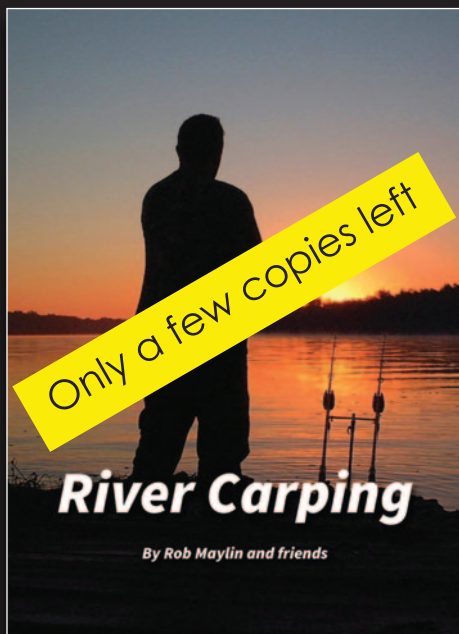
which is a big weight for the fish - maybe its biggest.

A mixture of Cell and Hybrid eventually tempted the fish for a feed on a lake that had been fishing very slow for the time of year." Amazing, Ed. Well done. ■



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Exclusive

I'm Still Dreaming

By Spud Simms



I'm still dreaming, 6am this morning I caught this awesome 48lb carp from my Northampton syndicate. I've gone through plenty of blanks but kept going always day dreaming of catching this one. Luckily, I had big help when it came to the photos so thanks to Richard Tranter Chris Hopwood and Sam Ribano. Also, Mark Dawkes for the press ups lol I couldn't have done it without you all.

Massive thanks to Geoff Bowers and all the lads at Active Bait Solutions for all the support and faith in me. Amazing. Still my very good mate had a 47lb common the morning before. Get in there Boooo!

Richard Crawley. Most of all though I'd like to thank my mom, Joy Young she's drove me back and forward to fill my obsession and she helps me load and unload the car. Drives on the motorway in the rain and spray, without my mom none of this would be possible so thanks mom x.









Just got back home from an unbelievable session. Just 6 days between catching April at 48lb and catching this.

The fully in all her glory 40lb 13oz Absolutely blown away, Richard Tranter you did me some amazing pictures thanks mate. Caught on active bait solutions MC nut. So as usual thanks to Geoff Bowers and the lads at ABS who support me. And of course, my mum again. Also, the words of encouragement from Georgina Bradley with her videos of my Oscar winning speeches.

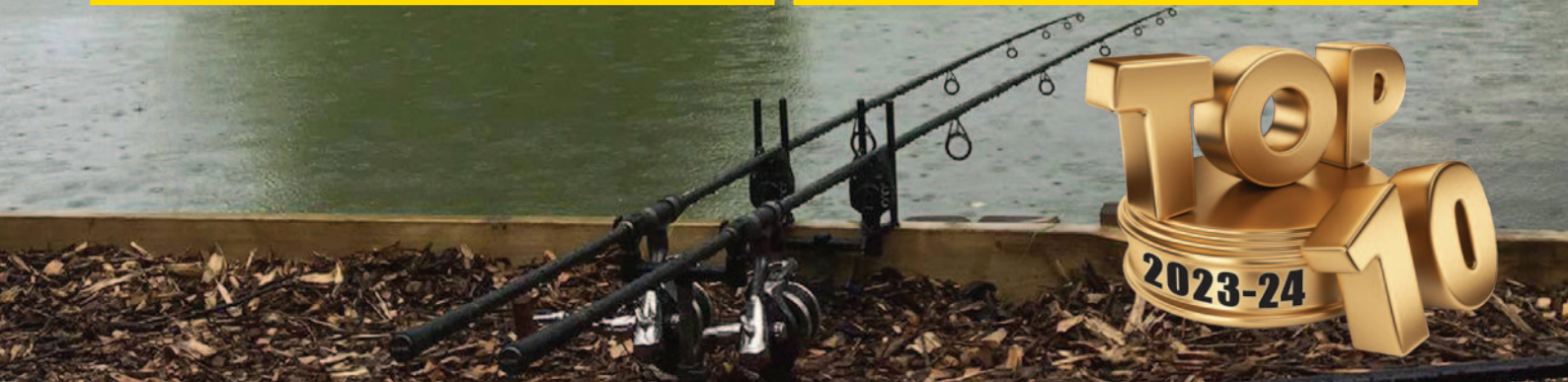
Unbelievably 6.30am yesterday I caught April again, just 33 days after catching him for the first time! I normally don't like recapture but you can't complain at this Just under 48lb.

What an amazing 5 weeks of captures. ■



BIG CARP TOP TEN

Carp Fisheries



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Lady Luck

Featuring Tim Crump

Tim Crump took his fiancé for a night down his local syndicate, in the hope she would bring him some luck and bank one of the few remaining fish he needs to catch out of there. Well that's exactly what happened!!

Arriving at the complex Charlie and I decided I'd try for a good un', a fish over 30lb was the plan. I showed my lady what we actually get up to when choosing an area or swim, I explained about the warm northerly wind we had due the next day and set us up on the end of the due weather. With everything setup and rods clipped up,

we started the process on getting them out there. The 1st bite came after 45mins with a nice 22lb mirror, don't you love it when things go right.

Then losing what felt a much larger fish around 11pm due to the hook bending out, a change to the rods with stronger hooks on the rigs and we're back in the game. Having been taken out of all 3 rods at 8am from a neighbouring angler, great, and all 3 back out perfectly, i started giving it large to the missus... "that's a bite".

Just before midday the missus got picked up, and shortly after I had a take on the left rod and landed a mega fully scaled , whilst sorting the fish on the mat, the middle rod was

away too. I hurriedly packed the fully into the sling and into the margin while playing an absolute creature, then realising my net was still strewn across the swim from the fully, the madness commenced with me now trying to play the animal on the end and set the net back up. Carnage, pure carnage! I got the fish in the net and clocked it was one I really wanted, the "Part Row", BUZZING!

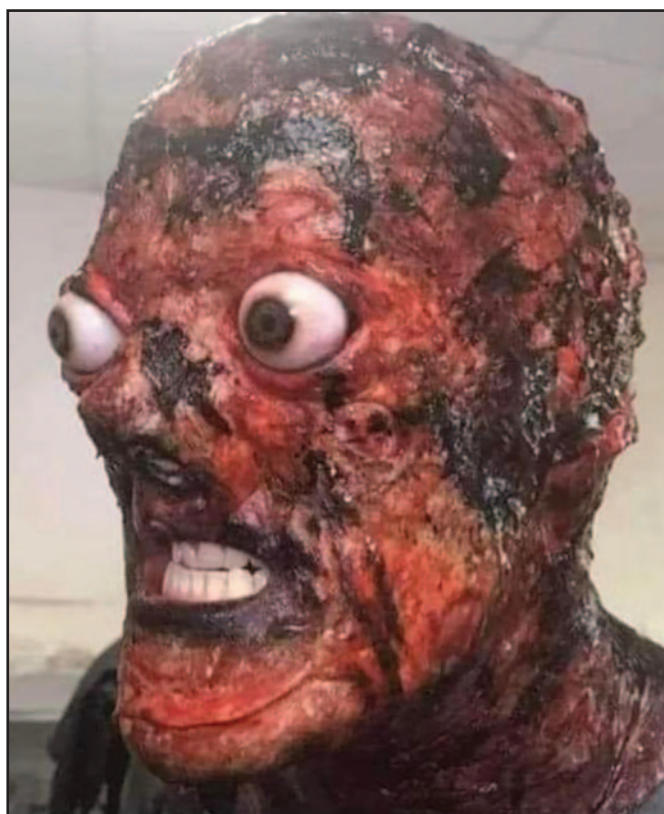
The fully going 27lb 8oz and the "Part Row" going 35lb 12oz.

All fish caught on a combination of SS-K hookbaits over a spread of matching SS-K 15mm and 20mm and a light drizzle of Marine17 for good measure. ■





Carpy Humour



Exclusive

An Autumn to Remember

Featuring Luke Stevenson



Golden leaves, soaked through and a big fat mirror, the perfect way to kick off September and fuel some motivation for the autumn. Luke here, cradling the notorious 'Pit 7 Lin' at a big late summer weight of 45lb. As per, his trusted size 4 Kamakura Choddy coming into fruition yet again. Fished on hinges incorporating 2.5inch sections of Mouthtrap, fished alongside light leads on Heli Safes, with leadcore leaders and a super slack Kontour mainline.

Another Target Ticked Off For Luke. After catching the Pit 7 Linear just a few weeks before, Luke's concentration turned to Pit 8, home to the largest carp on the complex, having done weights to 49.12.

With the autumn approaching, it seemed the perfect target. On his first session, Luke set up on the end of a southerly wind, where two hinge rigs were deployed 40 yards out, to a clean silty strip towards a bank of weed. A kilo of Krill was scattered to the area with the catapult, and through the first night, Luke took two carp. On the



Exclusive An Autumn to Remember





Here she is on a very damp moody morning at 45lb 4oz looking as incredible as Luke hoped.



Luke Stevenson had nestled into The Woolpacks Pit 7 to begin his autumn campaign for The Big Lin, but it was all over before it had barely began.





FISHING RESORT



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second evening, Luke saw his target show twice, just to the left of the spot, fuelling the anticipation on dark. At dawn, the rod ticked into action, where a heavy fish plodded in front, before he eased her into the net cord - Mission complete on his first trip. Hinge Stiff rigs set up with size 4 Kamakura Choddys on 2" MouthTrap sections tied via albreight knots to 12" N Trap links the rig set up, fished with Heli Safes, 2oz leads and Kable leadcore leaders. A mega start to the autumn and yet another target ticked off for Luke.

'One Eye' Ending a fruitful summer on a snaggy Fenland Pit, this character of a mirror known as 'One Eye' tipped the scales to over 40lb and was yet another chod caught victim for Luke.

Krill boilie in and around the weed led to a haul of fish through the summer months, with simple chod rigs fished over the top, with line lay a key element in Luke's approach. Fishing a super slack 15lb Kontour mainline, Luke would feel his 2oz lead down, and then kept the line slack, allowing

it to naturally sink in position, laying nice and slack in the crystal clear water.

Size 4 Kamakura Choddy hooks on MouthTrap sections were fished on

short Tight Weave Kable Leadore sections, adding a strong section for the swivel to rub against whilst playing the fish. Tried and tested, and again, getting the job done for Luke. ■





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brands in the UK and Ireland**

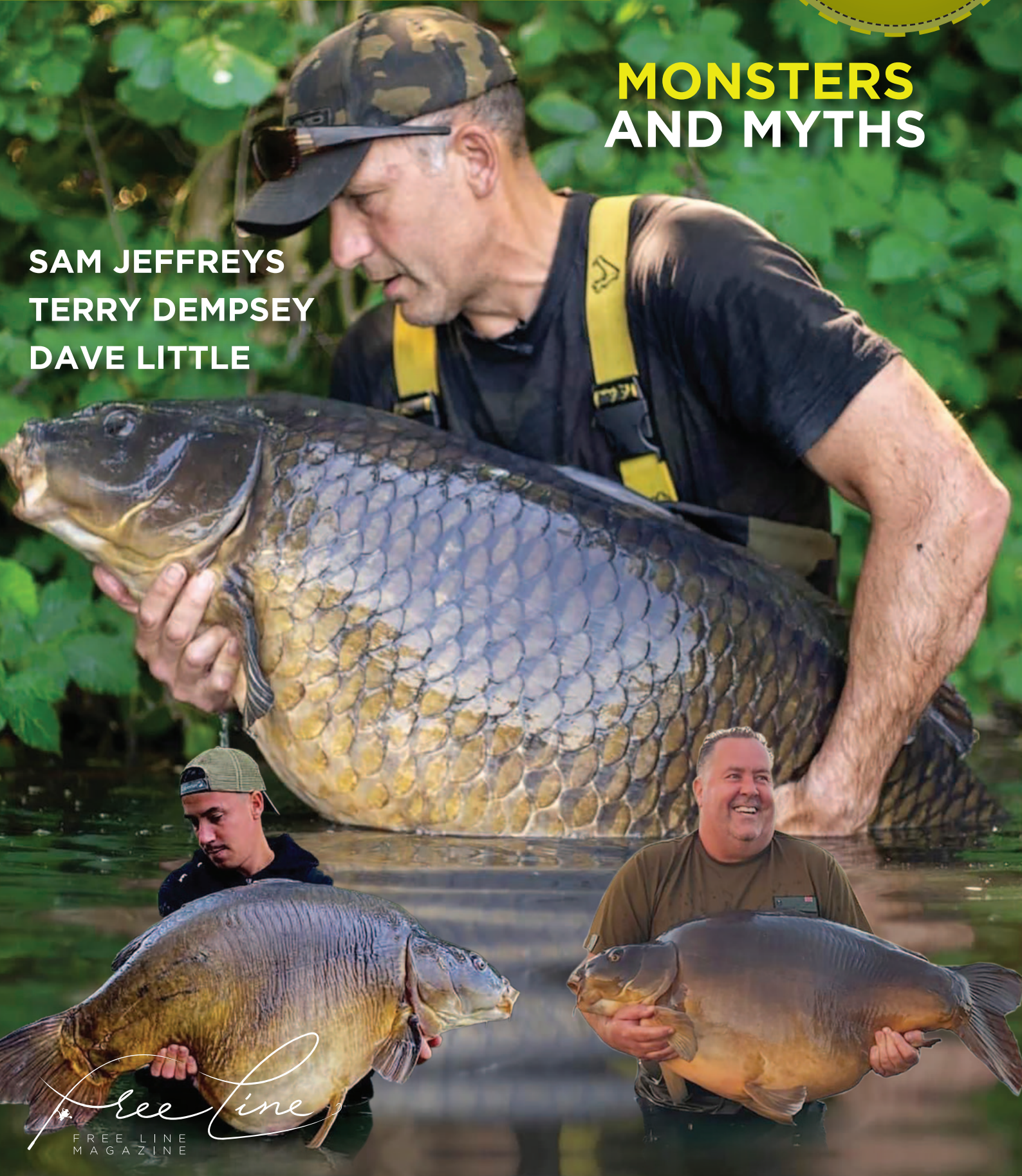
Free Line

FREE LINE MAGAZINE AUG 2023

71st
Free Line
EDITION
FREE

MONSTERS AND MYTHS

SAM JEFFREYS
TERRY DEMPSEY
DAVE LITTLE



Free Line
FREE LINE
MAGAZINE

VIEWS FROM THE BIVVY

Free Line MAGAZINE

Free Line MAGAZINE Rob's Ramblings



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Also available this month,

Big Carp Issue 325

Miss it and miss out!

Support, Strength and Belonging

June marks a year of our Men's Time Events aimed at reducing the risk of isolation and loneliness and providing a sporting social for men to come along to. As we have always said, these are for any ability, it doesn't matter if you've never kicked a ball, picked up a racket or thrown a line out, it's about 'Support, Strength and Belonging'. We have had over 180 attendees to the 17 Sports Socials we have put on and we hope that everyone who has come along has benefited from it. To all the people who donate and do wonderful fundraising for us, this directly helps our 'Men's Time Projects' and allowing us to make them FREE to attend - so thank you from all of us at the 8:56 Over the next 2 months we will be holding 'Archery Marshland Archers Fishing' at Docking Angling Club Par 3 Golf Denver Golf & Fishing West Norfolk Disabled Angling Club Please come along and give any of these ago and enjoy few hours with us... <https://856foundation.org.uk/mens-time-registration/> Right, off to do some fishing...

<p>Bringing Men Together Through Sport</p> <p>8:56 FOUNDATION</p> <p>MEN'S TIME FISHING</p> <p>Alive Lynnsport Fishing Lakes Equipment provided Sat 27th May 10 am</p> <p>Book your space www.856foundation.org.uk</p>	<p>Bringing Men Together Through Sport</p> <p>8:56 FOUNDATION</p> <p>MEN'S TIME Archery</p> <p>Marshland Archers, PE14 8JW All Abilities welcome Sat 10th Jun MIDDAY</p> <p>Book your space www.856foundation.org.uk</p>
<p>Bringing Men Together Through Sport</p> <p>8:56 FOUNDATION</p> <p>MEN'S TIME FISHING</p> <p>Docking Angling Club, PE31 8NT Equipment provided Sat 17th June 10 am</p> <p>Book your space www.856foundation.org.uk</p>	<p>Bringing Men Together Through Sport</p> <p>8:56 FOUNDATION</p> <p>MEN'S TIME Pitch & Putt</p> <p>Denver Golf Club, Downham Market, PE38 0EG All Abilities welcome Sun 16 Jul 10.30am</p> <p>Book your space www.856foundation.org.uk</p>



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CARP CHAT

Carpy News

Festival of Carp - 8th July 2023

Don't miss out on this year's spectacular event!

Join us for the Carp Society's largest open day...The Festival of Carp!

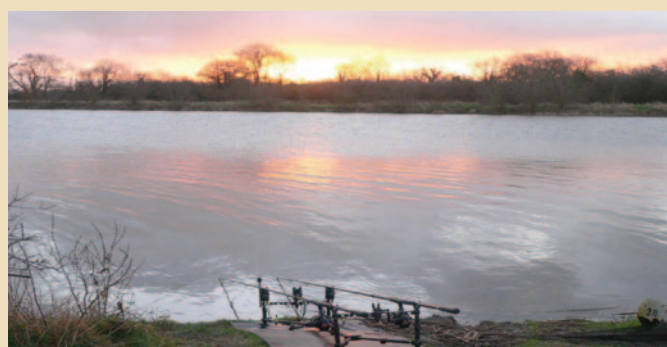
Featuring an incredible assortment of more than 20 renowned anglers and top brands from the industry.

An opportunity to visit well known anglers bank side

Improve your casting range with some 1-1 tuition

Visit Julian Cundiff, Mike Kavanagh and friends in our Rig and Bait clinic

Relax in our Theatre of Memories with Bill Cottam, Lee Jackson, Ritchie McDonald and Terry Hearn



TRADE AREA

Little Egret Press, Carp Society, CR Baits, Wallop, Haulerz, DT Baits, Dobbins Bobbins, Carp Particles, Sailvay Perchfishers Bristol Angling (with Nash), Bristol Angling (with Century Rods).



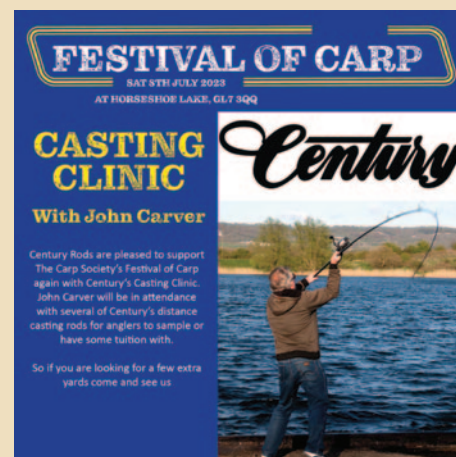
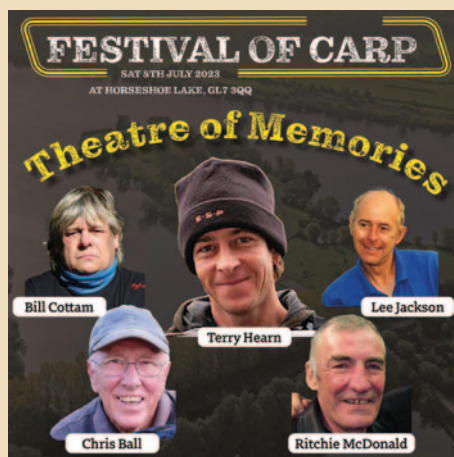
GET FISHING!

with the Angling Trust

Join the Angling Trust coaches for an introduction to angling for all ages!

ANGLING DEMOS

Rik Johnson (Wychwood), Ed Betteridge (Prologic), Frank Warwick (Prologic), Nash Tackle Team, Simon Pomeroy (Pallatrax), Andy Murray (Keith Napier memorial), Sticky Baits (tbn), Thinking Anglers (tbn), Lee Morris (Fox), Korda (tbn), One More Cast (tbn), Joe Turnbull (Ridgemonkey), Loz East (Ridgemonkey), Stu Lennox, Dan Shipp (Dawia), Adam Dawes (Daiwa), Mark Holmes (Nutrabaits), Mike Payne (Nutrabaits), Jake Wildbore (Fortis Eyewear), Greg Myles (RG Baits/Heritage Ltd Edition), Chuck Backhouse (RG Baits/Heritage Ltd Edition), Angling Times **CARP TEAM ENGLAND's** Rob Hughes and Bev Clifford



Dynamite Baits say goodbye to Terry Hearn

Like all things in life, nothing lasts forever. It's with sadness to announce that Terry Hearn has taken the decision to leave Dynamite and pursue other options. Please see the statement below from Terry:

'After twenty plus years with Dynamite I've decided to take on a new bait arrangement. Dynamite have always looked after me exceptionally well, providing great bait and regularly driving all the way down south to drop it off and to pop in for a brew. Lovely people at a lovely company, and I'll always look upon my time there with great fondness.

However, there comes a time when a decision needs to be made, and I've been given an offer that I think suits me well, one focused on steering carp fishing in the right direction with a strong emphasis on nature and the environment, something I'm very passionate about. Most exciting will be the new venues and contacts I'll have at my disposal, something I've started to struggle with in recent times. I'm also looking forward to fishing with a couple of my old buddies again, something else which has



been missing for some years.

All that's left is for me to thank Dynamite for all the years in their care, and for everything they've done for me. Big love.'

Thanks, Terry x

We would like to thank Terry for his input into our bait range over the last 20 years and also his advocacy of Dynamite as a brand.

Terry's departure will not affect the recipes or quality of the baits he

helped to develop, they will continue to be some of the leading Carp baits available and keep catching 1000's of fish each year.

As a company Dynamite keep moving forward with an expanding bait range, with many new and exciting products in the pipeline along with some great new additions to our anglers' team in the near future.

Thanks again to Terry and good luck with your new venture!

It gives us immense pleasure to be able to announce that Terry Hearn will be joining Sticky Baits!

Although 'Tel' needs no introduction, he is the most gifted angler of his generation, whose passion and appreciation of carp fishing has inspired and shaped so many anglers over the years.

"Proper over the moon to be joining Sticky, a company that already has a solid reputation for top quality bait and a team of anglers second to none. Exciting times ahead, now let's go get 'em!" Terry Hearn

"Making this announcement means more to me personally than it is possible to convey in words alone. I first met Terry some 18/19 years ago when I found myself fishing on the same Berkshire pit as him. I was a young keen angler in my early 20's (I'm quite sure I annoyed the hell out of him) but it was impossible not to be inspired by how he conducted himself and the love he had for our sport! His passion and storytelling were the same face-to-face as it is on his recent films that everyone has had the pleasure of seeing. In this modern social media driven age of Carp fishing, I feel that our connection to nature and the reason that we all started fishing has been lost in the interest of commercial gain.

I can honestly say that I would not be in the position I am now in the angling industry without the inspiration that Terry gave to me in those early days and now to be able to work with him to promote angling in the right way has left me understandably excited."

Tom Anderson - Sticky Baits



Get ready for a summer full of fishing

Summer school hols are getting closer and it's hot hot hot!

Fishing is a great way to cool off in the shade, relax, and enjoy nature by the water's edge. Get Fishing coaches and volunteers will welcome you back to improve your fishing skills. While you have another go please ask away and get answers on the best tackle, bait and places to be ready for a summer full of fishing!

Remember: most events are completely FREE of charge! We'll send you more info when new events are added. Look out for these emails.

WHAT'S AT THE NEXT EVENT YOU COME TO?

Have a go – practice how to catch, net and safely release fish

Tackle to use – the essential items you need

Where to go – your closest venues, clubs and coaches

About your fishing licence – day, week, annual and free for children!

Going it alone – what's next on your angling adventure! Everything you need to use on the day is included.

PLUS: A FISHING LICENCE IS INCLUDED FOR THE SESSION!

Thanks to the Environment Agency.

Facebook: Get Fishing

TikTok: @getintofishing

Instagram: @getintofishing

ORGANISED BY
Angling Trust



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.

FUNDED BY
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.



SUPPORTED BY THE OFFICIAL PARTNERS OF GET FISHING

Angling Direct



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. Find a friendly fishing shop near to you at www.anglingdirect.co.uk

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. 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. Find out about fishing tackle at www.shakespeare-fishing.co.uk.



The Angling Trust is a representative body for all anglers in England and Wales. We are recognised by Sport England as the national governing body for angling in England and we promote active lifestyles and encourage maintaining a regular angling habit.



***KLS Tackle** is a brand-new tackle company to hit the carp fishing world*



KLS Tackle

Steve Neville Alarm Moulded Hard Case

A moulded hard case purposely designed to protect your Steve Neville alarm. Made from a hard rubberized material. Supporting the KLS logo

KLS Tackle Windpan



KLS Tackle have designed the Windpan to act as a wind shield and also a pan support to eliminate your pan sliding off. It fits a wide range of pans and kettles' small and large. It's 150mm square and 100mm high to suit a wide range of cookers as you can see, two of the corners are slightly higher to accommodate the panhandle and to provide support. It's made from Aluminium and finished in black anodising; it fits together with its hook style system and packs down nice and neatly for easy storage.

Perfect to use with a Sandwich Toaster Pan, to stop it falling off a small round stove.

Visit our website to see and purchase our full range of products

www.klstackle.co.uk

A remarkable individual

We grieve the tragic loss of Ian Coates, a remarkable individual who not only shared his love for angling but also dedicated his time to introducing young people to our favourite pastime. With unwavering passion, he passed on his angling knowledge, equipping others with the resources to embrace the joys of fishing and steer away from crime.

Ian's commitment to nurturing young minds through angling was a testament to his selflessness and belief in the transformative power of our beloved sport. His dedication and mentorship inspired countless individuals, instilling in them values of patience, respect for nature, and the joy of pursuing a wholesome activity.

In the wake of this devastating tragedy, we extend our deepest condolences to Ian's family, friends, and all those whose lives he touched. The loss of such a compassionate and influential figure leaves an irreplaceable void within our angling community and beyond.

Our thoughts and prayers remain with the families of all the victims affected by this senseless act of violence. May you find strength in one another and in the memories of your loved ones during this difficult time.



Carpy Humour

King Tutankhamun's camping bed discovered in 1922 by Howard Carter. It's the first ever three-part folding camping bed.



The good thing about fishing is that nobody bothers you





FISHING RESORT



[https://naxiresa.inaxel.com/etape1-criteres.php?
compte=iktus&lang=2](https://naxiresa.inaxel.com/etape1-criteres.php?compte=iktus&lang=2)

Snugpak T-Shirts now available!



Snugpak, the UK's leading sleeping bag and insulated clothing manufacturer, has introduced a brand new range of T-Shirts (RRP £11.95) to its ever-expanding clothing range.

Ideal for warmer climates or intense activities, Snugpak's new 100% cotton crew neck T-shirts are available in black, olive and desert tan, XS-XXL. Sporting Snugpak's logo on the front and "we go to extremes" tagline on the sleeve, the casual T-shirts are sure to keep you cool and comfortable.

For further information or to buy online via one of Snugpak's preferred stockists, please visit www.snugpak.com or call 01535 654479. ■

GEOFF
ANDERSON

Press release



WizTool – then you have the tool at hand Good tools make the fishing trip easier



WizTool Mini Pean
€24.95

And maybe our
three new
WizTools can
help you here?

We have just
launched three new
pieces of equipment,
each of which can
help you on your
fishing trip.

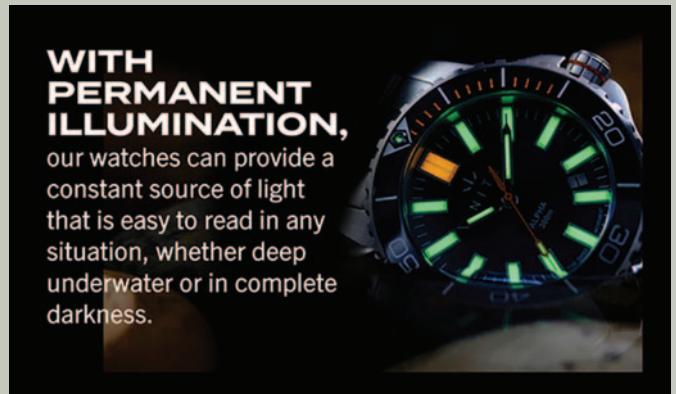
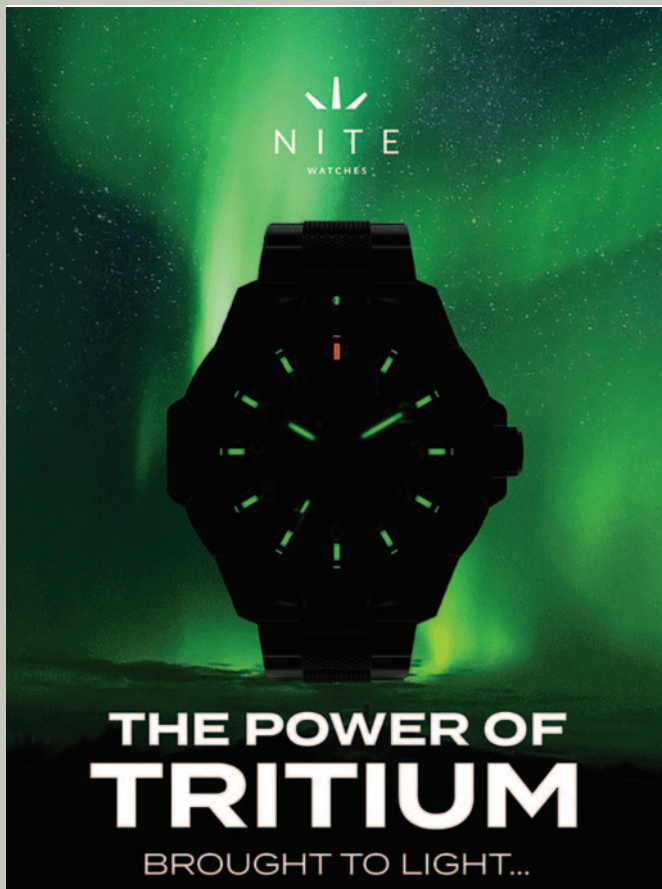


WizTool Multi Scissor
€9.95



WizTool Ceramic Braid Scissor
€29.95

NITE Watches Lighting up your Adventures



If you are sporting one of our Watches, you will know the benefits of permanent illumination technology first-hand. Often overlooked but always greatly valued, the ability to tell the time all the time is why every NITE Watch is fitted with Tritium illumination.

Widely regarded as the world's best and most reliable form of illumination, Tritium provides a constant glow throughout the night, unlike traditional watch illumination, which will fade in several hours.

Tritium is a radioactive isotope of hydrogen that undergoes beta decay to emit light. Tritium vials provide a reliable and long-lasting light source when combined with a phosphorescent material.

Our watches feature tiny glass vials coated with a phosphorescent material that contains tritium. These vials are then placed on the watch's face and hands, providing a constant source of illumination that doesn't require any charging or external light source.

AND, OF COURSE, THIS IS 100% SAFE.

Tritium is incredibly reliable and long-lasting, with a 20-year average lifetime.

In summary, tritium technology is a game-changer for watches and outdoor adventure lovers who don't want to be day-time activity-limited, providing a reliable, long-lasting, and safe illumination source that doesn't require any external power source.

We are proud to be the only UK watch brand to feature this technology

for 20 years. During this time, it has helped our armed forces, tv crews, photographers, international mountain guides, extreme athletes, Atlantic rowers, and international adventurers perform to their best.



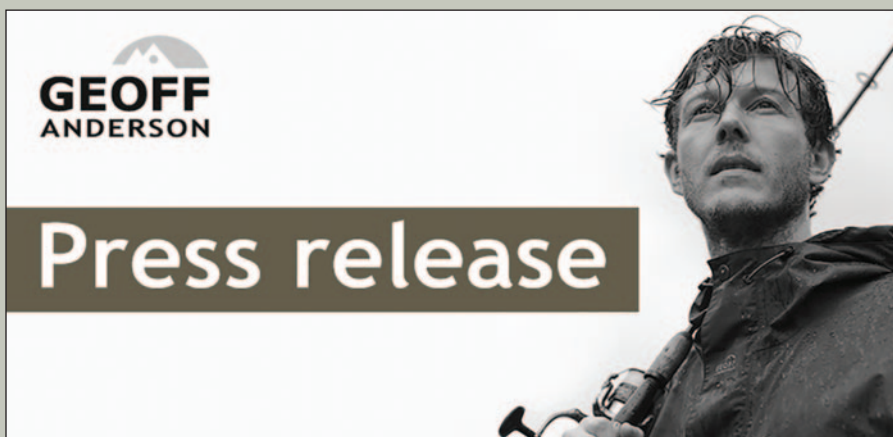
Get ready for summer – with our new summer collection

For the first time in 10 years, we are launching a new summer collection.

We have taken the best from our previous summer models and added the latest technology and our experience in making functional and durable clothing.

Yes, our summer collection is brand new. But it is built on our core values:

- High quality
- Long product life
- Maximum comfort
- Full functionality



Zulo2 Short Sleeve Green
€99.95



Zulo2 Short Sleeve Blue
€99.95



Zulo2 Long Sleeve Green
€129.95



Zulo2 Long Sleeve Blue
€129.95



ZipZone2 Green
€149.95



ZipZone2 Black
€149.95



Petromax

COOLER BACKPACKS

The Petromax Cooler Backpack is the perfect companion to keep your snacks and drinks fresh - whether you're camping, hiking or fishing. Combining the functionality of a cooler with the convenience of a backpack, these Cooler Backpacks allow you to be independent of electricity for up to 6 days (17L) and 8 days (27L).

Available in 17L and 27L and three colours, there's a Cooler Backpack for all your outdoor adventure needs.



To explore the range, visit www.whitbyandco.co.uk or scan the QR code



Roxxo Shorts Green
€99.95



Roxxo Shorts Black
€99.95

We could talk for hours about the new products. But we think you should be allowed to look at them in silence.
PS: The trousers are actually water resistant. And the shirts are the most breathable we've ever made.

Do you want to be a dealer?

If you want to hear more about Geoff Anderson or become a dealer of our products, you are very welcome to contact us.

More information

Malthe Ryge Petersen

mrp@geoffanderson.dk

+45 71 991 859



Roxxo Green
€149.95



Roxxo Black
€149.95



Roxxo Long Black
€149.95

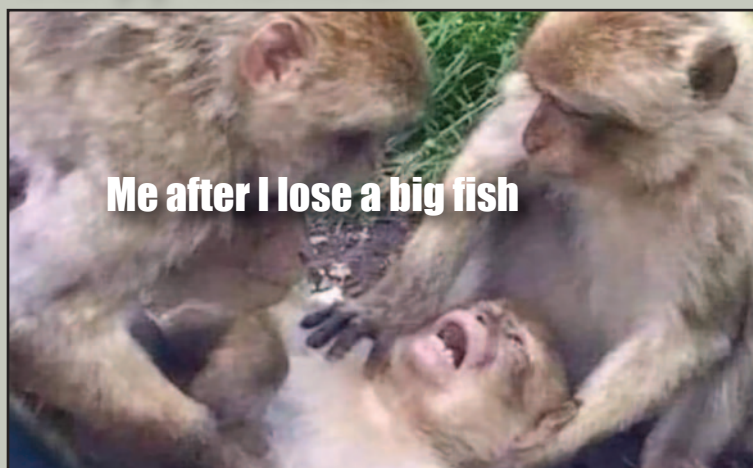
Who is Geoff Anderson?

Geoff Anderson is a small danish company that exclusively designs and produces clothing for anglers - especially for the harsh weather in northern Europe.

In the production, special consideration to the environment is taken and all products are certainly free of toxins. Durability and water proofness has always been keywords in the production.

Today, the clothing are only produced under its own name, but for many years Geoff Anderson has produced clothes for a number of other brands: Vision, Rapala, G. Loomis, Shimano, Zpey, Scierra, Hardy and Greys - the last two in more than ten years.

Carpy Humour



Make HayMax Part of Your Daily Routine

HayMax is an organic allergen barrier balm for hay fever sufferers that helps stop the cause of the problem – too much pollen getting into the body. To optimise its effectiveness it's best that it becomes part of your daily routine. Here's how plus some handy tips to help anglers...

Most hay fever products work by trying to deal with these symptoms. HayMax is different. It seeks to stop the cause of the problem – namely too much pollen in the body – from occurring. This helps prevent symptoms occurring completely or helps reduce the severity of symptoms by reducing the pollen load. Prevention rather than cure – since there is no cure for hay fever.

Put HayMax on first thing in the morning. After washing your face in the morning, apply a small amount of HayMax around the rim of the nostrils and bones of the eyes (but not in the eyes). In independent, university studies, HayMax has been proven to trap over 1/3 of pollen grains (as well as dust and pet allergens) from entering the body [1].

Apply HayMax before you go out fishing. Pollen counts are highest during the peak morning and evening

periods. Pollen is released early in the morning then travels upwards as the air warms up. In the evening, as the air cools, it moves back down again and the pollen grains reach nose height. Symptoms are usually worst at these times, so avoid going fishing then.

When you're fishing or out and about, wear a cap or hat and tie up long hair to prevent pollen being trapped in it. Wearing wraparound sunglasses will help protect your eyes from pollen. Change your clothes when you return home and wash your face or take a shower to wash away allergens so that they can't cause a reaction. A cool compress will soothe sore eyes.

Put HayMax on before bed as part of your night time routine. Before bedtime, take a shower or bath, to remove pollen particles from your hair and body. This will also make you feel more relaxed, which will help you to sleep.

Keep your bedroom windows and door closed to prevent pollen blowing into the room. If this makes the room too hot, consider using an air filter/purifier with a HEPA (High Efficiency Particle Arresting) filter to cap-

ture the pollen and dust particles, and cool and circulate the air.

If your symptoms are particularly severe or the pollen count is particularly high, or you find that one product is not enough or stops working, you could try creating your own Hay Fever First Aid Kit. This can consist of one or more natural products, such as HayMax, only one antihistamine, only one steroid nasal spray and eye drops.

Never take two antihistamines together, never take two steroid nasal sprays together, and consult your pharmacist or doctor if you are already taking any other medication.

HayMax organic drug-free allergen barrier balms have an rrp of £8.49 per pot and are available from independent chemists, pharmacists and health stores, Holland & Barrett, Booths, selected Superdrug and Boots, Ocado, direct on 01525 406600 and at www.haymax.biz

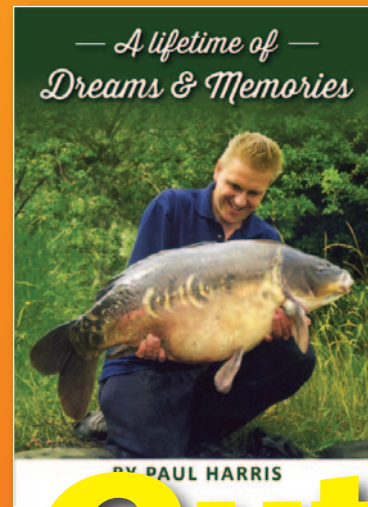
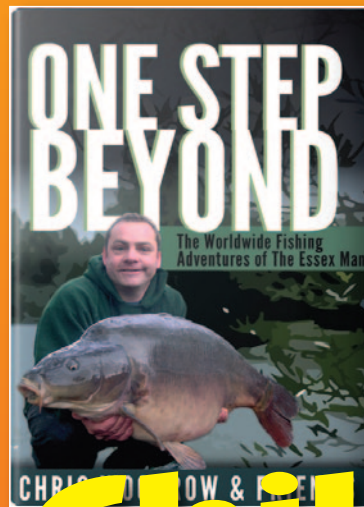
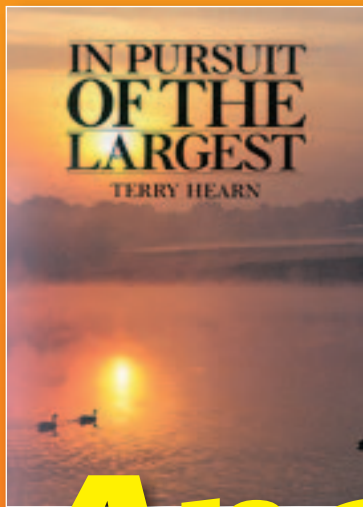
Reference

[1] Chief Investigator: Professor Roy Kennedy, Principal Investigator: Louise Robertson, Researcher: Dr Mary Lewis, National Pollen and Aerobiology Research Unit, 1st February 2012.

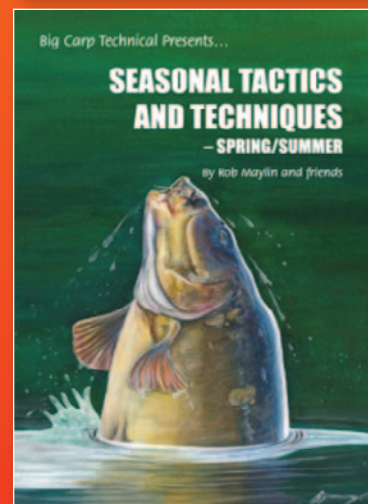
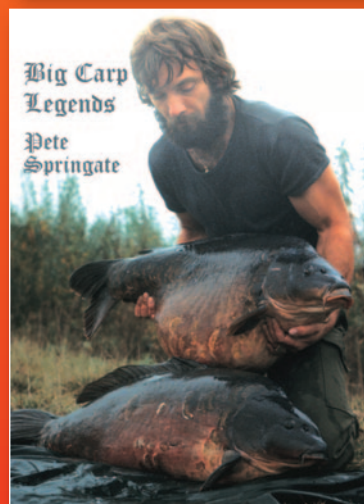
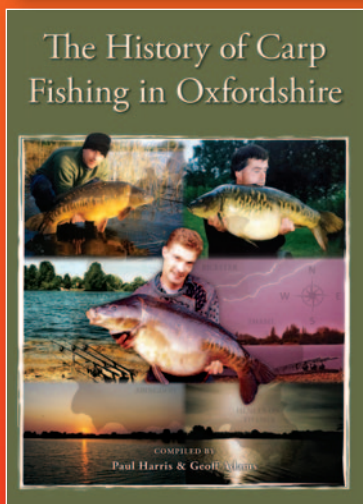
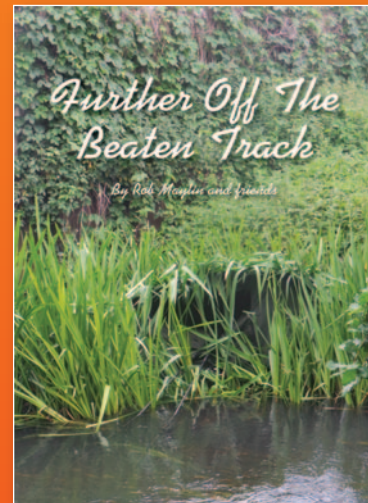
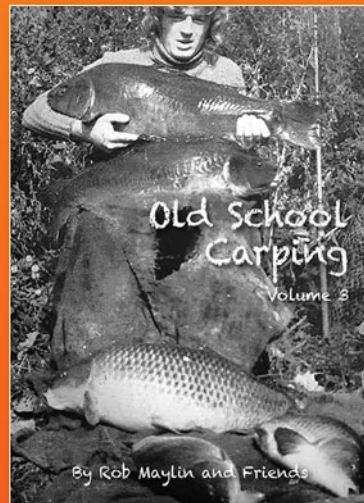
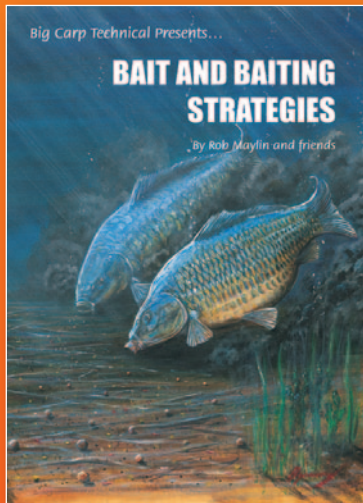
Carpy Humour



Bag Yourself a Score

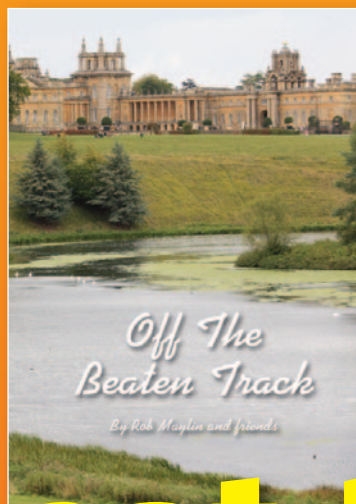
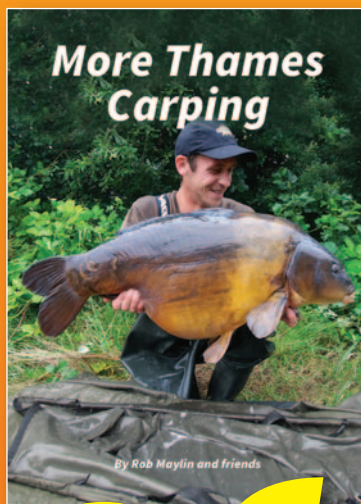


And Chill Out with

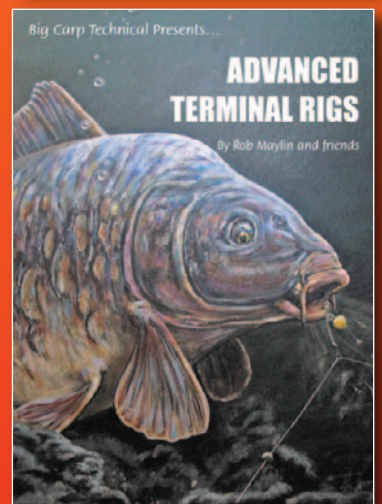
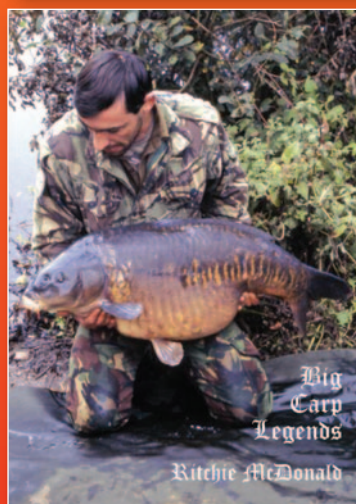
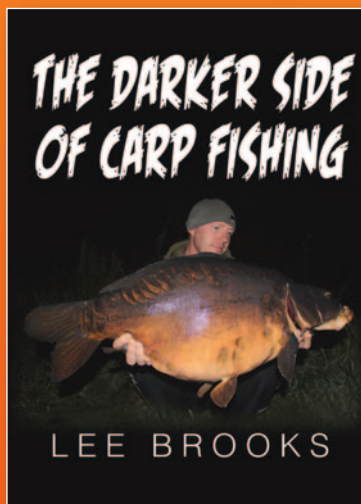


NEW BOOKS www.bigcarpmain.com NEW AND OLD BOOKS: www.ebay.com

Summer Scorchers



With a Great Read



gazine.co.uk/online-shop.html
.co.uk/usr/rarecarpbooksunlimited

Off the Radar

Part Two by Sam Jefferys



South London Housing Estate

Armed with a London A-Z, I'd circled any patches of blue around my London home. The patches that I knew weren't recognised 'legal' fishing spots are the ones that were short-listed! Each one was visited early spring, at times when I felt any carp that may be present would be most active. To be honest the number of lakes, reservoirs and park ponds I did recces on that were just devoid of any fish was quite surprising! But I hoped I'd stumble on one... isn't that every carpers dream to find a water away from the crowds that contains uncaught carp? I dream, I fear, many now seek out...

One such a water, I came across I'd actually fished as a kid! The local councils had recognised the value of encouraging fishing within the younger populations of their boroughs. It's a well known fact that fishing keeps kids off the street and out of trouble, so at the time, lakes up and down the country were opening up with the sole intention of encouraging young anglers to get outdoors and to get fishing. The Met Police were leading this campaign. The issue with this water, which was only a few



miles from my home, was, that they had stocked it with a small stocking of carp, no other species! Stick a few carp in deep water that is 40 acres and bloody deep and for the first year they do a vanishing act! The kids blanked day in day out, and eventually the fishing rights came to an end. Basically nothing ever got caught, and the kids grew restless and then lost interest. So here was a water that had received a stocking of carp, and for the best part of 15 years, they'd never seen a hook and were left to

grow on naturals. How had I not thought about this water earlier?

It was also around this time that a name kept popping up – Mike Scott, who today has become a good friend of mine. Mike was an angler searching for the same thing: under the radar, off the beaten track urban carp! I'd not formally met Mike, but I already had respect for him, as I knew the efforts he'd gone to on a few inner London waters, venues where most would never dream of attempting to fish but he'd done pretty well along





the way. I'd arranged to meet Mike for a beer one day on the River Lea In Hackney. Between speaking in hushed tones and trying to keep our cards close to chest, we chatted about all things carpy, London stylee... A kinda of "What do you know about this place, that place?" conversation, testing out each other's info along the way and only handing out little hints every so often. I was impressed with what Mike had to say,

and we ended up getting pretty pissed that day. The fella had been quietly doing his thing on a number of the places I had considered, but had yet to wet a line. Fair play, man, as these waters were no easy task.

Other than Mike, the water I had recently evoked had hardly been fished, and stock-wise, we had little idea of numbers. What size the fish might go to, having been left untouched and to grow on naturals

for 15 years, was anyone's guess, but from the few pictures I'd seen, it was unquestionably worth a few recce trips with the Polaroids. Essentially though, the venue represented an element of mystery, and it's this mystery and the unknown that lights my fire these days. I can't seem to get that excitement from any commercial venue; the unknown is unique to this off the beaten track carping, and that's what I thrive on. That sense of discovery and the adventure that one goes on along the way on these untapped waters has become everything to me.

It was mid-May now, and I'd spent almost a month dressed in camo clobber, sitting hiding up a few trees overlooking the lake while attempting to not get busted for trespassing on my new water. I'd sit for hours watching fish from up an old willow tree, dodging the locals who lived in the housing estates that surrounded this little patch of water, sat amongst a truly urban setting of high-rise flats, new and old. Fishing wise I'd had very little info other than that the lads who had had a crack here before me had all reported never having a run during the hours of darkness! Apparently all fish came out in the first two hours of light and during the summer. Now this concerned me slightly as when





'guesting' on waters by night, you need be catching by night! I'd never heard of carp only feeding by light, so surely this couldn't be right.

The water was controlled by the local council who used it for various activities, opening at 7am each morning, and closing at 9pm. Attempting to jump over fences laden with all the gear in daylight would just be too perilous; the locals would be on the blower to the cops in no time or the council workers would spot me if it was before the end of their shift, but either way I'd have to tread lightly. So it had to be a covert operation, in and out, with the minimal amount of fuss and disturbance. I spent a few nights just walking around the lake investigating the spiked boundary fence, checking all the possible means of entry, taking note of trees that overhung onto the neighbouring streets, safe areas of spiked barbed wire fences that wouldn't leave me hanging waiting for death should I slip, even old padlocks to disused gates that I could cut and replace with my own locks – basically any way of getting in and out was scrutinised.

It was clear the comings and goings onto this lake was going to be hard graft. The only options I had of

getting in were all pretty precarious. I'd found a safe place amongst some trees where I'd stash my bedchair, an old tattered brolly, mat, nets, sling etc... basically the overnight essentials. Not having to scale the dreaded spiked fences with all that gear would be a blessing... I've stashed gear on a number of waters I've guested; the ease of just having the bigger, bulkier stuff onsite has always made sense, but I am sure some bugger out there now has a shed load of old bedchairs and brollies, as somehow they've always gone walkies... The trees have eyes!

Having spent a number of days and nights watching the lake, I'd been able to observe where the fish held up by day and where they moved to by night. I was also aware of where Mike and Co had fished during their time on there. On most waters, I find carp will often have areas they favour by day, and often these areas receive greater sunlight hours and possibly warmer shallows that they can lie up in, soaking up the day's heat etc., especially early season. On this specific lake it was clear they favoured the one end during daylight, and at first light you'd see them making their way down to the day centre, but as

each day neared an end they'd move back up the opposite end, where I'd observed them congregating by night. This carping lark is generally a game of location, and when fishing the quick overnights, the key to the puzzle is to pinpoint that overnight carp nightclub!

I had suspected others hadn't been catching by night due to the fact they'd been fishing to where they'd seen fish by daylight. It was also clear the fish weren't used to feeding on bait, possibly feeding by light, where they'd grown used to hunting for naturals. The difficulty of fishing this water, for fish that were accustomed to predominately feeding on naturals during the day, was to try and reverse this situation, attempting to encourage them to firstly identify bait as a food source and secondly to drop onto it and feed by night.

In an attempt to get around this challenge, I'd decided to focus on liquids, a method that is not only deadly but hugely overlooked in today's carping. Choosing a spot within the night zone, I had two five-litre bottles with tiny punctures, attached to rope tied to the bank. These were slung out onto an area just past the marginal weed, an area that I was



positive fish were using as a patrol route on their way to the night zone each evening. I used two varying liquids: one was a mix of fish oils and L030 that would slowly leak and rise up in the water columns, thus hopefully attracting them to food signals should they be lying up in the water, and the other was a CSL and Molasses Mix that had been watered down slightly and that just released a minimal amount of attraction to lure

them down, neither of which though would have any great impact due to the levels being used and with such massive dilution, but it would be just enough to draw attention to the spot over a period of time.

These two five-litre bottles would be left in place for three days at a time, and I returned on the third night to refill them, and then back out they would go. Theoretically it's pretty much the same as chumming whilst

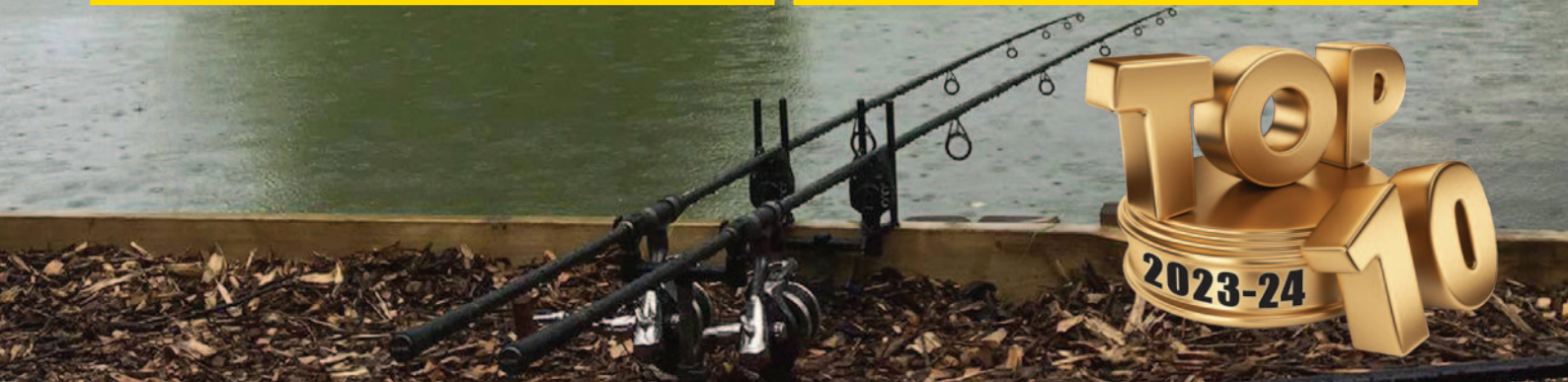
at sea; the thinking behind all this was to initially draw the attention of food to passing carp and in an area I knew they were present by night, but an area I wasn't sure they were yet feeding in or not. It's a tactic I've used in the past on similar waters, and I've been able to observe fish eventually trying to barge or nudge these bottles to draw the liquids out. It's worked well when guesting waters, where not being able to bait up with ease is an issue. The tactic allows me to know that whilst I'm not on the water, there is something working in my favour to entice fish to investigate a spot without me having to physically return each night to bait up. I was also unwilling to start introducing bait to fish that weren't yet used to finding bait, let alone eating it by night, potentially ruining the spot with old bait just rotting on the bottom!

After a few weeks of applying liquid in this way I started to apply bait alongside it. By this stage I was hopeful that the liquids had done their job and fish would have started to search for food in the area or at least be aware of the scent of food that might encourage them to investigate further. In its simplest form I was attempting to train the fish to want to



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feed in a new area, and by night. Fish that otherwise had just been used to feeding on naturals during daylight by sight I guess would be retrained.

With regards to prebaiting, I began dropping a bucket of maize and hemp and pellet soaked in the same fish oils every few nights in the general area of the bottles. I favour prebaiting with particles on waters with considerable birdlife, as I feel they can be left without fear of being cleaned out by the nuisance of our feathery friends. I've wasted thousands in the past, plumping up tutties and coots on boilies! It takes an incredible number of resolute birds diving to clear out the smallest handful of hemp grain for grain; a bed of boilies though can be munched by a group of the little diving buggers in a matter of minutes.

By this stage I'd yet to wet a line, so with car loaded I eagerly set off one night after work, full of anticipation! Weeks of planning and prebaiting had so far gone into this water, all based on this plan I'd thrown all my eggs into the one basket for! Running through the many 'what ifs' that bounced around my excited, scatty mind as I drove through the North London streets that night was almost too much. Had the weeks of liquids been worth the effort, had I overdone the prebaiting, and more to the point had my location been correct or not? It's these uncertainties that allow fishing to be the most unpredictable of hobbies; the uncertainty is forever exciting, but man it can mess with your head! We often have no idea whether a plan has been worth it or not. I really didn't know what to expect that first night...

Climbing the few fences proved to be trickier than expected with added extra rods in hand that night. There were a few branches that made life impossible, and with the housing estate overlooking my chosen entrance point, I couldn't believe they didn't rumble me, as I landed in a heap, ripping my jeans and landing with a five-kilo bucket of hemp that had opened up as I fell. The gonads had escaped near death though. I'd have to tie these branches back with cable ties next trip to allow a smoother entrance!



The horrific images that plagued my mind as I nervously clambered over some serious spiked fences each trip were getting the better of me! I love my fishing, but guesting no water for uncaught carp is worth losing your family jewels on a spiked fence over... The entrance to and from the lake would need looking at more closely...

The breeze was both calm and warm that night, pushing into the shallow bay that held most of the stock by day. I sat there in the dark, exhausted from the recent chaotic exertions of climbing in, not really expecting to see much fish wise, but

more to scope out the lake, as it offered a great vantage point. And the moon was full.

In recent weeks I'd jumped over, thinking the coast was clear, only to be rumbled by security who were in fact still present. So I sat back, taking my time whilst discreetly lighting a smoke, watching intently for activity from those whose job it was to patrol the lake, or residents who might have seen me enter. This whole ritual of jumping in and then watching out for security had become customary, a game of cat and mouse if you like. I no longer looked at it as a drag but more a part of this unorthodox style of





urban nonconformist carping I'd grown to love. I sat pondering whether the madness of ducking and diving and fence climbing when going fishing was in fact becoming an element to my carping I actually quite enjoyed.

I'd been guesting urban waters for a number of years around London, and with each overnigher my heart races a little faster... The adrenalin

and exhilaration, forever growing as my obsession to fish these kind of waters for the unknown treasures intensifies... Each night is an adventure when guesting urban waters. Just the effort of getting the rods out is a triumph in itself, let alone putting a fish on the bank... I love the challenge all that encompasses.

Eventually I was sitting in my swim, and all the rods were placed in

the area that had received the weeks of liquids and prebaiting. I'd been trying to position the prebait at the end of some marginal weed; this weed ran 40ft from the bank out into the lake along the entire bank. At the edge of the weed was a lovely run of gravel, and it was here I'd hoped the fish were feeding, or even using it as a patrol route along that bank. Placing the rods was pretty straight forward.

I'd cast slow melt solid PVA bags, the same bags I used on the continent when fishing deep water. These bags allowed me to overcast the weed bed then pulling it back along the gravel until I felt the leader hit the weed, indicating I was at the point at which the gravel fringes the weed. It was here I felt they might be feeding.

I cracked open a beer, and sat back taking it all in. I was buzzing at the reality of finally getting the rods out and relished



the setting of my new urban adventure. A group of Spaniards had somehow climbed in and set up a little musical jamming session a little further down the bank from me, they were however, unaware of my presence. Banging away on a bongo drum and strumming a few Spanish guitars, they sang well into the night, and by the smell of it they'd got through a few tons of hashish along the way! But it was all good – no point getting worked up by such 'goings-on'. There's no peace and quiet in London day or night, and neither of us had a right to be there anyway! This was the heart of London, what did I expect, I reasoned that it all added to the atmosphere, the bongo beats and guitars added to the vibe that night. The sounds of my Latino orchestra, police sirens occasionally echoing, foxes shrieking and just the usual buzz and hum of the city's hustle and bustle surrounded the lake, as it does every night, but all felt calm waterside, and all was good in my world.

I must have crashed out, as I suddenly awoke to a screaming Neville. Unsure quite how or when I'd nodded off, for a few seconds I was totally disorientated, but as I stood in my boxers, surrounded by the chaos of a bed chair upside down and a sleeping bag almost in the lake, I attempted to gain some control over what was clearly an angry carp powering off into the lake. I soon came round, still slightly



in shock, almost shaking at the situation I had before me. The lake was ever so slightly lit up by nearby street lights that reflected off the flat calm surface, and I could make out my mainline as it entered the water, nearing a large red buoy, which was anchored by either a rope or a chain. I'd not yet considered the now obvious hazard of a fish heading straight to the nearest snag... Surely uncaught carp couldn't be that wise as to know exactly where to head for? Who was I kidding? They always seem to know, and whether they've been hooked before or not, they will find those snags! Reluctant to put too much side-strain on potentially my

first fish from the new water, the fish powered on. I could feel it as it reached the buoy, and the dreaded awareness sunk in that it was now on the rope, the line grating in a jagged way, and I could make out the surface ripples coming from buoy to confirm this!

I've fished near swimmers' ropes, anchored buoys and all manner of unusual buoyant and structural snags that I'd come across on these London waters, and I felt a mug for having not taken more precautions to prevent it reaching the buoy on the first run. I guess I'd not fully expected action that opening night and was possibly unprepared for such a fast response.





With the line slacked off, and the fish still clearly tethered, I recalled I'd come across an old glass fibre dingy, stashed in some trees, on one of my recent late night recce trips. Possibly once used for some sort of waterworks or the placement of the odd buoy that was present on the lake.

I'd no idea whether this timeworn, battered boat would even be in a safe state to use, but it was my only option, an option I felt was worth

finding out. The idea of pulling for a break on any fish that I feel is snagged or tethered is something I've never felt comfortable with. I will always try to take to the water, if I can, whether that's a swim or via the use of a boat. Leaving a fish tethered up is just too upsetting a thought to not warrant doing something drastic to free it...

The boat was a real mess; it weighed an absolute ton, was cov-

ered in moss and housed a few hundred frogs that had claimed it as home. However it floated, and that was all I needed it to do – float. Improvising with an old bit of timber plank as an oar and simultaneously winding down on the snagged fish and trying to row, I neared the red buoy, half expecting my boat to start sinking at any minute. It all felt completely insane; most normal folk would be fast asleep at home, and here I was guesting a new water overnight, in the heart of London, climbing two spiked fences, dodging security, trying to avoid the eyes of local residents, listening to Spaniards getting high and banging drums, and now bobbing around in a decrepit old dingy at 3am in my boxers with a plank of wood for an oar and a rod in the other hand. All was becoming pretty surreal and far out; maybe I'd taken all this carping lark just a tad too far, I mused.

I could feel the line truly tethered on the rope, and reluctant to risk losing the fish I lightly tried to take the line around the rope, taking it round once, then back and around the other direction, so on and so forth, in an attempt to work out which angle it had swam around the rope, and how many times and in what direction...





I'd been sitting in the boat trying my best to free the tethered fish for a while, and I began preparing myself for accepting it was a no-hoper, but just at the point of giving up, I was sure I'd felt whatever the buoy was anchored to move! So grabbing hold of the rope again I gave it another serious pull, and with the dingy almost capsizing on its side due to the force, up it came. Dropping the rod in the boat, I repeated the process, this time with both hands on the rope, hand-lining it up and up, and it gradually neared the surface. Suddenly breaking the surface was first a large carp, followed by an old sand bag that looked as though it had been in there bloody years... The sight of that fish breaking the surface was incredible. I felt utterly exhausted by the madness of the past hour, like a possessed wild madman sat in the boat, my heart racing away. Hastily scooping the fish into the arms of my net, I bit the tethered line and chucked the rope, buoy and sand bag into a heap in the dingy. It was utter chaos, but who gave a damn? I had a fish. It had worked, and my efforts had come good...

The fish weighed 35lb on the scales, and the emotions of weeks of hard work, the daily psychological uncertainties I'd considered about my chosen location, the sheer number of

factors I had against me fishing this water and finally the insane circumstances I had been through to put this fish on the bank was all too much... There are few words that come close to how all that felt at that moment, but the sense of almost pure liberation and triumph was immense. The fact that it was a fish way bigger than I'd even dreamt of seemed almost irrelevant at that point in time; it was a carp, and that's all that mattered. The fish did feed by night, and this was of huge importance, as I'd always been told they didn't. With the red buoy and rope now safely removed, I continued to bait the spot under the cover of darkness. It was a huge effort

all that dodging and climbing just to bait, but when you're on fish and you've got the buzz of a new water, it's incredible the lengths you'll go to as carpers to keep the chances of fish in our favour... Nothing can stop you at times, whether that's a good thing or not.

The swim was rocking for almost three months. Fishing one night a week, I was fortunate enough to put a number of fish on the bank between June and early October. I'd been able to bank some of the better fish I had observed in the shallows earlier that spring, and some of these were real gems, fish nudging the 40lb bracket and one just over. Mixed in with these





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better fish had been a number of smaller fish, predominantly commons. I'd started to bait heavily with only boilies, and for a while this seemed to be pulling in the better fish, but it was costing me a fortune to keep the swim alive and baiting with 20kg boilies a week. Towards late October, the swim just totally died. It happened almost overnight, quite possibly due to the change in temperatures and the obvious change in fish habit that comes with seasonal climatic variations. The swim was just dead, and the fish had clearly moved off. I'd also felt the swim might have blown, which was not surprising considering the weekly pressure that one spot had received.

I'd noticed a few fish show at distance, and by mid-November, nearly all the shows I'd seen were out of casting range. Turning up one night, I set up my sonar and set sail on the borrowed glass fibre dingy to investigate the area I'd been seeing them show. It was at the deepest point of the lake, bang in the centre, and with a Fruit Shoot bottle taped in reflective tape to allow ease of picking it out in dark with a head torch, I marked an area that looked interesting on the sonar. This was at mega distance, in about 15ft.

That winter was mild. I'd row out in the boat three times a week after work, baiting with a bucket of hemp, maize, pellet, and basically anything

that would keep the fish interested in feeding. It seemed a crazy task, rowing out in the winter's darkness, just to feed fish, but by now, I'd become used to the extreme efforts of fishing these waters. I'd learnt to enjoy the madness of it all, and if you didn't it would just seem an exercise of extreme endurance.

I'd also become paranoid that the residents were onto me. I was lying wrapped up in my bag one night on my usual swim, listening to the increasing hum of something that resembled a massive dragonfly! Peering out of the top of my sleeping bag, I searched the lake before me to make sense of the humming that was getting ever nearer. A few seconds later, a smallish, mechanical object was sitting hovering 10ft above my bedchair with a bloody bright light that was blinding me... It freaked the hell out of me at first, as alien abductions crossed my sleepy mind – haha! But of course not; it was a drone. There's little you can do at 1am, cocooned in a sleeping bag with a bloody drone hovering above your bedchair, glaring down at you like an angry fly! I felt a completely hopeless mug just sitting there calmly watching it whilst whoever was controlling the thing sat observing me. It was a strange feeling of violation, as well as being majorly surreal... I tried shouting abuse at it,



and that made the whole situation even more ridiculous, as here I was shouting at a mechanical object that clearly could not communicate. I think it just amused the drone owner even more as it darted from side to side, almost tempting me into further rage.

Still in my bedchair and thoroughly pissed off at the insanity of all this, I got out and reached for my landing net, swooping like a muppet at a drone that was obviously way out of reach. To whoever was sitting watching me on a screen, it must have been hilarious! Eventually it floated up and buzzed off back into the housing estate, over some trees and out of sight... I look back at all that now in amusement, but it put the fear and paranoia into me then that the residents knew I was there, so I moved off to another part of the lake, to a more secluded spot and hopefully a little more out of sight...

Plotting up by night was now done in an area hidden behind a large shipping container, out of view from the locals. Here I'd built a very crude, makeshift shelter, which consisted of an old, ripped broly, a few traffic cones, and four sheets of 50mm ply and paving slabs for reinforcement,

which I had basically assembled into a box-like shelter. It looked like something out of Mad Max, but once inside, I was quite content with my scrapheap shelter; it did its job, and if found I wasn't risking the loss of another decent broly or bivvy. They'd probably think some poor homeless fella had resorted to calling it home. I also had a decent point to launch the boat from here, which would make the dropping of rigs and baiting up easier.

I fished that winter two nights a week, keeping the baiting going in on nights I wasn't able to fish. By the following March I'd taken 20 fish from the spots at range, dropping both rods from the boat in one hit, tight to each other just on the marker. The runs would often come early morning, which made it all a bit hairy, as the security would turn up at 7am prompt, when usually I'd have been long gone. I remember being out in the boat one morning playing a fish, which had become snagged! I could see security arriving and setting up for the day. I was sure they'd seen me, but somehow the morning darkness had hidden my presence. I couldn't believe I'd got away with it, but it was enough stress for the time being. That

last fish went 37lb, and it was time to leave the water and move on. I'd done well on there and taken a large number of the stock. I felt as I was getting a number of repeat captures, but the ducking and diving, late night boat-ing, drones and living like a homeless man under a plywood shelter two nights a week were beginning to take its toll. Deep down though, I think I'd grown to enjoy the endurance.

Cassien

Around this time I had started to fish out on Cassien, a water steeped in so much history, and a place I'd grown a fascination for since a kid. The place is just immense, and I stand there each session and marvel at the surrounding sights that greet you from every corner of the great lac... With a night ban in place these days, the efforts one has to go to to fish a lake this size is mad, but again for the angler willing to go graft at it the rewards are there!

East London Waterways

Back in London, and to date, my attentions have been drawn to the many canals and rivers of East London, namely the Regents Canal and





still live along the canal, and the mix of boat moorings, heritage buildings and a connection to nature can make for a charming setting, almost like a secret urban garden, despite the monster that is our city just a stone's throw away. Once the tradesman's entrance to the industries that lined the banks, we now have access to this hidden treasure and can appreciate the beauty of the waterway with its colourful narrow-boats, ivy-clad walls and rich bird life, along with a carp stock that would be impossible to put a figure on, but as far as the unknown is concerned, this I feel is the ultimate in urban angling, London wise.

the River Lea. The Regents Canal connects the Thames at Limehouse Basin with the Grand Union Canal at Paddington. Built in 1812, the canal was a crucial trading route, but now it plays host to canal boats, dog walkers, cyclists and all sorts of odd jobs avoiding the streets come night or day. If I thought the London parks held an array of colourful characters and strange goings-on, the river and canal systems of East London were the next level. Along these urban waterway routes, the canals are lined with signs of the industry of yesteryear. What once was an industrial heartland and then a post-industrial wasteland has now been transformed into a new city hub with homes, shops, offices, galleries, bars, clubs, restaurants, schools etc. Old warehouses and buildings, which sprung up during the heyday of the canal's operation are in varying states

of repair, with some needing some TLC, and most of these have become canvases to the growing London street art scene...

I'd grown up a keen graffiti artist, breaking into London train yards to spray up big colourful pieces as a kid. We'd been inspired by the early New York graffiti writers that originated from the early hip-hop scene. What I love about the East London, Lea and Regents are the miles of towpath street art that line the steel and brick walls turning them into miles of colourful creative patterns, images and letters – a real life display of art that isn't housed in galleries where art lovers have to pay to view the works under the watchful eye of anxious gallery owners. To me this is what makes graffiti and street art so unique. To be able to fish alongside such urban creativity in the heart of London is truly special for me. People

I'd spent years as a kid fishing club matches on the Hackney waterways. Back then the occasional bream or tench were the most sought after of catches. Although we all knew about the carp that lived in the murky canal waters, the only tales were of match anglers having their poles snapped. Not once did I ever hear of anyone actually targeting carp, but I'm sure one or two must have been having a pop. The carp in the Lea and Regents had always fascinated me, although back then I would never have dreamt that years later I'd be walking miles on a towpath in search of them. The obvious issue when starting new on any river or canal is location. I'd lived on the River Lea in Clapton, in a small flat, back in my West Warwick days. Next door to my flat there was a small canalside pub named the Ancor and Hope, a proper old boozer with a real



rundown, no-frills decor where if you ordered anything other than ale, the great but boozy landlord would make you feel like a complete nutter. But the boozier had some interesting old characters who had lived on the Lea for years.

It was here that I met a fella named John the poacher. John poaches the surrounding Walthamstow marshes for rabbits, pigeon etc, and on the River Lea for eels and crayfish. Basically anything that was in demand from the local East London restaurants, he'd be out at night snaring, catching or picking. He was a local legend, and I'd sit there for hours in the pub as he regaled me with the many tales of his poaching in the local area. What intrigued me most was his knowledge of the River Lea and the Regents. Being a keen coarse angler himself, he'd fished up and down the river since he was a kid, and the tales of fish he'd seen and supposedly caught were captivating. However, as the beers flowed on some nights these tales got a little far-fetched, and by the time he'd got onto swans suddenly vanishing underwater and tales of possible crocodile sightings, I'd know it was time to head home... But the bulk of his drunken tales of the river I felt were pretty accurate, and the description he'd given me of the various sightings of massive carp I'd at least hoped were true, and even if they turned out not to be true, it still had me itching to get going on the Lea and Regents and see for myself... I had a handful of old



beer mats on which John had scribbled maps of various stretches of the Hackney waterways, and with these in my pocket I'd set off in search of areas he'd recalled seeing these big, unknown carp...

I spent a good year or two going back to the Lea and Hackney Regents, trying to piece together something to really go on. I wanted an area holding a number of fish to warrant the start of a campaign. John's maps had come good on a few trips, and I'd found the odd fish to 30lb, but these I'd felt were just passing fish, and not the jackpot holding areas. I'm pretty sure along most of East London's Lea and Regents you'll get carp passing through at some stage, but to fish for these occasional passing fish would be slow going and not what I was about.

Mike, who had also been fishing the rivers for years through Tottenham and Hackney had also confirmed tales of big carp, and to back these up he'd had a few pictures. He'd grafted away for a number of years in some pretty moody, unappealing stretches and banked some serious fish. Sadly for Mike though, he'd been unfortunate enough to come across a body bag... Some poor girl had been chopped up, and Mike had been the unlucky one who had discovered it. I think that put him off the Lea for a while, as I'm sure it would for most. Mike's story didn't surprise me; the river was unique, but it also has a really dark side, which I'm sure comes with any canal or river that's flows through any large city...

After some time cycling up and down the waterways, I'd narrowed regular sightings down to a few areas, and it's here that I naturally decide to focus on. One area was on the canal, and the other was on the river, many miles apart. For some reason, both the areas I'd located carp in were in sections of river that felt pretty moody in comparison to some of the more trendy more friendly and environmentally cleaner stretches. The section that I'd settled on was bang in the centre of Hackney housing estate, home to a number of gangs, and with all sorts going on. The towpath here was an obvious hangout spot for the gangs and a safe place to move up and down Hackney avoiding the The Old Bill. You could be in Hackney from Tottenham in a matter of minutes on a bike, and the advantages of this for those avoiding the coppers were obvious. But where there are carp to





be caught I'll do my best to have a crack at them.

The reasons why the fish seemed to hold up along here in numbers may have something to do with the fact that it's one of the most populated stretches. There was a constant flow of locals here using the river, and food was forever going in, and whether this was from the thousands of residents chucking leftovers in or mums

with prams, feeding ducks bread all day, or even the large community of houseboats that would moor up along the free mooring spots, it seemed to attract fish. There was also a lock here that had a water worksite in operation, and the water here in the winter would always have steam rising, as it was often warmer than the air! I would regularly check the water temp with a thermometer, and in a few

areas the water temps between summer and winter were minimal! This was key to holding carp in the area...

On first inspection, I was surprised that any carp would choose this stretch; it appeared to be generally more polluted and run down than any other section I'd visited; in fact I'd go as far as saying this is the most run down polluted stretch of river in London! The shit I'd seen in the margins here was nasty – torched mopeds and shopping trolleys, old mattresses, sofas, dead foxes, cats, dogs, even a washing machine or two. You name it, it would float past! it was a dumping site for all manner of waste and rubbish. I guess I'd have a few features to fish to!

I'd developed a great interest in the ability of carp to survive in areas of poor water quality; the very nature of these fish adapting to an environment that we'd both created and also potentially destroyed, fascinated me. I had a greater respect for these fish, having to deal with an ecosystem that hypothetically should be devoid of life. Much like the urban fox, I find their determination to live alongside and adapt to the industrial world





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Since fishing the urban waterways of East London I've witnessed the general public exhibiting symptoms of complete shock as they've passed me by on some of these undesirable stretches of river whilst I photograph a fish. Most passers-by genuinely can't believe a fish has just come from what they regard as a smelly, polluted river. I too find myself in almost total amazement each time the alarm screams that there are carp present. The more polluted or run down a stretch of canal, the greater the sense of achievement. I'm sure most would hate the idea of fishing these stretches of urban river; personally I've grown to love them and the fish that somehow make it their home. Their resilience is remarkable.

The journey to date since starting on the waterways has been interesting. It was one massive learning curve, understanding the behaviour differences of river carp to those I'd targeted on still waters; there's been so much I've had to learn, and often the hard way...

Daily life on the river took some getting used to. I could write a book alone on just the characters I've come



to know since starting. That first summer was a shock. There was no turning up with all the flashy gear on this stretch of river; you wanted to attract as little attention as possible. So fishing with the bare minimum of old rods and reels etc. was the way forward, so should anything happen it's no major loss!

Sitting down there on the estate all night seemed quite nuts at times, but after a few months, I'd got to know a number of those who used the tow-path day to day. I'd be sitting there mid-summer when at first light you'd have a few prostitutes making their way back along the towpath after a night doing their thing. They'd often



be pretty out of it by the morning, but they would come and chill on one of the benches behind my spot, chatting away. A few hours later you'd have a few others join, followed by a few of the local kids who would turn up to have a smoke, and then a few regulars who would sit boozing riverside all day. By mid-afternoon, I'd have a whole group of characters who I had come to know, all sitting in my swim chatting away to each other. Finally a few local musicians would join us, and by evening there would often be a full-blown party taking place! Hardly peaceful fishing, but I'd grown to love a lot of the characters who visited each trip, and I accepted I was fishing on their doorstep. Despite the obvious troubles a few of them had with day-to-day life, they would be the nicest of people and would do anything to help anyone in need if given the time of day to show their true colours.

One chap would feed the swans daily with bags and bags of bread he'd collected from bakers who had stock left over. This chap would be there every morning come rain or shine. By the time I had got to know this fella, I'd been concentrating on one particular spot, trying to keep the bait going in once or twice a week. I'd sit and talk to him about art on the days I was there. Eventually I gave him a few paintings I'd done years



back, and in return he baited my spot every morning with pellet that we stored in an old dustbin in his front garden. A 20 kilo sack every few weeks would be dropped off at his yard, and a few kilos each morning would be fed as he gave the swans their bread. This was a huge help, having regular bait going in, holding fish in the area. The fella seemed to enjoy his daily baiting duties, and it was a cool little setup we had running.

By mid-June, the river would be a bubbling mass of stinking black silt, real nasty stuff, that would rise up

from the river bed. The pollution levels at this stage of the summer would be high, huge rafts of waste would drift through, and the fishing would be hard going. Presentation wise, it was nightmare fishing over this mass of polluted silt. However, the spot I'd chosen had seen tons of building sand, ballast and concrete thrown in from construction work that had taken place years prior. This spot seemed to remain clear all year round and was the only presentable spot I could realistically fish to. It was basically a large clear patch of sand that remained clear where the rest of the



river was a bubbling mass of polluted scum. The bream were also present in large numbers, so baiting other than the pellet, was kept to 22mm Poacher Baits boilies in big hits.

Fishing the sand patch by day was done from the housing estate tow-path, casting solid bags to the far bank and backleading the line down at various stages. I could potentially fish the margin of the sand patch from its near side but only by night, as it was private property, so I'd often park up in my motor after the residents had arrived home for the night and fish out of the back of the car with the reciever with the rods set up out of sight, hidden under some camo netting at the edge of the river on the spot. Again this was hard graft as I'd have to be off the private estate at first light when I'd drive back round to the public towpath of the housing estate and chuck the rods back over to the far margin for the day.

I'd seen an number of fish that first season, and the strain of these fish was magnificent – truly stunning dark chestnut mirrors and some perfect commons that all seemed very much out of place on such a built-up polluted stretch of river. Having fished Walthamstow years prior, I'm pretty sure a few of these fish may have once been Stow escapes that had somehow made it from the reservoirs into the river and swum miles upstream. The strain of the Waltham-



stow fish and those that are in the Lea and Regents are remarkably similar!

The tales of John the poacher's sightings of big big carp and a few of Mike's pics forever kept me going... There had to be some lumps...

I was pretty sure I'd seen a fish that could go 40, but I wasn't too sure. It was a fish however I'd put money on never having being caught before, and it was the dream of having just one of these uncaught massive London river carp that kept me plugging away. So far I'd had fish to mid 30s, and these fish alone had been an

absolute achievement, but I kept telling myself there had to be bigger.

It was early Feb, and I'd decided to give the river a bit of bait, as work was dry and I had a bit of time off. I hit the sand patch again from the private estate side, fishing out of the back of the motor and sleeping in the freezing car all night. I'd even tried borrowing a friend's narrowboat for a few days and mooring it up on the spot, fishing rods off the end of the barge. This was a far more comfortable way to fish the river in Feb, but I got moved off and told it was illegal mooring.



The bream had moved off by now, so I was able to fish over large beds of hemp and maize. The water temps were still high on this stretch though, so I felt there could be a chance of a fish, despite the time of year.

The river felt an entirely different place by winter. Gone were the colourful crowds of locals I'd got to know, and the towpath was now only ever visited by cyclists racing to and from work who would never dream of stopping for a chat. This stretch looked pretty industrial and run down on the most pleasant of summer days, but now in deep winter it was a grey, bleak, lifeless stretch. I forever felt like I was wasting my time sat there in my car, waiting for the receiver to spring into life.

After two weeks of baiting the spot and eight blank nights in the car, one early morn as I approached the rods half frozen from a night trying to sleep in a car seat, ready to swiftly leave before the private estate's caretaker arrived, I could hear the receiver in my motor going into meltdown as I neared the rods, which were a good distance away. Sprinting the last bit towards my rod that was now at risk of going in it was tearing off so hard, I leant into the fish. It stormed off upstream towards a dark bridge.

Under the bridge it went, and out the other side into the central channel of water it continued to power off. The fish was immense; it felt far bigger than anything I'd had up until then.

Bit by bit, it wallowed in the central channel, making a few more long runs further downstream until I finally had it back under the rusty old bridge, holding deep in the margins below my feet. In an attempt to get closer to the river, I tried to scramble down the mass of rubble and concrete slabs that littered the steep sloped bank, slipping and landing in the river in the process. It was freezing, but the adrenalin put any thoughts of the cold water flowing through my jeans to sleep as I stood there in a waist height cold morning river... With me somewhat a trembling mess, she went in the net... It was an incredible moment; I knew I'd achieved what I'd set out to do, as lying there in the gentle flow of the river as a new day awoke was a massive old east London river common! It's at these precise moments, after months or even years that we as carpers often devote to our targets, that we feel that sense of triumph, when all finally goes to plan. The blood sweat and tears that has gone into getting to that moment is a feeling that makes this hobby of

ours so unique...

What I love about the nature of fishing for the unknown is that I never fully know if that special day of accomplishment will come, as often fishing these 'under the radar' waters for mythical lumps is just a case of living out a fantasy, a mere dream of an immense carp, that if I'm honest I can never be sure even exists! But every so often the magic and realisation that they do exist as you peer down into the folds of that net marvelling at the trophy we so long for, from a water that you may have least expected to find such a wonderful creature, to me, makes this style of carping so special!

I realise that fishing is whatever we as individuals want to make it... no one style of carping or water is better than the next, but for me, the joys and efforts of escaping the crowds and searching the unlikely world of a big city for unknown carpy myths will keep me hunting here in London for many more years to come. Who knows what else is out there on our doorsteps? Whether that's in a city or not, it's the journey you go on to find these fish that makes it all worthwhile – a journey in carp fishing I'd encourage anyone to go on!

Be lucky, all. Peace. ■



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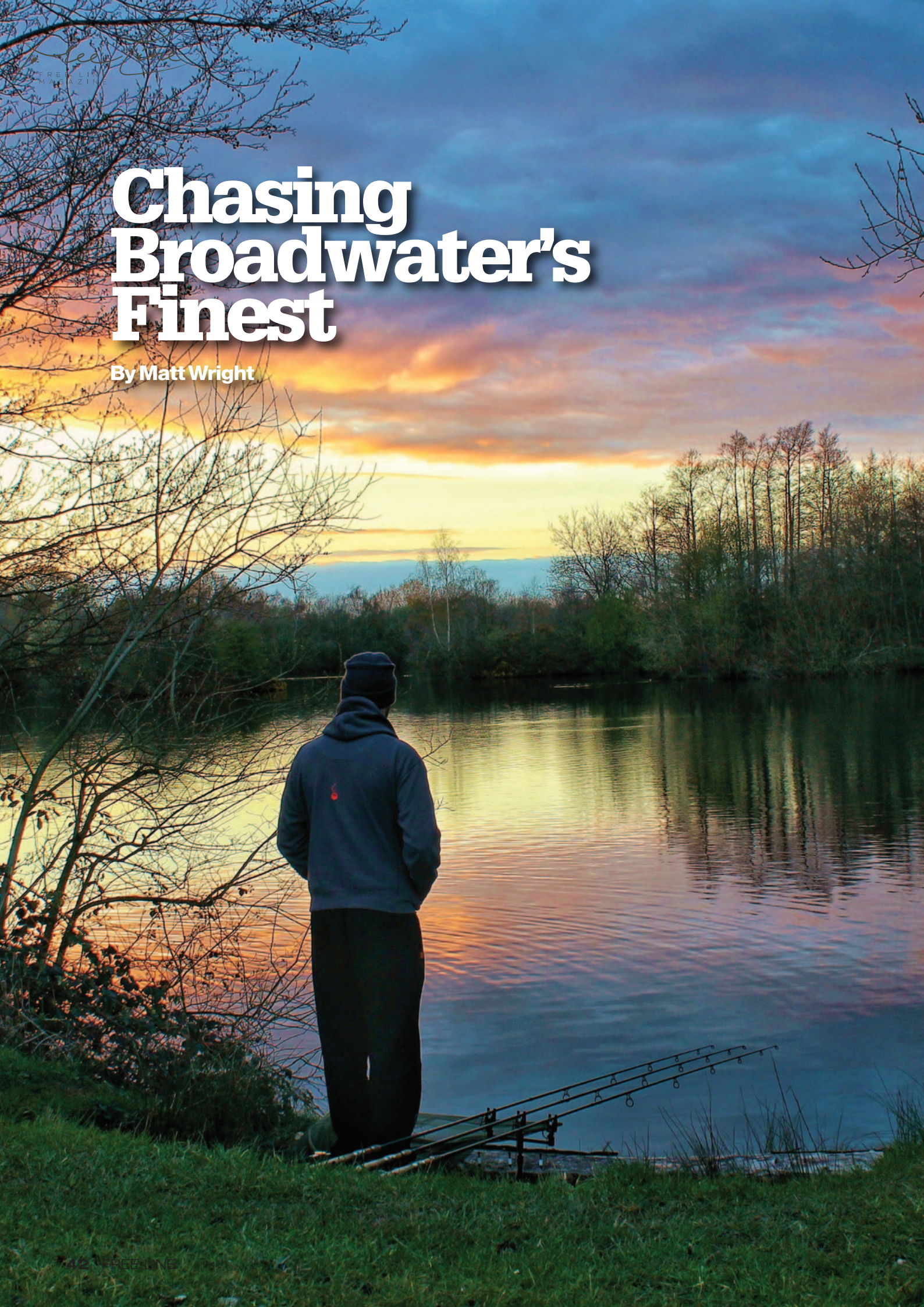
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Free Fishing
Magazine

Chasing Broadwater's Finest

By Matt Wright

I have been a member of the Broadwater Carp Syndicate for three-and-a-half years. Broadwater is a tranquil, peaceful lake set in beautiful surroundings and just a special place to angle. The lake itself is roughly 12 acres, full of features with a huge population of crayfish, loads of tench and thick weed, making it far from an easy water with everything against you. Broadwater holds an impressive stock of carp, and when I first saw the photos of the carp prior to joining there were three that really caught my eye, all part of the A-Team. Paw Print was a Broadwater original, a dark warrior with plenty of character and detail. The next fish was a common called Minter, perfectly proportioned and the biggest common in the lake. Lord Lucan was queen of the pond and the one I really wanted. I was immediately captivated by her stunning scale pattern, a truly special looking carp. What really appealed to me about all three fish is they were rare visitors to the bank and wouldn't give themselves up easily. Each fish would be caught once maybe twice a year; Lord Lucan actually evaded capture for six years. It would be a real challenge for me but rewarding if I managed to catch one of these elusive carp.

At this point I will give you a little insight into my fishing. I am an extremely busy man with a full time job, a family, promo team commitments with Sterling Baits and Big Fish Gear and a main organiser for a charity called Cast Away Cancer. 99% of my fishing is based around short



overnighters. I struggle to fish the weekends, as I run my son's under 14's football team and we train Friday nights with games every Sunday morning. I can't pick and choose when I fish; I have to fit my fishing in around my busy schedule. I am not able to look at the weather forecast and think, right, I need to be on the bank, pack the car and go; I get one night a week and that's that, and whatever is thrown at me I have to deal with. Even if I do fish the odd weekend I have to pack up early and be back for the kids' football early on a Sunday morning for 11am kick-offs.

During the week if traffic is kind to me. I can arrive at the lake around 6pm and have to be home the next morning for 6am at the latest. I then need to get the gear out the car and

packed away, showered and changed into a shirt and tie, drop my son to school, girlfriend to work, dog to my mum's and be sat at my desk for 9am. It makes me tired just thinking about it. My overnighters really do take their toll at times; they become tiring and can be extremely frustrating. I have lost count of the number of times I've been packing away watching fish show over my spots at first light knowing an extra few hours and I would catch, but it makes every single capture extremely gratifying. I class myself as an extremely fortunate man, and wouldn't change what I have for the world, but with limited time for my fishing it means I have to maximise my time on the bank and be fully prepared for every session.

I always keep a close eye on the weather and will have a rough idea of which area of the lake I need to be fishing and swims that occupy that region. The notes section of my mobile phone holds all the information I need for my favoured swims, and if I am lucky enough to drop in a chosen swim I can get my rods in position quickly, giving myself as much time fishing as I possibly can. All my rigs are tied in advance, preparing for every eventuality. My bait and food will be ready, and I even make sure I have a full tank of fuel so I can head straight to the lake. The last thing I want to do is waste time by making numerous stops en route. If possible I also like to prebait, and I've been known to stop on the way to work or turn up in the dark to put a



Final checks.



A Team – 3D common.



A Team – Big Barry.

few handfuls of bait on my chosen spots. I am a very simple angler when it comes to rigs; as long as my hooks are sharp and turn aggressively when a fish sucks in my bait, I know I am going to put fish on the bank.

All my fishing is based around critically balancing my baits and negating the weight of the hook. Years ago I used to get so much stick for picking at the putty on my hook link until the bait ever so slowly fluttered to the deck, but this gave me great confidence and still does to this day. Due to the crayfish in Broadwater, I have really had to think about my rigs, and they have evolved into what I use today – still simple but extremely effective. With regards to bait I never use hookbaits or boilies straight out of the bag. I will modify them using various liquids and powders, making them unique and different to what everyone else is using, hoping it will help pick out the better fish. The extra attention to detail and effort with my fishing helps stack everything in my favour when targeting individual carp.

Lord Lucan

The 2014 season began, and as usual it had been a horrible cold, wet winter. Throughout January and February I was more or less camping once a week and getting covered in mud. My first fish of the season came at the start of March in the shape of an upper double common. I remember it being a beautiful frosty morning, and I was having a cup of tea watching the sun break through the trees, slowly melting the ice on the ground as I received a slow take on my right hand rod. It was the confidence booster I needed, but over the next two weeks I did five nights after work without a fish to show for my efforts.

One frustrating morning, I was packing up watching show after show over my spots. That day at work I couldn't think of anything other than Broadwater; I was becoming obsessed. My mind was working overtime; Broadwater wasn't fishing particularly well, but I knew my effort would soon be rewarded, and the weather was looking perfect the following week with a low pressure coming in. I somehow managed to convince my girlfriend to let me fish Tuesday and Thursday night. It was

Easter weekend and Carly was off to Berlin for a hen party. I had plans with my son Dylan, so this would be my only chance to fish all week.

I was soon pulling into the gates of Broadwater after work on Tuesday and settled in a swim known as Thirties with the wind hacking straight into the bay to my left. The rods went out perfectly, and 2kg of Sterling Baits CN2 was spread over my spots amongst thick weed. Carly and Dylan turned up with a takeaway for me, and we all sat in my bivvy enjoying the feast – it was nice to have some company on the bank for once. Dylan helped me bait a spot; he was convinced I was going to catch that night, and in truth I thought I would too. That night I watched the same fish show itself three times over my middle rod, but I woke up to my 5am alarm without so much as a bleep. I put a few kilos of bait over the same spots and planned to get back in there again on Thursday night.

Thursday morning came, and I loaded the car before work. It actually crossed my mind to drive straight to the lake and call in sick, but my conscience got the better of me, and I



A Team – Jaffa.

spent all day wondering if the lake was busy, which swims would be free, and after the longest day at work I was soon driving back down the A45 on my way to Broadwater praying Thirties was still free. I pulled in the gates and couldn't believe it – someone was in there!! How's my luck? I set off on a few laps of the lake with my bucket, but didn't really see a lot. On the second lap I stood in a swim called the Beach, which commanded the central part of the lake. I watched two fish break the surface, and with the wind changing to a fresh south-westerly overnight, I hoped I might be able to intercept the fish if they moved on a new wind.

I put my bucket down, and a walk turned into a sprint as I ran back to the car. A quick change of clothes, and I was soon back in the swim sorting my rods. The Beach was a favourite swim of mine with the obvious feature being a huge underwater tree stump straight out in front with an island to my right hand side. I opted to fish one rod to out to my left into a silty gully surrounded by weed. My second rod was fished over the

back of a thick weedbed onto gravel a few rod lengths off the stump. My final rod was positioned on a small dinner plate surrounded by thick weed at the bottom of the marginal shelf off the island to my right. Either side of the spot the weed was really thick, but I knew I was on the money when the lead went down with a crack – perfect! I opted to fish a critically balanced Sterling Baits CN2 18mm hard hooker on all three rods.

The rigs were balanced with a piece of cork and two pieces of fake corn. The corn was there to help balance the rig perfectly but was also protection from the crayfish. I spread a kilo of CN2 18mm boilies over each rod, and I was soon sat with a brew in hand enjoying the mild evening when my right hand rod burst into life, and I quickly had a lovely mahogany coloured upper double common in the net. It was a great start to the session; the rod went back out on the spot, and I topped up the area with another few handfuls of CN2. It wasn't long before I was sat in darkness watching fish show all over me, but I was knackered. The early morn-

ings and late nights had taken their toll that week, and I soon retired to bed extremely confident for the night ahead.

I woke the next morning, and it had been an uneventful night – not a single bleep in fact. I looked at my phone and it was 6.30am. It was nice not to be packing up for work, and I found myself in a daze watching the water. I loved this time of day – really peaceful when I get time to myself. For me carp fishing is not all about catching; I love nothing more than being sat by a lake behind my rods watching nature around me at its finest that people never have the pleasure to witness. I love a good sunset and enjoy being up at first light watching the world around me slowly waking up for the day ahead. I appreciate watching the ambience of a lake change throughout the four seasons of the year from the crispy harsh frosts of winter to the leaves falling off the trees in autumn. I knew I should have caught that night, and I couldn't get my head round why. I was feeling very despondent, and I was about to put the kettle on when I received a



A Team – The Long Common.

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'.

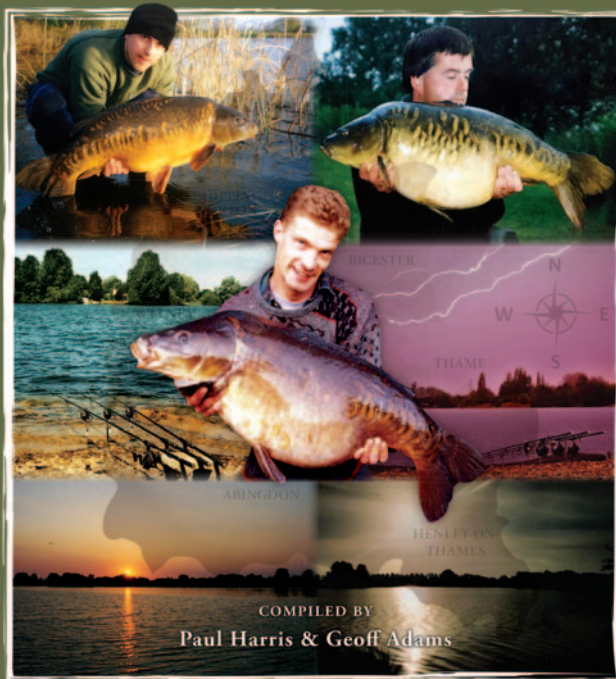
We have brilliant chapters on Newlands from Ginger Robinson and Milton Pools from Stuart Rothwell. Danny Aplin has written about his time on Linch Hill which will just blow you away! His pictures alone are worth purchasing this book.

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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AVAILABLE THIS AUTUMN



A Team - Trio.



A Team - Warty.

**Lord Lucan.**

very slow take on my left hand rod.

The fish kited to my left hand side and didn't really do a lot until it was under my rod tips where it found a new lease of life and set about beating me up in the margins, going through my right hand rod in the process. It tried to take me down the snaggy margin to my left more than once before eventually tiring. After a final shake of the head in an attempt

to shed the hook, I had a lovely common sulking in the bottom of my landing net. It turned out to be a fish known as the Long Common and part of Broadwater's A'-Team. Another member, Toby, came round to do the graphs for me before I slipped her back with a huge smile on my face. Things were finally coming together.

I attached a fresh rig, and the rod went back out on the spot first time. I

needed to re-chuck my right hand rod, as there was weed either side of the island spot, and I wanted to be 100% confident my rig was still presented properly. I bent down to pick the rod up when I remembered I had still not had a brew. I decided to put the kettle on first to make a coffee when my ATT receiver went into full meltdown mode; I was in on the right hand rod!! I knew straight away I was attached to a better fish, as it stripped me of line from the off. It felt really heavy, and I managed to turn it a few times, but it was taking a lot of line even at range! I couldn't stop it!

After a fair few minutes had passed the fish was around 30 yards out when a big scaly carp broke the surface. I immediately started to shake; I knew it was her, as she powered off again to my left hand side trying to take me into the marginal snags. It was heart-in-your-mouth stuff now, and I prayed Lucan stayed on. She wasn't ready to give herself up and powered off into the deep margins time and time again. I had never experienced a fish fighting like this before. I finally managed to get Lucan in front of me, and after one last lunge

**Serenity.**

she took a gulp of air and was in my net! I stood there quiet for a moment trying to take it all in... The Queen of the Pond was mine. On the mat I was blown away by what a magnificent creature this carp was. She behaved impeccably for the photos, and I couldn't believe I was holding Lord Lucan up for the cameras. After some water shots I took a few final moments with her and looked on in admiration as she angrily flicked her tail and powered back to the depths.

Toby walked back to his swim, and I was left to reflect on wonderful morning's angling. I hadn't felt a buzz like this in my angling for a long time. I couldn't stop smiling, and the blank nights over the past few weeks were now a distant memory. I tied a fresh rig, and the rod went back out on the spot with 50 baits over the top. I finally made myself a cup of coffee and made a few phone calls to various friends reliving the tale of my capture. I knew I only had an hour or so until I had to be home, as I wanted to see Carly before she headed off to Berlin. I was flicking through the photos on the back of my camera when the right

hand rod let out a series of bleeps, and as the rod tip arched round, I was in again! The fish tried to take me round the back of the island, so into the lake I went. I was up to my knees in the pond as I managed to coax the fish back out into open water. I managed to get the carp under control, and it wasn't very far out before it decided to power off towards the bay to my right. I put as much pressure on as I dared as my leader finally emerged, and a big mouth appeared on the surface. A few moments later I had another Broadwater common sulking in my net. This turned out to be another special capture for me – the fish was a new twenty-pound carp for Broadwater, and I was given the honour of naming it. I named the fish John's Common after my late dad. He was the one who first took me fishing at a young age, and I wish he was still here today to enjoy each and every capture with me. I decided it was time to pack up, and I drove out of the car park that day grinning from ear to ear. It had been a red-letter morning, and I still couldn't believe I had caught Lord Lucan. How different

things could have been if I had ended up in Thirties or re-chucked the right hand rod a minute earlier!

Paw Print

After my capture of Lord Lucan, I knew over the next few months my fishing would be really limited. I had three weddings to attend in Ibiza, France and the Cotswolds plus work and football commitments. I had a trip to France in May where I caught some lovely carp, and I continued fishing Broadwater as and when I could throughout the summer, battling the crayfish and mozzies, but I was consistently catching. I felt I was in a real rhythm with my fishing and was getting to grips the water, almost one step ahead of the carp at times knowing where they would be. This came from accumulated hours baiting spots, walking the lake and watching the water even when I wasn't fishing.

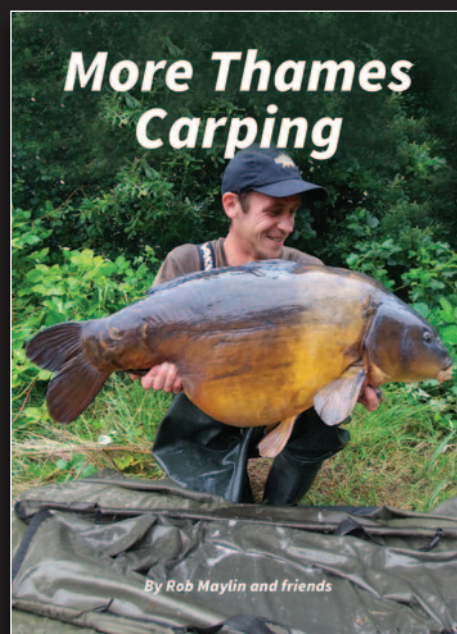
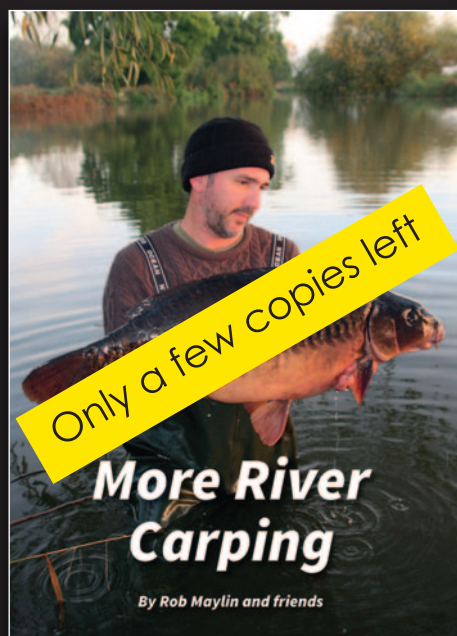
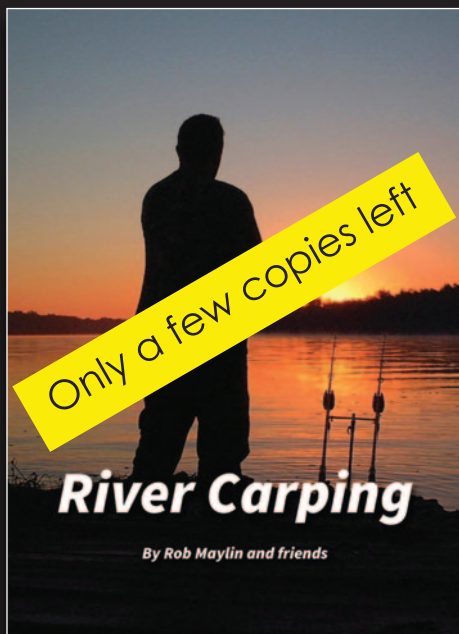
The summer came and went really quickly, and it was soon the end of September. I had planned to fish Broadwater hard in October, hoping Paw Print would slip up, but as



Paw Print.

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Returning Paw Print.

always it didn't go to plan. I fell ill with a virus, and it wiped me out. The doctors signed me off for two weeks, and it took me a good month to get over it. October had come to an end, and I planned to fish the first weekend of November if I felt up to it. The previous weekend I felt slightly better, so I went for a walk round the lake, and everyone I spoke to mentioned Paw Print. There had been a sighting of a large carp in the bay the previous week, and Paw Print was now the fish everyone was angling for.

The first weekend of November

was finally here, and my gear was all prepared, but I still felt so ill. I had no energy at all and contemplated not fishing. I was up early on Saturday morning and walked the dog as normal to get some fresh air in the hope I would feel better. Somewhere between leaving the house and walking the dog I lost my car keys, and the trip seemed doomed before it had even started! After an hour I finally found my keys under a bait bucket and looking at all my gear I decided I had to get out on the bank.

I was soon driving into the car park at around 9am and was surprised to

see how empty the lake was. The weather was looking perfect that weekend; it was 14 degrees and a lovely southwesterly was blowing the length of the lake. One member on the road bank had blanked the night before, and this was where I had planned to fish purely because I could park next to the swim and unload my gear. It seemed the easy option with me feeling how I did. As I got out the car with my bucket in hand, my mate Ricky strolled round the corner. He had been at the lake since first light; he told me there were loads of fish up the far end, and I would be wasting my time on the road bank. I did a lap with him, and it was clear to see where the fish were, right at the other end of the lake in numbers! I just had to fish up there, so I put my bucket in a swim called Pads and walked back to get my gear.

By the time I was back in the swim I was knackered, but had a new lease of energy once I saw the amount of fish in front of me. I saw at least six shows whilst I was setting up, but I was soon sat settled behind the rods, really happy I had made the decision to fish. Pads is a swim I knew very well and one that had been kind to me in the past. It had two big gravel bars out in front of it and a lovely channel to the left hand side, which always held carp. My left hand rod was fished in the mouth of the channel in the hope I would intercept any fish on their way in or out. My middle rod was fished straight out in front of me to the bottom of one of the gravel bars. It was quite clear, and the rod went out with ease. Both rods were fished with a critically balanced Sterling Baits KC70 18mm hard hooker tipped with the usual two pieces of fake corn. To the right of me the water was so clouded where fish were clearly feeding over the bar, but it was so weedy. I finally found the smallest clear spot in amongst thick weed. A few practice chucks and I was getting a perfect drop every time. I fished a simple critically balanced snowman presentation with a Sterling Baits 18mm KC70 hard hooker and a trimmed 15mm CN2 pop-up.

I can't remember how many casts it took to hit the spot after that, but it was enough to say a few choice words and have a serious chat with myself. There was foam all over the surface, but I finally got the drop I was



Calm after the storm.

after, and I was happy with how all three rods went out. I am extremely OCD with all aspects of my angling – everything has to be just so. I have to hit the clip just right and feel the lead down to the bottom, almost as if I am placing the rig on the lakebed myself. If it's not right I will recast the rod; it doesn't matter if it takes one cast or twenty, it has to be perfect, and I have to be certain I've done all I can. After the fiasco of getting the final rod out, I spread a kilo of 18-millers over each rod, and by this point I was seriously low on energy.

My mate Graeme turned up, and I thought whilst he was setting up, I would have a lie down in the hope I would perk up a bit. I kicked my boots off and lay down on my bedchair – I needed this! A few hours passed, and I had four bleeps on my right hand rod. I jumped up and saw the bobbin slam against my rod then slowly settle back down to its original position. I was texting a fellow member at the time who was asking how I was getting on, and I joked I was probably being crayed and would have no bait on. A few more minutes passed, and the same alarm let out another flurry of beeps, which made me sit up again. I was willing the rod to go, but everything went quiet again.

Half an hour later I had one of the most violent takes I've ever had. I flew out my bivvy, picking the rod up knowing I had to keep pressure on given the weed out there. I was instantly weeded up, but after keeping steady pressure on the fish it started moving again. The fish felt heavy as it continued to strip line from my spool and erupted on the surface. I managed to turn the powerful



Reflection.

carp, and a dark shape rolled on the surface before weeding me up again. I could feel the line grating on the weed before the epic battle resumed once again. The fish was plodding about slowly in front of me, and I finally managed to get it a few rods lengths out, but it was nowhere near ready for the net and was giving me a right run around. After one final lunge, trying to take me into the marginal snag, my leader appeared, and a dark carp appeared on the surface. I scooped my net under the carp and it was all over.

Graeme had heard the commotion and appeared behind me. We both looked in the bottom of the net at my prize, and it was Paw Print!! I can't even tell you what I felt at the moment. I let out a cheer and shouted Ricky from the other side of the lake. Ricky still hadn't got his rods out and

was soon in my swim as I hoisted the immense creature out of the water onto my mat. She looked magnificent in her autumnal colours, and I was gobsmacked by what a stunning old carp she was. Paw Print behaved perfectly for the photos, and I got in the lake for some water shots with her before we all watched the silhouette of this old carp slowly waddle away and fade in the distance. I let out another cheer as Graeme and Ricky shook my hand and congratulated me on my capture. I made a few phone calls to close friends and a few other members came round to congratulate me. I didn't feel like a beer, but Ricky made sure I had a few that afternoon, and I'm not sure they did me any good after a month without drinking!

That night Graeme and I ordered a celebratory curry, and I must have bored him half to sleep reliving the tale of my capture, but I went to sleep that night one happy angler. My alarm went the following morning at 6am, as I needed to be off the lake by 8am to get back for the kids' football. I topped the weekend off in style as a 6-3 win saw us go second in the table. Paw Print unfortunately died the following season, and I was gutted when I heard the news. Paw Print was a new PB for me at the time and gave me and many others fond angling memories; I feel privileged to have caught her. My attentions now turned to Minter, and it was time to plot the downfall of this elusive common



Happy angler!

Minter

The 2015 season started on Broadwater, and I was fishing for a common known as Minter that to my knowledge had only been caught once since I was a member. I continued my success from last season, as I enjoyed a really good spring catching some good fish including a few more of the A-Team. It was the middle of May, and after another good win at the kids' football I turned up one Sunday afternoon with the weather looking really good. A low pressure had come in with rain and a fresh westerly wind. I did a few laps of the lake, and to my surprise I saw nothing – not a single sign of a carp. My mate Rich was fishing on the road bank in Thirties, so I thought I would pop for a quick cuppa before deciding where to fish.

On my way round a good common came clean out of the water, leaving large ripples in front of peg 3 on the road bank. Could that have been Minter? A cuppa was off the cards now, as I quickly went and got the gear and arrived back in the swim. Peg 3 commanded a lot of open water but was one swim I had not done a lot of time in. There was a really thick band of weed in front of the swim,

which then dropped off into a silty gully at around 60 yards where the common had showed itself. I decided to put all three rods in the silty gully a few rod lengths apart, fished with a critically balanced Sterling Baits KC70 18mm hard hooker with a small KC70 pop-up to balance the rig. I spread 2kg of matching freebies in the area just in time before the heavens opened.

The rain finally stopped just before dark, and it was like a Jacuzzi out in front of me; it was evident fish were feeding in the silt. I watched a breathtaking sunset over the lake that evening and retired to bed early for my 4.30am alarm, extremely confident. Around 10pm I started to receive liners on all three rods, and a few hours later I was woken by a very slow take on my middle rod. The fish came in fairly easily, and I thought I had hooked a tench until it suddenly woke up a few rod lengths out and tried to find sanctuary down the right hand margin. I was stood on my tiptoes at the edge of my swim trying everything I could to stop this energetic carp. After a few nervous moments a large carp rolled on the surface as the moonlight glistened off the scales of a large common. I read-

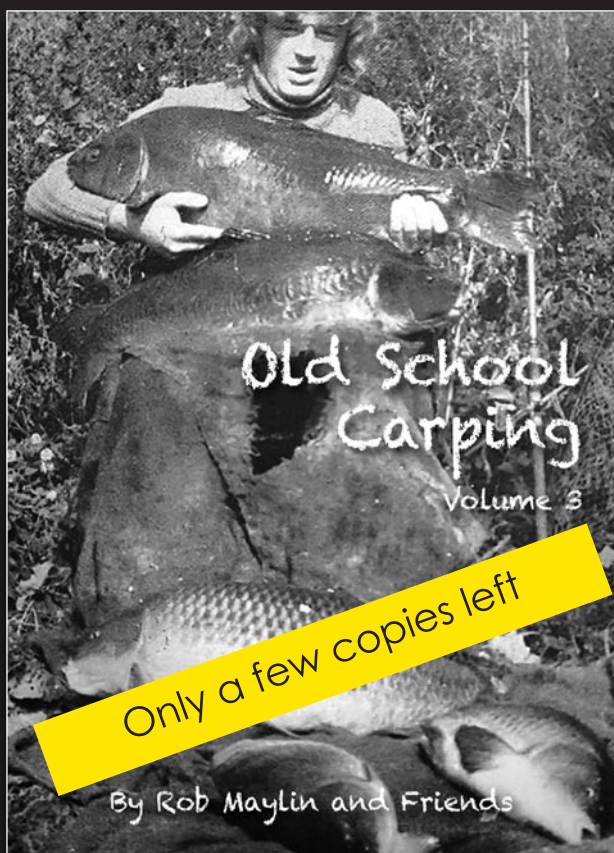
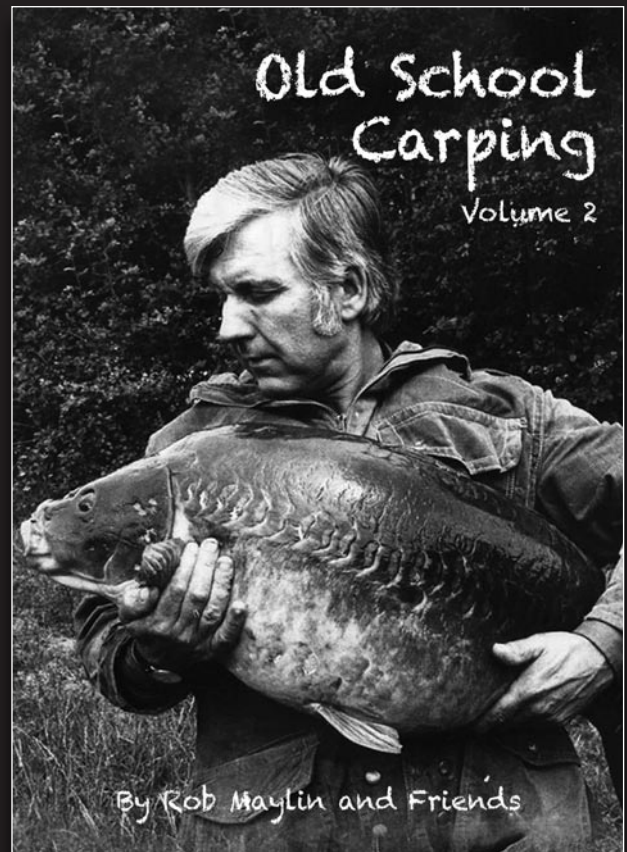
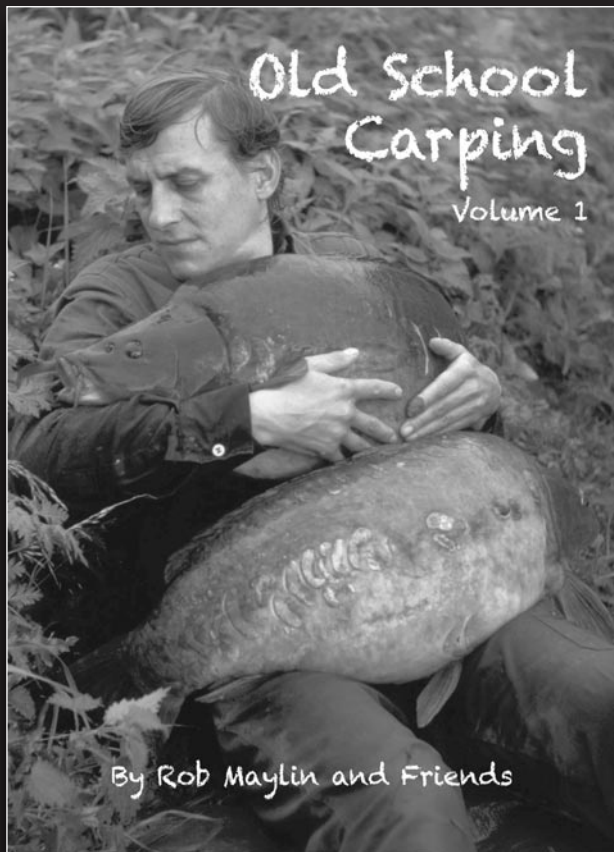
ied the net and guided the carp over the cord, but it wasn't ready and erupted on the surface, powering off and stripping me of more line. I turned the fish again and made no mistake second time round as I stood staring at a big common in the bottom of my landing net. It was pitch black, and it wasn't until I had the fish on the mat that I could confirm it was Minter! I had done it; the last fish I wanted was mine!!

It was midnight, and I made a call to Graeme to help me with the graphs. Minter hadn't been out for well over a year; it was in perfect condition, and I looked on in awe at this impressive common. Graeme was soon on hand to help with the photos and once again did me proud with the camera. After returning Minter back home there was no way I would be getting any sleep that night. I got the rod back on the spot and drank coffee after coffee with an enormous smile on my face. It was also time to reflect on the past 18 months or so, the hard work I had put into my angling to accomplish what I set out to achieve. I felt on top of the world as I drove out of the gates the following morning ready to set myself new challenges for the year ahead. ■



Minter.

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Return to Cottingham Lakes

By Ed McDermott

Ed McDermott
surface rig with rod.

Having had a good trip to Cotti in 2015, I had again booked Pepper Lake for a week in 2016, the only changes being that I had booked for May instead of April. The main reason for this was to see if we could get slightly better weather, and having historically got the fish going on the surface on the odd sunny day, I hoped some better weather might prompt more of this. As you will find out it was a good call and one that saw nearly all of the 14 guys bank a fish or two. Cotti is by no means a runs water, and I would rate it as quite challenging, but if you take your opportunities well you can have a fantastic session there. The photos will speak for themselves, and there is something very recognizable about the scaly fish at Cottington; any time I see one of these beautiful creatures in a magazine I don't even need to read the write-up, as I know exactly where the fish has been caught. What amazes me about the fish is they are not seemingly bait fish, and yet they seem to grow year on year.

The fish at Farlows love a bed of bait, but the fish at Cottington seem

to spook off any bait at all really. As with many venues, when you coax them into feeding off the top, they can eat a lot! Timing a session early in the season also means they are unlikely to have been hammered on the top, so this is advantageous too. Leading up to the trip the guys were naturally very excited, and typically the sale of my house had dragged on, which meant, yet again, I would only be able to do three days maximum before heading back to town to pack my life up. I had a UK Carp qualifier at my own lake, Farlows, from the 6th to 8th, and we were due to go to Cotti on the 8th, so my fishing partner Chris Thompson and I would have to take part in this fairly intense match, go to the prize-giving and then get straight on the road to Kent. Thankfully on the last morning of the competition Chris got the fish going on the surface, and we managed to squeeze a place in the semi-final with five fish all taken off the top. I must doff my cap to Chris, as I had very much given up hope at this stage, but Chris, ever the battler, got them going and had four of our five fish in the space of a couple of hours.

With lovely 25-degree tempera-

tures and gorgeous sun we set off for Cotti feeling tired but satisfied we had done a job on the home venue of Farlows. Some of the guys had already left for Cotti, and when we arrived they were having a walk around. It was clear the fish were in the bowl area, which incorporates pegs 1-4. Pegs 1-8 represent the original part of Pepper Lake, and this was historically an old trout fishery, so there are no major features, and the lakebed is fairly uniform. The features at Cottington are mainly around the margins, and it's the reed beds and the odd overhanging tree which initially scream out at you. I have never seen a bunch of adults looking so excited, and I needed no persuasion in getting together my stalking gear, which included a small bucket of varied sized Skretting's pellet coated in my favourite Live System spray, and then I like to add some clouding powder, as I feel this really does get the fish competing a little more and can get those wary feeders a little more interested.

As it happened there were lots of fish in the bowl, and they didn't need much persuasion. It wasn't long before Lewis Daneshi hooked into a



Paul Forsyth, 36lb 14oz.



Dan Daneshi 30lb-plus common.



Jason Jolley's 35lb-plus PB.



Ed and Lewis, scraper 30 and 35lb-plus brace.

fish, but a hook pull came a little further into the fight. Next it was my turn, and I battled what felt like a good fish, and upon seeing it I knew I had a good 20 on. During the fight Lewis hooked another fish, and Dan his brother also hooked into a fish. Dan landed his quite quickly, and it turned out to be a 20lb or so common.

Lewis on the other hand had a very large fish in the net, and I had a half decent one also. My linear went just shy of 30lb so I called it 29lb 8oz, and Lewis held his 35lb-plus mirror up for a cracking brace shot. It was a great way to start the trip, and certainly for those who had caught it took some pressure off. Little did we know at

that point, but particularly Lewis would have a session to remember forever. I managed to land another upper double, which again was a stunning scaly fish.

There had been some amusing over-excitement with a number of the guys striking a bit early, but when you are fishing in a six-acre lake with up



Ed's 32lb 5oz mirror that rucked forever.



Gary Harris's 38lb 8oz PB.

to two fifties, 15 forties and 40 or so 30s it is hard not to be excited. I would go as far to say that catching a fish of less than 25lb at Cotti is mildly disappointing, and it really annoys me that I feel that way, but I'm only human. You will never see me on film say, "When they look this good, size is

irrelevant," as that's just not what most anglers really think. To contradict myself a little, I go fishing to catch fish, and I'm more than happy slipping the net under a mid-double, but there is always part of me that wants to see a very large carp indeed in the bottom of the net.

With the adrenaline now out of our systems, we set up the bottom rods as darkness was not far off. I went out to get some pizzas as a further thanks to the guys, and we settled in for the night. Not long past 9pm I had a couple of beeps and knowing that I had back leads and slack lines on, I didn't need any more info to hit the rod, and after a spirited battle a long, low 20lb common was in the net. This is the first bite I've had at Cottington in the darkness, and I had ironically been saying to my friend Gabriel that they don't really show up at night much. An hour or so later I had a call from Lewis who had a massive fish in the net. When I got round to his peg I honestly thought the big mirror would be at least a mid 40, as it was so big. I was surprised when it went 41lb-plus, but given it was a new PB for Lewis he was rightfully over the moon.

The night passed without any further fish, but waking up at 5.45am we were met with a lovely warm morning. Although tired, I managed to get some pellet going in, and I could see that Lewis was also working the top in his swim. In the bowl the fish were



Stuart Harbour, 29lb mirror.

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Geoff's new PB of 36lb 8oz.



Lewis, 35lb 8oz.



Lewis, 36lb 14oz.

coming in and out and not really hanging around for a long time. I could see them ghosting out and back down towards Lewis' swim, and he had already managed another couple of fish, both over 35lb, which is a very nice morning's work! The day passed with a few more flurries of activity, and I believe towards the end of the day Lewis had had around eight fish with five of them being over 35lb, which is just phenomenal. I was second top rod at this stage with only three. Other good news had seen Jason Jolley have a new PB of 35lb-plus and Gary Harris who had really come out of his shell away from Farlows had had a PB of 38lb-plus. Chris had managed a couple of fish, but I felt for him when both fish were no more than upper double commons.

The afternoon saw the water's surface calm, and more surface activity with the mixers and pellet. I hooked a fish very quickly but had an unfortunate hook pull, not an uncommon experience, but especially gutting when the fish could easily be a 30 or 40lb-plus fish! Thankfully I was able to take advantage of this brief feeding spell with another bite. Little did I

know that this would be my longest ever battle with a carp, and I honestly had to sit down and relax for a bit after it. I was using my Free Spirit Surface Creeper, which is one of my favourite bits of tackle in so much as it takes me back to basics – light tackle with great feel and enough power when it counts. I'm not a big one for plugging products, and I don't actually get any free gear, as I prefer to pay and thus be able to use whatever I want whenever I want. So when I say a product is great, you know I genuinely mean it and that I am in no way getting anything back for doing so, which is something that is rare in carp fishing now.

The fight took me all over the place, and when the fish kept powering off to the left in the deep margin I was sure the hook hold would eventually come loose. Much of the fight was caught on camera, as I had Dan right behind me who is very handy with a camera. Dan filmed and filmed expecting the fight to be over any minute, but then the fish would power off again and again. I was feeling pretty sick during the fight, as I really did not want to lose this fish. Thank-

fully after numerous runs the fish eventually gave up, and it was a really beautiful one. I was shocked that it went only 32lb 8oz, but it is one of my most treasured captures because of the lengthy battle and the lovely scale pattern. It's hairy stuff when there aren't many snags around but the only real snag is about ten yards to your left!

Shortly after this I managed another common of mid doubles, and for once I was quite happy not to be running up and down the bank trying to stop the fish boring into the reeds, but even the little ones ruck, I can assure you. Dan, who was in the swim down from me, had just had a spirited battle with a real character of a common that was shy of 31lb. For many months before the trip Dan had been saying he was desperate to catch one of Cottington's scaly mirrors, and so far he had caught only commons. I had an amusing text from him in the night reading, "Yes! A 30lb mirror finally... one of the plain ones. LOL." I knew it wouldn't take him long to get something special.

It wasn't easy going though, and I felt for Dan especially when we were



Lewis, 36lb.



Lewis, 37lb.



Lewis Daneshi surface rig.

all there watching Lewis pull out an upper 30lb mirror every few hours. While we were extremely pleased for him, I'm sure we were all feeling a bit hard done by with the sizes of our captures. It's nigh on impossible to deliberately only pull out the bigger fish, despite what people say. I have always had the view that if you fish hard and if you catch lots, the bigger fish will come along. Lewis put paid to the odds here, as he is one of those anglers that will always catch the

bigger fish. There is no special rig, no secret, just an unexplainable ability to more often than not catch the larger fish of any session. We all know someone like Lewis who is a big fish man; he is a very good angler though who just happens to be adept at finding well-proportioned carp in his landing net. My theory is he has some special pheromone or wears some aftershave that we all don't know about. If I knew I would be licensing it from him and selling it by the lorry load!

The following day I was had to be off in the morning, and I was generally quite happy with how the session had gone. I had hoped we would have had a few more fish off the bottom, but it wasn't to be. At that stage Lewis had had nine fish, I had had five, Jason was on four, Dan had had three, and most of the other guys had had one or two, so all bar one angler had caught at that stage. Later that day when I had got home to pack up more of my house I had a call saying Lewis had had another two upper 30s, so by now he was on eight fish over 35lb 8oz and nothing less than 23lb – a total of 14 fish made it a quite magical session. I was suffering serious fear of missing out at this stage, and more than anything I wanted to be fishing. This was made worse when Dan called saying he finally had that scaly mirror in the net. It turned out to be a new PB and a unit of a fish at 41lb 2oz. the water shots are quite special I'm sure you will agree!

The week before our visit there were 12 anglers who had booked the lake and they had had I believe 46 fish, which is extremely good going given the stock of Pepper lake is around 150-200 fish. In contrast that party had had 37 of their fish off the



Lewis, 37lb 14oz.



Lewis Daneshi, 36lb scaly.



Lewis's new PB at 41lb 12oz just after we said that night bites weren't common.



Ed upper double stunner.

bottom, while we had around the same off the top and maybe six or so fish off the bottom. The one thing that I learnt from this year's trip to Cotti was that taking people out of their everyday fishing environments can really bring people out of their shell and force them to employ totally new tactics. For example Gary who is one of Farlows' volunteer staff is a very quiet man and I would class his angling style as patient, he is typically happy to sit behind the rods and set

traps. At Cotti he became a stalking monster, and every time I looked up, there was Gary walking around the venue and really enjoying the chase. It worked fantastically well for him, and he ended up with a new personal best of over 38lb and some other nice captures all off the top. We had Gary on film also, and he was immense.

Jason Jolley who was fishing next to Lewis had a brilliant session, and I'm sure he would have had more fish had he not spent a lot of time acting

as nets man for Lewis. After I had finished my house move, I decided I was going to get back there for just a day session, and given it's a two-hour drive, I felt I was being rather committed.

Arriving back at the lake I could tell the fish were very spooky, and they had truly been clattered. As a result I knew I might get just one small chance and that I would need to take it. I did laps of the lake and would get the odd fish taking a mixer then ghosting away. I noticed that someone was fishing on the back of the wind, and on the other bank where the mixers were drifting, a couple of fish were taking the odd one. I crept along the bare margins and dropped a mixer in the edge with just enough line to let it drift on their heads. Typically the massive head of a mirror came up and took a mixer right by mine, and then its smaller pal, a common of maybe mid 20s, came up, erupted on the hookbait and then spooked. I knew my chance had passed, and the two-hour drive home would see me licking my wounds.

Out of the 15 anglers who visited Pepper Lake at one stage or another during that week only two went home with no fish banked. It's important to know that the lake is not an easy one, but like any lake, if you get it right you can have a very rewarding



Dan finally got his scaly one and a new 41lb 2oz PB.



Matt, 35lb.

session. The team collectively banked some 43 fish, of which 18 fish were over 30lb and two of these were 40lbs-plus. Many of these fish were well over 25lb and only a few of the 30lb fish were less than 35lb – a very high average by any standards, and for most a lot of good memories. For Lewis and Dan who have had a roller-coaster ride in their family life last year, it was great to see the sun shine on them and see them smiling at such great results. My session went well, and I was just happy to get some fish. Like I said, I'd love to have had a PB or some larger fish, but in general everything was pretty perfect really. The staff at Cotti are really fantastic and go well out of their way to help you, and this also makes all the difference. I feel no conflict of interest in saying that any angler should visit Cotti, and who knows? It may lead to a 50lb-plus fish on the bank!

My final bit is on rigs, which for me is actually quite dull. I think there is an enormous amount of over-thinking in this department, and I personally try and keep things extremely simple where possible. My favourite rig of all time requires a coated braid, a Mugga hook, a little piece of tubing to pin the hair to the hook, and that is it! I have

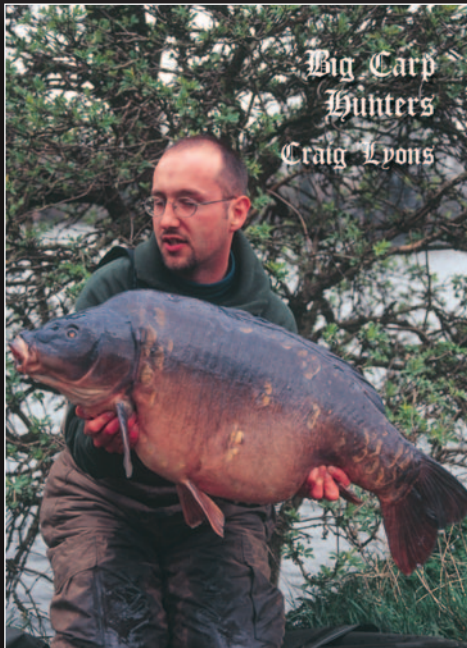
caught more fish on this rig than any other, and it especially lends itself to pop-up rigs. At Cotti I tend to use a balanced bottom bait, so a trimmed down Live System with a thin sliver of white or washed out pink pop-up. This is attached to a reasonably long hair and a wide gape style hook with a small piece of shrink tubing. As you can see, it's very simple stuff. I use a fluoro leader just to assist in pinning down the line or some tubing, as the last thing I want is to lift some scales. I haven't tried pop-ups at Cottington, but at Farlows I regularly use my pop-up rig.

Surface rigs were again very simple, and I find that a hair is more effective if you have time to do this, but equally effective is the side hooked fake mixer. A 12lb mono is used for the hooklink, and controller float wise I like the water-filled bubble floats. These type of floats have a nice drag to them, which aids in the hooking process and also doesn't seem to create as big a splash as the heavy bolt controllers that I will use only if it's a long cast. In close I sometimes use this awesome little product from Kryston called Driftwood, which is essentially a putty that floats. For reference I have added photos of Lewis

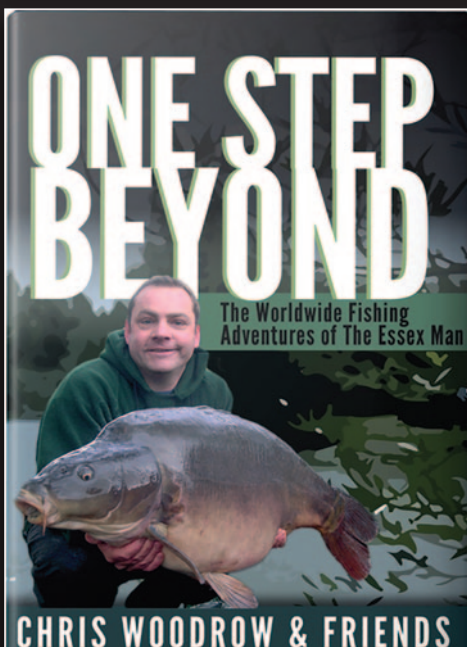
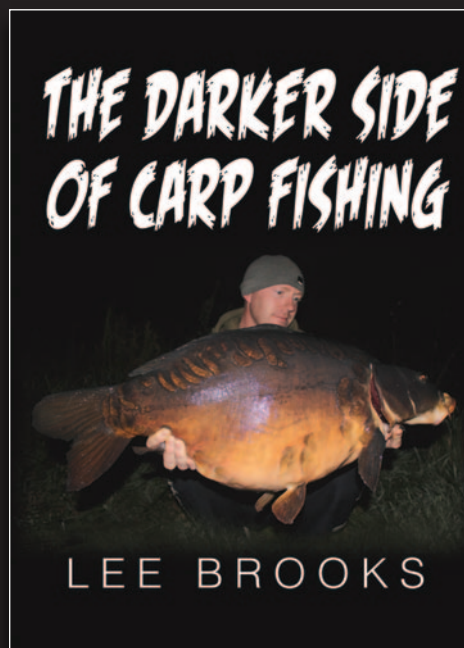
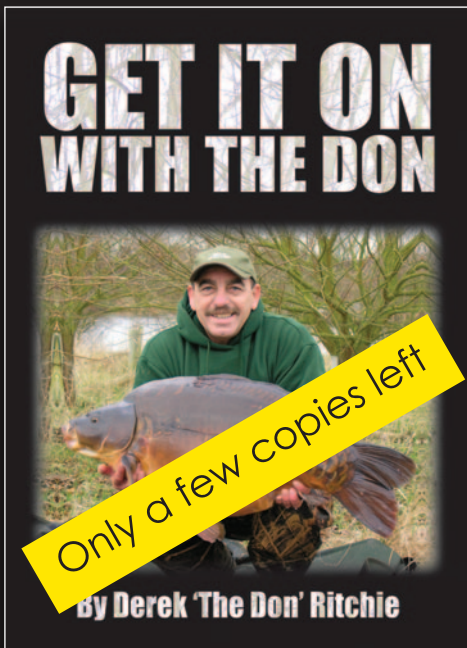
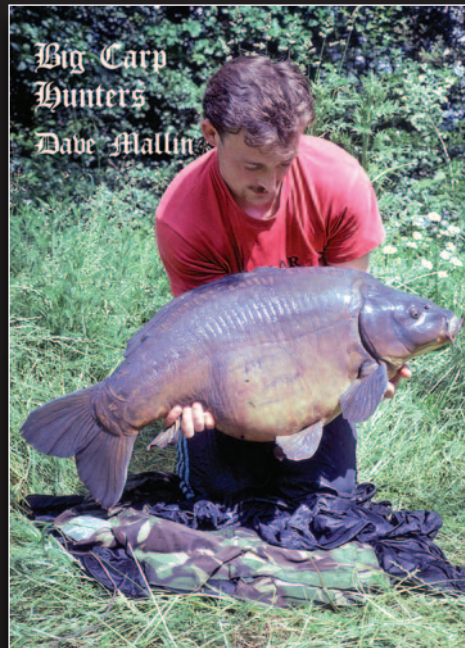
rig, and you will see his surface rig is identical, although I do also tie the mixers on with a hair if I feel the fish are spooking easily, and his preferred waffer rig is as simple as can be.

I have long been of the mind that even a pretty average rig put in front of a fish is better than an overly intricate rig that can have a lot of things go wrong. Why put more obstacles in your way when keeping it simple is keeping it strong and ensuring you have a greater chance of landing your bites? I believe everyone has something to teach, so it's important to listen. The greatest thing I've ever learnt was that each small percentage point can make a massive difference to the end result, therefore I make sure everything is done simply but done well. You will find most of the anglers out there who are smashing it week in week out are doing the little things very well. This means they are always confident, and confidence is what ultimately makes people better at whatever they do. Essentially taking luck out of the equation is what will truly bring results. Luck, chance, fate, whatever you want to call it will play a part at some point in your fishing. I know I'd rather be good than lucky. ■

THE BIG CARP HUNTER SERIES



The Unsung hero's prolific catches with a unique tale to tell



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The Myth and the Mountain

By Dave Little

The buoy line
was now
removed!

Our story, dear reader, takes part in a quiet corner of the Cambridgeshire countryside, tucked away behind river and lakes, hedgerow and willow trees, nettles and blackthorn bushes, where rabbits roam and birdlife aplenty flock, by a brook where chub and roach gracefully swim upstream and down, under sky filled with swifts and gulls, where long summer days pay their dues to eye pleasing, red sunsets at the end of it all. Here, quietly sits a lake immersed in mysteries and myths. When what seems known to all in the world of carp, this forty-acre windswept Ouse Valley pit somehow has anglers captivated in its own tales.

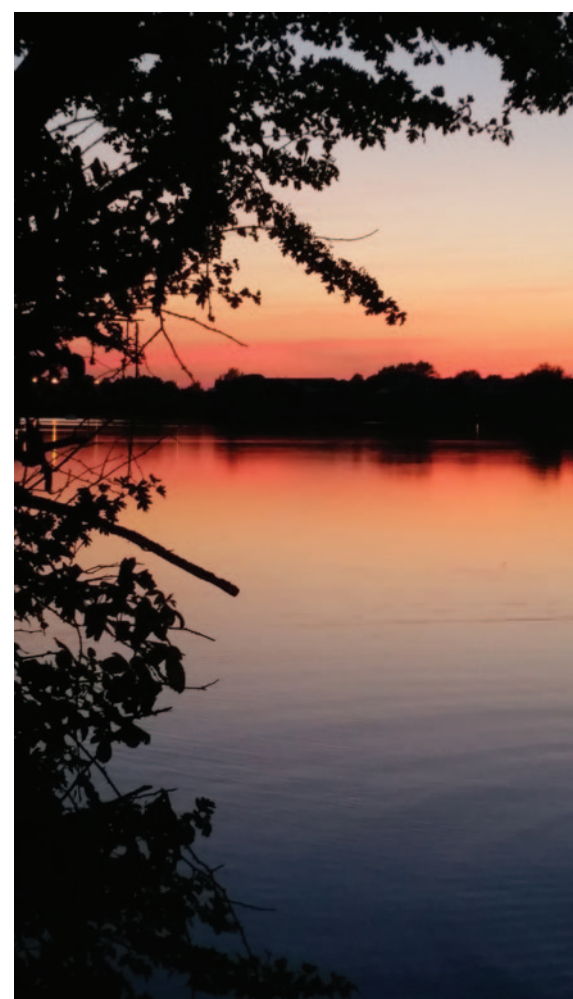
There are stories of uncaught monsters, leviathans of the deeps, large commons seen but never caught, scale-covered beauties that are simply nothing more than shadows. The stock is few and unknown. Others have angled here, and some have even taken up residency! It is also fascinating to hear the bivvy tramps tell their stories of these canny, hook-evading carp; it really does set the mind alight!

The first time I set eyes on this lake was three years ago, but I had heard of its ways and cruel intentions to

anglers long before this. Before even casting a line into its brilliant blue magical depths, I feared the place.

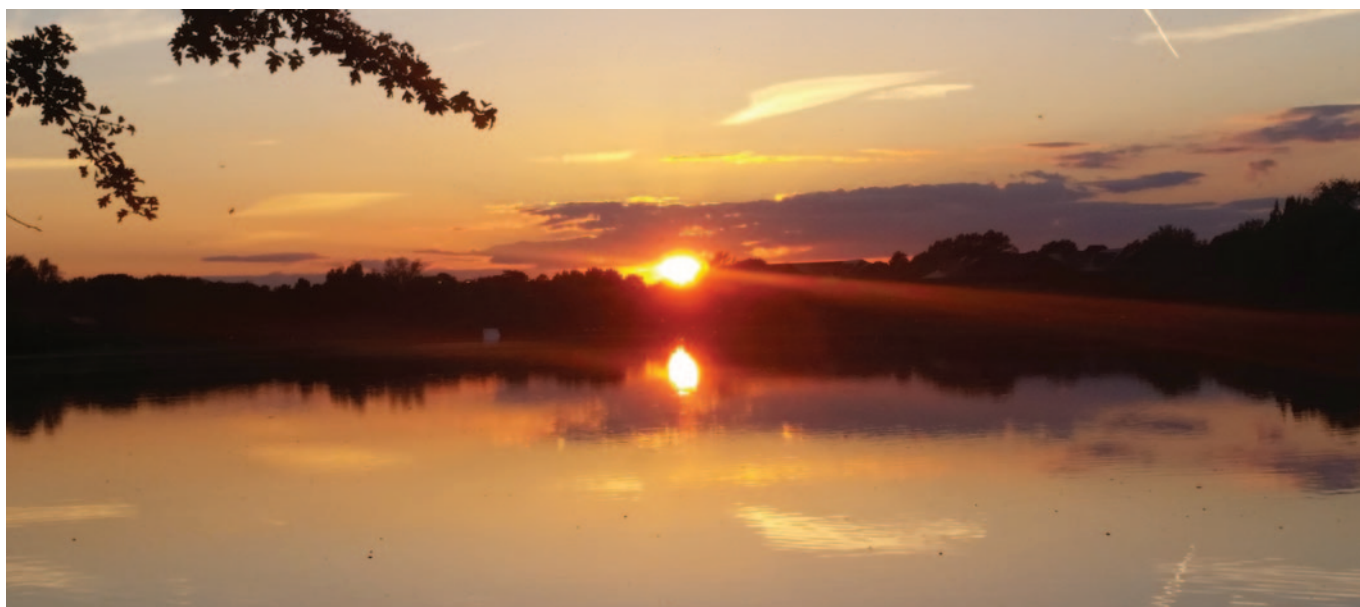
You see, I had listened to all of the stories, how nobody had really caught anything from there and how only a handful of anglers had good results. I was told how 'rock 'ard' it was. I heard the saying, "It's a man's water" over and over again. I had listened to theories of all kinds like which bait to use, where you might find them, how you could maybe catch them. I heard tales of lost fish, cut off whilst playing them, and how those fish were never ever seen or captured again. There are stories of one mythical, large common that only liked a certain area at a certain time of the year, and which had never been caught by the way, added to the bewilderment of this water. There were also the fish that did their Houdini acts and somehow, God knows how, avoided being recaptured for years... quite literally years, not a season, but years! "How?" you may ask... On the river and with regards to the river carp I could easily say they could have disappeared into miles of waterways, but with no exits, how they can hide away in acres of landlocked water beats me!

Now the lake intrigued me more than wondering what the other half was buying me for Christmas, and one spring I began baiting an area quietly one end out of the way, the margin side of one of the many huge bars that adorn the lake. A maze would be easier to navigate, as there are quite a few of these gravel



deposited underwater roadways. This is only one part of the many challenges that apply to this water, because there are quite a few, the most obvious being the speedboats. These men that think they are able to walk on water always sends my head knocking, but each to their own I sup-

(Below) The myth and the mountain. (Right) Tucked away in the Cambridgeshire countryside where skies blaze red when days are at their end.





pose. At the height of summer these wetsuit-clad water skiers will purr behind their V8 watercraft all day long (make sure your banksticks are in tight!) aiding the third challenge, the weed! Huge beds of the green stuff neatly cut by boat props now float around the lake like tiny continents, covering spots and pulling lines and leads adrift, a real ball-ache. Of course fishing in the weed is bad enough, but when you add huge bream and eels to pester you all night long when assuming spots are primed, you can see why the carp get away with it for so long. Then there are the winds. Anything but an easterly seems to just channel in the bankside willows and push down the lake. This is more like a northerly type wind, and I had baited on the end of it and spent two months catching monster snotties



and wriggling water snakes with the occasional green-eyed tench.

What I was also witness to was my own suffering, and a large four-rod baited area with not much time was becoming nothing but a major hell. Paranoid to my own beliefs, I was changing rigs, changing baits and really in the end just praying for a bite that might just be a carp. The fish-meals were doing a great job for the bream (they were larger than my pet terrier, and the swim next door saw a bream angler stay put for the next few weeks because of this), and the eels would twist up my rigs and line into the most intense, knotted bird nests!

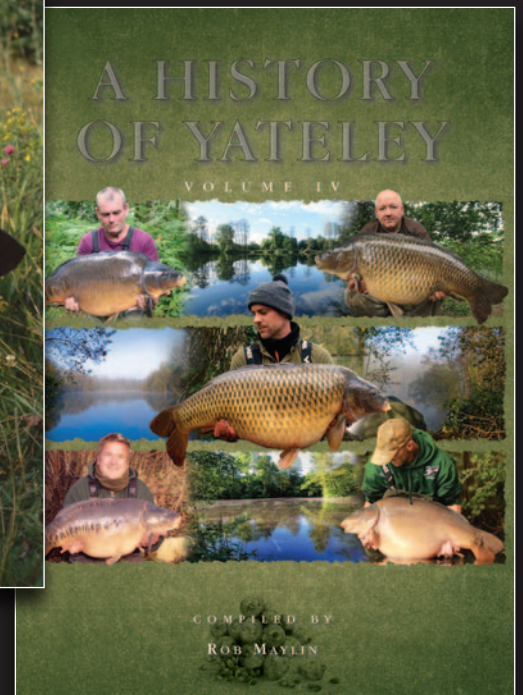
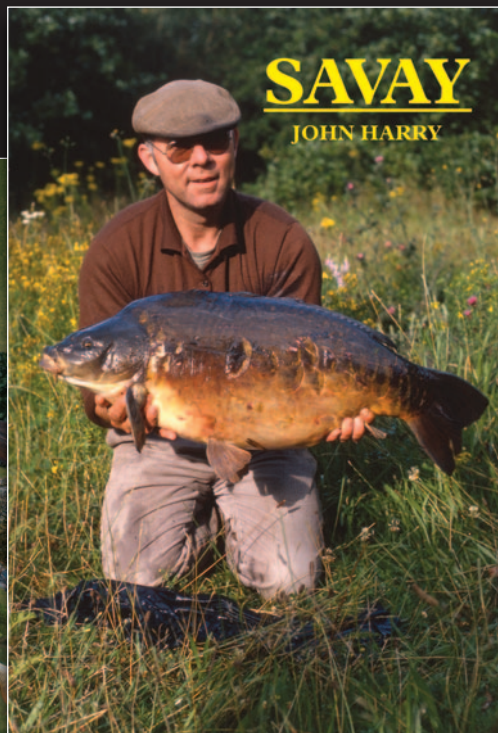
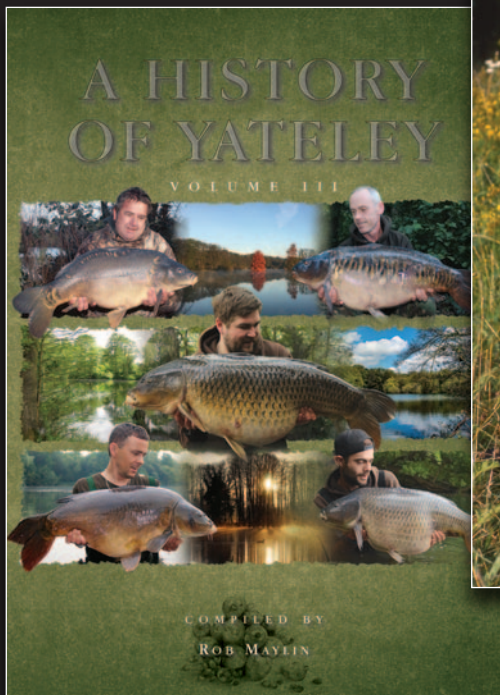
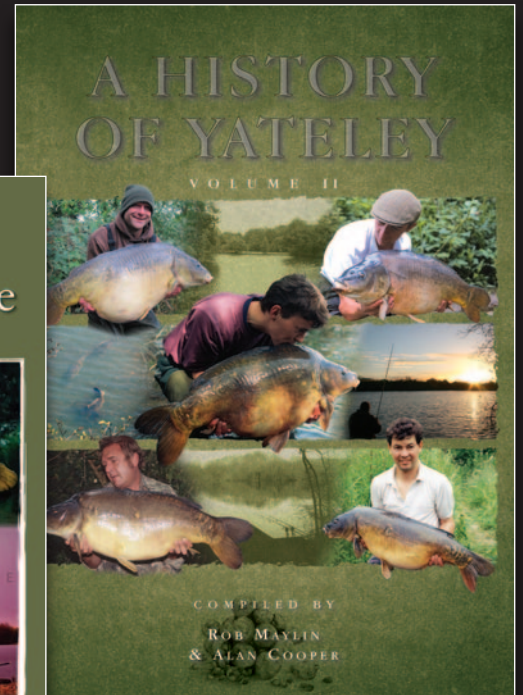
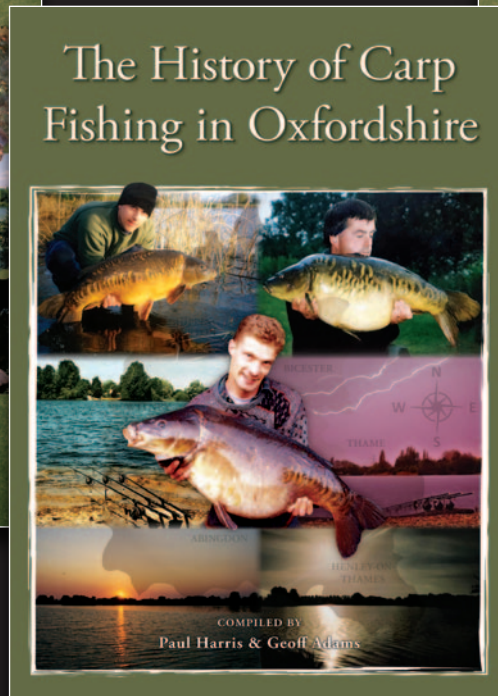
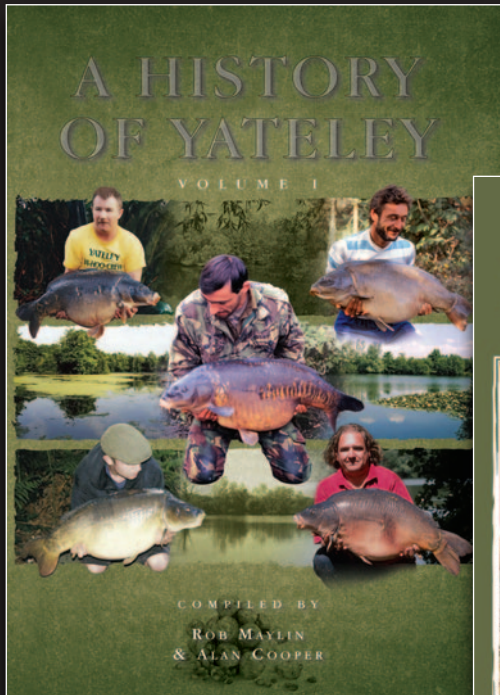
Other places to fish were becoming a lot more attractive, and when finally I did manage to catch a carp, albeit the smallest in the lake, it was a bit of a harsh consolation, but a carp nonetheless. What had I learned? Well, it was a fishing hell, but I had experienced a few key teachings along the way. Walking away with my tail between my legs, I was honestly beaten.

Time away helped my confidence, but I had heard there had only been half a dozen fish out with quite a few anglers going after them, so on average probably only a fish each! A real headache, and I returned in mid-September with weed at its most prolific. I found some fizzers at range, put two rods out before dark, and by 7am the next morning they were wiped out by a trailing bream! I put some more bait out to the spot, sure of fish activity and returned the following week. I repeated the action with two rods before nightfall again and reeled in at 7am as a huge raft of floating weed had blown over the tips of my rods and pulled my lines well off the spots. This wasn't fishing if I couldn't even present a bait!

Luckily there were two other anglers still on (Andy and Ian) to help talk, pour tea, drink beer and council through the pain and hardship of it all. Like pushing through a snow-storm, both were also bravely venturing forward through it all, and both were mega keen on catching one certain carp. It had somehow evaded

(Top) Where the carp are nothing more than shadows and rumours.
(Centre) "A man's water!" But I had to give it a go...
(Bottom) Be lucky, all...

THE HISTORY SERIES



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being caught for three years yet was seen and was clearly still present in the pit, not ottered or decapitated by a flying, roaring Mastercraft ski boat. It had somehow got away with it. It really had got me thinking how? I asked and listened to all the other anglers' theories on how it had been previously caught and why it wasn't getting hooked anymore. Intrigued and confused with it all, I went as far

as asking father and son, the Bartletts, at St. Ives Tackle over tea and breakfast cereal (a great tackle shop!) and quizzing them for info from their years back on the lake (thank you, chaps).

The more I spoke to people about the place the more I began to build up the information. I had another go in the area I had baited, but it was now the beginning of October, and I had always fished for river carp at this

(Top left) Away from the lake, the river was a comfort.

(Top right) The lake's smallest and a lesson about the lake's challenges.

(Below) Other places were more appealing and helped to build confidence.

time of year. A baited spot on my beloved Great Ouse had me leaving the lake at 5am with new rigs tied to arrive at the river for 6am to hopefully





grab a bite before leaving at 9am for work. Trouble was, the first time I had forgotten the new rigs that I had so carefully tied and had totally wasted the morning's fishing with pop-ups over a polished riverbed! So returning to the lake after work for dinner and a place to kip, I felt more confident of a night-time bite. I left again at 5am with rigs ready and an all-out assault on the river at 6am. Laney had showed me a simple bottom bait stiff rig that I had tied with an 18mm out of the bag. It worked!

The river carp were a comfort, but I still wanted more. Intensely greedy, I returned to the lake, desperate for something to happen. I decided to have a go in a swim renowned for its eels! It was a long shot, especially as it was now mid-October, and the whole area was known for shutting up shop for winter. I had a lead around, and it seemed clear, but the flotsam from the speedboats had somehow ended up here and definitely needed clearing and removing

(Top) The rigs worked, and an early start on the flow brought success, but the lake still enticed me.
(Right) Autumn success... I was ecstatic.

before any angling took place. A drag nicked off a mate had me clearing the swim like old times before the glorious 16th, but the difference was this was autumn time! Everything just felt on top of me as I waded out into the cold waters. I felt like I was flogging a dead horse, and the weed stank and weighed a ton. The hole in the waders also didn't help, although some comfort in a sprinkle of hemp, tigers and boilies had me leaving a little optimistic.

Over the next two weeks I tried to

bait every day when I could. Enough to cover the area was all that was needed. Of course the gulls were a nightmare, so as late as possible I continued baiting. Now fortunately there was a pub close by, and as there was nobody stupid enough to carry on fishing the lake so late on in the year, an opportunity arose to slope off for a couple of jars and a bite to eat with my girlfriend Denise before putting the rods out. This was close to the end of October, and I can remember it had rained heavily. Navigating our way back to the bivvy in the dark was a muddy, slippery affair. Getting the rods out was even harder, especially with a skinful!

I had managed to get two out somehow, both on an Uncle Jim long-running chod. Kodex had sent me some leadcore that matched the lake's bottom perfectly. I use the rig quite a bit on the river, and to be honest I was being a bit lazy casting underarm, tipsy. Wherever they landed was good enough before slipping quite literally into the bivvy and into bed for the night. After only a couple of hours I heard my reel whizzing off! Clambering out of bed over Denise I slipped on my old boots and made my way for the rods. The ground was like a ski slope, and I had to be careful not to fall. To be honest still a little worse for wear, I couldn't believe what was happening. The rod had absolutely torn off. A carp was the culprit and I was shocked. In the darkness, a mid 20 common eventually rolled in. I was made up. I just couldn't believe it. Denise was shouting at me to calm down, "You'll have a bleedin' heart attack!"

I was over the moon, and this was





(Top left) After all the challenges, achievement came twice in quick succession!

(Top right) Patched up by Denise the thorns had taken their toll.

(Below) Returning Lumpy, albeit a little sore from the blackthorn battle.

before what happened next. It was around 5am, and I thought I had dreamed the whole thing up. Again I heard the reel whizzing off. More rain and drizzle plus the lack of sleep and by now a truly foggy head left me 'arse over tit' lying in a blackthorn

bush as I slid out the bivvy. To add to the pain and my grimacing face, a bramble branch had kindly lifted my jumper and buried its claw-like thorns into my left side torso. I thought the continuously running reel on the rod to my right would aid in pulling me out of this whole palaver. I grabbed the rod and screamed as I felt something stab into my finger – it was the wrong rod! By now I was screaming like a girl to Denise for some help.

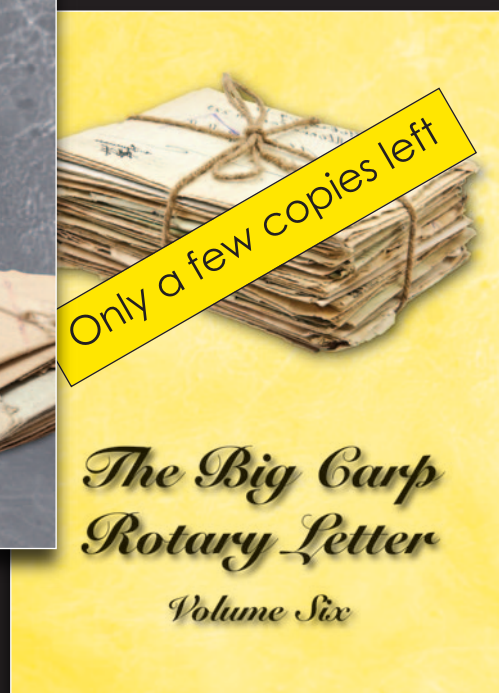
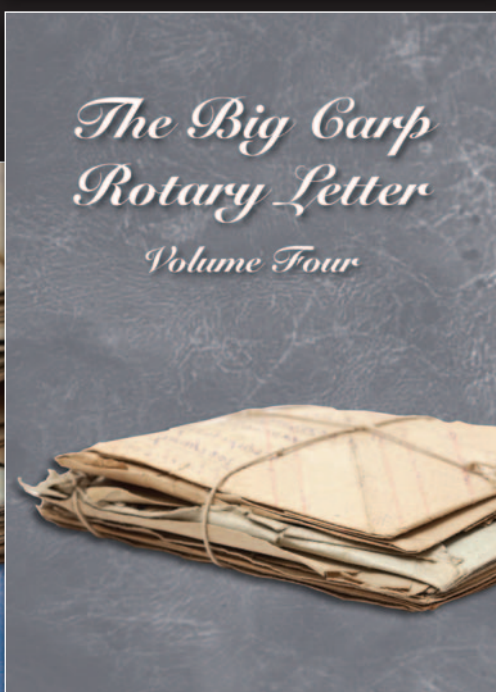
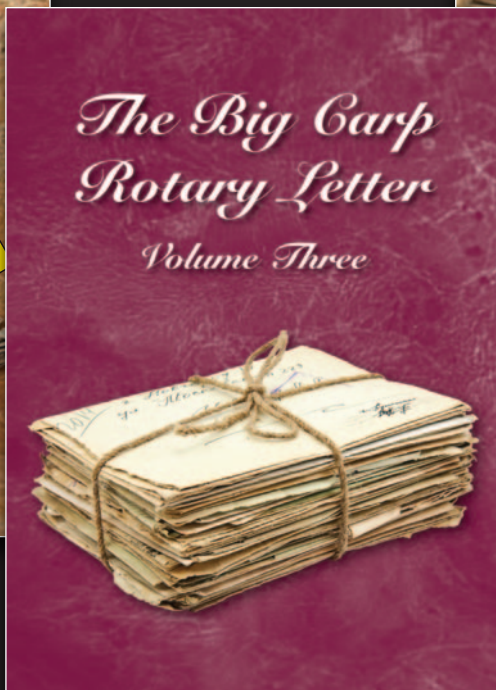
I was in such a state, but eventually after stabbing myself once again in

the head with more blackthorn, I managed to hold and play the correct rod. Holding on and trying to embrace the fish's runs and surges left me in absolute agony. Denise, bless her was behind me and holding onto the back of my jumper to prevent me falling in again. When the fish finally rolled into the net, both the fish and I were dragged up the sopping, slidey bank by my lifesaving girlfriend. By the morning the place looked like a bomb had hit it, but there was not one but two gifts waiting to be unwrapped.



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night at around 9pm that all too familiar screaming alarm and racing reel sounded.

The only person available again was Denise to give me a hand with the night shots of one of the originals, Split Dorsal. It was a dreary old night, but the vintage looking common carp with its saddleback features looked great in the glow of the head torches. I was doing cartwheels. The area had given me my fourth carp from the lake, and I was ecstatic. I felt I was climbing a step closer to sussing these old wily creatures out. I had heard them crashing in the darkness, so I knew I was coming close. Now knowing I could catch carp from here my fears had left me, and an obsessive urge to find and catch them took over, but it would have to wait until next spring.

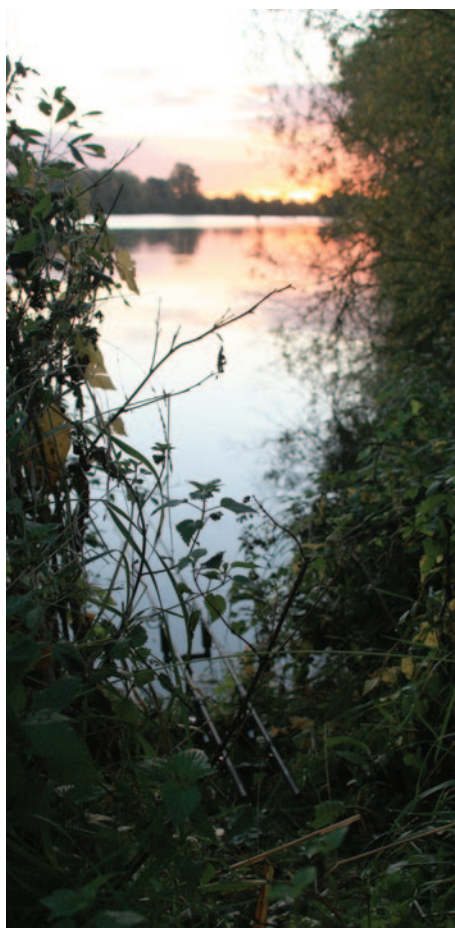
I returned the following April as keen as jackrabbit in spring sunshine and set about finding fish. It was somewhat busier than the previous year, but it didn't phase me, as I just wanted to get as close to the carp as possible, so I got in! Standing in the lake from first light for four hours had me seeing more than the bank angler. It was freezing, but I didn't care, and by 8am the gamble paid off. Two fish leaping clean out and then repeating their actions only moments later had me in the zone. It was on the opposite side of the lake to me, but the only thing was I had work and then a fence to climb over on my return.

I went through hell at work, praying no one had seen or made the move before I got back. After tearing up the

(Top) Confidence was building...

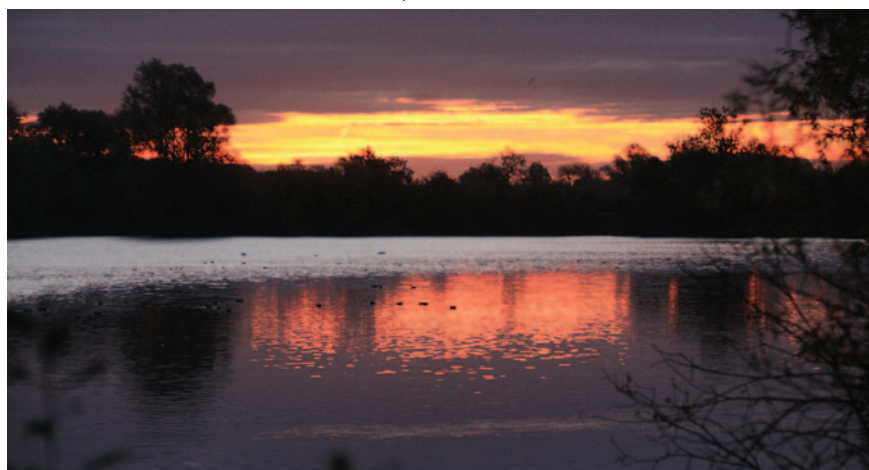
(Below left) The eel swim.

(Below) Spoilt by the lake in the late autumn.



Apart from removing pieces of shrapnel (blackthorns, the nasty buggers) from my limbs for the next few weeks, I was blown away with the result.

I carried on baiting the area with more Hybrid boilies and fished it a few times overnight before disappearing off to work. I was up at the crack of dawn most days and was spoilt with some amazing views of autumn mornings. It was still quite mild, and a southeasterly had been blowing for days, slightly trickling into where I was fishing. It was now mid November, and I had started believing that my luck was up until one overcast





county lanes on my return, I still had to climb, clamber and throw all my gear over a farmer's fence. The swim was quite literally the furthest away from anything and was on one heck of a slope. I spent almost an hour leading around in the area the fish showed, wanting a hundred percent

certainly I was presenting for the night. Once happy I looked for an area close in for my second rod. Wading up the side of the pit to my right and underneath some overhanging branches, there appeared to be an old spot, obviously where somebody had baited before, but weed had started to return over the area. I placed three handfuls of Hybrid boilies and three handfuls of tiger nuts over it, and for some unknown reason cast a choddy six feet past it down the shelf. I made sure the line sank right through the

baited area, hopefully incurring some signs of fish feeding if ever they did.

By the morning the area I found where the fish showed resulted in a bite in the form of another original, a fish called Rosie, and I was as happy as Larry. Seeing this fish in the edge a lot and even on one occasion sticking

(Above) Split Dorsal and fears had (Left) The lake being cruel with its underwater abundance. 100% or nothing!

(Below) The following spring, and I was as keen as mustard.





its head into a sunken tyre searching for food had made me pleased to have caught it. I came back the following week and headed straight for the same swim. It was at the end of a buoy line that has now been removed (I forgot to mention that hurdle also, a quarter of the lake out of bounds behind mussel infested chain links and a carp galore sanctuary). There was somebody looking around that end of the lake, and another angler had set up two swims down. I quickly did my best to stick a bucket in the swim without appearing too eager.

Two rods were put out to the area, and one again to the right underneath the overhanging branches, simply repeating what I had done the week before. To be honest, the area looked devoid of bait underneath those branches, so something must have eventually come along for a good old munch!

By the morning the right rod bent over double. The drag was as tight as I dared so as to try and pull it away from the branches. The curve in the rod took on another form as I grabbed it, and whatever was attached started

heading towards the only snag in the manor, the last buoy on the bloody buoy line!

The chains that held them in position would have cleanly cut my line easily, so I tried bringing the fish away from that. It began to come closer and closer until it was a couple of rod lengths away when it decided enough was enough. The fish went on a huge run, pulling away from me and to the left. It had stripped around 60 yards before I could get on top of it again. With this much line out it had now found its way into the submerged roots to my left hand side. I had to jump in and precariously pull the fish towards me over my remaining rods. I was soaked and still had not seen what was on the end, so when a huge common rolled into the net, I just let out a roar. All this time uncaught and there, astonishingly, it lay!

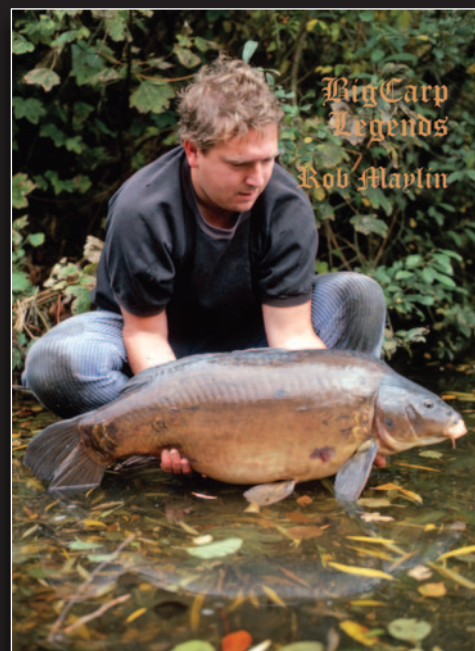
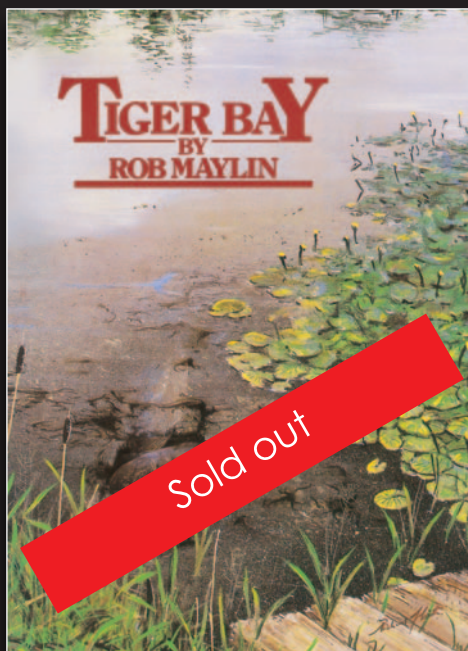
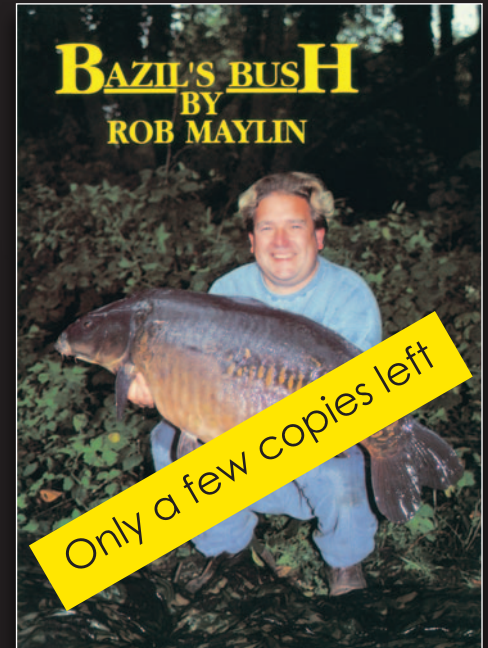
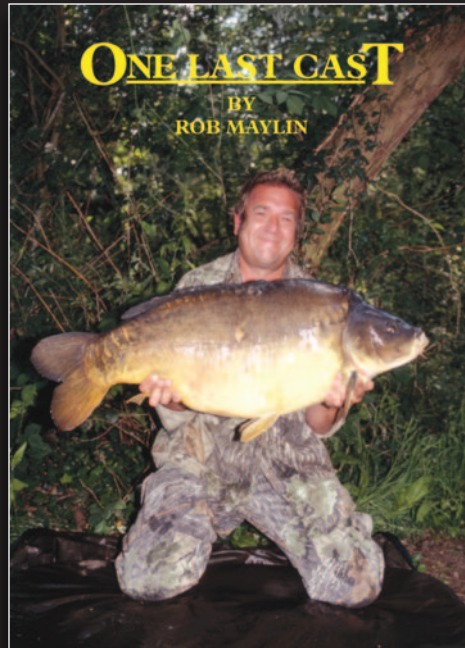
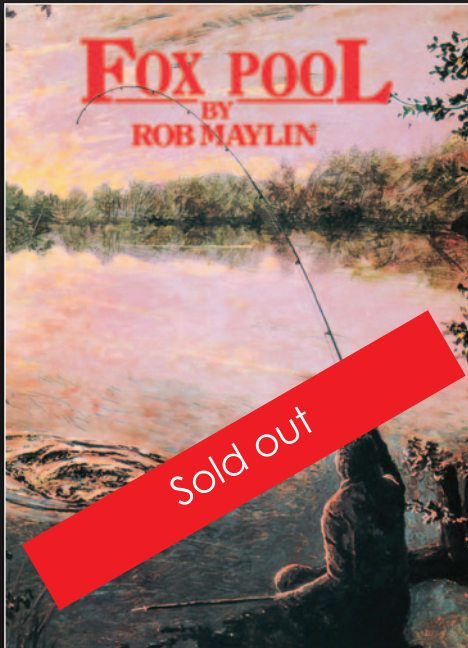
Within minutes other anglers had turned up to see the spectacle – a crowd of bodies and cameras all wanting to see this special creature that had somehow been getting away with it all these years simply added to the magic. It didn't disappoint either.



(Top) Spring success... Rosie had made a bankside appearance at last. (Left) Three years uncaught.

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The fish looked epic. Every part an old, big vintage common from a challenging, windswept big pit. Never in a million years did I think I would be lucky enough to hold such a beast. To me it meant the world. Of all the adversaries, the otters, speedboats, other anglers, eels and bream, weed, weed and more weed, work, wind and

waves, I had somehow endured it all. As hard as it was, it was more than worth it in the end. I was on a high and felt on top of the world!

Thereafter, as luck would have it, the buoy line that retained all that out of bounds bank was dragged out by a pair of divers hired by the ski club. Mr. Feral himself was present when they

pulled the chains that had been submerged for years out onto the bank-side. As you can imagine, draped in weed and crustacean covered, it

(Above) The missing common was epic.

(Below) Tetley with Mutleys. What a fish!





looked a carpy site. With the snag site removed there was only one thing to do: fish it!

Good friend Andy Tetley was straight over and pitched up a swim down to the left from me whilst Mark Johnson (Boots) had finished cutting a swim and was pitched up to my right. Tetley lowered a bait into the edge whilst the speedboats flew past, and it was only an hour later when it tore off at a rate of knots. I heard his screams and joined him, still with speedboats tearing up and down the lake. Whatever was on the end of his

line was doing a great job of tearing about too. To be honest it was absolutely beating Tetley up, and with the waves added by the boats it was an awesome spectacle. Eventually when the hair-raising beast finally rolled in we were in awe of the creature that had caused such rod-bending carnage. A fish called Mutley's had us completely dumb struck. I remember clicking away, repeatedly saying, "What a fish!"

It didn't end there. A week later I had an early call. Boots had nailed something mindblowingly special.

With camera in hand I ran round to see what all the commotion was about. Grabbing the retainer Mark bought to the bank a carp that had avoided (somehow) capture for half a decade. Immediately we all knew as the curtains rolled back how special and beautiful this scaled creature was. We were completely in awe of this amazing creature, a truly stunning carp and certainly one of Cambridgeshire's finest. It set questions racing and minds soaring to what else could possibly be hiding in its shadowy depths – more mysteries and challenges to be answered. A special place and special times made with good friends just as obsessed and passionate.

So the place has spun its web and pulled me down deep. I'm still 'having a go' and battling with its all-consuming magic. I've seen firsthand what the place can do to a man (souls taken) and I'm trying my best to steer a true course now. There have been upsets along the way that I am sorry for, and there have been moments of true joy for me and others too. What the future holds has always been unpredictable, but as always, effort equals reward, and hopefully all will become clear...

So until the next moment when that reel screams... be lucky, all! ■

(Top) Still 'avin a go!
(Left) Mindblowingly special.





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Diary of The Urban Myth

Rob Maylin chats to Terry Dempsey (Urban Baits)

Rob: Well, we are just at the start of August, and I have arranged to meet up with Terry Dempsey for his exclusive diary. We had a bit of a change of venue for the meet-up this time. We had arranged to meet up in the same old coffee shop, and then earlier today Terry told me that he was at Bluebell Lakes with good old Tony Bridgford, and they have a fantastic complex of lakes up here. I've never fished it, but I must have a go, as Tony has always invited me up there. Tony is a regular advertiser in the magazine and has a page every month; he sounds a lovely old boy. Anyway, Tel is out there stocking the shop out with Urban Bait, so if you are in the Northampton area and you want to get hold of bait, that little shop that he has onsite is the place to go. Terry reckons that there'll be 200



Get on the going bait with Pete Castle.



Five-year-old Oscar Castle showing dad Pete how to do it.

anglers up there at the weekend on that complex. There are some fantastic fish in there; some have come and gone, but there are still 50-pounders in there. I don't know whether there is a 60 or not, but it won't be long until there is one. There are loads of 30s and 40s.

With Tel telling me the new venue news, it was good in some respects, because I don't have to go all the way by Gatwick Airport where we normally meet up, but blow me down, the bloody traffic on the motorway this afternoon! The M3 was shut on one side because of another pile-up, the second one this week. Terry's arrived with steam coming out of the collar and blisters on his hand, telling me he has had a seven-hour round trip up there to drop this bait off. We are not in the best of moods, so this story might turn tits-up. Tel has been out doing a little bit fishing. You know what he is like; he never does a lot of

fishing, and as I have always said, he is one of the best carp anglers in the country, if not the best. With the limited time that he does, and running a successful business, he was only in the mag a little while ago with three massive commons. It speaks for itself, and the bloke catches fish wherever he goes.

There's another reason why I've met up with Terry today other than to talk about fishing, and that is to pick up the next lot of subscription offers. We have a slightly different offer this time, and you will see there is a picture in the magazine. Terry has kindly added some pellets. He does these dedicated pellets with the various sorts of pastes. He does a Nutcracker one, but at the moment what we are offering you is the Red Spicy Fishmeal in there with the Liver Cracker powder. It's a deadly combination, and Terry has been telling me the Red Spicy Fish is going really well at the moment. It was all the Nutcracker at one time, but people have seen that it's a good bait and are trying something else as well. So in the next lot of subscription deals, not only do you get the boilies, the dumbbells, the pop-ups and the Stick Mix, but you get a big bag of the new pellets as well – always handy for the back of the car even if you don't use them all in one session.

Terry got his ticket for Savay this year, and I wonder whether he's been down there. He is going to tell us in a minute, and of course he also fishes his other Kent syndicate water. He



Ian Roy, 33lb from a 60-acre southern pit.

has caught most of the big fish out of there, the big commons and the fully scaled. He has one more to go, the really big fully scaled mirror, and that will be his lot. So what have you been up to? Have you been out with Daniel?

Terry: Good to see you, Rob. Yes, I've been very busy at work since I last saw you. To be honest, I am not quite got over the three big commons over the last few months. They say things come along like buses. To be waiting for a particular fish, and then I get three fish out of the blue. We don't even know which fish one of them is. It was two ounces short of

50lbs, a long, dark fish, and I have not seen another picture of it, so I am still getting over that, Rob. But as you know I got a great call in the spring, and that was to get on the Savay Syndicate.

I have always wanted to fish Savay since the 80s, around the time that I first met you. It's one of those magical places, and I think it's a MUST if you're a big carp angler in England to want to fish Savay. It's an absolutely beautiful lake of 70 acres, so you've got lots of room on there. I have done five nights so far over the past six weeks, which is nowhere near as much as I want to do on a lake like Savay, but it has been an insight, and I have enjoyed every single night. I have had liners on a couple of occasions, and I have seen a few fish, but I'm yet to have a take. Obviously I've caught fish out of Savay in the past doing the days, but being on the Syndicate I am yet to have my first fish, but it's very exciting times for me.

Every night I have gone on a different swim... I've done a night in the Daisies, I have done a night in the Channel, I have done a night in the Gravelly, I've done a night in the Shallows and I've done tonight in the Cottage. I've been all over the lake trying to soak up the atmosphere. I have really enjoyed that, but with the school holidays starting last week, I have Daniel with me all the time. Most of the time he is coming to work with me, and last week I decided to



Kai Richards 33lb 4oz.

take him fishing. After the episode with the 54lb common when he was with me, I thought I better take him again and see what happens.

We had a great session; we did four nights, which is the longest session that I have done in a good couple of years. The first night we did, I taught Daniel how to perfect his cast. What I decided to do was fish two rods, and I was going to let him fish one of them because the carp are so big in my Kent syndicate they would actually pull him in the lake, so I put a rod out for him for eels. I know there are a few eels in there, and I thought it would be nice for him to get a bite in the night off the eels. I bought him a bag of maggots and I bought him some casters, and we set a rod up for eels. Daniel was just getting used to his new ounce-and-a-half lead, and since casting is a new technique for him, he decided to cast all time... nothing but cast.

The funny thing was on the first morning we were really on fish. We'd spent the night looking, and I'd climbed a tree. You're not supposed to climb trees over there, but anyway I ended up in a tree somehow. I don't know how it happened, but I was high up in a tree, and all of a sudden as I looked across the shallows, I could see a couple of spots growing amongst the weed. The water there is so clear you can see the bars in the middle. I saw these two or three spots, and all of a sudden I saw a big fish move off one, so I was really, really confident. We got our rods into place, found the spot and marked the lines up. One was at 11 wraps, one was at 14 and one was at 18. They were real



Dean Martin landed a new PB of 39lb.

good distances apart, and we baited them really accurately using the spods with a load of 14mm boilies and a tiny little bit of hemp to help them come out. I was super confident!

I woke up the next morning, Rob, and they were on me. I saw fish out there, about eight or ten good movements, which is good for this lake, because it's quite low stock. There was fizz happening too, and I was going to catch. One of my friends was fishing right at the other end, but he hadn't seen a fish, and he didn't have any confidence at all. Anyway Daniel decided to get his rod out and have a cast about while they were fizzing in front of me. Thirty to forty leads hit the water and got dragged through a big weedbed, with him on the other end, struggling and fighting with me as I

was trying to stop him, and all the fish surprisingly disappeared.

At about ten o'clock in the morning, I could see the guy 300 yards away right at the other end have a 40, which he owes to Daniel because Daniel moved the fish. I told him that if we were going to move swims he had to be quiet, and he assured me he was going to be quiet. Anyway we moved right over the other end and went to fish on this point. We found a nice couple of spots, put the bait out there, and everything was going well. But just before dark, Daniel saw a big load of rocks and just started chucking them into the lake. Then he got his rod out and started with his leads flying in my swim. Well, no surprise, I didn't catch anything.

On the Saturday morning my wife Tania came down as well. It is a lovely place, very quiet. It's right out in nature, and it's not too far from the coast, so we ended up spending a hot day in Broadstairs on the beach. We spent all day watching the Punch and Judy shows, kicking a ball around on the beach, and I had a little swim in the sea. At night-time we went back down to the lake. Cut a long story short, we ended up doing four nights, and on the last night my wife had gone home, and Daniel and I thought we would give it one more night.

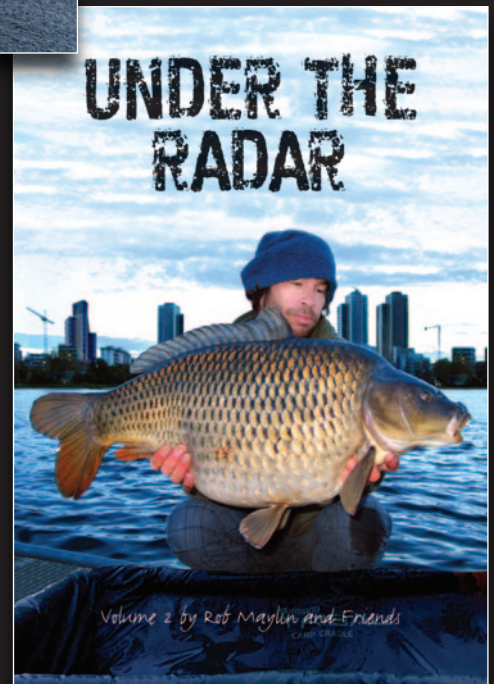
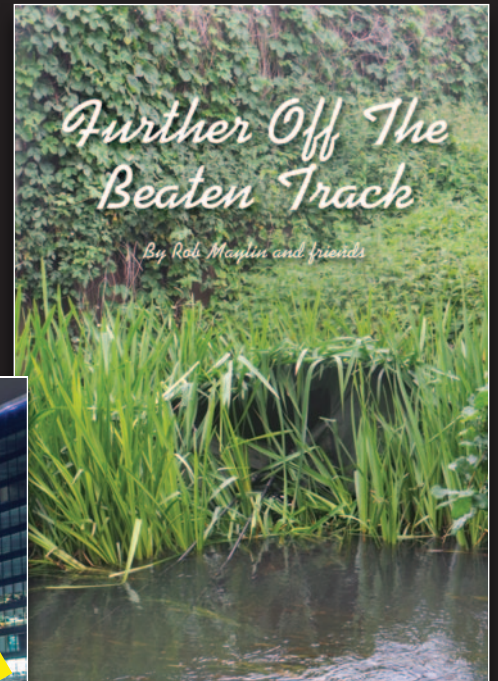
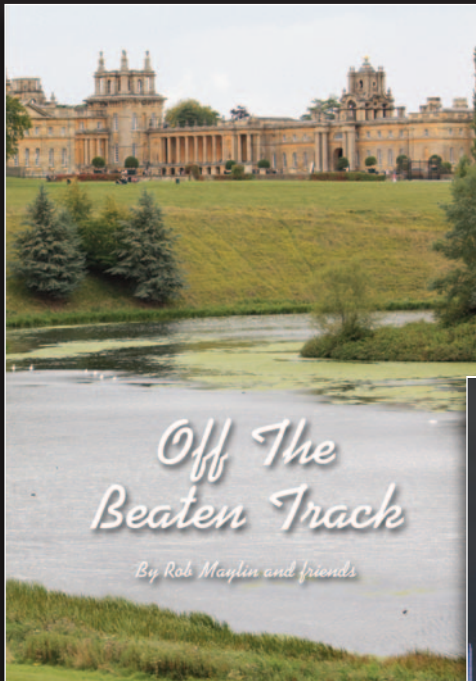
We walked around the lake, and all of a sudden, I found myself up a tree again. I really don't know how this happens. I really do try to stop it happening, but it just seems to keep hap-



Carp number two of Peter Hudd's recent 80lb-plus Teillatts brace, the Long Common.

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK SERIES

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Courtney Pody with the Woodcarving at 36lb 14oz.



Andy Gowers, 34lb 12oz, Berkshire gravel pit.



Yet another cracker on the deadly Nutcracker.



Cracking 46lb 13oz common caught by Nathan Hughes.



Paul Wyatt is on the going bait! He managed to land this 34lb 12oz.



Wayne Clarke with a clonking common.

pening to me. So I was right at the top of this tree, and Daniel is well impressed with his dad and how high he can climb. I was watching two fish in this weedy corner, and one of them looked absolutely massive. I wouldn't be surprised if it was getting on to 60lbs. The other fish looked really small in comparison, maybe not even 20lbs, and they were milling around this weed. Daniel and I dragged all the gear around – it was a team effort. We set everything up, and he promised to stay quiet. I was literally fishing 20 yards out, as I could see a tiny little spot glowing. I flicked the rod onto this glowing spot and broke few boilies, crumbed them up, and threw them around it. I put my other two rods to the right, and by the way, Daniel never did get his eel rod out in the lake – all three were put out for carp. That night we went to bed early, and the mosquitoes were really bad.

At 4:45am, my buzzer went. It was an absolutely roaring take. I woke up, and my rod was bent right round in the rest. I came flying out of the bivvy and pulled into the fish. It was all weeded up, and there were bubbles coming off the bottom. I started gaining a bit of line, and I shouted to Daniel, "Wake up! Wake up! Get the net!" So it was a real team effort. He got up, got the net, and eventually we



48lb common for Nathan Hughes.

landed a big weedbed with a fish inside, so we were well happy, the both of us. When we got it on the bank, we realised it was the smallest mirror in the lake, is a fish which I called the Baby Fully Scaled. It is the most beautiful carp, unbelievable, like something out of a dream – what you wish a carp would look like. It's really dark and bronze – amazing colours, with blues on its back. I caught that fish before two years ago, so I thought

it was only right to let Daniel have his photo taken with the fish. He held it well, and that was that. Next week he is going away to his grandmother's for two weeks with his mum, so I think that will be it. This is when I'll be getting my bit of fishing done, and I am hoping to do the full two weeks. I don't think there will be one night where I am at home. I have waited a long time, so hopefully I'll do a few nights at Savay and a few nights at my Kent syndicate, and see if I can nick a fish... as long as I don't keep walking up those trees, which is a big problem that I have got.

Rob: You can always count on one thing with Tel, and that is an exciting story. I don't think I have ever met up with him when he hasn't had a good tale to tell with laughs in it and a bit of excitement. It's always exciting to see him. As I mentioned at the start, we had a change of venue, and I told you where I was. In fact we met up in Staines, which is actually where I first bumped into Terry. I can't remember in which year it was, Terry; it was well before all the magazines, so it must have been in the 80s. Anyway, it was a long time ago. We were reminiscing today about the good times and laughs we've had down here in the Old Feathers pub, and we are sitting opposite that now. Well, the pub is gone now – the pikeys burnt it down so many times that they gave up rebuilding it.

Flying around here are the old ring-necked parakeets, the little green par-



Dave Goodyear is still catching regularly from a large, super tough London reservoir.

rots so common over at Longfield. I remember watching them in the cornfields behind when the corn was out, and they were obviously nibbling away there on the corn on the cobs. It certainly brings some memories back being down in this part of the country. It's real carp country down here – two minutes one way you've got Colneme, Longfield and a syndicate water just over the back of where the Feathers used to be. A few people have fished it – Rick Golder for example has written about it in the mag, and of course just up the road you have Wraysbury. It is a great part of the country, full of memories for Tel and me. It just goes for me to say thank you very much for meeting up with me, Tel. I look forward to hearing about this two-week session that you're going to have. I can't see him doing it – you're going to have too much to do at work, but it's a nice thought anyway, Tel.

Tel: Yes, Rob. I am going to try hard anyway. It was only the other year when my wife went away for seven weeks, and I did seven weeks (both burst out laughing), and there you are saying I don't do any time. If I can...



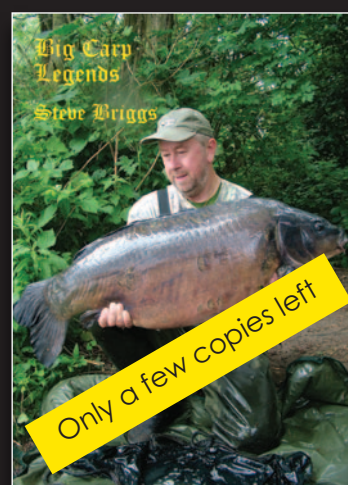
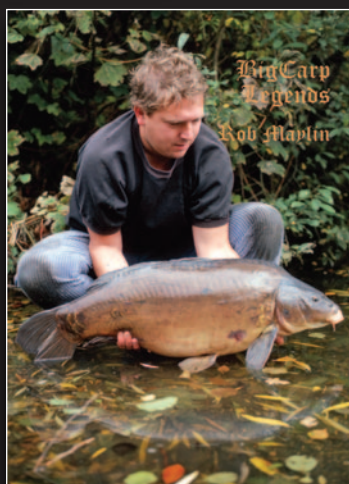
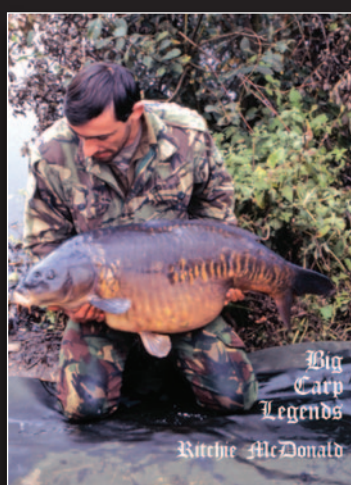
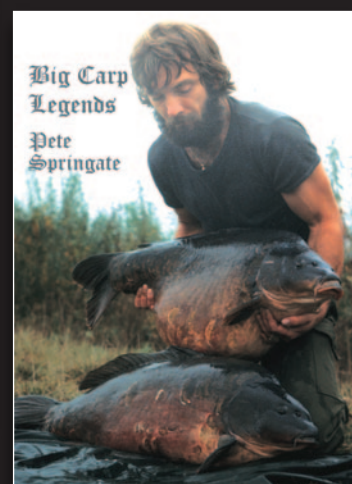
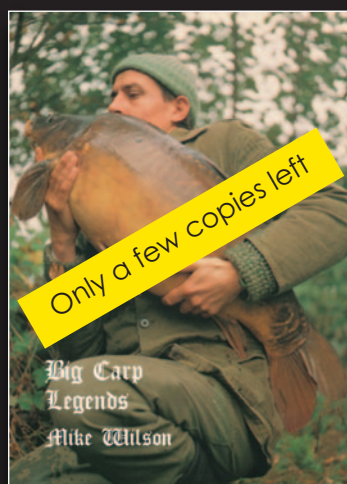
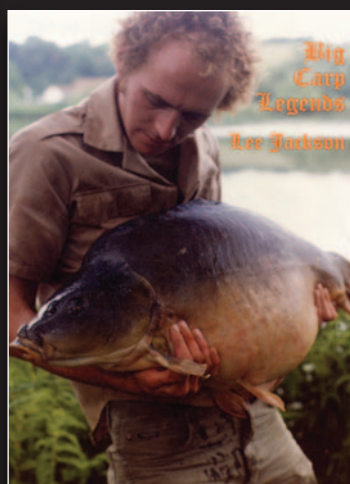
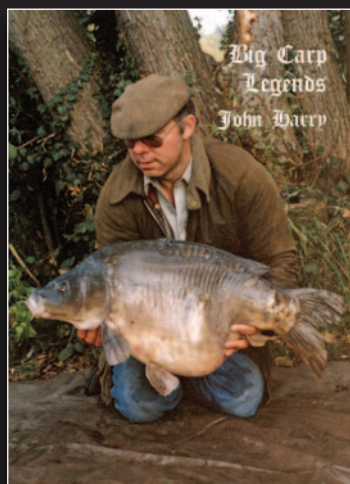
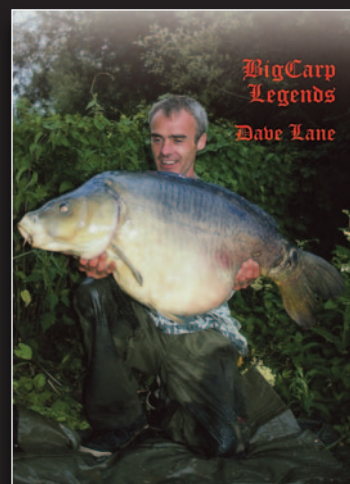
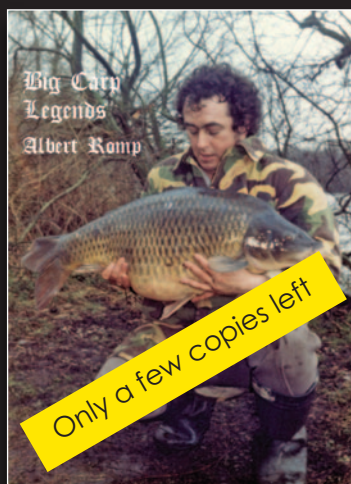
Daniel with a beauty.



The Myth.

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you know... when the cat's away, the mice come out to play. Oh yes, I remember the last time you and I were here. I think we were in that restaurant behind, and I had been here about two weeks at Longfield and hadn't had a wash.

I think you were feeding me because you felt sorry for me. You found me with just a load of tomato sauce sandwiches. Yes, this is a magical place where we are now, and I have fished nearly all these lakes at one time or another. I fished Kingsmead, K1 and K2, when it used to be one big lake, and I have fished both the Wraysburys. I have caught fish from both Wraysbury 1 and Wraysbury 2 and obviously Colnemer. I've had a few fish from Longfield with a friend of mine, and yes, it's a magical place. You've got Yeoveney as well just across there. It is rich in history, but it's changed a lot over here now. The fishing has changed a lot, but we had the best times. Anyway, Rob I will see you next time, and hopefully I will have few pictures for you.

Rob: Cheers, Tel! ■



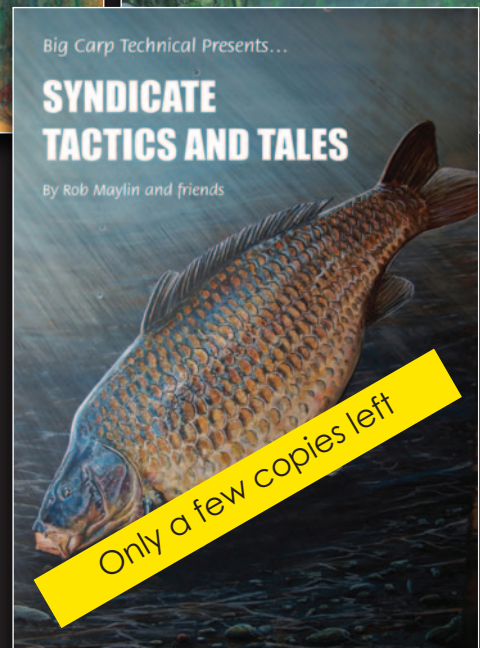
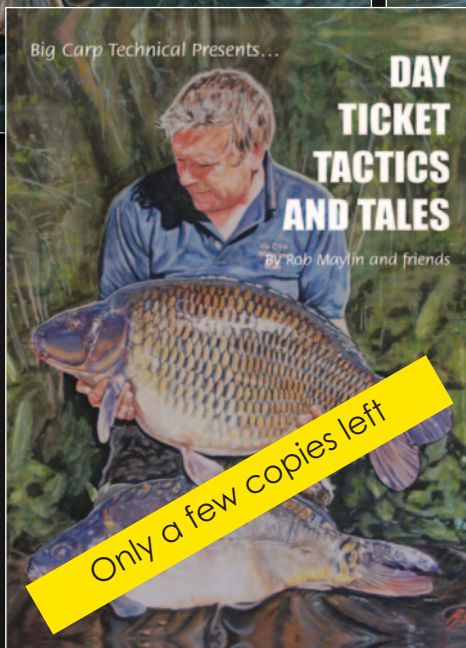
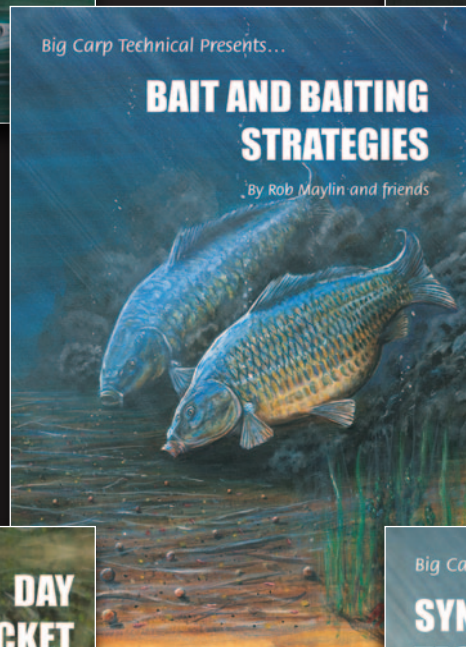
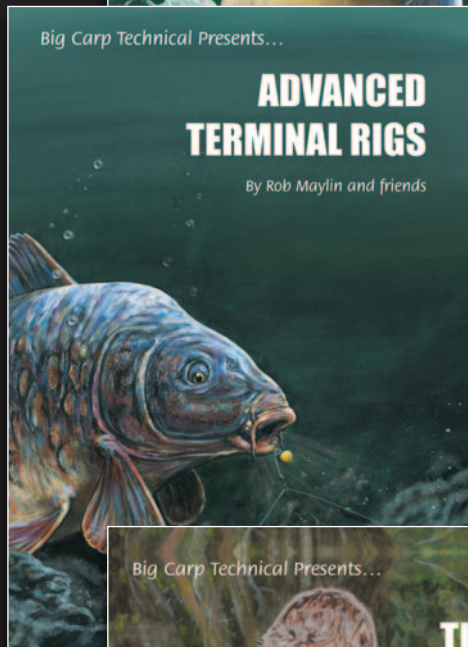
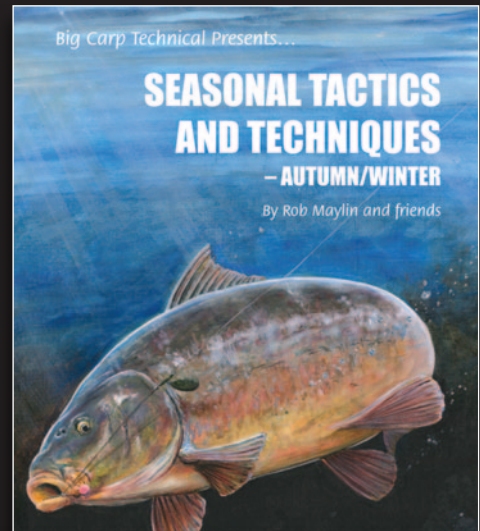
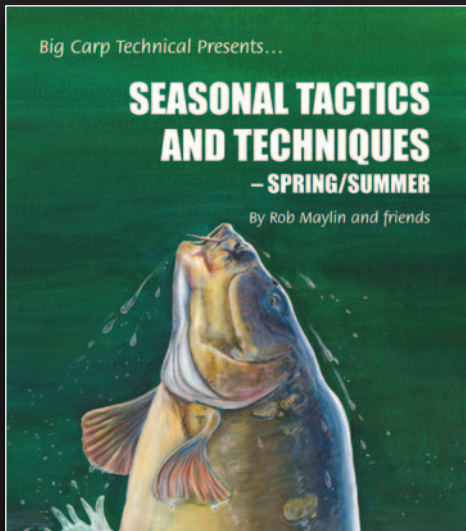
The Digital Common for Pete Hudd at over 80lb.



Young Harry Willats getting in on the filmed action at this years' Korda Developments Carp Academy.

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The Hunt for the Bulldozer

By Nick Onslow

After having a very successful spring of catching all my target fish from my local Billericay club waters, the urge to move on came sooner than I had planned. I needed to find a lake close to home for convenience as free time to fish was limited. I had to set new targets to see me through the rest of the season, and I had a lake that I thought would be ideal for my new target, which was a 40lb common (the Bulldozer). This water was Golden Gates in South Ockendon, and I managed to get a ticket for the lake at short notice. I was not new to this water, as I had previous history with this lake dating back about 12 years. Golden Gates is approximately 12 acres of various fishing features to challenge your abilities.

The new season started mid-June. The first few weekends of the season



21lb.



The Snake at 25lb

was a great time to reacquaint myself with the lake. It was a slow start, but it was great to be back and to get the feel for the place again. Golden Gates can be quite a weedy water to fish, so some of my tactics had to be adapted. I changed from bottom-baits to pop-ups but kept my old faithful Urban Baits Red Spicy Fish. My rigs were simple – I was using 15lb Ashima Groundhog hook links with size 8 Goliath hooks with a helicopter setup and a roughly 2in high washed-out pop-up. I was also roughly using 2kg of bait per 24-hour session.

The first Saturday in July was the start of my run. The first fish I banked was called the Snake, and it held so much history, as it was the oldest fish in the lake. I also banked a 21lb mirror in the same session. Over the next few weeks I started nicking a few fish on a regular basis, none of which were the bigger fish I was hoping for, but this did prove I was using the right baits and methods.

Throughout August the lake was becoming more populated, which impacted my fishing and made it more of a challenge to get on the fish. It was the August bank holiday weekend, and I was starting late on the Saturday. I was expecting it to be a busy weekend on the lake, but to my surprise it was relatively quiet. I did my usual walk around, and it wasn't long until I found the fish in the swim called the Front Bay. I set up on them and cast all three rods tight to the island where the fish were showing, with roughly a kilo of chopped baits across all three rods. I changed from using pop-ups to straight bottom baits, as there was not too much weed about.

It was getting darker, and I was settling down for the night. Around 2am I was woken by my middle rod with a one-toner. This was a long 22lb mirror. I settled back down, and it was quiet for the rest of the night. I woke at first light to see if the fish were still in front of me, but all was quiet with not much movement in the water. I waited a while and had a cuppa, but it seemed like the fish had moved on. It looked like it was time for me to do the same.

I went for a wander and met another angler who had just caught a new PB of 30lb. I did the photos for him, and he told me that his swim was full of fish rolling and bubbling. Unfortunately, he couldn't stay and was packing up and going home. Of course I then jumped in after him and set up pronto. I cast all three rods to where the fish were rolling, but I took a big gamble on spodding around 2kg of bait.

Throughout the day there was still the odd one or two showing, so I was



26lb 3oz.



28lb 10oz.



still confident I was going to catch. The hours went by and the evening came in, but still no action. I called it day and got my head down for the night.

Around 7am the following morning I was awoken to a full blown take. I was playing the fish for a good 15 minutes, and to my amazement up popped one of the ghosties, which

were on the list of the fish I wanted. This turned out to be one of the smaller of the three ghosties in the lake. She weighed in at 26lb, and I was over the moon. I slipped her back and recast my rod to the same spot and spodded a further kilo of the Spicy Fish Mix over the spot. I didn't have long left of my session. I brewed the kettle for one last cup of tea. I then



22lb

couldn't believe my luck as the same rod was away again! This time it was a stunning mirror carp of 28lb 12oz. I returned her to the water and reluc-

tantly I started to pack up.

The following few weeks I was unable to fish due to family holiday commitments. On returning from my

holiday, I was itching to get back to the lake knowing that I had three nights solid at the lake.

Once I got to the lake the weather was high pressure with strong easterly winds. I did my usual wander around the lake to see any signs of fish, and I ended up finding a few fish showing in the swim called the Zoo. I quickly found three clear spots, as this part of the lake was very weedy. I spodded around 3kg of chopped baits over all three rods.

The evening was upon me, and a friend who was fishing one swim up came to join me. We got some dinner, and I was still exhausted from all the holiday travelling, so I decided to call it an early night. The next thing I know I was woken with a typical Golden Gates screaming take. I then banked my first fish of the session, which was a short, dumpy 28lb mirror. The next day the fish consistently showed over all three of my rods.

In the evening I decided to top up the swim with more bait, but unfortunately the night went on with no action. The fish didn't bite until the next morning when I had my second fish of 23lb. I quickly cast out again, as



Big Girl.



28lb.

the fish were still showing, and within the next hour I was away again with my third mirror of 25lb. We took the photos and then slid her back. I still had one more night left, so I took the gamble and put a further 3kg of bait over the same area. Just as it was getting dark and I was watching the water I noticed a big common stick his head out not far from my spot. Could it be?

I decided to call it a night, then around 1am I was away again, and the fish took around 20-30 yards off my reel. This one felt a lot bigger than the last couple. I ended up playing the fish for about 20 minutes. It stayed low and felt heavy as the big ones invariably do. I was still half asleep but managed to net her at the first attempt. I looked in the net and thought, that's a long fish! I even thought it might have been a pike. I went and got my head-torch and then I realised it was a long common, and straight away I knew it had to be the Bulldozer.

I left her safely in the net and went and got another angler for help. We both got her up on the scales, and it went past the magical 40lb mark and stopped at 41lb 2oz. We took the photos, and although I was enjoying my

moment I knew I had to get her back. She glided away smoothly, and I felt overwhelmed by this achievement.

I couldn't believe I had caught another target fish. After that session I did return for a few single nights, but I think I had filled my quota of catches

and had no further catches on the lake. As I said before I kept it simple, as most of my fishing over the years has been, and yet again it has not failed me. The faithful Spicy Red Fish had done its job! Get on the going bait! ■



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