

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



An African Adventure... (Part 5) by Dave Charley
Big Storm, Big Results by Marc Cav
This Time Last Year by Liam Sykes
This Time Last Year featuring Roger Bacon
Organisation is the Key by Terry Edmunds
Carp Fishing and The Military by Michael Madeley
Spring is on the Way by Darrell Peck
Take me to Church by Scott Lloyd
Prepping for Spring by Charlie Ferris

Autumn Success by Chris Claxton
As Spring Sprung by Ed Betteridge
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A 15 Year Obsession by Jerry Hammond
Highlights of a carp life by Martin Pick
Carp Magazines by Rob Maylin
Magic moments by Steve Briggs
Wasing Parrot by Terry Hearn
Top Highlights of 250 issues of Big Carp – Terry Dempsey



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5	BLUEBELL LAKES
6	ELPHICKS
7	SANDHURST
8	FRYERNING
9	FARLOWS LAKE
10	COOLE ACRES

Top 10 French Holiday Destinations

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2	LAKE BOSSARD
3	LAKE HERITAGE
4	RIBIERE
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9	LES QUIS
10	JONCHERY

Top 10 Bait Companies

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

Top 10 Carp Tackle Companies (Terminal)

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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

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2	SHIMANO
3	REUBEN HEATON
4	FREE SPIRIT
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6	TRAKKER
7	AQUA PRODUCTS
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9	CENTURY
10	CHILTERN CUSTOM RODS

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3	YATELEY ANGLING CENTRE
4	ANGLING DIRECT NORWICH
5	POINDESTRES
6	KESWALLS
7	ANGLING DIRECT BIRMINGHAM
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9	TACKLE UP
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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 333

SPRING TIPS AND TRICKS

Liam Sykes
This Time Last Year

Roger Bacon
This Time Last Year

Darrell Peck
Spring is on the Way

Charley Ferris
Prepping for Spring



Also, This Month:
Terry Edmunds Organisation is the Key
Michael Madeley Carp Fishing and the Military
Dave Charley An African Adventure
Marc Cav Big Storm Big Results
Scott Lloyd Take me to Church
Extensive Countrywide Catch Reports

Still the proper carp angler's favourite read

Bug Bait – The Highest Quality Bug Meal



ZEE BUG RANGE

Zee Bug Boilies has a blend of high-quality powders of which includes black soldier fly. It has taken extensive research to find and source a high-quality black fly with such a low-fat content. This bait can be used all year round, to prevent changing bait in the winter months. Check out the Zee Bug range: https://bugbait.co.uk/store/?_shop_category_filter=zee-bug



TS BUG RANGE

The TS Bug is the third of our four baits in the range. Naturally grey in colour the TS Bug contains a blend of several insect meals along with a combination of spices which creates a subtle creamy spiced aroma. Once again due to its low fat content this bait can be used year round and is extremely digestible. https://bugbait.co.uk/store/?_shop_category_filter=ts-bug-range



CREEPY CRAWLIES HOOKBAITS

A hookbait specifically designed to be used as a topper to give that extra little fleck of colour to your foodbait. Available in: Peach - Peach White - Kiwi & Maggot Yellow - Earthworm & Garlic Pink - Cherry & Bloodworm <https://bugbait.co.uk/product/creepy-crawlies/>



JONNY LEMON HIGH ATTRACT POP UPS

A different take on your classic white pop ups with a zesty, sweet lemon flavour profile, combined with long lasting buoyancy these are a real winner fished over bait of as single hookbaits. Available in 12mm, 14mm and Booster spray Get yours here: <https://bugbait.co.uk/product/high-attract-pop-ups/>



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Highly buoyant, Bright and extremely attractive! Combining that visual factor along with a tried and tested flavour profile you know you're onto a winner! <https://bugbait.co.uk/product/high-attract-pop-ups/>



THE BUGS NUTS

The Bugs Nuts is the second of the four baits in our range. Cream in colour the Bugs Nuts contains both a blend of insect meal as well as several nut meals. You can clearly pick up the aroma of the nut content with in the boilie when you smell it which is very appealing. Due to its natural fat content this boilie is better suited for spring through to autumn fishing. Available NOW in 15mm & 18mm Shelf Life boilie. <https://bugbait.co.uk/product/the-bugs-nuts-boilies/>



BLACK BUG

Our new bait range Black Bug is created using a combination of four different insects, following the Bug Bait ethos to replace traditional marine product protein sources. Black in colour means that if you have a problem with diving birds on your venue the range is going to greatly benefit you. For the attractor package, we have chosen to use a combination of citrus fruits which as well as being ultra-attractive to the carp are extremely resistant to the ingress of horrible silty smells when fishing over dirtier substrate. Available Now! https://bugbait.co.uk/store/?_shop_category_filter=black-bug-range



Our man James Cottee has continued his great form banking multiple fish as of late with a little help from our Yellow Snow pop ups fished over Bugs Nuts boilies.



James Cottee has been in touch with this lovely mirror which was part of a recent haul using our Yellow Snow pop ups fished over a bed of crumbed Bugs Nuts boilies.

See the full range...

amazon prime



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Spring Tips and Tricks

At last Spring is in the air! It's 'Carp Time' again, they are on the munch, the banks are filling up with those little green tents, there are smiles on the anglers faces as friendships are re-newed and all is good in the world again. Fxxx Putin, Sunak, Covid, the Lecky Bill, it's our time to chill, get the rods out on the spots. crack open a nice cold beer (or cuppa if you prefer) and... relax.

I love the spring. I bloody love it. A new start, the buds are on the trees, a few early flowers have just appeared. The birds are building nests and Mr Carp is hungry. I love the spring! So, with that in mind the theme of this month's Big Carp is 'Spring Tips and Tricks' and we have articles from the guys who know how to make the best of this time of year.

Darrell Peck is one such guy, he can catch them anytime of the year but without a doubt spring is his favourite month and, in this issue, he gives us some of his advice.

Charley Ferris is prepping for spring while Roger Bacon looks back to last spring and how he was stacking them up like breeze blocks over at Greville.

Liam Sykes is also looking back to 'This Time Last Year' and a massive Stanwick common Also, this month Terry Edmunds tells us how to get organised, as in his opinion this is the key to success.

Just to mix it up a bit Michael Madeley returns this month with his latest piece looking at 'Carp Fishing and the Military' whilst Dave Charley returns with the next instalment of 'An African Adventure'. Last month's cover star Scott Lloyd has been at 'em again as he asks "Take me to Church", Whilst Marc Cav took on a Big Storm Big for Results.

Since the first months of 2024 have been exceptionally mild, there has been plenty of 'bigguns' smiling for the camera, hence another packed 20 pages of 'Extensive countrywide catch reports' again this month.

Add to these some 'carpy' humour, the latest news and reviews and I think you would agree that for FREE it's another fantastic issue of Big Carp.

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

Rob Maxlin

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BIG CARP 333

MAY 2024

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Oz Holness with a beast!



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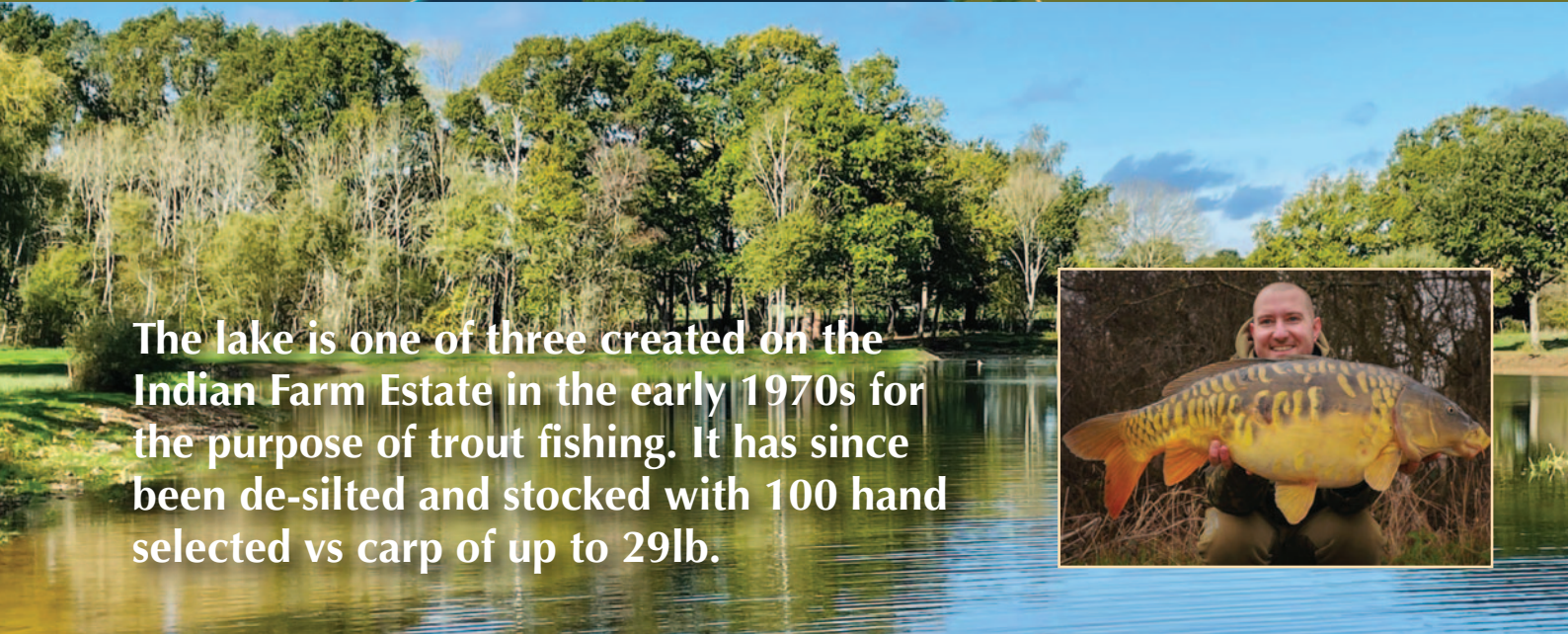


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A stunning 6 acre estate lake, offering a peaceful slice of fishing heaven situated in the heart of Surrey's beautiful countryside.



The lake is one of three created on the Indian Farm Estate in the early 1970s for the purpose of trout fishing. It has since been de-silted and stocked with 100 hand selected vs carp of up to 29lb.



Onsite facilities consist of a cabin with shower, toilet, basic kitchen and a sitting area.

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ShockLeader

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

Angling Trust wins new contract to grow fishing and support grassroots clubs and fisheries

The Angling Trust has today been awarded a new four-year National Angling Strategic Services contract (NASS3) by the Environment Agency following a competitive procurement process.

The new contract will commence on the 1st April 2024 and will run for four years during which the Angling Trust will be focussed upon the following key areas of work, which will be funded by rod licence money: Introduce more people to fishing to ensure our sport grows and flourishes and more people enjoy the health and well-being benefits that angling brings.

Provide expert advice to grassroots clubs and fisheries on club management and growth, protecting fisheries from predation, improving biosecurity, and issues around invasive species.

Administer a project fund to support the development of clubs around the country. Build effective enforcement partnerships with the police, angling clubs and fishery owners through the Voluntary Bailiff Service and Building Bridges project.

Jamie Cook, Chief Executive of the Angling Trust, said: "All anglers who buy a fishing rod licence deserve to have clarity on where that money is being spent and how it is impacting fish and fishing.

As a not-for-profit organisation and the national governing body for fishing, the Angling Trust is focused upon re-investing licence money back into grass roots angling.

"We are delighted to be able to extend our partnership with hundreds of community clubs, coaches and fisheries across England, channelling resources to where they can have the greatest impact and get more people fishing more often.

This contract will provide new resource for our incredible Reel Education programme which is taking angling into schools as part of the National Curriculum and creating a desire to try fishing in previously untapped communities.

"Our national club network and the volunteers who run them are the lifeblood of our sport.

We will therefore provide a much greater emphasis on clubs and fisheries, providing more professional support and funding opportunities to help them operate more effectively, deliver better fisheries management, and create real and lasting pathways into angling.

"The funding from this new contract will also allow for the doubling of the national voluntary bailiff network to help clubs and fisheries protect their waters from poaching and fish theft as well as resource to train

police forces nationwide on fisheries crime and prevention alongside EA enforcement staff.

"I firmly believe that as an organisation run by anglers for anglers, we are best placed to use this small portion of the overall rod licence income for the benefit of fish and fishing.

However, it does not prevent us holding the EA to account when necessary.

That's been the case many times in recent years where we have tackled the Agency on a number of issues, including pollution, over abstraction and habitat destruction, and our sister organisation Fish Legal have taken the EA to court on behalf of ourselves and our member clubs and fisheries.

"The current National Angling Strategic Services contract is due to end on 31st March 2024 and the new contract will be on a rolling 12-month basis for a maximum of four years, with £1.77 million of rod licence income being invested in the first year.

The NASS3 contract has a participation target in year 1 of engaging with 37,000 people and aims to increase the number of volunteer bailiffs to 1,400 after four years.

The contract builds on nine years of partnership work between the EA and Angling Trust which has seen a wide range of initiatives introduced such as the nationally recognised Get Fishing awards, the Voluntary Bailiff Service and the Angling Improvement Fund (AIF) which have helped to protect fisheries and promote the sport of angling throughout England.

Heidi Stone, Fisheries Manager from the Environment Agency, said: "Our partnership with the Angling Trust has been a key asset in bettering our fisheries across the UK and improving the sport of angling for existing and new anglers.

"We are delighted to award the Angling Trust with this contract, so we can build on our previous successes and secure the best future for angling by making fishing licence income go further." ■

Image: Introducing newcomers to angling at a Get Fishing event, funded by fishing licence income in partnership with the Environment Agency.



Northern Ireland Carp Anglers Association 2023-24 Season

As we come into the final weeks of our 2023-24 season, I thought I would do a quick update for our followers on what's been going on.

At the start of the season, we had JS fisheries across from England to net Milllodge which was a real eye opener and through up a few surprises.

We carried out another major stocking at our newest venue Tildarg which is growing from strength to strength and the fish are growing beyond what we ever expected. We have already seen 20lb+ fish on the

bank. This venue is going to be something very special in the future.

During the season we held a few matches which were fantastic craic including a pike match during the winter and we hope to carry this on next year.

We have carried out lots of significant infrastructure improvements across all 5 venues with a new carpark at Brookhall, new bridge and grills and all of the swims replaced at Glenvale, new swims on swanhole and swims at Tildarg.

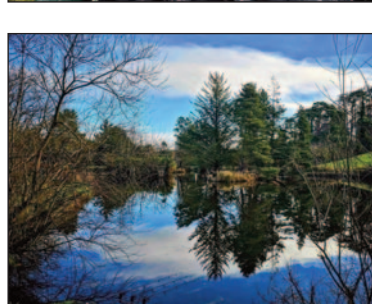
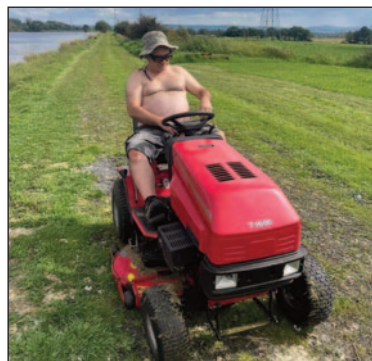
The new season 2024-25 will see

work start on Mill lodge where we have big plans.

The fishing has improved year on year and again we have seen hundreds of fish caught, loads of new personal bests for our members and lots of lake records being broken and probably more important, lots of people getting involved in carp angling of all ages.

With the winter being so mild this year the carp have definitely been on the move and they are feeding with some amazing fish being out already in 2024. ■

Few pictures from 2023-24



Do you remember your first few years of fishing?

The excitement, saving up your pocket money for tackle, going on adventures with friends?

Through our Get Fishing programme, Angling Trust introduces thousands of young people to angling every year.

Help us inspire the next generation to get out there and fish – join the Angling Trust today.

Your Membership will also support our work to:

- Help us fight pollution through our Anglers Against Pollution campaign and the work of Fish Legal
- Support our work to lobby Government on environmental issues



- Fight angling bans
- Introduce more people to our wonderful sport
- Promote the mental health and wellbeing benefits of angling
- Support grass roots angling clubs
- Improve fishing access for all

Your Membership will provide you with:

- Exclusive discounts on a wide range of fishing tackle, bait and much more
- Public liability insurance while you are fishing
- 10% discount at fisheries around

the country

- Access to fishing matches run by the Angling Trust
 - Quality annual magazine
 - Regular newsletters and updates
- Adult membership is just £30* for a whole year, senior citizen membership £26* And if you would like the youngsters in your life to be members too that Junior membership is FREE!

Please note – if the child involved is under 13 years of age you will need to contact the Membership team on 0343 507 7006 to give your consent and to add them to our records. ■

The Kracking Re-Opens For Exclusive Bookings



We are now taking bookings for exclusive fishing on the Kracking Carp Lake. This lake is home to some of Devon's biggest Carp!!

From the 1st of March bookings will run from midday Friday to midday Sunday, and midday Monday to midday Thursday.

Bookings are £250 for up to four anglers. All anglers will be vetted prior to the booking being confirmed (18+ only). Normal fishery rules apply.

We are taking bookings NOW from March to and including December by phone only 'strictly' during office hours 9am-4.30pm – TEL. 01409 221559. Do NOT call out of these hours

BOOK AS SOON AS YOU CAN to avoid disappointment!

Xanadu, Speci Cat, Fat Boys and the Trout Lake also reopen for day ticket fishing from the 01st of March. (More details to follow tomorrow).

Thank you for your patience whilst improvements have been made to the otter fence.

We look forward to seeing you soon.. ■



We need your help

Would you like to help raise money for charity? Well now is your chance! East Northants Fishing is holding a 48hr carp fishing match this year (dates to be announced soon) and we need your help to raise as much money as we can.

If you would like to donate prizes, sponsor the match/trophies or just donate to our chosen charity Cancer Research UK. please contact us via our Facebook page or by phoning Ricki Stokes on 07787522264.

Please could you like and share this post to anyone you think would be interested. Thank you from the East Northants Fishing. ■

Welcome to

CREEDENCE FISHERY

your exclusive premium carp lake

Located in Essex, Creedence Fishery hosts one of the finest fishing lakes in the area. Created in 1922 and opened in 2020, the fishery boasts a stunning two acre carp lake, stocked with fish up to 44lb, with at least 30 x 30lb carp up to 39lb and at least six different 40s, backed up with another 30 x upper 20s. A handful of other 30lb fish and some fast growers to back them up. We are proud to offer you an excellent fishing environment and with accommodating facilities to help you get that new personal best!

THE FACILITIES



Four purpose built cabins adorn this beautiful hidden carp lake in Essex. Bookings available via the website. (Four Swims) Whole lake bookings available.

Creedence Fishery: A Year of Remarkable Growth In the few years since its inception, Creedence Fishery, located in picturesque Essex surroundings, has quickly distinguished itself as a premier destination for carp angling enthusiasts. This two-acre modern carp fishery has seen a flurry of activity and development over the last 12 months, significantly enhancing the angling experience and bolstering its presence within the community. At the heart of Creedence Fishery are its unique offerings that cater to the comfort and convenience of anglers. Each of the four meticulously designed swims (one of which one is a double) houses a wooden cabin equipped with modern amenities including heating, a fridge, TV, power, and Wi-Fi.

This innovative approach ensures that anglers can focus on their passion without the hassle of setting up bivvies, regardless of the weather conditions. In order to prevent unsightly angling tackle hanging from the trees along its margins, and to protect the cabins and wildlife, Creedence Fishery is a bait-boat only venue which adds to the excitement and challenge of catching big carp from its waters. Furthermore, the inclusion of essential carp care equipment, along with toilets, shower and vending machine, underscores the fishery's commitment to both angler satisfaction and fish welfare.

A pivotal development this year has been the introduction of a communal BBQ and social area, fostering a sense of community among visitors. The integration of the 'swimbooker' app for easy online booking has also streamlined the booking process, reflecting the fishery's embrace of technology to enhance user experience. The stocking program represents another significant milestone, with the addition of over 15x 30lb carp and

3x 40lb carp to the lake. This initiative not only promises thrilling challenges for anglers aiming to catch these magnificent specimens, but with the recent nettings removing huge numbers of smaller fish, allows for the backup stock to grow through too.

The impact of these developments is evident in the surge of anglers flocking to Creedence Fishery, drawn by the allure of its massive specimen carp and the enhanced fishing experience. The attention from mainstream angling media further validates the fishery's growing reputation as a premier destination. Looking ahead, Creedence Fishery plans to continue its trajectory of growth with a focus on nurturing huge specimen carp.

A scheduled netting at the year's end aims to curate the lake's population, ensuring that only carp above 25lb remain, alongside the introduction of even more 40lb carp. A testament to the fishery's appeal is a special feature by 'AJ Spooner' of swimbooker, whose YouTube session capturing multiple 30lb catches in a single winter outing has captivated the angling community.

This event, emblematic of the fishery's potential, can be easily accessed through the QR code link, as we invite you to witness the thrill of angling at Creedence Fishery. As Creedence Fishery continues to evolve, its blend of comfort, community, and carp sets it apart, promising memorable experiences for all who visit. With bookings already matching last year's total by February 2024, the fishery's future looks as bright as the reflective scales of its prized carp. Every new booking also includes 3KG of free feed pellet for every angler! Check the live availability of Creedence Fishery via the swimbooker app, and, if you're looking for a comfortable place to target huge carp in Essex, get it booked!



swimbooker

CONTACT DETAILS: 07882 083160

Creedencefishery@gmail.com

creedencefishery.com

See us on Facebook (Creedence Fishery) and Instagram (@CreedenceFishery)



We look forward to welcoming you to Creedence Fishery!



Adam Rawlings catch report

After the wind the move the first night in a new swim and blowing my mind when I see it here it is THE SADDLE BACK COMMON 52lb 6oz a new PB common mega moment for me self takes for the win lol.



Scott Lloyd Again!

Black Swan's 'Paw Print' at 48 and ounces, capping off what has been an incredible winter for Scott Lloyd! We might have to rethink that Mr Autumn title. With the fish appearing high up in the layers, a couple of depth tweaks to Scott's zigs eventually struck gold, cementing once again just how important it is to make those changes when zig fishing. All black everything on the Zig Kicker and Barrel front being the winning combo this time around.



Scott Lloyd catch report

The zigging over on Dinton Black Swan has been kind to me for sure, you certainly can't pick em but I definitely managed to pick a few of the right ones!! I landed 3 fish over the past few months, a 38lb'er 57lb'er and this 48lb'er came just a couple of days before the zig fishing was due to stop as it does traditionally every end of Feb. If I can keep that average going, I'd be a happy man but to be honest my year is made already and anything else this year will be a bonus! I've got a few filming commitments elsewhere for a few weeks but I'm sure I'll be back over come April for some proper fishing on the deck, I'm looking forward to setting sail I won't lie it's been a while since I done some serious boat fishing so it should be fun at least



Jonny Beaker catch report

And another new 40lb plus carp for the road lake syndicate trust the process 3 new 40s this year and there will be more.



Anthony Tanti catch report

What a great session I had on my syndicate last week, landing two 30's and a brace of 40s, biggest being 46.8lb, happy days.



48lb PB tops 10-fish old mill hit!

Ryan Swift was celebrating new personal best on his latest trip to Old Mill Lakes in Lincolnshire, topping a 10-fish catch with a unit of a mirror known as Paw Print. Weighing in at 48lb, the fish came from a spot next to one of the islands, where Ryan had introduced a mixture of broken Bug boilies and Crayfish Mini Mix pellets. A slip-D rig and a Bug Corker dumbbell waffer fished over the baited area was enough to give Ryan the bite from the PB-busting mirror.



Steve Nicol catch report

Steve Nicol first trip out this year, and first-time using Halo results in one of the most sought-after carp in the Kent complex *The Box Common* at 40lbs 6oz BMX 15mm Shelflife coated in BMX liquid, with a 12mm BMX pop up. Another 40 plus carp falls to Halo baits.



HUGE Brace of Carp!

Ivan Medic has kicked off his year perfectly with two giant carp from Croatia. One 30kg+ common would do, but two is even better! That is exactly what Ivan managed when he landed a 35.5kg (78lb+) common followed by a 32.05kg (70lb+) during the night. Both caught with Ronnie Rigs comprising of crimped Link in 25lb and Edges Size 2 Curve Hooks. Brilliant result Ivan, well done



David Gates catch report

Monks pit, Cambridgeshire – Forty, two thirties and three twenties in a day! Let's kick-start the week in the capable hands of Perry Alabaster, who had an amazing day's angling yesterday over on his syndicate water, Monks Pit, landing a forty, two thirties and three twenties! This was also Perry's first-ever session using our new Crayfish Hydro Spod Syrup, which we just knew he'd love – and he clearly already does! Perry baited an area with Bug crumb and Crayfish Maxi Mix and Crayfish Mini Mix pellets, all soaked in the Crayfish Hydro Spod Syrup, and the fished Crayfish wafers over the top. The highlight of the trip was a unit of a mirror known as Felix, tipping the scales at 46lb 14oz!



Scott Geezer Grant catch report

Another session and another result, the bait is really taking hold, banked a 28lb 3oz mirror then a couple of hours later I banked another winter 40 in the shape of the Woodcarving at 41lb 7oz. This is my second Winter 40lber and what a fish it is. Same tactics same baiting strategy. The Nuts boilies, chillie hemp & maggots. Size 4 Ronnie rigs holding firm as always. PVA mesh bags & foam nuggets for the perfect presentation.



Rick Golder catch report

One from a few weeks ago, the 3rd week of January, and my first bite of the year, 2 days after the lake had thawed. Unfortunately, a recapture, but at 41 lb in the cold a good result.



Young, keen and determined

Max Whitehall had an incredible run over on Linch Hill's Christchurch-a Lake that's not for the faint hearted, and requires 100% dedication and concentration! He went head first into his campaign, landing many of the lake's special residents, with the pick of the bunch being 'Baby Perch' at over 43lbs!



Oz Holness catch report

It's everything you could want from a beautiful English gravel pit, big gnarly overhanging snags, big trees, back bays, weedy and crystal-clear water, that's Farnham Flint. Not only that, it's home to some incredible-looking old It's everything you could want from a beautiful English gravel pit, big gnarly overhanging snags, big trees, back bays, weedy and crystal-clear water, that's Farnham Flint. Not only that, it's home to some incredible-looking old carp, of which some are giants!

One man who thrives on these big pits, chasing giants is Oz Holness, here with one of the enormous old commons from Flint, caught during a recent filming trip with the guy from Cyp.



Lewis Read catch report

Lewis Read told us about his recent trip to the one and only Wellington Country Park:

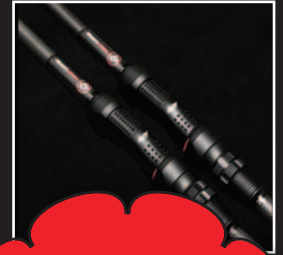
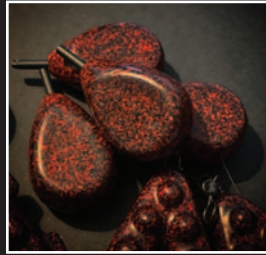
"I had a lovely weekend – guesy on Welly, courtesy of my old mate and head bailiff Jamie. It had been postponed since Christmas, but I got the last weekend of guesies on the full moon instead. Brucey Bonus... I got down Friday morning, just in time to find Welsh Brian stood in the water with a big fish in the net, which I immediately ID'd as 'Drop Scale' and went 53.7lb (a new PB for him). The area he was in was the little lake, and talking to Dean (Fletcher), it seemed that area had done the majority of recent bites and, as Brian was going late morning, it would have been rude not to put my barrow behind him and go for a walk. It's always a few degrees warmer in the sheltered little lake, and the fish seem to love it in there.

With nothing seen on my long stroll, and all other anglers saying they'd seen nowt, I got rods cast out to some old favourite marks and baited with a pole (walking round to the other side) - and had a bite next morning which resulted in 'The Linear' @46.8, a proper battle! It was a lovely trip down memory lane..."



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Fred Saunders catch report

Well, where to start I've had the half lin at 44lb verified by the guy in 11 who took the photos thank you Jon Touchin was there for the 32lb fish mid 20 and low 20 great help from bailiffs once again making sure you're ok if you need anything and a good insight of the lake



Keith Newton catch report

47lb 4oz slope head March 2024.



Scott Lloyd catch report

A much-needed break from the norm resulted in something rather special for Scott Lloyd last week. A carp of the highest order, and a result at any time of the year, but in mid Feb. Those Church Lake carp have seen some top-quality angling pressure over the years so a stealthy approach of only fishing the single rod and staying mobile was key to Scott's approach. Super slow sinking singles fished on Hinge rigs to signs of feeding carp being the winning tactic. Scott's rigs were carefully constructed using our Recoil and Camstiff hook links, as well as our super strong size 4 Beaked Chod Barbless hooks.



Ben Oconnor catch report

The Elite Carp Masters at Cottington lakes, Oconnor and Oconnor, peg 2, the 'little linear' at 41lb 3oz, steamies hydro squid fished over 20 hydro squid boilies along with a 3oz square lead from SM leads what a Sunday morning in February and a stunning 40lb carp.



PB For Paul Chubb

Our man Paul Chubb has set himself a target of at least one UK 50lber this year and he has started his mission falling only a few pounds short with this 47lb+ ghostly common from his syndicate. We have a feeling this PB won't last long, bring on the 50s Paul. Paul's rod of choice is the 13ft X1K giving him both, the ability to cast where many can't and having a rod man enough to keep them fish out of the snags. Well done Paul



Scott Grant catch report

46lb + bruiser of a carp called buster for Scott Geezer Grant from the dell syndicate in Essex recently, caught with a mixture of crumbed the nuts boilies and a powder coated Nuts pop up getting the result!

The Lucky Hats Back For Jack!

Jack Meyer's lucky hat, strikes again during his first trip of the new year. He told us: "My first trip of the year fishing and of course I opted for Welly. I haven't been down to Welly since beginning of September due to family life, work and filming commitments i just haven't had the time! Checking the weather forecast a few days previously I could see that a storm was heading with unusual double figure temps for this time of year, I had to get down the lake!"

"I had 3 takes in 48 hours (I lost the 2nd due to an old crack off in the lake.....GUTTED) But still an amazing result to have 2 40's in a Jan session! The common going 43lb and the mirror hitting 47lb!" "My standard approach for Welly using a mixture of washed out Cell & Hybrid in 15mm. Using White Milky Toffee pop ups over the top." Brilliant, Jack.



John Paul McCusker catch report

Team member John Paul McCusker is at it again in a BIG way with his first UK 50lb! It's not the first time she has been caught on a Scorpion hook either: 'Finally having one of those dream sessions. Buzzing with this fish this morning. First UK 50 and what a beauty she is at 56-07. After 3 fish yesterday up to 40-05 who would think I could top that. One of the A+ team called black spot. Caught using #carptackleonline #scorpion hooks and end tackle. Let's see what tonight can bring. Superb John, congratulations!

Jack Frost catch report

Congratulations to Mick for a cracking mirror of 45lb 7oz well done Mick.





Trent Baits catch report

Northy's biggest old girl canon at 44lb. Had her after finding quite a few chunks really localised in the early hours. 3 rods deployed and she was the second bite of three. An incredible morning fishing I'll not forget. By far the best winters fishing for chunks I've ever had.



Urban Baits catch report

Part of a huge 30 fish haul, this enormous upper 50 mirror was certainly the highlight of the trip. Heavily baiting with Nutcracker and Fully Loaded kept the bites coming thick and fast.



Bob Goulds catch report

It's been a great February. Looking back in the diary it's normally one of the hardest months. But not this year. It was topped by this 46 lb mirror.



Paul Manning catch report

Well, my second time on and never did I think I would catch one of the 2 fish I wanted to catch, the queen of lake 48.06lb of sick carp.



Ben Heath catch report

Ben Heath sent in the following catch report: This 52lb 6oz mirror known as 'Mr T' was the highlight from a 48-hour session on Emperor Lakes Fishery in Devon. A Wicked White Wafer fished in a PVA bag with 'P-Fish' pellets proved its downfall. This was fished tight to an island at 40 yards. This is a fish I have not caught before from Emperor Lakes and beats my previous PB by 6lb. I would like to thank Dave and Jo Lidstone for giving me the opportunity to fish Emperor and Mad Baits for supplying the goods to fulfil a dream of catching a UK 50. One happy angler!



Winter 40lber

Jonathan Tuck has been in touch to tell us about his recent brace from Northery park syndicate, here he is with his 1st one a fish known as 'early riser' at 40lb 8oz, and if that's not enough he also had a 34lb common a fish known as floppy tail only half an hour later, this was Jon's first time out with Cbbaits m-crab and special pop ups, congratulations from everyone at Cbbaits on your new PB, good



An Oxfordshire brace to remember

After heading down to Linch Hills Christchurch Lake, Chris Dibbens soon found himself soaking up the glory after landing two of the lake's real gems, with one over 37lbs and the other over 42lbs! Spreads of Manilla Active in various sizes onto a bar, with 14mm White Manilla Pop-Ups over the top doing the business.



54lb+ Black Spot Wraps Up Wharf Pool Campaign – Wharf Pool, Essex

Jamie Cramer's winter campaign on Essex's Wharf Pool syndicate is finally complete! After landing two of the A team amongst a seven-fish tally in January on the Stanford-le-Hope venue, Jamie's good run continued into February, with a further seven fish gracing his net, topped by the fish he so dearly craved, the magnificent Black Spot at a massive 54lb 8oz. Just for good measure, Jamie also set a new common lake record with a fish known as the Dinton at 36lb 10oz, backed up by a beautiful scaly mirror of 30lb 6oz.

Jamie hasn't been afraid to give the fish some bait, introducing a regular mixture of crumbed-up Bug boilies and Crayfish Mini Mix pellets, all soaked in Calanus Hydro and Bug Hydro Spod Syrup. Bug Corker pop-ups in 15mm fished over the baited area have done the rest of the work!



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The Glebe Lake has been run as a private fishery in years past, but is now available for lake-exclusive bookings for up to five anglers for three or four nights sessions.

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Dave Levy – Mainline Bait Catch Report

Many of you would have already seen this capture but we wanted to say a big congratulations to Mr Consistent, Dave Levy on the capture of this immense winter common. We caught up with Dave just a day after the capture, he told us:

“I finally got to meet my nemesis ‘The White Tipped Common’. My first session was some three years ago and since then I’ve fished 85 nights on the lake from hot summer sessions to freezing cold winter nights.

This winter saw the lake busier than before. It was seeing a lot of bait and although Cell had done me well in the past I knew a different tactic was needed. I decided to fish solid bags with a super attractive mix. This consisted of crumbed Cell, Essential Cell, Spod and PVA Pellet Mix and some red maggots.

I had a 35lb fish at the start of the year then a few blanks, but as it was January this is only to be expected. It was not the end of January and this session I cast six solid bags out through the day so there were the small super attractive food parcels. The night was quiet and at 8am the next morning I was just recasting a rod when the left bobbin dropped back, at first, I thought it felt like a thirty as it was slow and stayed deep, the fight was slow and deep but as the carp rolled for the first time, I saw what I was attached to. I must admit I was well nervous, but the fish slide slowly over the net and the long wait was over. Some say she’s the best carp in Essex. I wouldn’t disagree, and at 51lb 10oz she equalled the Essex club record. I’m still on cloud 9!” Brilliant, Dave.



Richard Harris catch report

On B1 Linear last month, Richard Harris landed carp to 40lb. Awesome angling.



Terreign Clothing Catch Report

We have already been on one hell of a journey since we started, but this weekend represented a very special moment for us the first Terreign Clothing UK 50-pounder.

Of course, it was the man on fire, Brian Warrick, who caught this absolute beast.

Amazing job, and we could not be happier for you.



Keith Newton catch report

On a roll kings penny 40lb.



Club Lake Biggie

Dave Hill struck gold recently at his local club water in the shape of one of the A Team and a new PB at 41lb 2oz. Dave’s tactics included plenty of crumbed up CreAmino. IT-Works. Well, done Dave, great.



Royston Clarke catch report

Last year was a real crazy year that put my fishing on the back burner, but towards the end of the year I started to get the fire back so started walking a big pit. Seeing fish in all types of weather and following them, walking the lake most days for 2 months and thinking I've may have seen the bigun a few times really got me excited.

I finally decided to get the rods out for 24hours that ended in a blank, the weather started to pick up so thought I'd do another 24hours. I managed to get the last rod out and in the middle of putting 3 spombs over my last rod the second rod was away.

What a surprise after a long heavy battle looking into the landing net seeing the queen of the lake looking back at me the golden common. A fish that I never think I'll ever beat for its immense size and looks and in February from such a massive lake.

A big thank you to the people that helped me share the moment 2 weeks ago all the walks paid off.





Tom Maker catch report

Loaded with Cherry Coke and the @cinecarp.tv cameras, Tom Maker headed down to Linear Fisheries. With his horizon marker set, 3 rods deployed as tight as possible, and incorporating his theory of putting the rods out first and bait over the top, he was ready to go! Due to the noise of the spomb drawing the fish back in, almost like ringing the dinner bell, the action was thick and fast from the off! Lightly baiting the area with 2.3mm Bloodworm pellets, corn and chopped worm seemed to work a treat. Coupled with a mix of pink and yellow Mulbz (tipped with a bunch of wrigglers) being the downfall to 14x 20s, 6x 30s and the icing on the cake, the lake's biggest mirror at mid-40s!



Scott Grant catch report

My last fish of my Winter campaign and another fish I dearly wanted the "Lodger" at 47lb 9oz, this was the biggest of the campaign and my third winter 40lber. This has been my best winter ever. Effort equals rewards as they say. Same tactics as before Halo baits Nuts boilies, chillie hemp and maggots. PVA mesh bags and nuggets used for the perfect presentation.



Keith Newton catch report

Keith Newton back on the Bluebell Complex and putting the JH Baits KLF through its paces yet again! His latest original called 'Slope Head' at a mighty 47lb 4oz, caught on a KLF Pop Up presented on a Ronnie rig with a light scattering of KLF Boilie.



Jonny Old catch report

Jonny Old was lucky enough to catch a few lovely carp with the biggest going 40lb 4oz, which was a carp he has really wanted in his album called 'The Big Simmo Scaly'. Not finished, he also had a 27lb mirror a low 20lb mirror and mid double too. "They have defiantly loved the Cell lately" Jonny told us "As baiting with a few kg of boilies on each rod are keeping the bites coming. I've been keeping everything simple with Cell wafers on spinner rigs and baiting with straight boillie covered in Cell and Cream Smart Liquid." Brilliant, Jonny.



Roger Back with a Bang on Grenville!



59lb 12oz unit caps bumper return session. Roger Bacon is currently mid-session at Grenville Lake, but we just had to share this absolute tank with you guys in case you need any motivation to get out on the bank this weekend. This is actually Roger's first session on the Cambridgeshire super water since August, but it's almost as if he's never been away, amassing a huge tally of carp, topped so far by this absolute unit of 59lb 12oz! Roger's session began with a 10kg hit of mixed-sized Bug boilies that he had pre-soaked in Bug Liquid Food for 48 hours and the bites followed regularly thereafter.



51lb+ Lake record caps remarkable campaign!

Lee 'Smiley' Baker has capped off the most remarkable few months' angling he has ever experienced with a hard-earned and justly deserved new lake record. Lee has whetted our appetite for the new campaign with scaly after scaly on his syndicate already this year, but there was always a bigger prize at the back of his mind and the hope of something extra special.

Yesterday, in the midst of another good run of fish, Lee's numbers finally came in as he slipped his net under the largest fish in the lake, another beautiful scaly mirror of 51lb 13oz, which was not only a lake record but a new personal best for Lee. Describing his emotions after the capture, Lee said: "I'm absolutely blown away!"

Lee has been soaking his Secret 7 and SLK boilies and in S7 Liquid Food and then dusting it in Krill Meal and Insect Meal, and then adding Hydro Spod Syrups and similar powders to his pellets. Secret 7 Corker wafers and Corker pop-ups fished over the top have been getting the bites.



Mark Laurence catch report

Innovate rod Mark Laurence upped his PB last night with this clonker. Mark had been targeting this A Team member from his syndicate for some time and now finally has it in his impressive portfolio. Tipping the scales at 56lb 8oz, the fish known as PATRICIA succumbed to the Reaper Nut Mix. Well done on your new PB mate!

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Mark Davey

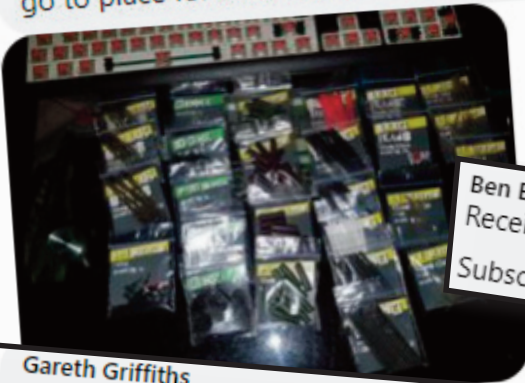
Just received my second order, ordered Sunday at 7 arrived Tuesday at 9am. Great communication and products. It's possibly the best tenner I have spent joining up. Highly recommended. M

2 h Love Reply Send message Hide



Matt Applegate

My order arrived this morning. Very happy mate, fast delivery aswell. I cant big carp punk up enough, my go to place for all of my end tackle from now. All this for under 50 notes is insane. Thanks again mate.



Dan Care

Cracking gear with quick turnaround



Ben Bradley

Received my samples and really impressed with the quality of everything
Subscribed and order to follow



Gareth Griffiths

Mine have arrived thanks very much. Look awesome bits of kit, I am tying a rig now and will test as soon as the lake isn't frozen!!!! Thanks again.

6 d Love Reply Send message Hide



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Scott Carr Green catch report

Well, old mills birch been kind again this week fish of 37.02, 23.14 and 16.00. I've put the nights in past couple of months but been rewarded with my best cold water carp fishing ever. 11 carp of 16.00, 23.14, 25.00, 25.09, 28.13, 29.06, 35.04, 35.13, 36.00, 37.02 and 41.02. Next session will probably be in summer as our new bundle of joy is due next month, maybe sneaking odd short session in local or on a Cheshire club water before the return. Good luck to everyone in clubbing season April/May while I'm elbows deep in dirty nappies, covered in sick and sleep deprived. All caught on old mills house bait from Trent baits.



Richard Cox catch report

Well, what a Tuesday morning I had, a very special carp at an incredible 56lb 5oz made a dream come true. Fair to say I'm one lucky angler. Pc1 over maxinut, seems to do me proud everywhere I go.



Jim Shelley catch report

Jim stalked this 44.14 common from a French canal recently using our epic Squid and Octopus Pop Ups.



Adam Honeysett catch report

Well, what can I say, I have been waiting to fish Pullens on the Elphicks Complex for some time and my 1st session on there didn't disappoint, after going back to work last week & not fishing I was really eager to arrive on Monday for our 48-hour lake booking.

I knew it wasn't going to be easy as it hadn't been fishing at all well but that's winter carp fishing for you.

I managed 1st out the draw and opted to fish a swim in a bay, the plan was to spomb out crumb and maggots but noticed holes in the reeds and a stick stuck in the ground on the far margin so it was obvious people had been fishing across the bay. This straight away seemed a good bet as if those areas are baited often that's where the fish would look for good when they were hungry, so ASM wafers tipped with Maggots were deployed into the area after finding the best bottom with a bare lead away from debris reed stems etc. several handfuls of ASM crumb & Red Maggots thrown over the top & it didn't take long, just 4 hours later I had my 1st Pullens carp at 42.06, I really thought I was on to something but that was the only fish between the 4 of us in 48 hours.

The action was caught on camera for my YouTube channel in the near future.



40lb-plus Common in Double Take!

A double take not long into darkness saw Ed Banks with 63lb of carp in his nets on a recent outing to an undisclosed venue, the highlight being a 40lb 6oz common! Remembering how the action unfolded, Ed said: "I received a savage take just before 8pm and hit into it. It immediately felt like a good fish, towing me around wherever it felt like! After 15 minutes, by which point I still hadn't seen the fish, one of my other rods decided to tear off at the same time, leaving me trying to juggle two rods at once. Luckily, the big girl gave up not long after and I managed to land both carp, the other being a low twenty." Ed's bites came on pink 15mm Bug Half Tones pop-ups that he pinned down with putty so they acted like a wafter. He fished his rigs over a mixture of 15mm Bug boilies, maize and hemp, all soaked in Sweet Cayenne Pepper.



Adam Maplethorpe catch report

What a big result for Adam Maplethorpe! It's one of the A-team from a 150-acre gravel pit in Lincolnshire. This 42lbs 11oz mirror was backed up with 3 more thirties to 37lb, all caught a few weeks back on Particle and Cell boilies covered in Smart Liquid. Well done, Adam.



Jon Williams catch report

A lovely 40.8 from this week's session backed up with a pair of 30s and a pair of 20s. Lovely times in Cambridge again.



Perry Hauling on Monks!

After a blistering start to this session on Monks Pit, the action showed no signs of letting up the following day for Perry Alabaster! Following six fish to 46lb 10oz on the first day, the second day yielded a further nine, including six thirties weighing in at 38lb 10oz, 38lb 2oz, 37lb 7oz, 35lb 6oz, 32lb 2oz and 30lb on the nose. Big beds of both Crayfish Maxi Mix and Crayfish Mini Mix pellets soaked in a generous helping of matching Crayfish Hydro Spod Syrup kept the fish coming back for more, with Crayfish and PB wafers picking off the bites.



DT Baits (Richard Smith) catch report

Baits Used: CWGB boosted hookbait and take 4 topper, **Rig of Choice:** German rig, **Weight of fish:** Various, **Venue:** Southwest syndicate
Catch details: With milder temperatures and a good low pressure system forecast, I knew I had to get down to the lake. I made the effort to get up early in the hope of giving me the chance to get on the fish! I found some spots near to where I had seen some bubbling and cast out 3 rods, all with CWGB boosted hookbaits topped with the take 4s spritzed with the matching bait spray. I opted to bait lightly introducing 3 spombs of CWGB pellet & stick mix soaked in the matching DNA liquid over the top of each rod. After the first night and morning passed uneventful, I wasn't deterred as the conditions continued to improve, I topped up each spot with just a couple more spombs. Not long after first light on the second morning the bobbin pulled up tight on the left hand rod and after a good battle in the margins and under the rod tip, I managed to land the first of the trip. In the shape of a stunning 37lb 10oz mirror.

Half way through a coffee after slipping back the 37lb mirror. The right-hand rod was away. An immaculate 31lb 12oz common fell to a CWGB boosted hookbait and take 4 topper. Then At 3am in driving wind and rain the right-hand rod was away again, this time resulting in one of the new stockies. After seeing a couple of shows long the evening before. I decided to move one rod to that area. Applying the same tactics that had done the previous 3 fish. On the final morning, Just as I finished boiling the kettle for the first coffee of day that rod was away. This fish felt strong from a long way out and after a good fight i slipped net under the biggest fish of the trip in the shape of this awesome 41lb 12oz mirror! As with all the fish it fell to a CWGB boosted hookbait and topped with a take 4 which was spritzed with the matching bait spray.



Sandhurst Brace – Luke Vallory

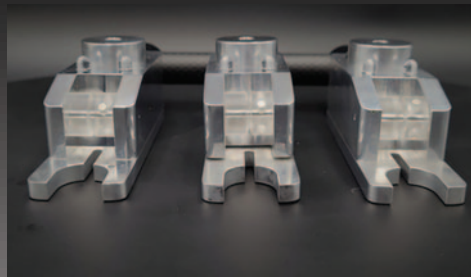
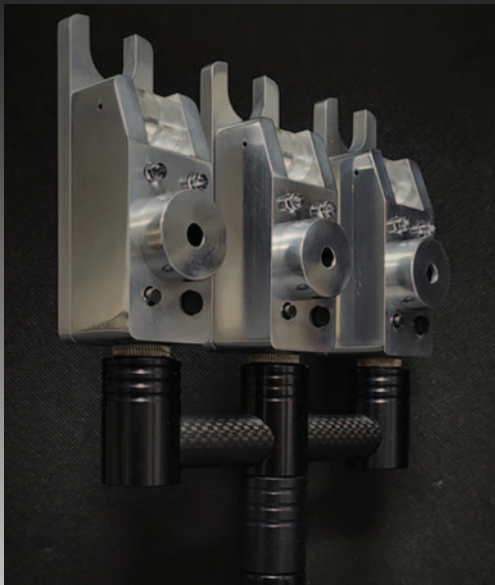
Luke Vallory headed to Sandhurst knowing there'd be a chance of a bite with the lake notoriously fishing well through the late winter period. Upon arrival, Luke soon located carp, and was quickly set up on them, locating a firm spot in the vicinity. Two rods were fished to the area, both baited with 12mm pop-ups on conventional spinners, rigged up with size 4 Kranks and Hybrid Lead Clips. The following morning produced two bites, both commons at 38:10 and 28, a perfect trip back to Sandhurst.

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Our monthly reviews on products currently on the market

In this issue:

- Geoff Anderson
- Target Baits
- KLS Bait



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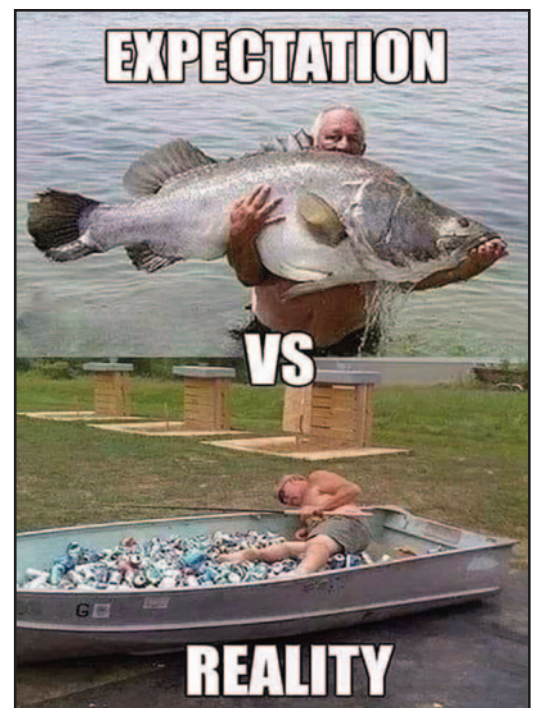
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An African Adventure...

By Dave Charley - A story of a fishery, where no fishery has been before.

Part Five (Part Four was published in the February issue, page 36)

The project was really starting to become a reality. Both dams had been left for a year to allow the aquatic ecosystems to mature before stocking with fish. August 2022 had seen us stock 71 carp into the beautiful 8.6 acre Carp Corner, taking up residency with the 125 Tigerfish already present.

The larger dam of 12 acres, which we called Tiger Bay, had been successfully stocked with 225 Tigerfish. We also put in an abundance of Tilapia, including some very impressive specimens up to 5kgs. The primary objective of these fish was to be a feed source for the Tigers, but we came to realise they are also a very sought after species in this part of the world.

So just when you think the hard work is done, and you can finally relax a little, we got a call from a staff member saying there were some 'strange' looking dogs in one of the dams. "Strange looking dogs"?! Upon arrival my heart sank as I watched two otters frolicking away in Carp Corner. Although wonderful creatures, they're not exactly what you want to

see in a newly stocked dam! And neither were the odd crocodiles that had made brief appearances over the past few months.

Piet and I discussed what we needed to do, both knowing it would be a massive undertaking, but one that had to be a priority right now. We chatted to a friend, a former crocodile farmer, who advised us on what barrier would be effective against these semi-aquatic reptiles. Electrical fencing doesn't shock a croc due to its thick, bony like skin. And so, a plan was hatched, and the design would involve using renewable hardwood spikes, 60cm long, hammered into the ground. These would be set 20cm apart and have three strands of barbed wire running along them, and above that would be standard electrical fencing.

The reality was we had 2.5km of fencing to do, not for the faint hearted!

It was during these tiring months of fence installation that we also had the excavator working to dam up the sides of 12 hectares of land that we wanted to leave as a wetland area. We had been marvelling at the bird and insect life that now called the dams

home, and in fact we had already identified over 100 species of birds. A wonderful addition to the venue, creating a large natural habitat for an abundance of species to thrive in.

One day whilst working on the fencing and watching the excavator creating the surrounding wetland, Jack had an inspired idea that we should use this heavy machinery to move earth and build up a couple of areas alongside the dams that could be future cottage sites. Genius idea! We were creating an 'oasis', considering the rather barren, abandoned farm lands surrounding us, and now we had a plan that people could come and stay right in the middle of it. It was over a couple of very cool and pleasant gin & tonics that night, that we finally decided upon the venues name: Waterside Retreat.

It was now mid May 2023 and D-day had eventually arrived, we were going to trial fish the venue for the very first time! I had a couple of very eager friends coming to join me for a weekend at the dams. It had been over two and a half years since we decided to start this project, and to finally be able to fish it was so incredibly exciting. We drove down and



Predator proofing the venue was no mean task, especially considering we 2.5km's to complete.



The excavator busy securing the wetland area, as the dams start to mature and flourish.



Brown-throated Weaver.



Yellow-billed Stork.



Malachite Kingfisher.

arrived Friday afternoon, and spent the remaining daylight hours sorting out tackle, prepping the boat and baiting an area for the carp. We managed to catch a few Tilapia as the sun was setting over the water, and life was rather marvellous I must say, but the real fishing adventures would be starting tomorrow.

We woke up early and headed

straight to the dams, and whilst Scottish Dave decided to cast lures from the bank, Haydn and I took the boat out on its maiden voyage around Tiger Bay. We gently moved around the water, powered by the electric trolling motor, and stopping where we thought would be likely spots. It was such a pleasure to finally be wetting a line into a water that had become such a big part of my life. The months of struggling to successfully transport and stock Tigerfish had been a huge challenge, but one we finally overcame. Now I just needed

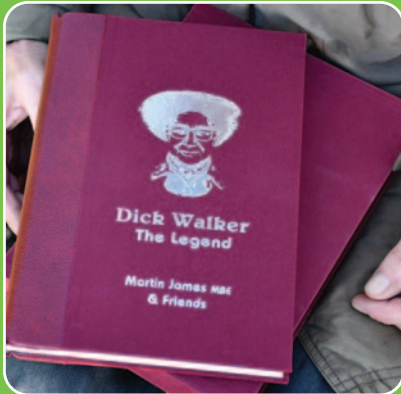
one of the 225 toothy predators to actually take a fancy to one of our lures!

I was just about to tell Haydn that I thought my lure was too big, knowing that most of the Tigers that were stocked over a year ago were averaging between 100 – 400g. Then Boom! Something struck my lure with such velocity it took me completely by surprise. The rod doubled over and the braid screamed off the reel. It was suddenly pandemonium on the boat. Then an explosion erupted at the surface as a large fish leapt into the air



The first morning out searching for Tigers and this happened, a fish beyond my wildest dreams!

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"I fished Swan Valley for over two years and I can honestly say it was some of the most enjoyable fishing I have ever experienced. It's a beautiful lake offering great opportunities for stalking, floater fishing and traditional methods. The stock is incredible for a water of this size, with upwards of a dozen forties" with some quickly approaching 50lb. I would not be at all surprised to see the first Swan 50 come out this year. The recent opportunity to book the whole venue for a group of friends is a brilliant idea and is realistically priced. Check out the photo galleries on their website and Face Book and get booked up asap because there are vacancies for some great weeks available but it will soon get booked up, you won't regret it." (See also the chapters on Swan Valley in my book One Last Cast)

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like a salmon. Fleeting thoughts raced through my mind as I tried to comprehend what was happening. That had to be a Tigerfish, as no other species behaves like that, but it can't be a Tiger as it's blooming massive!

I was a complete nervous wreck as I held onto the rod, the boat spinning round as the hooked fish powered itself towards some reeds. Again, the fish burst through the surface, launching itself right out of the water and shaking it's head violently. The huge teeth were clear to see, and now there was no doubt what was on the end of the line.

Haydn was almost as emotional as I was, and kept shouting "Hold on my son, hold on!". Soon the fish began to tire and I was able to take control of the fight and bring it towards the boat. Haydn did a great job and scooped it up first time. We lifted the net into the boat and both stared in disbelief at what lay in front of us. A pristine Tigerfish of around 4kg's, its teeth bigger than mine, and my first capture from our venue. I could hardly talk. I was literally in shock. How on earth could it be this big already?

As you know from my previous articles, although these fish look like serious gangsters, they are very fickle and can't handle too much stress. Making sure this incredible creature was returned safely into its home was now the priority. We quickly unhooked it and I lifted it up for a couple of pics. I held it in the water by the boats side so it could regain its strength, but it instantly slapped its tail and swam away, back into its watery realm.

My mind was well and truly blown away! It was almost lunchtime, so we trolled back to the launching point and returned to terra firma. Piet arrived at the dams with lunch and beers, which was typical of his wonderful hospitality. I was trying to down play what had happened. I calmly told him I'd caught one.

When I showed him the pics on the phone he was flabbergasted and couldn't believe what he was seeing, and thought we had photo-shopped the images! A mornings fishing I will never forget.

We all ate lunch at the waters edge with a couple of well deserved cold ones. We were stoked as Scottish had also managed to land a decent Tigerfish from Carp Corner. The plan for the

afternoon was that Haydn wanted to catch a Tiger on a fly, so him and Scottish would head out in the boat on Tiger Bay. I was keen to see if the carp might be enjoying their first taste of tiger nuts and sweetcorn that I had been throwing into an area close to some lilies.

The lads headed out on the boat and I walked round to my spot at Carp Corner. I decided to fish with just two rods, as the area was small,

with a lot of submerged weed surrounding it. The two rigs went out nicely, and there I was, an Englishman carp fishing at my own venue, in Mozambique! It felt quite surreal to be honest, and I was still on another planet after the mornings encounter with the Tiger.

The wind started to pick up a little, and was blowing directly into the corner I was fishing, conditions were looking good. I just didn't know if the



The first carp to be caught from Waterside Retreat, and I was smiling from ear to ear!

carp would start feeding on my free offerings straightaway, as the dam was full of naturals. I'd personally spent hours upon hours collecting various species of snails, shrimps, and mussels, basically carp food, along

with native macrophytes and marginal plants. These had all been left in the dam for a year to flourish and populate before any fish were stocked. So for the past nine months that's what the carp would have prin-

cipally feeding on, along with other aquatic invertebrates and blood-worm.

Well, it took less than two hours before my bite alarm disturbed the peace as my right hand rod was away. I had to give the carp some decent pressure to make sure it didn't reach the lilies and get snagged. Fortunately, it shot out into open water, stripping a good 20m or so of line as it surged for freedom. My heart was racing. Soon I had it close to the bank and I scrambled to get the net. Up to the surface it came, so startling dark in colour. A couple more lunges and it had had enough, and I quickly scooped it into the net.

I couldn't believe I'd got one! Wow, after all the time and effort that had gone into the project, to be looking down into the net at a beautiful carp was an incredible feeling. The fish was almost jet black, a result of the clear water in the dam, and looked absolutely breathtaking. The guys had heard the commotion, well probably me screaming in delight, and came round to help weigh it and take some pics. I was smiling from ear to ear, what a day!

Once it was safely returned, I scrolled through the pics to see if I could identify which carp it was from the stocking pics nine months ago. I found it, but couldn't believe it. The carp had weighed 2.3kgs (5lbs) nine months ago, and was now 6.5kgs (14.3lbs)! Astonishing, and I was soon wondering how some of the other carp had been getting on in their new home.

Now I wanted the others to try and catch one, and back out went the rods. Haydn and I sat in the grass, laughing and trying to make sense of it all.

Then the same rod burst into life, and madness broke loose again. Haydn grabbed the rod and whatever was on the other end roared off into the open water again. Now Haydn is a keen fly fisherman from South Africa, and for whatever reason they generally have the reel handle on the right hand side, not the left as I had on my rods. He overcame this weird challenge marvellously, but his eyes seemed to be bulging out of his sockets everytime this powerful creature tore line from the reel. This certainly wasn't a 2lb trout that he is used to fighting!



Colonel Mustard nine months apart, and almost double in weight, as Haydn holds him up for a pic.

Again, a large jet black carp rolled at the surface, and instantly I recognised it. It was one of the biggest carp to be stocked, and had a very distinctive yellowish mark on its left flank. I'd nick named it Colonel Mustard from the board game Cluedo, and now it was giving Haydn a serious fight. It's huge tail fin slapped the waters surface as it dived down again, with Haydn holding on for dear life.

Up it came again, but this time it was done and ready to be landed. I lifted the net until the fish was safely nestling in the mesh, and looked at Haydn in amazement. He's only gone and caught Colonel blooming Mustard, and it looked massive. We were all astonished as the scales swung round to 8.2kgs (18lbs), as all the carp were only just over two and a half years old. And what a spectacular looking fish! I was so chuffed to see a friend come and catch such an impressive fish.

The next day we had to leave at midday as Haydn needed to be back home later for a meeting, so time was of the essence. The guys headed back out in the boat as Haydn desperately wanted to land a Tiger, whilst I went back to check my spot we'd caught the carp from. I threw in some bait and went for a walk around the dam, looking for fish and taking a few pics. After a while Piet called me to say he had breakfast ready for us, some things you can't refuse! I called the lads to come in and I quickly went back to my spot to see if anything was there. There were tell tale micro bubbles at the surface and the water seemed a little cloudier, clear signs the carp were feeding on the spot.

Life choices! I couldn't refuse breakfast, but I knew the carp were eating theirs with gusto! I raced down to the cottage and scoffed down the delicious food as quickly as possible. I apologised for acting like a starved madman, and explained what I'd seen. I just had to get back up there and cast a line! Scottish and Haydn were having lots of fun on the boat, and that's where they were going to fish from until we left.

Arriving back at the dam, I decided just to fish with a single rod, straight back onto the spot that had produced both fish. Carefully out went the rig and I was just praying I hadn't disturbed the carp too much. It wasn't



Lure fishing from the boat was a lot of fun, as Scottish shows off a lovely Tiger.



Dinky has certainly been loving life in Carp Corner.



In fact, Dinky has been loving life since arriving 26 months ago!



long before the alarm sounded a couple of beeps, followed swiftly by a one-toner as another carp roared out into the open water.

The power of this carp was impressive and it felt like a good fish from the off. It felt amazing to be connected to another carp and I was desperate not to lose this one as it made some powerful runs towards various patches of lilies. Fortunately, everything came good and I was soon readying the net as its big head broke the surface. Get in!

I quickly unhooked it in the net and

secured it safely whilst I shouted at the top of my voice for lads to kindly come and help with some pics. I called Piet to say I'd got a good one in the net and that he should come up and have a look. Soon we were all together, staring at the dark shape in the net and wondering its size. Again, I recognised the fish as it had a funny dink in its head above the right gill plate. The guys said it should be named Dinky, and who am I to disagree.

Up she went and the scales read 9.6kgs (21.1lbs), you little beauty! It

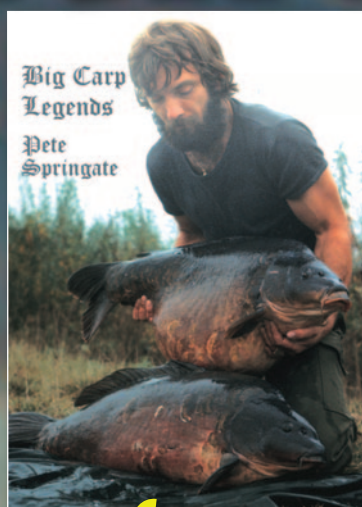
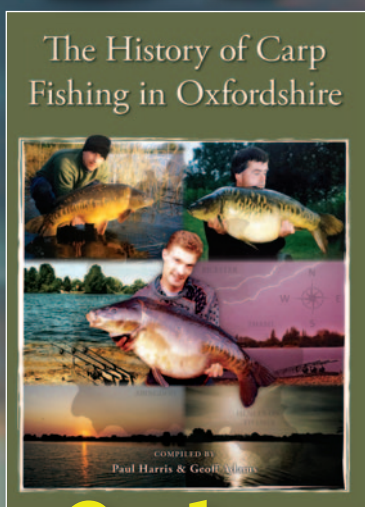
had put on an incredible 5.7kgs (12.5lbs) in just nine months! What an amazing reward and proof that everything we had done in creating the most optimum environment possible for them to flourish in was certainly paying dividends.

The weekend had completely surpassed all expectations, and as the dust settled, my mind was filled with wondrous thoughts at what the future could hold at this extraordinary venue when we officially open. ■

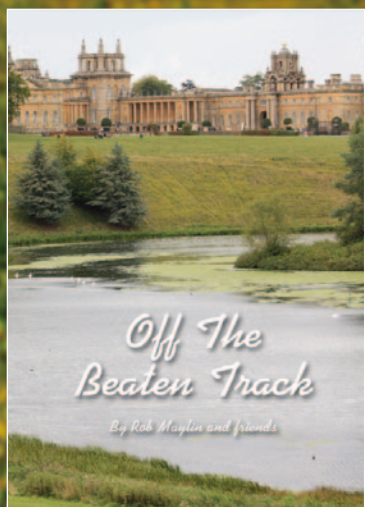
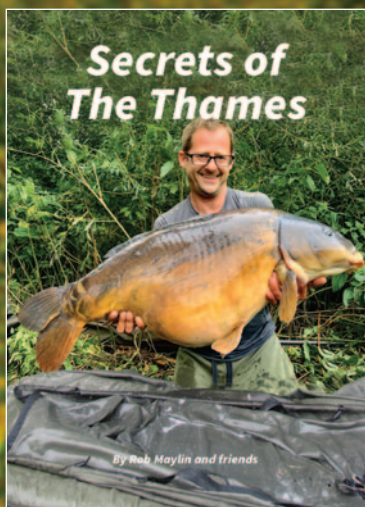
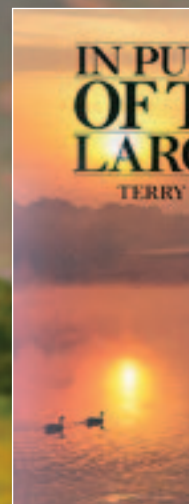
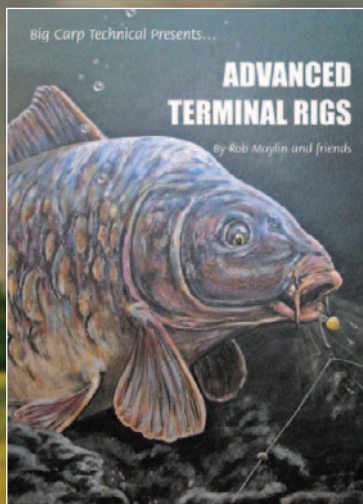
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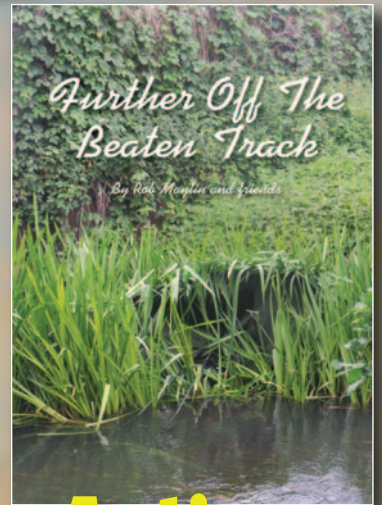
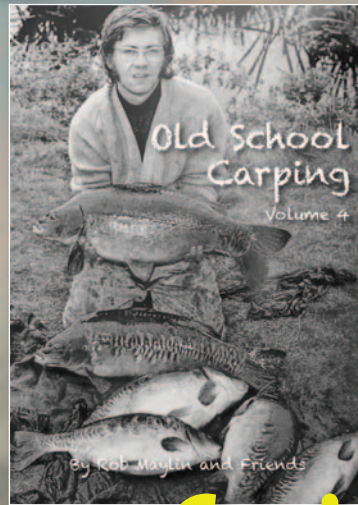
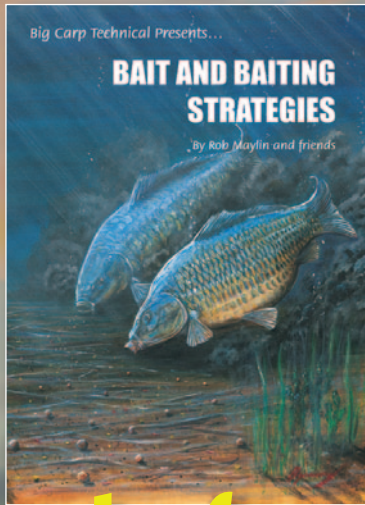


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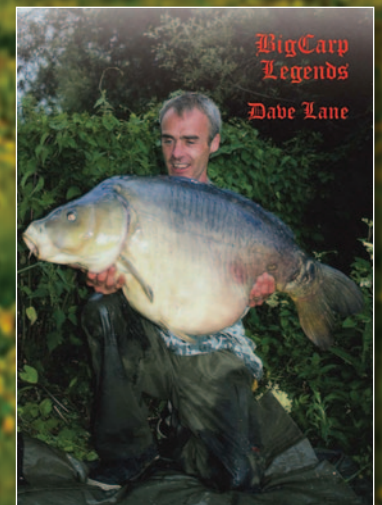
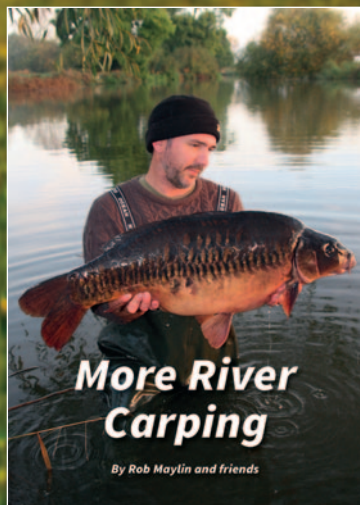
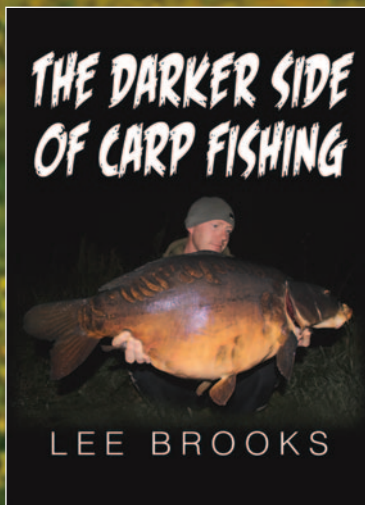
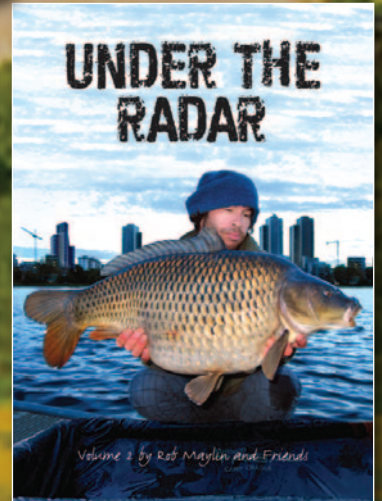
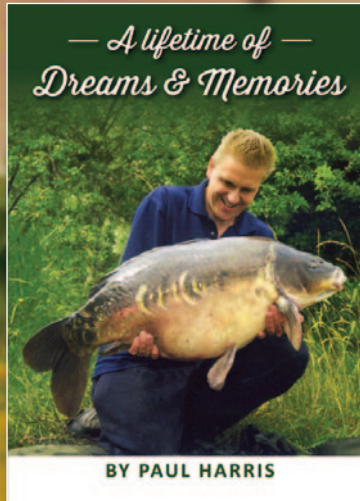
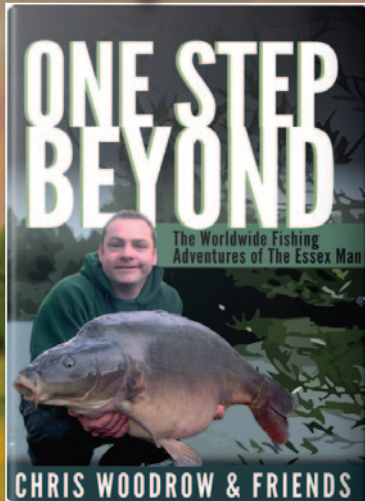


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Big Storm, Big Results

By Marc Cav

I had been lucky and managed to coincide my trip with a big pressure drop along with 45mph winds arriving in the late evening. When I arrived to the lake from my night shift, one of my favoured swims that had been doing bites was becoming free.

It was evident fish were still in that zone, with regular slicks appearing in the open water. I made sure to mark the areas, lining them up with skyline markers, and when I got in the swim, three solidz were staggered in a line at 80 yards, where I'd seen most of the activity.

I kicked back and chilled into the evening, hopeful I was on fish and a bite was on the cards. At midnight, all



hell broke loose and the predicted storm kicked in, sending much of my kit over the otter fence and into a nearby field – Trying to find these bits with a dying headtorch was great fun.

The storm seemed to stir the fish up as well and I managed a 34lb common before a chunky 41lb mirror.

Cav's solid bag rig consisted of 20lb Touchdown to Hybrid Leaders and

3.5oz Inline Square Pears. 18lb Supernatural hooklinks and size four Longshank X's, with his small Solidz filled with boilie crumb and Slicker Pellet. ■



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



Twisted Scale third time out for Ricky Collett this time at 39lbs. Nice one.



A 29lb common for Ricky Collett the same fish he caught recently.



26lb carp for Charlie Sheldrick who fished the day ticket lake recently. This was the biggest of the five carp he caught and he also lost two.



Ricky Collett lands the long common at 34lbs 3oz only six hours in. Nice catch.



27lbs 8oz and 16lbs 9oz catches for Ricky Collett. Nice carp.



Ricky again and again!



27lb common carp caught by Richard Draycott. Cracking catch.

Lake Prices

Day ticket lake – Oak

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are the same as the day ticket lake for pike during the winter – £20 a day and £30 for 24 hours for catfish in the summer.

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This Time Last Year

By Liam Sykes

4 0lb+plus Silver Common on First Stanwick Session!' In early spring, Liam Sykes announced himself to Stanwick Lakes in some fashion, landing one of the most-wanted fish in Elsons on his first very visit to the Northamptonshire venue!

Weighing in at 40lb 2oz, the Silver Common was also a new personal best for the 31-year-old from Sheffield, who also had four other fish to 28lb during his 48-hour session.

Liam said: "I tried to book on to a lake last weekend but everywhere seemed to be booked up, so a trip further afield was needed.

"I had never fished Stanwick Fisheries before and Elsons Lake was the





only lake you can book on, so that was my destination for this trip. Upon seeing fish close to the margins on my first lap around the lake, I settled in a swim which gave me as many options as possible whilst also being able to fish to the area where I spotted the fish. After three hours of finding fishable spots in the thick blanket weed, I put four or five Spombs over each rod, all on solid bags. It was a quiet first day and I was losing confidence getting into my bed.

"I was awoken at around 4am to the middle rod ripping off, but unfortunately the hook pulled a couple of rod-lengths from the bank and it looked like a good 30lb-plus mirror! I decided to rest the swim until first light so I could get the rod bang on the spot.

With a new bag on the spot at around 7am, it only took half an hour for it to rip off again, this time producing one of the lake's big girls, a sought-after fish called the Silver Common and a new PB common of 40lb 2oz. I was buzzing. A quick call to the bailiff to come and check the fish over and take some pics and

videos was in order.

"The same spot produced the rest of my bites, seven in total, with me landing five of them. I was over the moon to get so many bites from a tricky water like Elsons. What a way

to start the year!"

All Liam's fished gave themselves up to 12mm PB pop-ups that he fished inside bags of Crayfish Mini Mix pellets, mixed in with some Bug and SLK crumb. ■



This Time Last Year

Featuring Roger Bacon

Back in early January, with the weather looking particularly favourable for Grenville, Roger Bacon decided to kick off his year on the Cambridgeshire syndicate nice and early.

Smashing out Bug-packed solid bags as far as he could get them over a baited area of mixed-sized Bug boilies, Roger was rewarded with an amazing January hit of eight fish that included his first fifty of 2023 at 51lb 6oz and two back-up forties to 46lb 1oz.

“With the weatherman telling me it was going to be windy, I decided I would take the opportunity to try and fish to an area out in the middle of Grenville where I thought the bigger fish had settled over the previous very cold spell,” said Roger.

“On arrival the wind had already started and, yes, it was very strong!



Rigging up with solid bags containing a mixture of Crayfish Mini Mix pellets and fine Bug crumb injected with Bug Liquid Food, I whacked my bags out 40-45 wraps with the aid of the wind – definitely my longest cast ever!

“Over the next few days, I had nine bites and eight fish, with biggest

weighing in at 51lb 6oz, 46lb 1oz and 41lb 10oz. They were mostly day bites too, which was lovely, giving me time to tie rigs and rest up at night. Casting every couple of hours in the days, I injected almost a litre of the Bug Liquid Food into my bags over the session, with Pink Peril pop-ups used for hookbaits.” ■





Exclusive



Organisation is the Key

By Terry Edmunds

Being organised on the bank is a major factor in @terry_edmonds angling. With a busy schedule teaching punters how to cast to the moon, he is reliant on having all his kit packed neatly and ready to go for when he can get out angling.

My main luggage items include:

13ft 3 Rod Compac Rod Holdall – Terry's preferred rod length is always 13ft! So, opts to use the dedicated Compac Rod Holdall to ensure his rods and reels are well protected. Its design also makes it easy to strap Storm Poles, Nets and Slings for ease of transport.

Compac Carryall – Terry will either use the medium or large depending on length of session. This carryall houses all of his 'life' items. To keep things super simple and easy to find, he utilises our Compac 200 EVA cases to separate and store certain items.

Compac Rucksack 60 – Our biggest Rucksack. Terry uses this to house all of his terminal tackle and regularly used fishing kit. Each pocket contains certain items, so if setting up in the dark, or with his eyes closed, he can grab what he needs quickly! ■



Exclusive Organisation is the Key



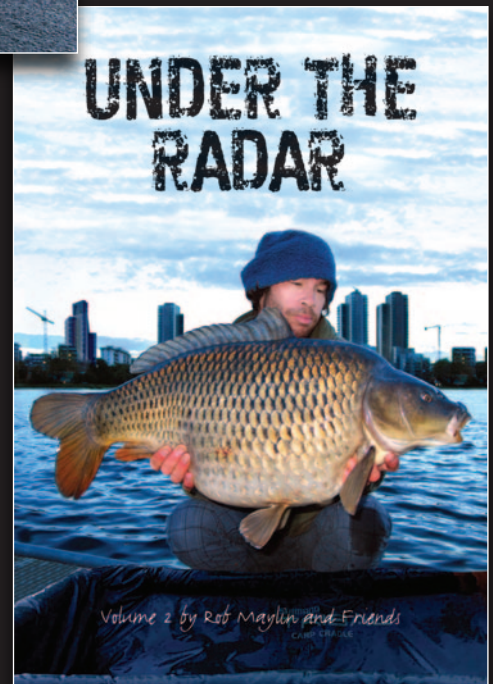
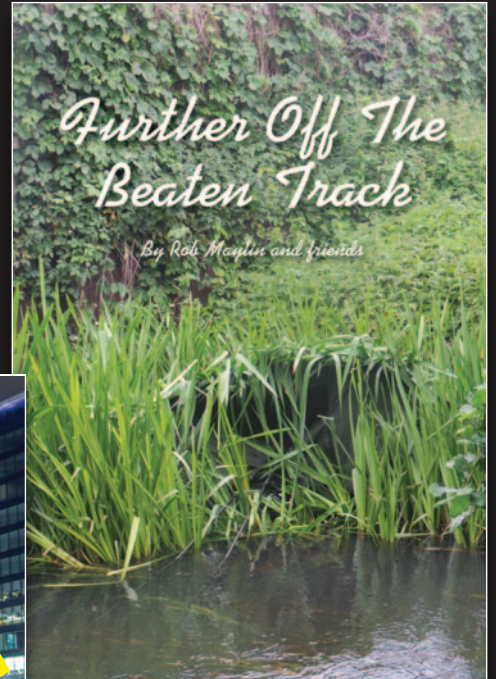
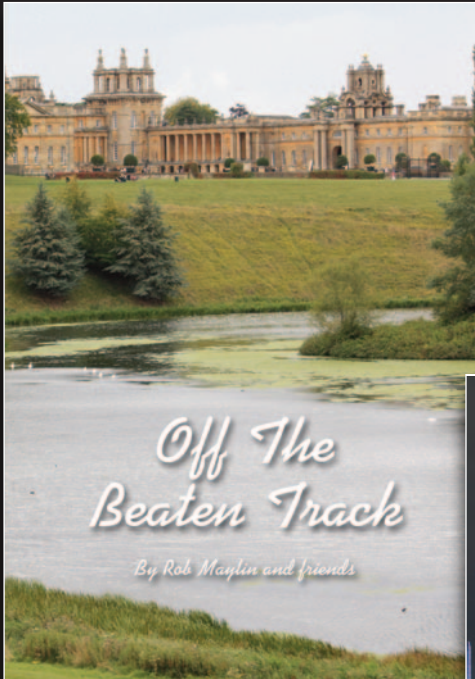


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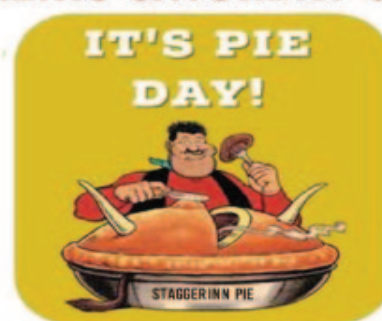
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Exclusive

Carp Fishing and The Military

By Michael Madeley



These are my personal experiences

My time in the Army was spent around the Cold war initially BAOR British Army of The Rhine in the 80s and then moved into the Gulf war liberation of Kuwait, and in-between drinking and being prepared to move, Carp fishing was not as important to me as it has been for the last 15- 20 odd years.

One of the things that hit hard was driving out of the camp gates for the last time, my rank of Sgt now meant absolutely nothing, it was a level playing field in Civvy Street.

I focused a lot more on my fishing since leaving the Army and mainly self-taught and asking questions on



Exclusive Carp Fishing and The Military



forums etc...but now being Ex Military I needed to find like-minded people.

Jumping forward a number of years it was when i joined the Ex-Military Carp group that i finally found a group of ex military guys that were on the same page, military banter had resumed and i actually fitted in, my passion of carp angling took a new level within military circles who would have thought!

So, as you can see I'm jumping forward a lot as this article is about the Carping and not my journey in between.

The Ex-Military Carp group has



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.

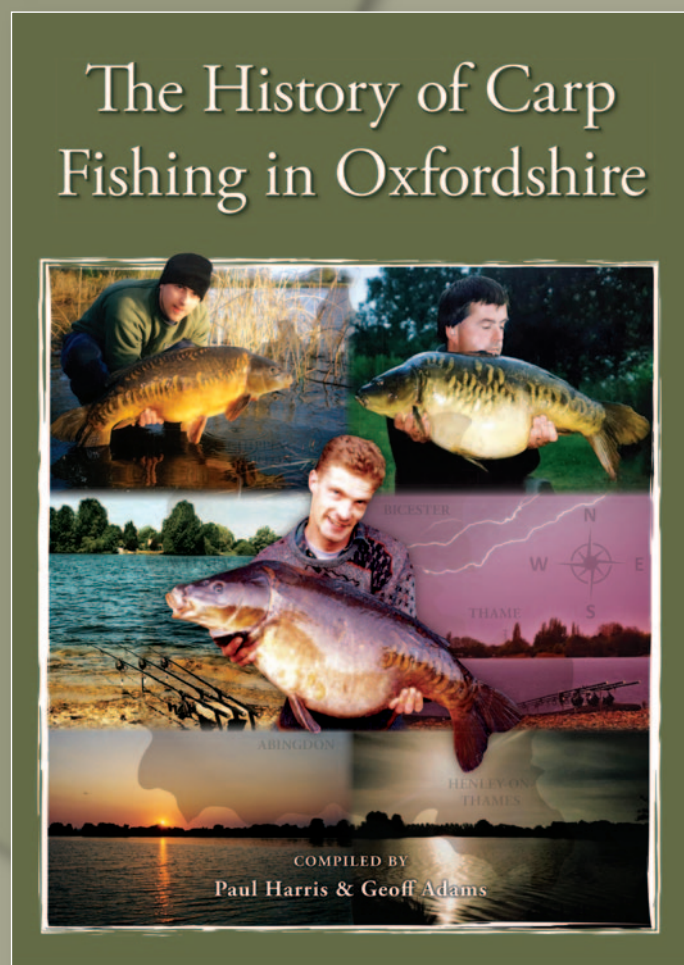
Nick Stansfield is a brilliant young Oxford carper who doesn't shout about his catches. We have two incredible chapters from him from two of the county's most iconic lakes, The Leisure Park and The Big S! Josh Chatfield has written a fantastic chapter which really gives you an insight into how fishing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

Exclusive Carp Fishing and The Military





Exclusive Carp Fishing and The Military



been going for a long time and grown massively, it is well run and holds a number of Ex Mil events around the Country so this gives you an opportunity to fish venues you wouldn't of normally fished. The Ex-Military group mirrors the regular Army with its own inter Corps and inter services Carp Championships. There are also last-minute events when the Regular Army Carp board invite an Ex Mil team to attend some of their own event's, mainly the Inter Corp and Inter Services, Last year we also put in a team to fish against the Army regs and Team Scotland who were preparing for the World Championships.

Although the Ex-Military Carp



SECRETS OF THE THAMES

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£29.95

Secrets of The Thames



By Rob Maylin and friends



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

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

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

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

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

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

By far and away the largest carp water in UK. Now sit back and enjoy just a few of its many secrets.

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Exclusive Carp Fishing and The Military



group welcomes any Ex-Military to fish and have a good time at the events you do need to be selected to represent the group for both the ICCC and the ISCC participants do need to be at a certain level of Carp Angling and it is the Ex Mil-Chairman and the committee that select the team.

However, if you just want to chill out and meet like-minded people you can find the Ex Mil Carp-group on Facebook.

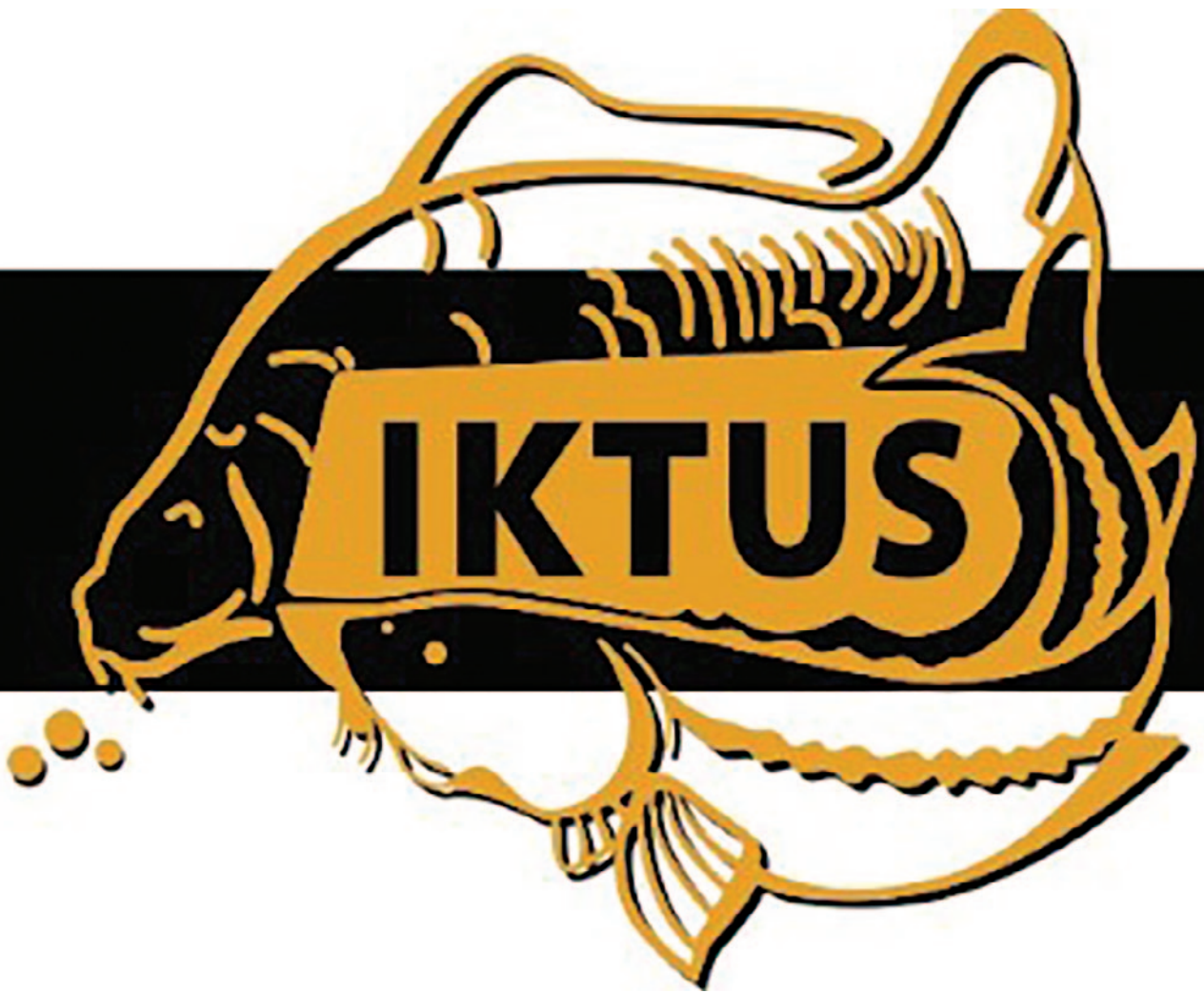
One of my great privileges was to be asked to be the Ex Mil Army-Team Captain last year 2023. we're I captained the team in both Inter services events one at Norton Disney (Reg Army) and our own which was down South on Chigborough lake.

Now you might also be surprised to see that certain Regiments in the Military have their own individual Carp teams and these include the Royal Artillery, Reme, Armoured Corp, Infantry to name but a few., and these count as Inter Corp. For the Inter Services you are looking at the Army, RAF, and Navy.

So we the Ex-Mil group base are Championships on the same line as the regulars and often get invited to attend and compete against the regulars which is all about putting out the strongest team we have and going out to win.

And there we have it. To round up if you are a Veteran and you like Carp fishing but miss that banter, join the Ex Mil Carp Group and have a great time whilst forming new friendships and being amongst other like-minded veterans.

Thanks for reading, Mike. ■



FISHING RESORT



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Spring is on the Way

By Darrell Peck

Overall, it's been a super mild Winter and as a result, carp have been getting caught from absolutely everywhere.

I've managed 3 sessions since my last update and below I'll cover each.

Starting in December at @gigantica.carp I had an amazing week. Fishing from the Alcatraz swim, I found a lovely gravel area at 33wraps and right from the get-go it just kicked off.

The fish were out in front of me during day light hours and by constantly feeding a mixture of @mainlinebaitsofficial Cell & Sweetcorn I managed over 30 fish to mid 40. Combi Multi Rigs incorporating Cell wafers tipped with yellow plastic







maize the winning presentation.

Next Up was Trois islands at the end of January. I'd seen on Facebook they were to allow boats and bait boats through the Winter and decided it was worth a punt. We got off to a good start in Peg 6, managing one on the first evening, and one the following afternoon.

However, this was our only action

for the entire week despite a couple of moves. Still, not to complain, fish of 49 & 54lbs was a great start to year. These were again taken on Combi Multi Rigs and maize tipped Cell wafers over corn & 10mm Cell.

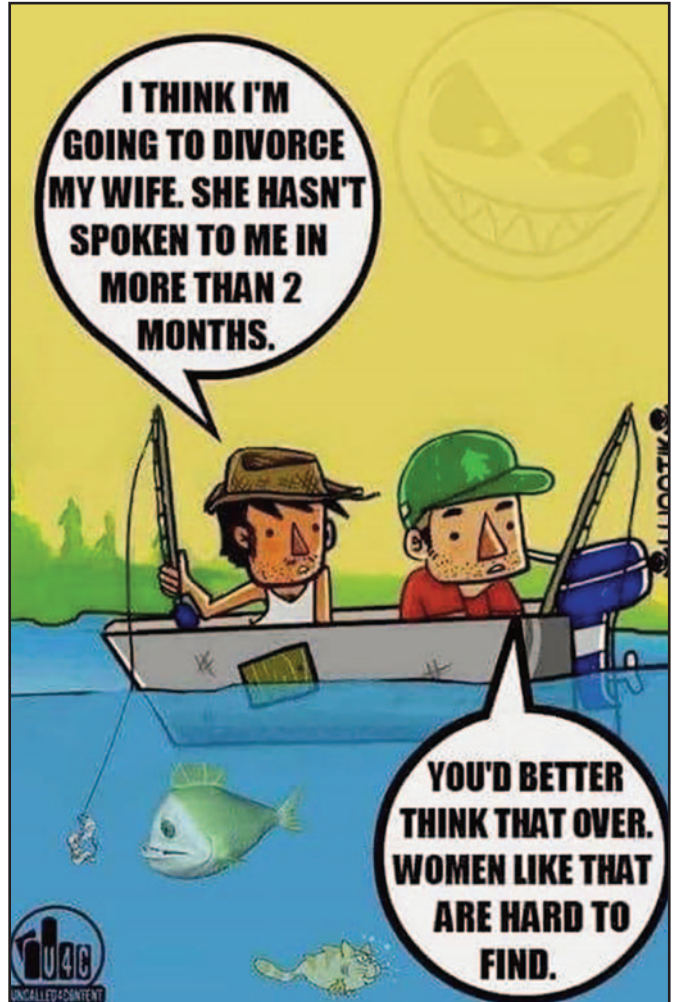
Lastly, I have just returned from a 36-hour session to @blasfordhill , Fishing from the nature reserve bank closest to the main island and I man-

aged 5, including The Big Girl weighing 34lbs. Simple 10mm Cell catapult tactics with 15mm Cell wafers over the top.

Foot note: I've just spent a whole day organising my garage in preparation for the coming weeks.. Spring is well and truly on the horizon and I for one can't wait. ■



Carpy Humour



Take me to Church

By Scott Lloyd

Well, what a session I have just got back from, literally just had a bit of time to sit

back and reflect a bit really and it all starts to sink in, you know the one. So, for those who follow my insta stories you might have already seen but for those who don't, this is what went down....I've always wanted to fish on Nashy's Church Lake so once the chance came about, I obviously snapped it up and to be honest it was a much-needed break from the norm. Somewhere to just disappear, relax and it was just me n me mate Benny boy against the fish!

I had 4 nights ahead of me and I

soon learnt the fish certainly knew when they were being fished for and pretty quickly figured out that fishing a single hookbait and just using 1 rod to ease the line pressure was the way forward!

I ended up fishing 3 different swims and caught 5 fish in total, a few smaller ones, a 31 and this insane 40lb 12oz mirror known as "the beauty queen" and it certainly lived up to its name wow! It absolutely blew me away I won't lie, just perfect in every way and to catch it in February was just the icing on the cake! It's most certainly a memory that will stay with me forever!

The fish were on the natural food in the silk weed so tactics wise I trimmed down a single 16mm peach

and pepper pop up until it sank super-r-r-r slow on my long hinge rig and rest on top of any low lying weed it went into.

Seems simple I know but sometimes I think doing less takes more balls, to fish a single rod on a single hookbait in the winter can sometimes be mind boggling but i don't think I could have caught any other way, one cast felt too much on there, never mind 100's with leading and baiting etc, it just felt the right way to do it in the end and it paid off? Better to be lucky than good as they say

Bigggg thanks to Kev and all the lads down there, mega place, great hospitality and even got looked after with these insane pics to, nice one Josh. ■





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Prepping for Spring

By Charlie Ferris

It's at this time of year, my mind starts drifting and I find myself dreaming of those lush spring mornings and thoughts of new campaigns. This year's been no different, even more so this last week when temperatures have exceeded 15 degrees. I know those carp will be waking up and now is the time to get all my kit prepped and ready to go.

I've spent the last few evenings in the shed, going through all my kit and tackle, getting everything in order for the coming months. Bait and tackle have been ordered to get me through, the freezer's had a good clear out, hookbaits have been soaked, the tackle box has been neatly organized and rigs and leaders have all been tied. The reels have been respooled with my favoured Tapered Long Chuck and the van's been kitted out with all the essentials. Friday's have been booked off for the foreseeable, it's game on'.

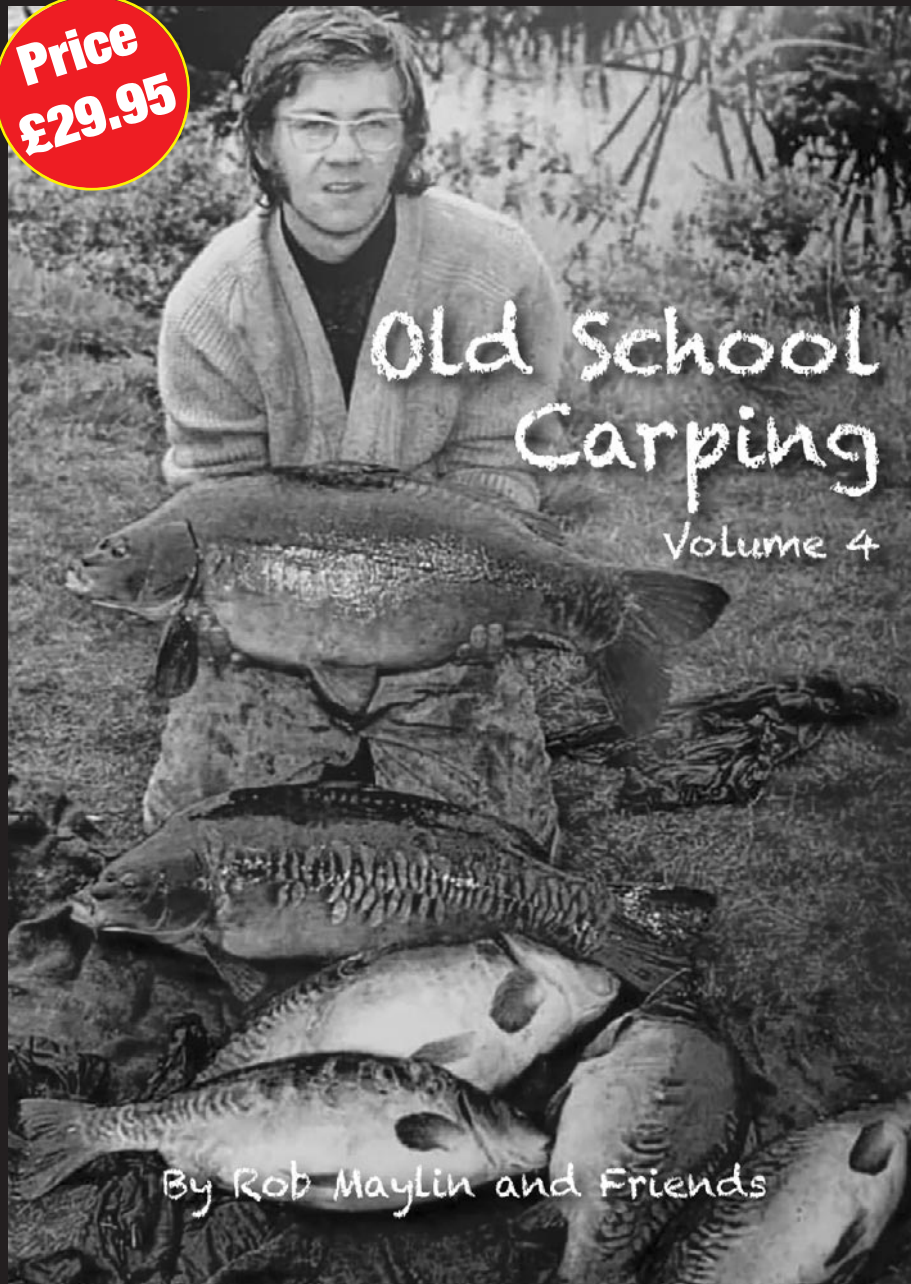
If you're at a loss over the next few weekends, don't leave it too late, get that kit sorted start dreaming off spring! ■





OLD SCHOOL CARPING VOLUME 4

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£29.95



The 'Old School' series has become one of our most popular sets of books we have ever published. It appears that, in this fast-moving society we find ourselves, more and more anglers are keen to look back at how things used to be, where it all started, before the commercialism that now controls our angling, before the 'sponsored angler', before Facebook, the Internet, or even mobile phones! However, did we survive? It certainly was a very different sort of carp angling to today's high pace, remote control, Snapchattling, wannabe blogger's world we find ourselves in.

Our contributors to volume 4 are the unsung heroes of that bygone age who were catching carp years ago before the hair rig when not everyone could catch them quite so easily.

But the big difference between the line-up for this volume is that these anglers' names may not be known to you. Unlike our previous volumes this one is not all about the famous anglers of this time. Volume 4 is about many of the very successful anglers who did not seek fame by publicising their catches at the time.

Anglers who smashed their venues and the record books but kept quiet until

now. So, let's take a look at what Volume 4 has to offer, and why I consider it the best yet. Here is a brief synopsis of volume 4's line up and what their chapters are about. A Brief Moment in Time by Kevin Grozier, My Early Carp Life by Anthony Rogers, A Tale of Two Twenties by Dave Miller, Back to the Old Days by William Lovett, Blackroot Pool by Brian Ingram, The Old School Scrapbook, The Seventies by Christopher Davis, Yateley North Lake June 1985 by Nick Peat, Early Carping Memories of Broadwater by Phil Martyn, The Tale of a Twenty Pounder (My first) by Steven Hall, Looking Back – Old School by Steve Fisher, Early Seventies Carping by Gerry Giles, My Introduction to Carp Fishing by Lee Fisher, Billingsgate in Focus by Kris Ford, Old Skool Carping by Paul Tidiman, 'Billy' the Mirror, Church Pool, Patshull by Tim Thornton and My First Doubles by Stewart Crowther.

A fantastic, 'one off' collection of tales from a bygone age from many of the most successful but most secretive anglers of the good old days.

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HIGHLIGHTS OF A CARP LIFE
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A 15 YEAR OBSESSION
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VIEWS FROM THE BIVVY

Rob's Ramblings



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Also available this month,
 Big Carp Issue 333
 Miss it and miss out!

Legacy Project Young Anglers Support by Dylan Harvey

If you're under 18 and need some help with some bits and pieces have a look at this page - everything is FREE. <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61556650450414> Items are always being added. If you would like to donate, however small, please PM Dylan Harvey Chairman of TC Conservation Group - The Legacy Project and he will arrange collection. Individuals who donate are credited on the pages post - this way a personal thankyou can be given when the item is allocated. "So let's support the next generation of anglers, lets help get bums off seats in front of computers and help fathers and sons enjoy our waterways and all that they offer". Please 'follow' 'like' and 'share' our page - just by doing this you might be putting a young angler in touch.





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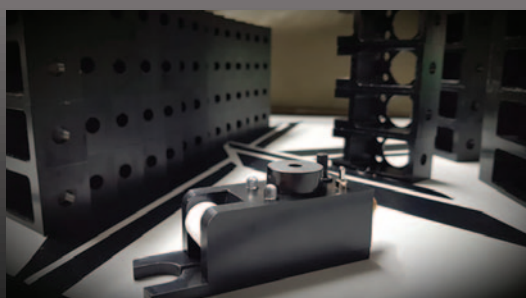
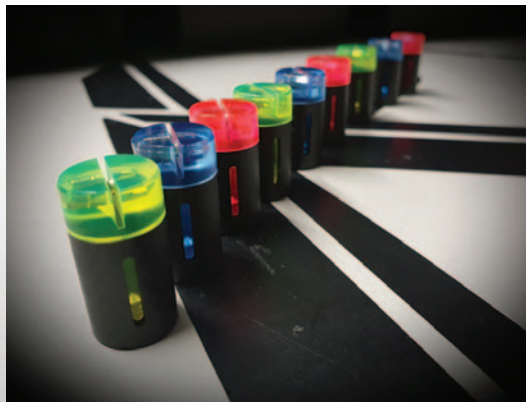
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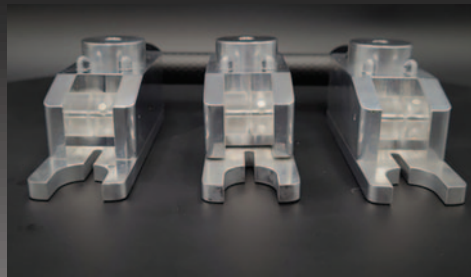
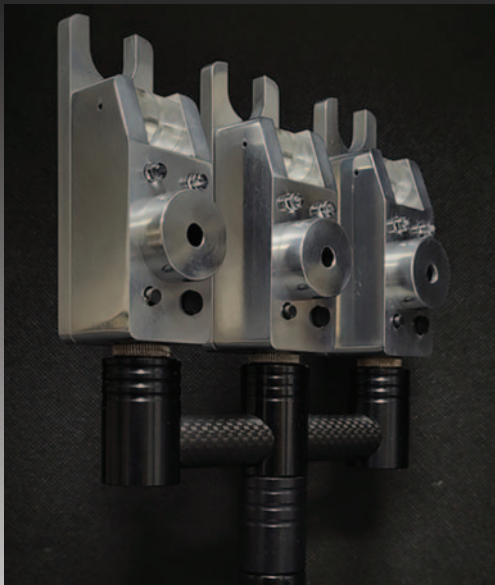
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**CARP
CHAT**
Carp News

Farnham Angling Society News

A fantastic start to 2024 for FAS:

A merger of Farnham Angling Society with Cove Angling Society, resulting in an additional fishery within next seasons handbook.

Farnham Angling Society (FAS) is delighted to announce that we shall have ownership and stewardship of Chaley Park Fishery, Normandy (near Guildford), as a result Cove Angling Society(CAS) merging with FAS on 19th January 2024.

CAS believe that the merger is far and away the best course to ensure the future of the fishery. FAS paid no money for the fishery, which is now the property of FAS, but have agreed that the full CAS membership (57 members), will have free membership for the next 5-Yrs and that their 7 Executive Committee members will be given free Life Membership, in recognition of their dedication to CAS and work at the fishery over the last 25-Yrs.

FAS considers itself extremely fortunate to have received the approach from CAS, which initially came via Bob Hall our Match Secretary who regularly fishes the venue.

However, once the approach was made, no time was wasted in us discussing the possibility of a merger, establishing the desires of both parties, arranging a site meeting, undertaking due diligence and using both Fish Legal and local solicitors to prepare the Merger Agreement which



has now been signed and completed.

Our thanks to Dave Wilkins, Rod Carroll, Paul White & Doug Arnold at CAS for their communications and involvement in bringing this about.

Purely as a result of the appreciation of FAS's management of our Society and stewardship of our fisheries, CAS's executive committee's approach has led to FAS having obtained an excellently set up fishery, costing nothing but a small legal fee for arranging the merger documentation and a period of free membership for CAS members as detailed above.

It is good to know that our reputation as a well-run fishing club afforded us this golden opportunity, and better still to have secured a new fishery and extended our portfolio of FAS fisheries available to our members. We are delighted to advise that Chaley Park Lakes comprise a gated secure fishery with two well-stocked

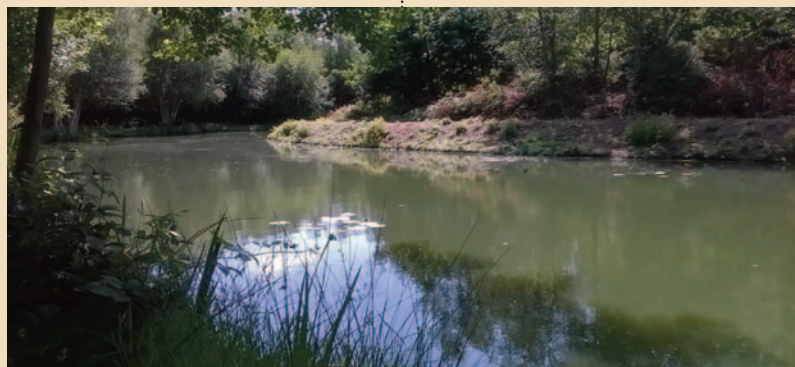
ponds of approximately 1.7 & 0.5 acres, which are oval in shape with large central islands offering 'canal' style fishing.

The larger lake has 36 pegs and offers a consistent average width of approximately 18-20m to the island, and has an average consistent depth of 5' (1.5m). The smaller lake has 24 pegs and offers an average width of 12-14m, with an average and consistent depth of 4' (1.3m). Both of the ponds are well stocked and contain a mixed stock of Common and Mirror Carp to 15lb, Tench, Bream, Roach, Rudd, Perch, and a few Crucian Carp.

Summer matches are regularly won with 50lb +. The venue will host open matches every Thursday throughout the year from 7:30am – 5:30pm, with the larger lake also closed on some Sundays to visiting fishing clubs.

During these matches, one of the ponds will always be available for members to fish. Existing CAS bailiffs will work with our own, to bailiff the fishery and an existing maintenance contract will be maintained for the next 3-seasons. We hope you enjoy the new fishery, which will be available to our members to fish from 1st April 2024, with full details being included within our 2024 – 2025 handbook.

Ian Gray, Honorary Secretary, on behalf of the Executive Committee. ■





Monthly Newsletter

JANUARY 2024



Great Fishing Prize Draw – fish with a legend!

It's back! And seven legends of our sport have generously donated their time for free to support this amazing fundraiser.

Tickets are just £2 and you could win a session with Ali Hamidi, John Locker, Matt Godfrey and Frankie Gianoncelli, Hywel Morgan, Neville Fickling or John Bailey.

Whatever your preferred style of fishing – match, coarse, game or sea – there's a prize for you! Simply check out the

list of fabulous prizes and decide which ones you would like to enter.

All proceeds from the draw will be used to continue our work to introduce new people to fishing and our fight to protect fish, fishing and the environment.

You can choose to take part in as many of the draws as you wish and remember, the more tickets you buy the better your chances of winning. ■

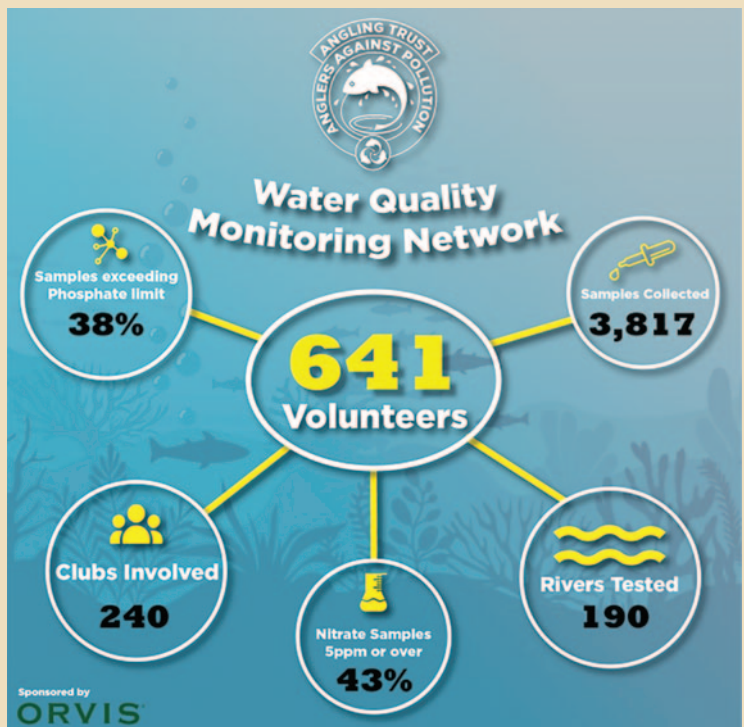
ANGLERS AGAINST POLLUTION

Over 640 volunteers sign up for water testing

Did you know the Water Quality Monitoring Network (WQMN) now involves over 640 volunteers from 240 angling clubs, testing water samples on 190 rivers? It's a remarkable achievement since we launched the Severn catchment pilot in May 2022, and testimony to how concerned anglers are about the state of our rivers.

The WQMN is an essential part of our Anglers Against Pollution campaign and the findings from the water sampling will be used to engage angling clubs in better understanding pollution issues on their waters, seek local solutions that restore rivers to a healthy state, and help the Angling Trust hold the government to account, ensuring it meets its own legal responsibilities.

You can show you care about our water environments by purchasing Anglers Against Pollution clothing from the online Angling Trust Shop. ■



GET FISHING

Blog: How sea angling is supporting healthier lives



Amelia Henderson at Bedlington Station Sea Angling Club has been organising a women's boat fishing group and supporting local military veterans and their families with angling activities. It's an incredible example of how one person can be the catalyst for so many people to benefit from life-improving experiences simply by spending time fishing.

In an inspiring Get Fishing blog, Amelia tells how the Together Fund, administered by the Angling Trust and Sport England, was a great opportunity to support more participation, and share the social, economic and health benefits of sea angling. ■

VIRTUAL FISHERIES FORUM

Anglers National Line Recycling Scheme – 6 Feb



6th February, 7pm – open to all

The Angling Trust's Anglers Against Litter campaign has gained national acclaim and widespread support from anglers and clubs. As part of our mission to help tackle pollution and littering, we are delighted to have the Anglers National Line Recycling Scheme's Steve Tapp join us for what promises to be a fascinating Virtual Forum.

Since its launch in March 2018, over 378 shops have signed up to the ANLRS along with over 192 fisheries, angling clubs and charter boats – with some manufacturers having also pledged their support. The scheme is also working with the Angling Trust to investigate collaborative projects that will expand its impact across the country. ■

SHOWS

Come and visit us at British Fly Fair International



The British Fly Fair International is the premier fly fishing show in the UK offering everything for the fly fisherman, whether a total novice or a seasoned expert. It's being held across three halls at the Staffordshire County Showground on 10th and 11th February, and the Angling Trust will be there once again – with some great offers for members and non-members! Don't forget to pop along and say hello!

Right now you can save £2 on advance day tickets or £3 on a weekend ticket. ■

Bug Bait – The Highest Quality Bug Meal



ZEE BUG RANGE

Zee Bug Boilies has a blend of high-quality powders of which includes black soldier fly. It has taken extensive research to find and source a high-quality black fly with such a low-fat content. This bait can be used all year round, to prevent changing bait in the winter months. Check out the Zee Bug range: https://bugbait.co.uk/store/?_shop_category_filter=zee-bug



TS BUG RANGE

The TS Bug is the third of our four baits in the range. Naturally grey in colour the TS Bug contains a blend of several insect meals along with a combination of spices which creates a subtle creamy spiced aroma. Once again due to its low fat content this bait can be used year round and is extremely digestible. https://bugbait.co.uk/store/?_shop_category_filter=ts-bug-range



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A hookbait specifically designed to be used as a topper to give that extra little fleck of colour to your foodbait. Available in: Peach - Peach White - Kiwi & Maggot Yellow - Earthworm & Garlic Pink - Cherry & Bloodworm <https://bugbait.co.uk/product/creepy-crawlies/>



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THE BUGS NUTS

The Bugs Nuts is the second of the four baits in our range. Cream in colour the Bugs Nuts contains both a blend of insect meal as well as several nut meals. You can clearly pick up the aroma of the nut content with in the boilie when you smell it which is very appealing. Due to its natural fat content this boilie is better suited for spring through to autumn fishing. Available NOW in 15mm & 18mm Shelf Life boilie. <https://bugbait.co.uk/product/the-bugs-nuts-boilies/>



BLACK BUG

Our new bait range Black Bug is created using a combination of four different insects, following the Bug Bait ethos to replace traditional marine product protein sources. Black in colour means that if you have a problem with diving birds on your venue the range is going to greatly benefit you. For the attractor package, we have chosen to use a combination of citrus fruits which as well as being ultra-attractive to the carp are extremely resistant to the ingress of horrible silty smells when fishing over dirtier substrate. Available Now! https://bugbait.co.uk/store/?_shop_category_filter=black-bug-range



Our man James Cottee has continued his great form banking multiple fish as of late with a little help from our Yellow Snow pop ups fished over Bugs Nuts boilies.



James Cottee has been in touch with this lovely mirror which was part of a recent haul using our Yellow Snow pop ups fished over a bed of crumbed Bugs Nuts boilies.

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ONLINE AUCTION



Online Auction – can you donate a lot?

Our annual online auction takes place in March – and we need your help! Every year we are humbled by the generosity of our member Clubs, Fisheries and Trade partners who provide day tickets, memberships and tackle for us to sell. We had a fantastic range of items on offer last year and we would love to make this year's even bigger!

If you can donate a lot, please either complete our online form or contact our Membership Marketing Manager at samantha.frost-jones@anglingtrust.net. ■

COMPETITIONS

FishOMania tickets on sale



Matchroom Multi Sport and the Angling Trust can reveal that the hottest tickets in British match fishing will go on sale Friday February 2 as FishOMania launches for 2024.

This season's 20 qualifiers will be staged at locations which include the most popular venues from last year, along with one new water – Marston Fields – and two returning favourites from FishO's illustrious history, the superb Hallcroft Fishery and Gold Valley Lakes. The grand final will once again be hosted at the amazing Westwood Lakes, in Lincolnshire – this year on Saturday July 27. ■

England Shore squads for 2024



ENGLAND'S shore angling squads have confirmed they will compete in nine major championships in 2024 after some of the strongest-ever squads were named this week.

There are new caps for several anglers this season, with progression from youth to senior squads also in evidence, and follows a rigorous selection process led by team managers and chaired by Senior England Manager Richard Yates.

The squads will be flying the flag for Team England both home and abroad with World Championships in Cyprus, Ireland, and Spain, and on the beaches of Montrose, Scotland for the Home Internationals. ■

COMPETITIONS

Launch of TroutFest 2024 fundraiser

The Angling Trust has launched a new competition for game anglers – TroutFest 2024. Hosted at some of the finest trout fisheries in the country, TroutFest 2024 will see seven individual qualifying matches take place over the next few months, all leading to a grand final at Millets Farm Fishery, in Abingdon, Oxfordshire, on Sunday, September 15.



Each qualifier will be fished from the bank and the top anglers from each event will win a TroutFest fishery trophy and a golden ticket to the final where 28 rods will compete for the inaugural title, main trophy, and winner's purse.

Steve Fitzpatrick, Angling Trust Head of Competitions, said: "The purpose behind the new event is two-fold, firstly to give game anglers an exciting new competition to be part of in 2024 and secondly to help raise awareness and much-needed funding for the England Youth Flyfishers squad." ■



MEMBER OFFERS



15% off Pallatrax baits and products

Pallatrax, the innovative bait and tackle company, is offering Angling Trust individual members 15% off all telephone orders. Pallatrax products can be viewed online. Pallatrax can also be followed on Facebook and on X at @pallatraxuk. Orders must be by telephone to 01409 240 042. Please have your current Angling Trust membership number to hand.

Save on DFDS ferry trips to Europe



DFDS have been voted the world's leading ferry operator for 12 years in a row – and now Angling Trust & Fish Legal members can travel to France and the Netherlands at discounted prices!

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 in comfort and style. Generously partnering with us to provide travel for our England teams, the fabulous team at DFDS have also agreed to offer exclusive discounts including:

- 10% OFF Dover-France ferry crossings**
- 15% OFF Newcastle-Amsterdam ferry crossings**
- 10% OFF Newhaven-Dieppe ferry crossings**
- 33% OFF special mini cruise from Newcastle-Amsterdam**

TRADE PARTNERS



Flyfishing Journal – made for the modern fly angler

We are grateful to our trade members for providing invaluable support for our work to protect fish, fishing and our waters, and to encourage more people to take up fishing.

Trade Supporter Flyfishing Journal is a quarterly publication edited by England international Andy Taylor along with expert contributors from around the globe.

Published by Nous Media, Flyfishing Journal comprises a wealth of evergreen features that inform, entertain, and inspire both seasoned anglers and a new, more diverse audience.

And as a special offer to Angling Trust members, you can get four issues of Flyfishing Journal for the price of three. Simply login to your Members Dashboard to obtain the promotional code to use when ordering on the Flyfishing Journal website.



Albury and Heron Lakes Syndicate News

Limited number of syndicate tickets now available from April 2024

We are now opening up our membership for the new season from April 2024 to new member enquiries. Those who have already contacted me and are on the waiting list can you please get in touch with me again to arrange a visit.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the syndicate from April 2024 please do get in touch.

Membership syndicate ticket price is £550 for Albury Lake, and

£880 for both Albury & Heron Lakes for the 2024-25 season. All prospective members are interviewed and given a tour around the lakes before being accepted onto the syndicate.

Contact details are on our Facebook page and more information is also available on our website www.carpfishinghuntingdon.co.uk. Many thanks Tony Humphrey Albury & Heron Lakes Brampton. ■

Here is a little taste of some of the catches from 2023/24.



The Glebe

**NOW
OPEN!**

The Glebe Lake has been run as a private fishery in years past, but is now available for lake-exclusive bookings for up to five anglers for three or four nights sessions.

This lake is a little slice of heaven situated at the top of Ecton Lakes Complex, with lots of work carried out over recent years, this seven-acre lake tucked away in the Nene Valley is a carp anglers' paradise.



The Glebe will give anglers the chance to fish for hand-selected carp of our homegrown strain for years to come. Common Carp to 35lb, Mirror Carp to 47lb (and still growing) with some amazing stocked fish coming through. The lake is a weedy, rich lake with some amazing rewards to be caught!

Price £750 • Max 5 Anglers • 3 / 4 Nights lake exclusive

**Grendon Road, Junction 10 A45, Near Earls Barton,
Northampton, Northamptonshire**

Contact: luke@ectonlakes.co.uk

Website: www.ectonlakes.co.uk

 **See us on Facebook**


Ecton Lakes
www.ectonlakes.co.uk

Landowners and anglers key to preserving Scotland's vital fishing seasons



Her Grace, The Duchess of Sutherland, casts the first line of the 2024 season

The vital contribution of angling to the environment and conservation, tourism and the economy has been marked as the River Tweed opens for the 2024 season.

At an event held at Kelso on Thursday, Scottish Land & Estates chief executive Sarah-Jane Laing represented the rural business organisation as one of the gold sponsors of this year's opening.

The opening was officially conducted by the Duchess of Sutherland whilst Màiri McAllan MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Just Transition, addressed attendees at the occasion organised by the River Tweed Commission.

Through the work of members of Scotland's District Salmon Fishery Boards, the River Tweed Commission and charitable Rivers and Fisheries Trusts, Scotland's valuable and iconic wild Atlantic salmon and freshwater fish are protected despite populations facing a severe decline in recent decades.

In 2023, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) reclassified Atlantic salmon from 'least concern' to 'endangered' in Britain (as a result of a 30-50% decline in British populations since 2006 and 50-80% projected between 2010-2025).

Much of the ongoing conservation work is funded privately by landowners and through angling by both domestic and international visitors, whose expenditure not only supports



SLE CEO Sarah-Jane Laing and Màiri McAllan MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Just Transition

key expertise such as ghillies but also generates income for the wider rural economy.

Sarah-Jane Laing, chief executive of Scottish Land & Estates, said:

“The opening of our Scottish salmon fishing seasons is not only a wonderful occasion for anglers and rural communities but is also an opportunity to mark the substantial contribution made by those who care for our rivers and fish populations.

“Real concern exists over fish stocks, particularly Atlantic salmon, due to a range of factors including global warming, climate change, altered river flows, a reduction in food stuff for fish and an increase in preda-

tors.

“Ghillies and those who own and manage rivers and land are working hard to address these factors where they can and are also taking steps to maintain high water quality in the hope of helping the lifecycle of salmon and trout. In the Scottish Borders, we’ve seen examples of Philiphaugh Estate undertaking peatland restoration that they hope will improve water flow regulation in the Tweed Catchment whilst the Hirsell Estate has carried out planting of riparian woodlands on the River Tweed, a measure that can help to combat rising water temperatures.

“By visiting Scottish rivers, domes-

tic and international anglers bring a lot of economic benefits to the local communities. They spend money on various things, such as accommodation, travel, food, and fishing equipment. They do more than just fish, they also help sustain a wide range of jobs and businesses.

“Growing up in Kelso, I’ve always recognised the huge importance of angling to rural Scotland. It’s a real honour to be part of the River Tweed Commission opening ceremony for the 2024 Salmon Fishing Season, and on behalf of Scottish Land & Estates, we pay tribute to those who will undoubtedly make the 2024 season a great success.” ■

Specialist Angler UK



We are recruiting for team members and consultants to join us... to represent and promote our business and its values in return for Exclusive team member or consultant discounts on both our materials range and lead range.

The team members and consultants will be required to send in pictures and catch reports. Any vlogs they can do and along with this put the word out about the company and its products. Be highly visible on social media and post regularly. Take part on product testing with feedback on ideas and improvements.

We will run a socials during the year for the consultants and team members at locations and dates to be confirmed.

If you feel you can contribute to pushing the company forward and representing the values we hold so hi please DM us on Facebook or email specialistangleruk@gmail.com

With a brief description of your fishing history and experience and what you feel you can bring to the company.

We are recruiting team members and consultants depending on knowledge and experience, team members can develop into consultants when they feel they are ready and spaces become available.

Regards

Paul Worstencroft and Mandy Coles
Specialist Angler UK ■

Carpy humour



Hook Lake exclusive!

First time ever exclusive lake bookings now available for 2024

Hook Lake is a proper Old Skool estate lake set in beautiful, secluded and peaceful surroundings in the Hertfordshire countryside. For an eternity the fishery has been run as an exclusive 25 man syndicate, and such is the demand for one of these sought after places, it is considered almost impossible to get on. Until now that is!

For the first time in its history and for a limited time only, starting in May and running through until the end of September, the fishery will be available for 3 and 4 night exclusive bookings for up to six anglers at a time.

Over the years, this historic two acre estate lake has seen many well known anglers grace it's banks, including the likes of Kevin Maddocks, Vic Cranfield, Tim Paisley, Rob Hughes, Simon Crow, Dave Lane and Ian 'Chilly' Chillcott who likened it to the famous Redmire Pool, and in fact, back in the lake 90's the lake was stocked by Les Bamford with a number of Leney strain carp from Redmire, some of which are still alive today.

There are around 55 English carp in the lake, with the large majority over 20lb and currently around ten 30's, with the lake record being 35lb 8oz (as of June 2023).

Despite its size and stock of carp,



Hook Lake isn't an easy fishery, however, it's a great place for anglers who want to improve their fishing skills, who are looking for a new challenge, or simply want to experience a different, more traditional style of fishing then they may be used to.

The size of the lake and its secluded location, makes it a perfect venue for a social and there are a few large benches in various swims

around the lake which have seen their fair share of socials over the years.

There are 16 recognised swims on Hook Lake which are all large enough to house a bivvy, with many of them easily big enough for a two man bivvy, and each of the swims on the fishery have their own little hot spots.

There is a pub a few hundred yards away in the village which also serves food, and there are plenty of shops



Welcome to

CREEDENCE FISHERY

your exclusive premium carp lake

Located in Essex, Creedence Fishery hosts one of the finest fishing lakes in the area. Created in 1922 and opened in 2020, the fishery boasts a stunning two acre carp lake, stocked with fish up to 44lb, with at least 30 x 30lb carp up to 39lb and at least six different 40s, backed up with another 30 x upper 20s. A handful of other 30lb fish and some fast growers to back them up. We are proud to offer you an excellent fishing environment and with accommodating facilities to help you get that new personal best!

THE FACILITIES



Four purpose built cabins adorn this beautiful hidden carp lake in Essex. Bookings available via the website. (Four Swims) Whole lake bookings available.

Creedence Fishery: A Year of Remarkable Growth In the few years since its inception, Creedence Fishery, located in picturesque Essex surroundings, has quickly distinguished itself as a premier destination for carp angling enthusiasts. This two-acre modern carp fishery has seen a flurry of activity and development over the last 12 months, significantly enhancing the angling experience and bolstering its presence within the community. At the heart of Creedence Fishery are its unique offerings that cater to the comfort and convenience of anglers. Each of the four meticulously designed swims (one of which one is a double) houses a wooden cabin equipped with modern amenities including heating, a fridge, TV, power, and Wi-Fi.

This innovative approach ensures that anglers can focus on their passion without the hassle of setting up bivvies, regardless of the weather conditions. In order to prevent unsightly angling tackle hanging from the trees along its margins, and to protect the cabins and wildlife, Creedence Fishery is a bait-boat only venue which adds to the excitement and challenge of catching big carp from its waters. Furthermore, the inclusion of essential carp care equipment, along with toilets, shower and vending machine, underscores the fishery's commitment to both angler satisfaction and fish welfare.

A pivotal development this year has been the introduction of a communal BBQ and social area, fostering a sense of community among visitors. The integration of the 'swimbooker' app for easy online booking has also streamlined the booking process, reflecting the fishery's embrace of technology to enhance user experience. The stocking program represents another significant milestone, with the addition of over 15x 30lb carp and

3x 40lb carp to the lake. This initiative not only promises thrilling challenges for anglers aiming to catch these magnificent specimens, but with the recent nettings removing huge numbers of smaller fish, allows for the backup stock to grow through too.

The impact of these developments is evident in the surge of anglers flocking to Creedence Fishery, drawn by the allure of its massive specimen carp and the enhanced fishing experience. The attention from mainstream angling media further validates the fishery's growing reputation as a premier destination. Looking ahead, Creedence Fishery plans to continue its trajectory of growth with a focus on nurturing huge specimen carp.

A scheduled netting at the year's end aims to curate the lake's population, ensuring that only carp above 25lb remain, alongside the introduction of even more 40lb carp. A testament to the fishery's appeal is a special feature by 'AJ Spooner' of swimbooker, whose YouTube session capturing multiple 30lb catches in a single winter outing has captivated the angling community.

This event, emblematic of the fishery's potential, can be easily accessed through the QR code link, as we invite you to witness the thrill of angling at Creedence Fishery. As Creedence Fishery continues to evolve, its blend of comfort, community, and carp sets it apart, promising memorable experiences for all who visit. With bookings already matching last year's total by February 2024, the fishery's future looks as bright as the reflective scales of its prized carp. Every new booking also includes 3KG of free feed pellet for every angler! Check the live availability of Creedence Fishery via the swimbooker app, and, if you're looking for a comfortable place to target huge carp in Essex, get it booked!



swimbooker

CONTACT DETAILS: 07882 083160

Creedencefishery@gmail.com

creedencefishery.com

See us on Facebook (Creedence Fishery) and Instagram (@CreedenceFishery)



We look forward to welcoming you to Creedence Fishery!



and amenities including a small fishing tackle shop in the local towns of Potters Bar and Cuffley, both less than 5 minutes drive away.

In over 45 years there have been no issues relating to damage or theft of any property, and whilst the secluded location of the fishery is beneficial, there are two locked gates into the fishery itself, which is also completely fenced, helping to prevent access onto the property through the surrounding woodland or fields.

For more information or to book a session, visit the Hook Lake website: www.hooklake.co.uk and also watch Simon Crow's recent video of the lake on YouTube.

There is an online booking system on the website where the discount code: BCFL24 will get you 10% discount off the total value of your booking! ■



THE ORIGINAL AND BEST



The Carp4Kids Academy
The Original and best
5th-9th August 2024
@windsorview Lakes
For more information email:
carp4ourkids@gmail.com

The Carp4Kids Academy are proud to be partnered with Windsor view lakes for this year's event. Our tutors have years of experience, teaching the vital points of carp fishing to your kids. We will ensure the future of our beloved obsession, through the next generation.
TACKLE BOXES NOT XBOXES



Angling Trust East of England

Brilliant guide for understanding how to fish legally. For anyone young or new to fishing, it can be hard to work out what licence you need. The Angling Trust have some very helpful guides that tell you what you need to know and this 'Lines on the Water' blog below explains it all in a simple way. Share this post with friends to give them all the help they need. <https://linesonthewater.anglingtrust.net/2020/05/19/how-do-i-go-fishing-legally/>.

Our Enforcement work is funded by fishing licence income delivered in partnership with the Environment Agency. ■



Carping4Charity Events

All Carping Friends and Family

Well, we have been very busy at C4C HQ and we present 3 Events for 2024.

Our first is DARENTH BIG LAKE – Your chance to fish this AMAZING Members ONLY Lake – In our ULTIMATE PAIRS Event.

2nd EVENT – BRASENOSE 2 – LINEAR FISHERY – GIRLS VS BOYS AUG 16th – 18th 2024

3rd EVENT CROWSHEATH FISHERY – A LADIES SOCIAL – Sept/Oct dates TBC.

Let's talk about our 1st Charity Event – A Pairs Match on Darenth Big Lake on Friday 17th May – 19th May 2024 – Plenty of room to fish with only 15 Pairs @ £300 a pair (may have 2 swims per pair). This can be made up of any pair – Men, Ladies or Mixed.

Darenth Big Lake – About the lake:

40 swims set within 14.5 acres of this premier fishery.

The Lake itself holds some 280 fish including 30 fish nearing the 40lbs mark and a further 4 fish exceeding the 50lbs mark.

The current lake record is a Mirror Carp at 57lbs 8oz, Leather Carp 56lbs 8oz, Common Carp 50lbs 4oz, Ghost Carp 38lbs 14oz.

The lake also holds some Catfish the record weighing in at 101lbs.

We also have quality roach in excess of 3lbs, Bream in excess of 15lbs, Tench in excess of 12lbs and pike in excess of 27lbs.

There is something for everyone whether you're an experienced Carp hunter or the individual who wants to while away the time in a secure and beautiful location.

TO BOOK YOUR SPACE on any EVENT Contact Myself Tania Williams or Miranda Brown. Provide your contact details and we will send you instructions how to pay and an EVENT PACK.

07446199184 – Tania

07919006651 – Miranda

EVENT 2 Details will be Posted tomorrow ■

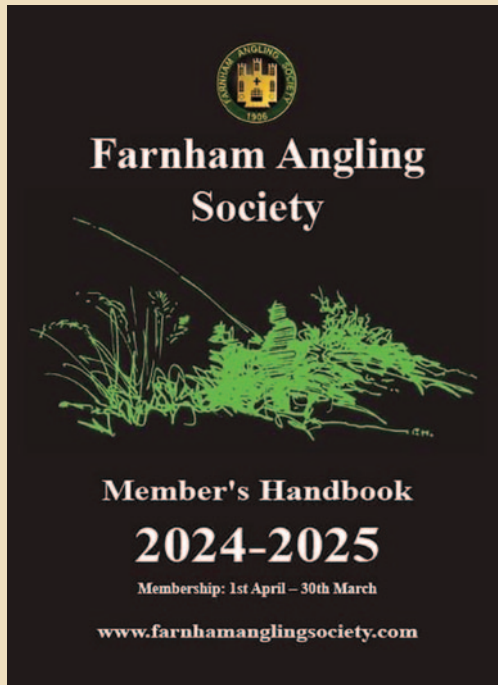


Bayeswater Fisheries 2024 Rules for Syndicate and Day Ticket Lakes



- No driving around either lake, park in the car park provided and stay off the farmers' fields.
- NO leaders of any sort, leadcore, shock leaders, nylon, braid etc are all BANNED.
- The Twig and all Plastic Baits are also BANNED.
- All Rubbish must be taken home with you, anyone leaving rubbish will be banned instantly.
- Dip weigh slings etc on arrival.
- If you are waiting for a swim, place a bucket in there and wait in the car park until the swim is available, no waiting in swims!
- You must use the cradles provided in each swim.
- Drones are prohibited!
- No Dogs allowed.
- No Retaining fish.
- Bait boats are allowed but please be considerate of other anglers.
- Hooks are your own preference.
- 15lb B/S line minimum.
- You must carry your IDCard on you at all times.
- Keep all gates shut at all times.
- Syndicate members must lock boats up!
- Leave the toilet clean!
- For guest and visitor request, contact Steve Bugg for more information.
- Do not enter Bayeswater unless you have booked. ■

Farnham Angling Society Membership News



Applications to renew or join FAS for the 2024-2025 season Members may now apply to renew for the 2024-2025 season via our website: <https://www.farnhamanglingsociety.com/join-us/> The Gold Valley Office will next be open between 10:00- 14:00 on Friday 29th February 2024: full details of all opening times are within the newsletter. Postal applications may be made using the Renewal Form on Page 89 of your 2023- 2024 handbook or by downloading an Application Form from our website: <https://www.farnhamanglingsociety.com/membership-application/Handbooks> will be issued in early March 2024, once we have received them from our printers, for the forthcoming season which will commence on 1st April 2024. ■

Kids in Mind Angling

Are you free on the 20th April? Well, we may have something that @everyone may be interested in! We are holding an open event alongside CarpBasics to kick off the season and the season of hopefully the better weather at the picturesque Monks Lakes in Kent.

This fishery offers 7 stunning lakes spanning across 120 acres in the Kent countryside and we've been given the opportunity to put on an event and of course we agreed! Full café experience available serving hot food and drinks all day. Plenty of FREE parking! Best of all there's plenty of water to have a nice walk round while you're not catching a few carp with us.

More details to follow including Celebrity Anglers, Raffle and fundraising.

- Jonathan Terry
- New Direction Tackle UK
- Swimbooker

Are you free and want to get your yourself familiar with fishing or just fancy having ago? Why not come along! ■



Horcott Lakes Open Day

With the release of the new CC Moore & Co Ltd Prostim Liver coming up we thought this would be a great opportunity to show case this amazing new bait.

On Saturday the 2nd of March 2024 you will be able to get your hands on this new bait line first hand at Horcott Lakes. In the testing period ProStim Liver has already had devastating results at Horcott.

We have some amazing bundle deals going on the day including boilies, boosters, pop ups, wafers, etc, along with any questions answered by CC Moore consultant Lee Polard.

- We will also have our famous bucket deals on offer with Pellets, PVA Bags, Liquid and Pop-ups with two of these containing FREE (yes FREE) season tickets for 2024-2025 and some 24hr sessions.
- Six Month tickets available only on the day (starting April 1st) for only £250.
- Massive savings on leads, £10 for 10 or £20 for 25.
- 10% off everything in the Tackle Shed.
- BBQ and refreshments.
- Free entry.
- Gates open 10am-3pm.

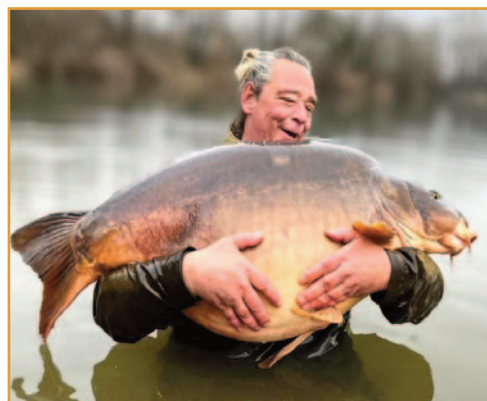
So why not pop in grab a bargain, a cuppa and have a stroll round. ■





FISHING

IKTUS VOTED N
FISHING DESTINA



RESORT

No. 1 FRENCH CARP
CATCHMENT AGAIN IN 2024



- 64 carp over 30kg caught in 2023 and 64 FREE bottles of IKTUS Champagne given to the captors!
- Carp up to 37kg;
- Current stock is 2300 carp, about 700 carp over 20kg.
- Iktus is also No. 1 for sturgeon with more than 20 different varieties, 7 species over 50 kg, 15 French records up to 120kg.
- In 2023 more than 150 tonnes of fish were caught from Iktus
- Plus A bunch of great people!
- Book now for 2024, 2025 and 2026!!





FREE LINE
MAGAZINE

CARP SCENE

Reviews



Colourful Carrying!

Add a splash of colour to your next adventure with Lifeventure's new range of Expedition Duffels. Combining the travel expert's proven design with a range of eye-catching new colours, the bags are not only incredibly durable but also feature a spacious 100L capacity that can easily accommodate all of your travel, walking or camping essentials.

Made from a tough 1,200 denier fabric, the Expedition Duffels can easily cope with the relentless wear and tear that is associated with outdoor life. Additional reinforcement across the bag's base in an ultra-strong, 1,680 denier fabric further increases its practicality and durability when transporting heavy or bulky loads.

Perfect for carrying all types of outdoor gear, the Expedition Duffel has a large main compartment that is secured with high-strength lockable zips. Designed to offer maximum practicality and versatility, the Expedition Duffel has both top and side grab handles for ease of handling together with a detachable shoulder strap that can be stored inside the bag during transit. When not in use, the bag can be folded flat – ideal for maximising space inside a tent or in the car.

The colourful Expedition Duffels are also available in a convenient 120L wheeled version with smooth rolling wheels. The Expedition Wheeled Duffel is equally versatile and can be easily rolled around its wheel-base for compact storage.

To find out more about the new range of Expedition Duffels visit www.lifeventure.co.uk. ■

Helping Anglers Tackle their Hay Fever this Spring

Spring is a great time for anglers to get back to really enjoying the outdoors again, with warmer days and lighter mornings and evenings. However, it's not so great if you suffer from hay fever, as spring is the peak tree pollen season. Help is at hand, though; try adding HayMax organic drug-free allergen barrier balms to your fishing tackle this season, to help you enjoy your angling again.

Hay fever, or seasonal allergic rhinitis, is the most common allergy and is thought to affect almost half the UK population. It is an allergic reaction to pollen and other airborne allergens such as fungal spores. The two main types of pollen which affect hay fever sufferers in the UK are grass pollen and tree pollen. Tree pollen starts in February or March and peaks in April and May and affects around 25% of hay fever sufferers.

HayMax is the original natural, organic, drug-free prevention for hay fever sufferers and is now in its 20th year. Leading the way for almost 2 decades, HayMax has now won over 60 awards, including for 2023 a Soil Association BOOM Award, British Made Award, Enterprise Award, BizzieBaby Award, Global 100 Award and Corporate America Today Annual Award.

HayMax is a balm that has been used successfully by Olympic athletes to help combat their hay fever during their careers. It is applied around the rim of the nostrils and bones of the eyes to help prevent pollen and other airborne allergens getting into the body whilst you're angling. It has been proven to trap over one third of pollen before it gets in the body [1]. Less pollen, less reaction.

As HayMax is organic, drug-free and non-drowsy, it is ideal for anglers as it won't affect your ability to stay

alert. And the small pot fits easily into a pocket, fishing bag or back pack. It is available in 5 varieties – Pure, Lavender, Aloe Vera, Frankincense and HayMax Kids – each an equally effective barrier to pollen.

Damien Wilkins comments, "I have used your Balm for about 4 years now and I cannot recommend this highly enough this has stopped 99% of my Hay fever symptoms which used to have a big effect on my lifestyle during spring and summer months, not feeling drowsy and being able to function as normal is just amazing. Thank you. I even posted on LinkedIn about how good your product is."

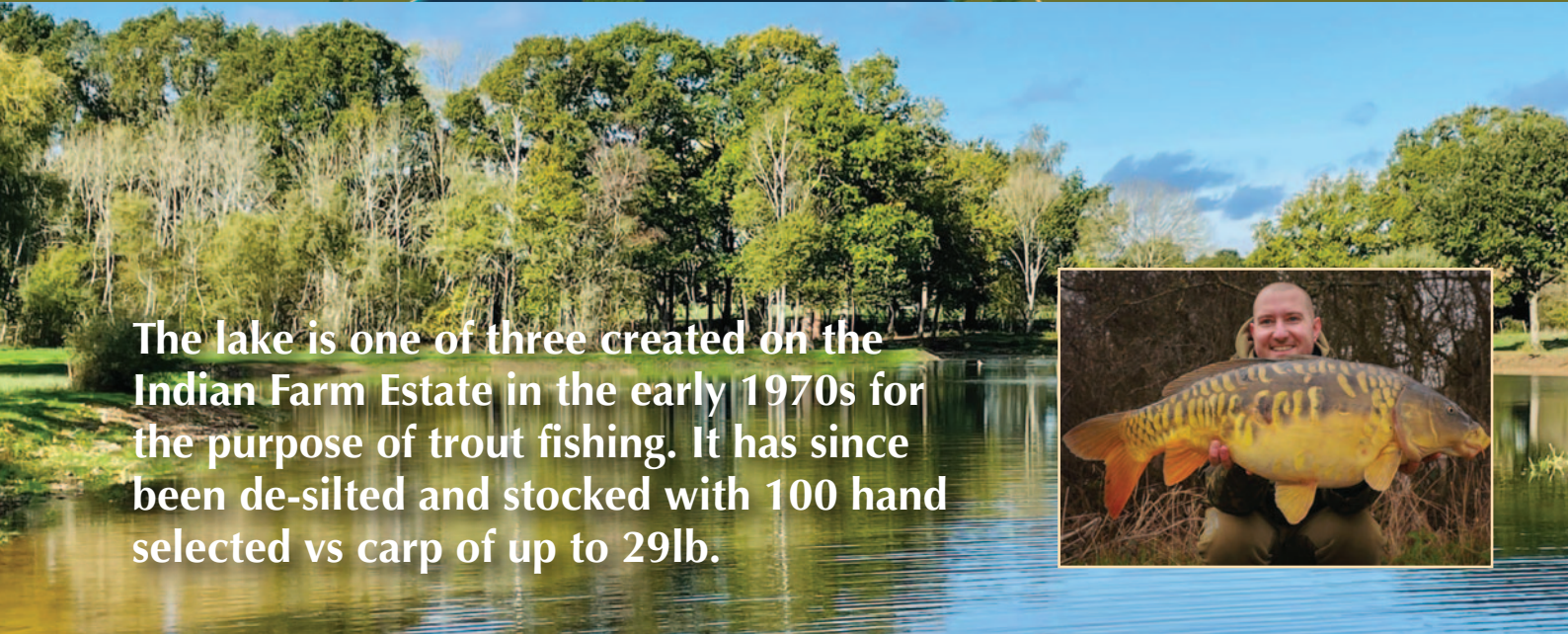
Independent university studies show that HayMax traps all types of grass and tree pollen [2] and that HayMax traps over a third of pollen before it enters the body, in addition to dust mite allergens and pet dander [1]. In an independent survey by Allergy UK (the leading national charity providing support, advice and information for those living with allergic disease), 80% of hay fever sufferers say HayMax works [3]. And 94% of people find HayMax quick to be effective; 44% say that it works immediately and a further 35% say that it works within an hour or two [3].

With over 60 awards, Olympic athletes having used it successfully, doctors in the media regularly talking about it, and glamorous Hollywood actress Nadine Mulgerrin posting about HayMax on Instagram, it's hardly surprising that people are hailing it as their 'lifesaver'.

HayMax has a rrp of £8.49 per pot and is available from Holland & Barrett, selected Superdrug and Boots, Ocado, independent pharmacies, chemists and health stores and direct from HayMax at www.haymax.biz and on 01525 406600. ■



A stunning 6 acre estate lake, offering a peaceful slice of fishing heaven situated in the heart of Surrey's beautiful countryside.



The lake is one of three created on the Indian Farm Estate in the early 1970s for the purpose of trout fishing. It has since been de-silted and stocked with 100 hand selected vs carp of up to 29lb.



Onsite facilities consist of a cabin with shower, toilet, basic kitchen and a sitting area.

www.carp-fishery.com

Office hours: Monday - Friday 9 AM - 5 PM

info@carp-fishery.com | Tel: 07961 277085

Indian Farm, Effingham Common Road Surrey KT24 5JG

BOOK NOW!
POWERED BY
catch



Autumn Success

By Chris Claxton

Autumn seemed late to arrive this year, and Swan Valley had been fishing really slowly through September. Very little had come out with only the odd fish here and there each week, and the feeling on the lake was pretty downbeat. I had managed to winkle a fish out on my sessions, but the action certainly wasn't easy to come by, and there were no chunks to speak of.

It was the second week of October, and I had a 96-hour session from the Sunday planned. I had other plans on the Saturday night, which ruled out fishing over the weekend. As it turned out my plans for Saturday night got cancelled last minute, which then got me thinking about getting the rods out early, but I opted not to. My thinking was that the lake would be busy, and I would probably have to slot in where I didn't want to be and might not be on the fish. Instead I decided to go for a walk round on Saturday to see what was happening. It was the same as most weekends gone by – the lake was busy, but nothing much was doing, just one fish out earlier in the week.



This certainly didn't bode well for my session, however I was fully aware we'd been going through a spell of high pressure with warm days and cold nights, which can't have helped. A storm was forecast on the Monday, which was bringing a wind change, a pressure crash and warmer temperatures through the night. I was sure this would work in my favour.

I arrived on the lake around mid-

morning on the Sunday, and it was a cracking sunny day. I had a walk round, chatted with a couple of people on the lake and it was the usual tales of woe. After a couple of laps of the lake, it was quite apparent picking a swim was not going to be easy – there was barely a sign of fish anywhere. I finally opted for a swim called the Channel, which isn't a favoured swim for this time of year, but there was a method behind the madness. It is a narrow swim between the main lake and the Back Bay, so it had to be a great interception point. To my knowledge it hadn't seen a lot of pressure recently, and best of all there was a fresh south/southwesterly wind pumping into the bank, so I felt the fish would turn up here at some point.

I was aware that earlier in the year people had lost a few fish in this swim, so I spent a bit of time raking it out to remove a weedbed close in. This would give me more chance of landing a fish should I get into one, and it also worked in my favour, giving me a much better line lay. Before the session, I had already thought a fairly heavy baiting strategy might be the way to go, and this approach was then a given for me in this swim, as I wanted something to draw down any



passing fish. I knew the swim hadn't seen much if any attention for a while, so I wouldn't be putting bait on top of anyone else's bait. I had already prepared a lovely mix of different sized pellet and Area-51 boilies from Heads Down Baits, all boosted with a little krill liquid, and I put around 5kg of this on the main spot from the off. This was a different approach to how I have fished for most of the year, so the hinged stiff rigs were ditched on two rods, as I fished bottom baits on the baited area. However I couldn't ignore how well the boilie approach with the hinged stiff rig had worked to date, so the third rod went out in a nice clear hole amongst the weed with a kilo of boilies over the top.

By the time the rods were out, the cracking sunny day had turned to night, and with the night came the rain and wind. The weather progressively got worse as the night went on, and it was fast becoming apparent the front of my brolly needed to go on. The only problem was that it was in the van, so this wasn't an option until daylight. I woke in the morning after no activity. The weather was miserable, and it was almost as wet and muddy under the brolly as the rest of the swim. I don't mind admitting I was feeling dejected.

I went for a walk to grab the brolly front and a look round the lake to see if a move would be worthwhile, but there wasn't anything showing to warrant it. The weather then went from bad to worse quickly. I returned to my swim lively to get the front on the brolly, and to my surprise there



(Above) 22lb 10oz common.
(Below left) Diddy common.

were fish showing in my swim, which really gave my confidence a lift. One rod went back on the baited spot with another 2kg over the top and one rod slightly off the edge of the spot back on the hinged stiff rig. I was hoping this might pick up any fish that was attracted to the bait but was a little too cautious to feed hard. The final rod was put on a lovely clear spot in the margin where I had seen fish. I was pretty much bound to the brolly after this point for the rest of the day and night, as the storm really took hold. The swim was fast becoming a mud bath, and the conditions on the bank were pretty poor.

I woke in the morning to a brief break in the storm. It was a lovely morning, and it really felt as though autumn was finally arriving. There was leaf litter all over the lake, and the

odd tree was starting to thin out. It wasn't just autumn that had arrived but the fish too, and the rod hard on the baited spot kicked into action. A cracking battle then followed, in which I came out on top, and a lovely dark 22lb 10oz common graced the bank. It had a really big paddle, so it was clear to see why this fish put up such a good fight. It wasn't one of the lake's largest residents, but I was chuffed nonetheless, as thoughts of a blank had already started to creep into my mind.

The weather was very up and down all day with rain showers, but as the day went on, more and more fish were turning up in the swim – some real units too. There was one particular fish that kept swimming along the weed behind my spot, flanking and rubbing itself on the weed. I remember thinking what a seriously long fish it was with a really light belly that showed up as it turned on its side.

It was a real pleasure just to watch them swimming round in the upper layers. I put a zig out on one rod to try and bag one, but they just seemed to be swimming circuits around it with no real interest. I was just sitting back in the brolly thinking about moving the rod just off the baited spot back onto it, as that's what had produced a fish, but then all of a sudden one the Delks went into meltdown. I raced out, expecting the zig rod to be going, but no, it was the rod just off the spot I was thinking of changing that had





rattled off.

As I picked the rod up, it was clear this was a good fish. The rod bent over double, and the fish was fully in control, lunging powerfully from left to right. I gave it as little line as possible, as it was a very small swim with overhanging trees on both margins, and there was still a lot of weed about, and to add to this, the fish was

having a good go at wiping out my other rods. Things were really not in my favour.

Dan, who was fishing in the swim next door, came round to help me net the fish, which was a great help, as I could fully concentrate on the battle. As soon as the fish was in the net, he said he thought it was the Long Fish, but we were unsure. Another mate,

Mark, had turned up in the swim by this time, as he was having a walk round. Mark kindly did the honours with the pictures and hoisting the fish on the scales. Once on the bank it was clear to see this was indeed the Long Fish, and it had to be the fish I had been watching rubbing itself in the weed. We were expecting this fish to go about 38lbs, so when the scales tipped a couple of ounces over 40lbs, I was gobsmacked. Not only had I managed to bank another fish from my wanted list, it was another UK 40, and I was on cloud nine.

That was the last of the activity for the day, but the weather improved further on Wednesday, and much as the day before, the fish were in the swim in numbers. I was watching lump after lump drift into the swim and then disappear down on the baited spot, and I felt another chunk was imminent for sure. One fish I was watching was clearly an upper 30 when another fish just appeared out

**(Top) Koi common.
(Below) The Long Fish.**



the weed, which made it look small... Excitement levels were through the roof.

Then out of nowhere the right hand rod in the margin sprung into life. A diddy little common was the result, probably one of the smallest in the lake, but a little cracker nonetheless, and the continued action was very welcome. Then within ten minutes of this, the rod just off the baited spot burst into life again. Unfortunately, it wasn't one of the big lumps that had been drifting into the swim, but it was a stunning common carp with a real strain of koi running through it. All of its fins were tipped white, and it had a real ghostie look across its head and shoulders. It isn't always about size, and I was more than pleased with this fish.

That turned out to be the last of the action, as the storm had completely moved out by then. The drop in temperature returned that night as it went down to about three degrees, and come the Thursday there wasn't a fish to be seen in my swim any-



where.

I packed up, totally knackered but very happy. I hadn't expected much at the start of the session due to how slow things had been. However, things couldn't have unfolded much

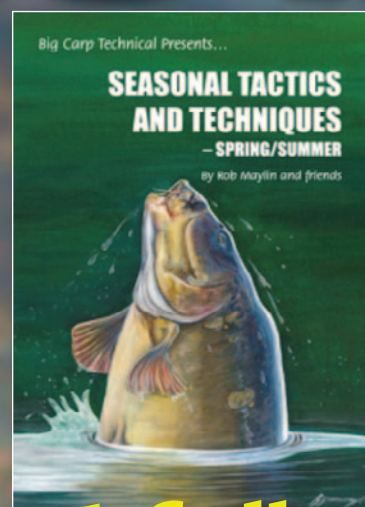
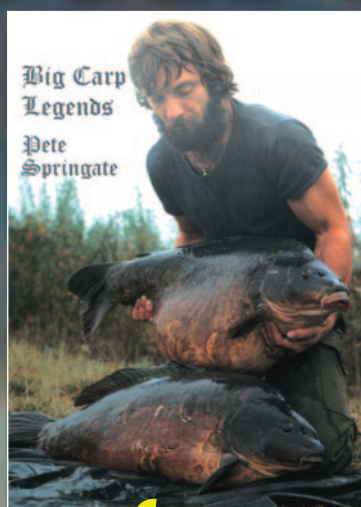
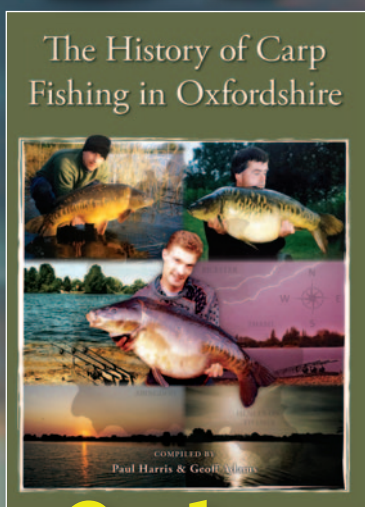
better... I'd had a few, and another one of the big girls was in the album. I certainly managed to put myself in the right place at the right time, and the weather clearly played its part too with lady luck on my side. ■

Carpy Humour

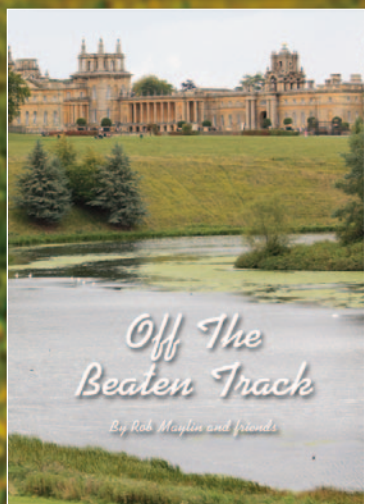
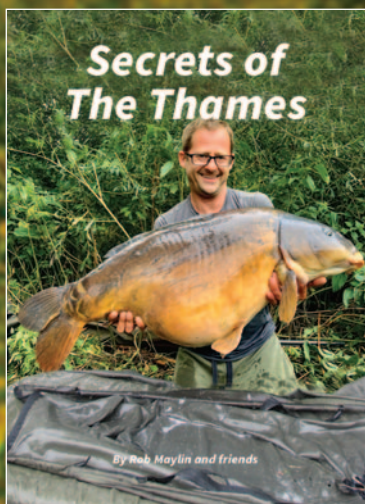
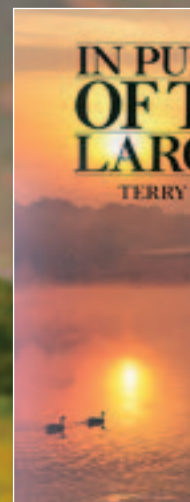
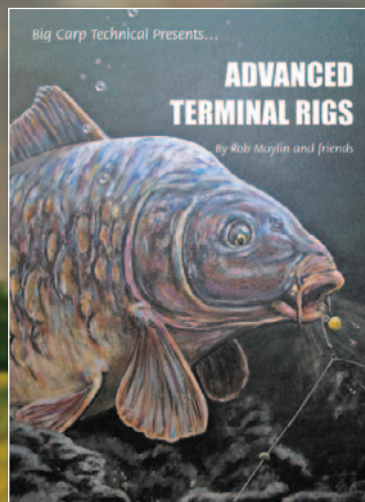
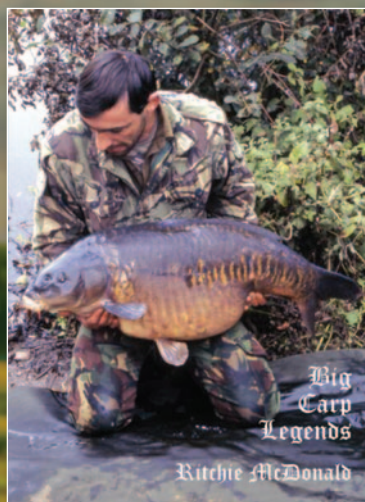


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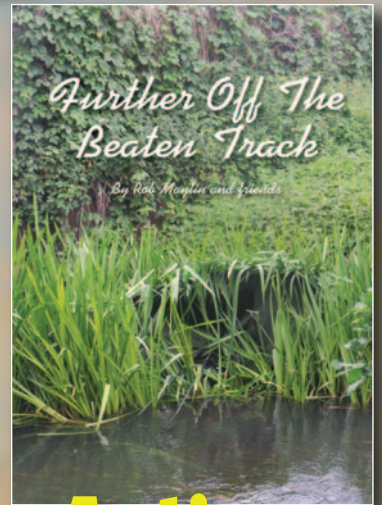
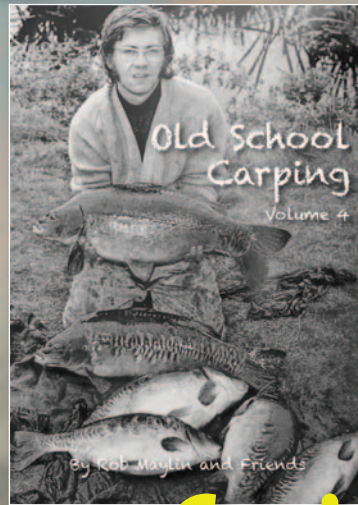
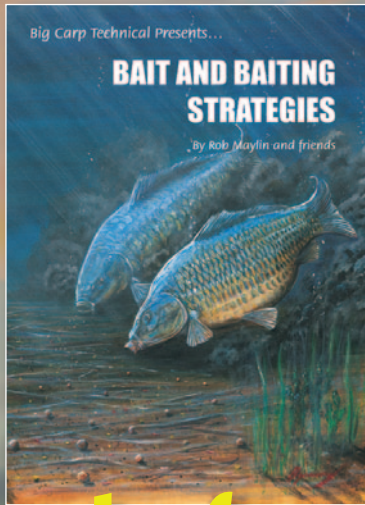


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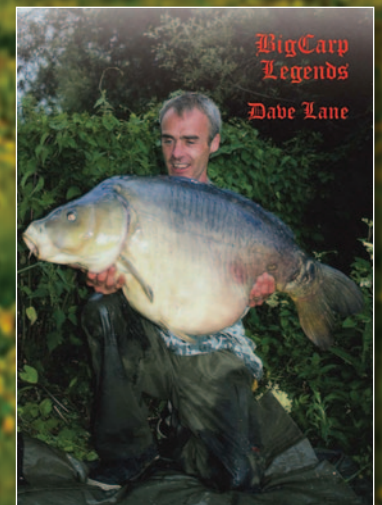
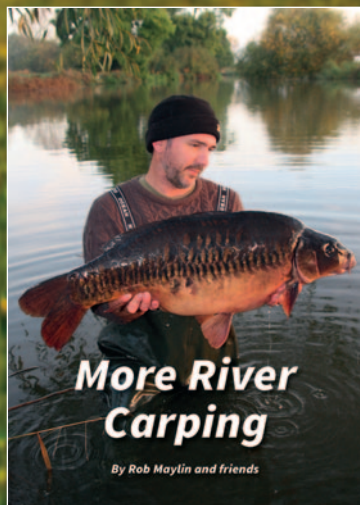
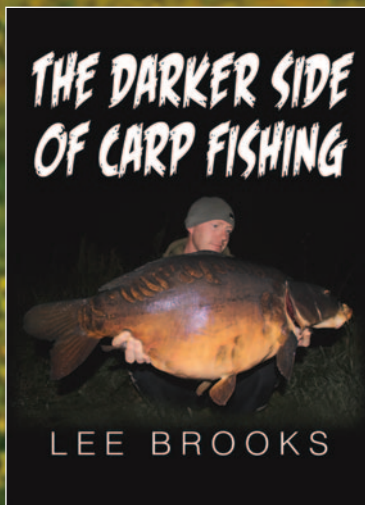
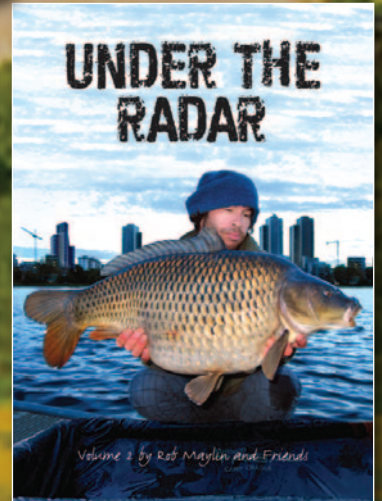
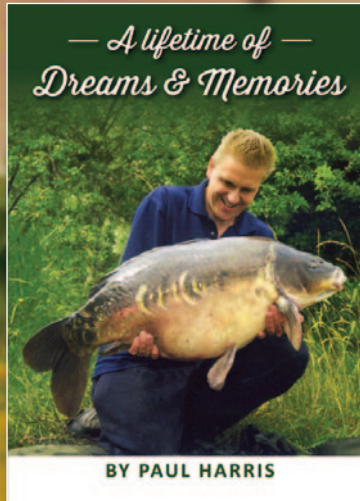
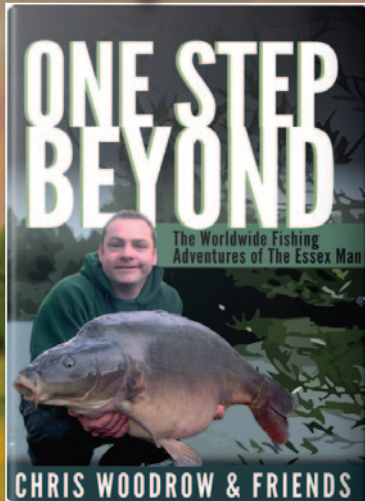


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As Spring Sprung

By Ed Betteridge

Big moon = big commons?

It's been a while since I have written for Big Carp, but I have done a good few articles and diaries within these pages in the past, so I'm glad I've been invited back to write in the 250th edition. It's quite a feat to print that many issues, and I know the magazine has had some very good anglers in its pages over past 20-plus years. It's always a struggle to know what to write about in these sorts of articles, but being as we are at the start of spring then that seems like a fitting subject, so this piece echoes back to a cracking spring I had a couple of years ago.

With April quickly looming and no set water to angle on, I needed to decide where to fish in the spring, and luckily I received a phone call that potentially answered my questions.

(Top right) The weather was changeable at times.

(Below) My first fish from a new water and a chunk to boot at 34lb 12oz.



The voice on the other end was offering me a ticket (that I duly accepted) that I didn't think I had a chance of getting on to for a while. I can't name the water, but it was 75 miles from home, which is about as local as I fish these days, due to there being next to no big fish in Derbyshire! I changed a

few things around in my packed schedule so that I could squeeze an overnight session in on the day my ticket started to get a feel for the lake and pay my subs. I did a couple of laps of the lake to get used to the layout, and as the day wore on, the skies cleared and turned into a glorious





spring evening, and the fish started to pop to the surface and cruise around with their backs out. It was a really good sight to see after the winter, and although I didn't catch that session, I learnt a lot and I decided to do April on the water and see what transpired.

I have been told numerous things about the supposed size and stock of the place. To my mind its about 15 acres with a quoted stock of anywhere between 40 and 70 carp, but despite the stock density, it isn't the easiest place to catch from. Looking at an aerial map of the place there is one swim that screams out to be the place to start, the Point. It commands a big chunk of water and allows a vista of most of the lake from various viewing points within a few strides of the rods. So with nothing else to go on, I dropped in the swim on my second session.

The first night passed without action, but the fish started showing in the mouth of the bay at around 8am. I quickly wound in my middle rod, and the pop-up was still buoyant, so I dowsed it in Goo for a bit of instant attraction and cast it toward the showing fish. It landed right on the money first cast and touched down nicely on the lakebed. Around 20 minutes later, the bobbin twitched up slightly, going from hanging down and pointing at the deck to lifting to a 45° angle. I jumped up and hovered

my hand over the rod waiting for a lift up of the chain, but it didn't come. I was just about to pick up the rod anyway and hit it when the bobbin fell to its previous position. I felt 95% sure a fish was on, but if it wasn't and it was just a liner then a retrieve and recast could spook the swim.

I was in two minds about what to do for what seemed like ages, but it must have only been 30 seconds. Then when the bobbin very slowly started to rise again, I hit into it before it even moved the chain. I felt just a dead weight to start with, but as far as I knew there was no weed or snags in the swim, so it must have been all fish! I slowly eased it toward me, and it stayed on the same line all the way

in, not doing a thing except nod its head occasionally. Once under the rod tip, it started to put up a scrap, and I could see I was attached to a good and very thickset fish. After a few runs and plodding low in the water, I slipped the net under her, and I could see that what she lacked in length was made up for in girth! On the scales she spun the needle round to 34lb 12oz, and I was over the moon to be off the mark with a mid 30lb chunk. I couldn't resist doing the shots with the backdrop of blossom before returning her to the lake.

The next night passed without action, yet I still felt confident of a bite, so I managed to squeeze in a third night. There were a few fish showing on the same area towards the middle of the lake, so I had a little lead about and found a nice spot at 85 yards. So I clipped up and cast a bait to it on the evening of my last night. I followed up this with three Spombfuls of Hybrid boilies and left the line to slacken off before clipping the bobbin on. I didn't bother switching the alarm on because I knew I would need to adjust the line some more to get the perfect balance between slackness with the line hugging the deck and just keeping the bobbin in touch with lead so that bite indication wasn't too bad.

I turned my back on the rod for a few seconds whilst I readied one of the other rods, and when I turned back, the bobbin was in the alarm and the line was tight. I was a little surprised to get a bite only minutes after casting in and introducing bait, but

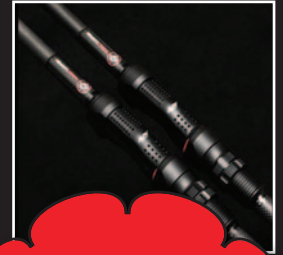
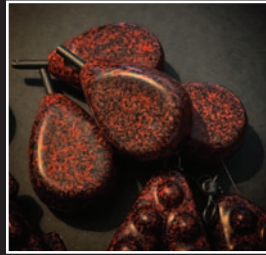


(Top) A mid double.
(Right) My first mirror at 23lb.



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that was the only explanation I could think of, a bite. So I picked up the rod to engage in a very spirited fight. The fish only turned out to be a mid double common, but I was happy with the result and my second fish. Later that night I picked up a third fish and my first mirror from the water at 23lb, leaving me very happy with the result and extremely encouraged with my start to my campaign on a new water.

After the three-fish hit, I was keen to get back down to the lake the following week. On pulling up at the side of the track and taking a quick look in the catch report book in the angler's hut, I could see only a couple of entries since my captures a few days earlier. This really surprised me because I thought there would be a glut of fish banked in my absence due to the way it was fishing on my last

night, but I guess I had just caught it right as the lake had switched on. From the vantage point of swim 6, I could see the lake was busy and the Point swim that I had caught from the previous week was taken, so I grabbed my bucket and took a wander around the lake in search of somewhere to drop in. From talking to a few of the lads on my walk round and witnessing a few shows myself, it transpired that a bulk of fish were showing out in the middle section of the lake, and I really wanted to get in an area that gave me access to the centre. It was mentioned to me that the guy in the Point might well be leaving later in the day, so I made a beeline for the swim.

As I walked up to the Point, I could see a bucket positioned behind the bivvy, and my heart sank at the thought that the swim might have been prebooked and I had missed my chance to get in there. But after talk-

(Top) Nene Valley dawn.
(Below) A new PB common, the Goldfish at 45lb 10oz.





(Top left) The smile says it all as I return the Goldfish to its home. (Below left) The third bite of the day, a low 20lb common with a crinkled tail (Bottom) The clear skies made for scenic sunrises... ..but also frosty nights.



as an opportunity to try and pounce a cup of tea in what was proving a very dry syndicate!

I found no signs of any fish anywhere else and even saw a couple more in the Point's water, leaving me in no doubt as to where I needed to be. I waited until Mick had completely wrapped down and left the swim before I dropped in. I knew the spots that I wanted to fish, so getting the rods out was an easy affair of clipping up to known spots and just making sure the rigs went out untangled. I Spombed 2kg of boilies over the left hand rod and about 0.75kg over the other two. As the sun dropped, the big full moon rose in the eastern sky, and I couldn't help but wonder if the night would yield a big common. All the shows into dusk were on the right hand side of the swim, and I stayed up quite late expecting a bite on my right or middle rod, but I eventually gave up in the early hours and retired to bed. I was awoken from my slumber some time later as I received a few bleeps. As I peered out of the top of my bag, I could just see the bobbin return to the slack position, and I assumed it was a liner, but just as my head hit the pillow, the alarm sounded again, but this time the bobbin stayed tight to the alarm. I jumped out of bed and made my way to the rods. As my eyes focused on the bright LED that was cutting through the darkness, I

ing to Mick (who was in the swim) it turned out that it was his ablutions bucket, and he was indeed leaving in a few hours, so I dropped my bucket in the swim and left Mick to fish on

and not feel pressured by my presence. It also gave me the chance to do a few laps and check all the nooks and crannies to make sure I was making the correct choice. I also saw this





(Above) I made several moves in the pursuit of a bite. (Right) I was forced to improvise after I forgot my kettle. (Below) At sunset there were a few showing in the bay.

could see it was the left hand rod, which really surprised me, as all the shows I had seen were over the other rods.

As I picked up the rod, I had to take in a lot of slack, as the fish had run toward me, but I soon came in contact with a heavy weight. I knew straight away that it was a big fish because of the slow, lumbering plodding and the ponderous, weighty runs that it went on. I started to imagine which fish it might be; I knew it wasn't any of the long, lean powerhouses because of the slow, weighty fight. Once close in, I started getting a lot of vibrating sensations up the line as if the carp's tail was beating

against it for a while before pinging off the fins or various other parts of its body. From what I have been told about the Fat Lady that used to reside in St. Ives in Cambs, the fight of this fish was very similar, so I surmised I hooked into a deep-bodied fish. So even though I hadn't caught a glimpse of the fish or hooked or heard any stories of how any of the fish in the lake fought, I became convinced I was hooked into one of the biggest residents!

I became a little nervous about the prospect of landing what could be my biggest common, but after a few edgy minutes I slipped the net under the lump. I then secured the net and grabbed my head torch from my bivvy. As I shone the light into the net, I could see it was indeed a fish called the Goldfish, and I must admit I was a little taken aback by my perception of the fight, and then even



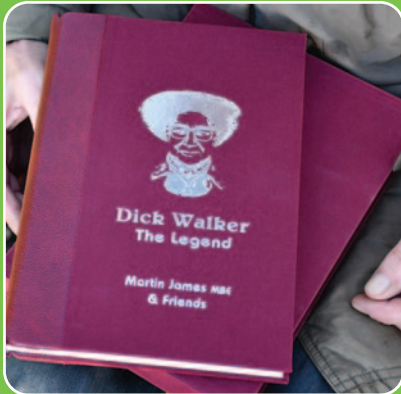
more taken aback by the sheer size of her. She looked like she was going to beat my PB common, and the scales confirmed this by smashing my previous best by 1lb 8oz and registering 45lb 10oz! I was blown away by the size of her and delighted at the capture. Dawn was only just around the corner, so I sacked her up and put the kettle on. We got some cracking shots and a nice bit of video before slipping her back.

Later that morning I received another bite, which I lost after a few seconds. I wound the rig in to find that the boom section of my hinged stiff rig had tangled around the back of the lead, something that rarely happens. I couldn't help but think that this was the reason for the hook pull. This bite was from the right hand rod, and then a little later the middle rod was away, and after an erratic fight, I landed a low 20lb common with a strange crinkle to the top of its tail. Later that day the wind swung round to a chilly easterly, which blew right into me. This seemed to knock the fishing on the head and what little shows I saw were right on the back of the wind. I stayed put in the hope that they might move on the wind, but they didn't, well not for 24 hours anyway, which was when I had to pack up.

The following week, I got back down and again there were far fewer entries in the catch report book than I



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was expecting, yet this time I was to experience the lakes more moody nature. I receive a bite from the point swim, but managed to lose it shortly into the fight. The annoying thing for me was that I was on fish for most of the time – fish showed near me on both my nights, and I also spent two days stalking in a small bay but couldn't tempt a pick up!

The last night I moved onto a few fish, but woke up the following morning biteless and to see fish showing in my swim. The shows were between two of my baited areas, but because I only had two hours before I had to pack up for work, I wound in my right hand rod that was away from the shows and cast the 1oz lead into the ripples of the most recent disturbance. And that was the last carp I saw; they were spooked by a 1oz lead! So I suffered a three-night blank. Blanks I can deal with, they are par for the course on most of the hard waters that I fish, but I hate blanking when I'm on fish; it generally means I'm doing something wrong. I could help but think that even though the fish were being moody, I still should have nicked one!

On my next session I was again surprised to be able to get back in the Point swim. I positioned the rods on the usual spots, but at dusk I saw sev-

eral shows in the same area to my right, and I knew I had to move one of my rods. I quickly skipped in my middle rod, doused it in Pineapple Goo to give it added attraction and then sailed the rig into the ripples of yet another show. I watched the area into dark and saw a couple more shows, which was a very positive sign after I had spooked them with a 1oz lead the previous week. I knew I had a very good chance of a bite on that rod, but it was the (new) middle rod that received a bite, only to land a double figure common.

It took until just before dawn until the right hand rod signalled a take. It was quite a positive take compared to the others I had received from the lake; it even took a couple of inches of line off the clutch! Initially I thought I was into another small fish, as the fight was uneventful and not very heavy at all, but once I got the fish close in, the battle changed, and there was a lot more weight to the fish. It went on a few slow and deliberate runs that made me reassess the size of the fish, and I breathed a sigh of relief once I slipped the net under it.

Once I flicked the head torch on, I could see I had banked a long, lean common with a very underslung mouth, and as I lifted it onto the waiting mat I knew it was going to be



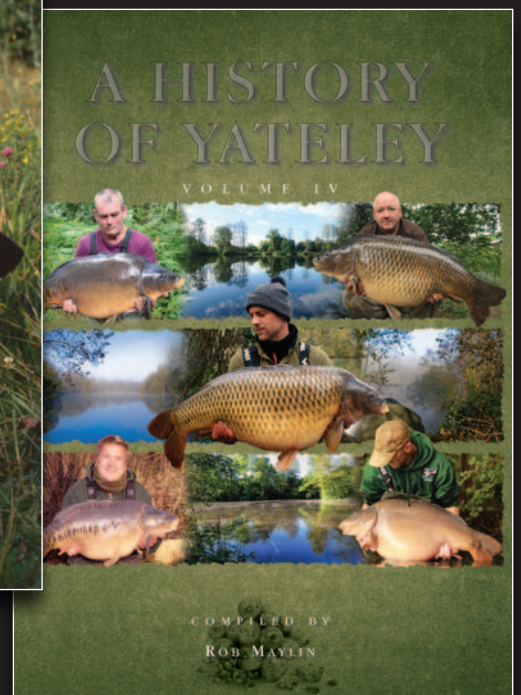
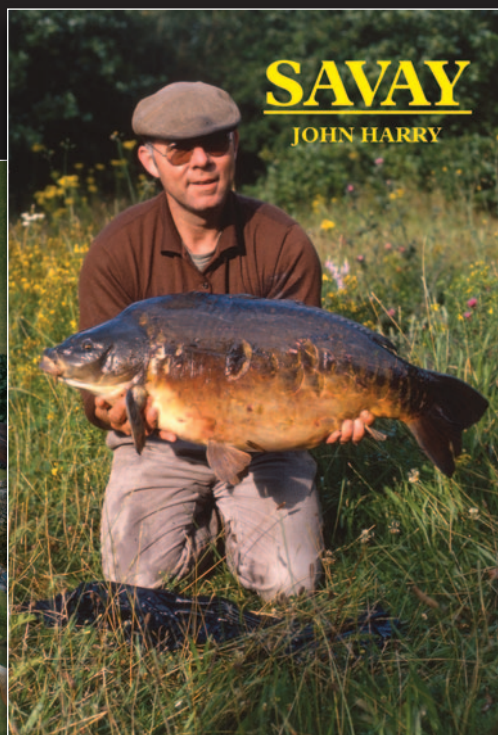
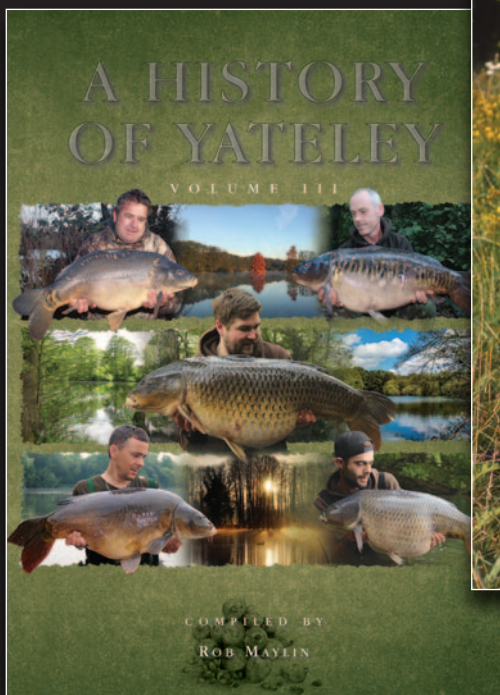
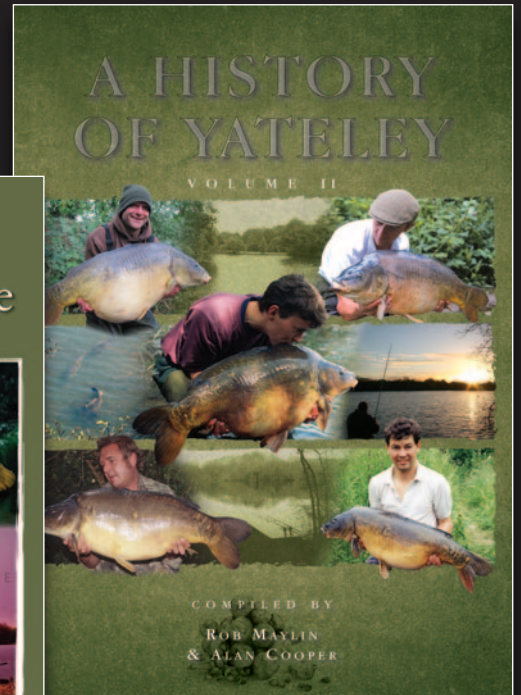
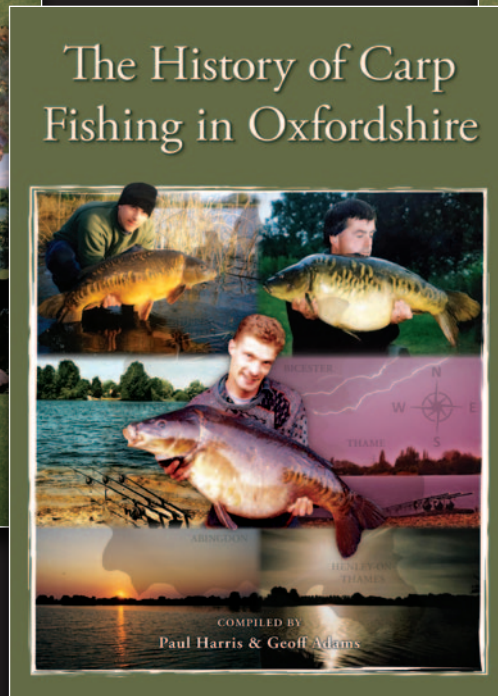
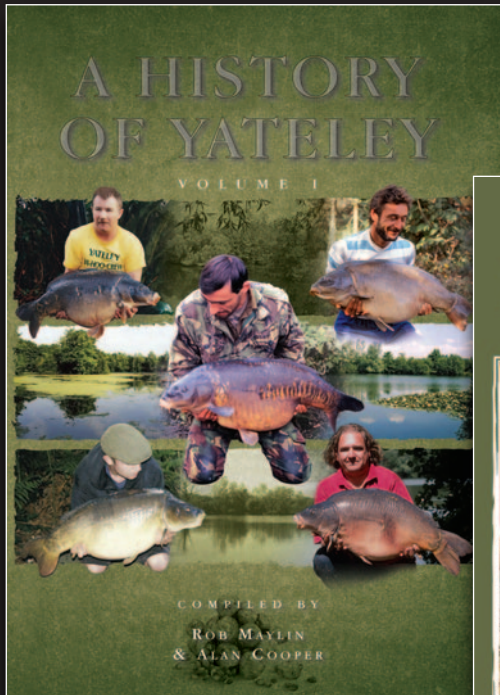
(Top) The Gooed hookbaits seemed to be working.

(Bottom) Another good fish, an unnamed one at 39lb 7oz.

close to the 40lb mark. Once on the scales the needle spun round before settling back at 39lb 7oz. There was no one that I knew on the lake, so I did a few self-takes, and I couldn't resist doing them in front of the hawthorn blossom. The photos turned out really well for selfies, and I couldn't help but think how well my start to the new water had gone. I was less than a month into my ticket starting, and I had already banked two of the better fish and a new common PB to boot! If only all springs were this good. ■



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Off The Mark

By Jake Lund



Just like last year, I decided to join a different water for my winter fishing. I fancied somewhere that had better winter form than where I'd been dangling this year. My first session out, not much fishing was done to be honest. Due to the mild weather we've had, the lake was still weeded right up, and not knowing the lake very well, I didn't know of any clear spots. I also wasn't sure where the fish were spending most their time. However after 48 hours of sitting behind pub-chucked chods, it was obvious the fish were loving the weed, and wherever the weed was thickest seemed to be where they showed most.

With this in mind, on Sunday with not much happening, I decided to start prepping a spot in a small bay in the main lake that was unfishable due to all the weed. Four hours later after dragging weed in using a weed rake that I had custom made by the fairly new Apollo Angling Centre in Byfleet, I had a clear spot to fish!

I was knackered, and my spod rod and reel had taken a beating, but I did have a fairly clean spot with a nice line lay. The spot wasn't as clean as I'd like it to be however, but after two

weeks of baiting quite heavily with Dynamite Baits' Monster Tiger Nut, between the birds and carp they had cleaned the spot off nicely, and I was able to get a nice hard donk on all three rods!

The week before I was down to fish, I gave it a big hit of bait on the Monday, with the hope it would all be gone by the Friday, and I would be able to fish just for a bite at a time over just a pouch of bait over each rod, as I was only able to fish two days and one night. I was even more excited to get down that weekend when I had a call confirming that on Tuesday and Wednesday night fish were showing over my baited area!

Saturday morning soon came around, and three hinge stiffs went out. The day was quiet, and hearing that there had been a couple of fish out, I decided just on dark to put a kilo of washed-out Monster Tiger Nut out. As the temperature dropped that night, I couldn't help but wonder if I had overdone it with the bait.

Through the night fish were showing out in the middle of the pond, slowly edging their way closer to the bay I was in. However, once they got to the mouth of the bay they stopped showing. By this point it was now first light, and I was super tired and fell

asleep. 9am I was woken by a one-toner! My left rod was away. Swiftly bending into a heavy, dead weight I was into a proper weeded-up carp!

Very slowly I edged a whole weedbed in, bit by bit, until the weedbed hit the wall of marginal weed. In the end I had no option but to set the clutch and pass the rod to the missus! Scary moment!! I jumped in the waders and made my way out with the net. Breaking weed away, I hand-lined a weedbed into the net, but thankfully there was a carp in there too.

The beast went 39lb – what a result, and what a first fish to have! It certainly made my winter campaign already, however I'm going to keep plugging away. Fingers crossed I might have something to write about again soon.

Tight lines. ■



A 15-Year (Ob)session – Carthagena

By Jerry Hammond

Nearly fifteen years ago this August on the 23rd, my family and I moved into a new home. This was no normal home; this was to me all my dreams come true. We had bought a house on an island, an old lock house surrounded by the River Lee. The house was a lock keeper's cottage that had later been extended to double its size; it was my dream home and one I am still totally in love with.

Not only was my house surrounded by some of the best chub fishing in the area, literally outside my kitchen window, but opposite over the weir-pool bridge lay two beautiful lakes. The lakes had, for some 30-odd years, been run by the late Peter Brill. On the buildup to us exchanging contracts, I was constantly knocking on Peter's door to try and find out as much information as I could about the carp in these two waters.

The smaller of the two lakes, around five acres, had some history to it and was known as Heartbreak Pit. The name must have been given for obvious reasons, as it would just break your heart each time you blanked. Peter showed me an old newspaper cutting dating back to the 70s – apparently it was a good tench water, but very difficult.

When I first viewed the lake, it



looked beautiful but was completely overgrown and covered in invasive lily pads. There was a gravel washing plant adjacent to the lake that was still in operation, and they had extraction rights to pump water to wash their gravel. By the looks of it, the lake was riddled with gravel bars; some

were proud out of the water where the levels were down, and these bars had all sorts of vegetation growing on the tops of them. The lake had not been fished for years, and to honest there was not a path or route around the lake, but I knew one day it would be special. Peter told me that Heart-



(Intro page) Living on an island – outside my back door.

(Top) Brooke Lake construction.

Brooke Lake's first 40 – Dyson.

(Below left) Carpet Graham with Carthagen's first 40.

(Below right) My good mate Bazza with a Brooke Lake cracker.





break Pit was one of the oldest pits in the Lee Valley, around 90-odd years old, and he doubted any carp were present, but there were maybe some tench and perch, but that was it.

Now, Peter had run the other lake as a fishery for years. This lake I knew as Carthagenena Lake, as the Lock House was called Carthagenena Lock. This lake was around eight acres in size and was also an old gravel pit. Years before, I had walked around the lake a few times, as I live in the area, and I'm always on the lookout for new waters, as us anglers always tend to be. I never ever fished it, but knew a few friends that had, and to be honest there are so many waters in the Lee Valley that I never really took much notice of it.

Peter said there were some good carp in there and showed me a few photographs. He also had an old stocking receipt from back in the 70s that showed some 800-odd fingerlings stocked. Looking at the pictures, these fish were of a very good strain.



There were a few with the classic small tail, and one was a cracking looking leather, a few linears and some very nice commons. The lake was gin clear and weedy, and in

places the Canadian weed came to the top – fantastic. I got to speak to some of the guys that fished there and tried to build a picture up of what actually resided in the lake. The anglers were not exactly hardcore, more like pleasure anglers, and only a few were allowed to night fish. However I knew that Nicky Onslow and Kenny Dorset had fished there, so I really needed to speak to these guys to really find out what gems the lake held. Carthagenena Lake was mainly a silty bottom unlike Heartbreak Pit – two totally different waters. Both





(Top left) Snubnose common at 35-plus – one of many.
(Top right) A great shot of Toby Henwood with Tango.
(Above right) Martin Collier with the awesome Little Tailed Leather at 39lb.
(Left) Pumphouse where DD lived.

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



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(Top left) The Northern Common at 38-plus, Carthagera Lake.

(Top right) Dyson.

(Bottom left) Turkish – firm but friendly. The Unknown was his first UK 40.

(Bottom right) Long time friend Paul Pynan with a lovely dark Cartha common.

waters had lots of work needed doing, and Brooke Lake was going to be one hell of a challenge, and I could not wait.

The day came when we eventually moved into our new home, Carthagera Lock House. By the way, I don't have to operate the locks; this is now done by the owners of the boats, thankfully.

I ended up buying all of the fish in the lakes from Peter, and some of the land, and secured a lease from the owners, which at the time was a land holdings company. And so started the beginning of a nearly fifteen-year journey. Where do you start? Well, Heartbreak Lake would have to go on

hold for a few years, and there was lots to be done on Carthagera Lake, so that's where it started.

We also had a weirpool and a couple of miles of river to look after as well, and the weir needed all new swims, some fifteen of them. Luckily I had a good friend, Dicky Lang, a very good carpenter and also a carp angler. Dicky and I got cracking on the weir and ended up rebuilding every swim out of decking, which was costly and time consuming, but we got there in the end.

Dicky was a big part of the fishery in the early days, and I owe him a lot. He helped me relentlessly on both lakes, so thanks for those times, mate.

Carthagera Lake, which I'll call the main lake, needed new swims and some swims taken out, as there were way too many. These were all made with scaffold tubes that were all ripped out. I tried to keep the swims all natural where it was possible to do so. Another good friend, Keith Olney, was with me from the start. We had

fished together on other waters in the area years before, and he saw it as his adventure as much as mine. There were snags out in the middle of the lake in two or three places that needed taking out too – the list of jobs was endless.

Just before we took over, a local angler, Rich, caught a 30lb common off the top. This was the biggest fish I had heard of getting caught, and Nicky Onslow had caught a nice twenty zip linear. It seemed there were a nice head of old twenties in the lake, and I was hoping once the bait started to go in they would soon pile the weight on. My plan was to introduce some quality fish into the lake only a few at a time just to back up these already old fish (or one day I'd have none), and then to open it up as a syndicate water. In the early days, it was just a case of getting to learn what actually lived in the lake. After a while we soon had a rough idea, but little did I know just how wily these carp would soon become.





One morning, a mate of mine rang me to say that his boy has caught a nice carp. Back then we allowed sacking up, and so he had it sacked. The previous day I had put a lot of fishmeal chops in the swim his son was fishing. His dad said, "Yeah, it's a nice 30. Can you go and do the pics for him?" I said, "That will be the common that he's got." His dad said, "No, mate. It's a mirror."

Well I never knew of any mirrors over 30, so I wasted no time in getting to his swim. As he drew in the sack and lifted it out of the water, the water that was draining off was coloured a pinky red. Startled at first, I realised it was the colour of the fishmeal it had been excreting in the sack, so this fish had been troughing like a good'un. I was itching to see what he had caught, so you can imagine how I felt when this amazing old looking mirror was revealed.

weighed in at 34lb, and that made my day probably more than his. I named this fish Double D after the two D-shaped scales on the one flank.

Over the next few years DD became the king of the lake, and she sure was a crafty girl. She hardly made many appearances, but she would normally let her guard down around spawning time when she would venture away from her hiding bush that she tended to live in and which we named D's bush. The good thing for me was that we had such a good syndicate, and lots of my normal fishing buddies got tickets, so I was always seeing my pals. We got the lake in really good shape – all the bad snags removed, lilies were planted, and all the swims were looking nice. We also have a clubhouse, which is an



I had no knowledge of this fish, and none of the old regulars ever mentioned a fish like this. It was in immaculate condition with a few nice scales on its shoulder and two below it, yet the other side was completely nude and leathery. What a carp! She

(Top) The Parrot – one of my favorite characters.

(Above) A nice winter shot of Brooke Lake.

(Below left) Building swims on Brooke and stocking for the future.

(Below right) One of the Italian strain in Carthagera Lake.





old cricket pavilion, and lots of good mates. A clubhouse can only mean one thing, and let's just say the socials in there are legendary, believe me.

At the same time we were steaming into Heartbreak Lake, and after electro-fishing, it was revealed that no fish were present – sadly no surprise leviathans. But later on some huge tench were caught that escaped the electro fishing. A water analysis test was done, we got the go-ahead to stock, and some good strains of fish were put in to test out their new home.

The big common that was caught off the top made a few appearances, and we named this one the Mint because it simply was a mint fish – a high-shouldered, deep fish and that along with DD were the target big girls. Along with these two, others were turning up in the mid to upper twenties, so it was all exciting times. A cracking leather, the one Pete had shown me a pic of, made an appearance too. What a carp! It was a typical

old looking leather carp with a small tail like the Dustbin out the Yateley Car Park Lake. My mate Neil caught the linear that Nicky had caught at 26lb. She was a cracking old carp but had mouth damage to one side that looked old. I later found out she came from the river years ago and went in with the mouth damage. I named her the Parrot Lin.

I changed the name of Heartbreak Lake to Brooke Lake after my daughter. I thought it was a bit daunting for anglers to come to a lake named Heartbreak. The lake was opened up as a day ticket water after extensive works were completed, and we now had both lakes up and running.

Other fish started to make the magical thirty pounds in the main lake, and at the start of the new season 2006, Carthagena Lake produced its first forty-pound carp to Carpet Graham in the shape of DD. We were all so pleased for Graham, and the fact we now had a forty to fish for, so the clubhouse rocked that evening.

(Above left) Another old one, the Escape Artist.

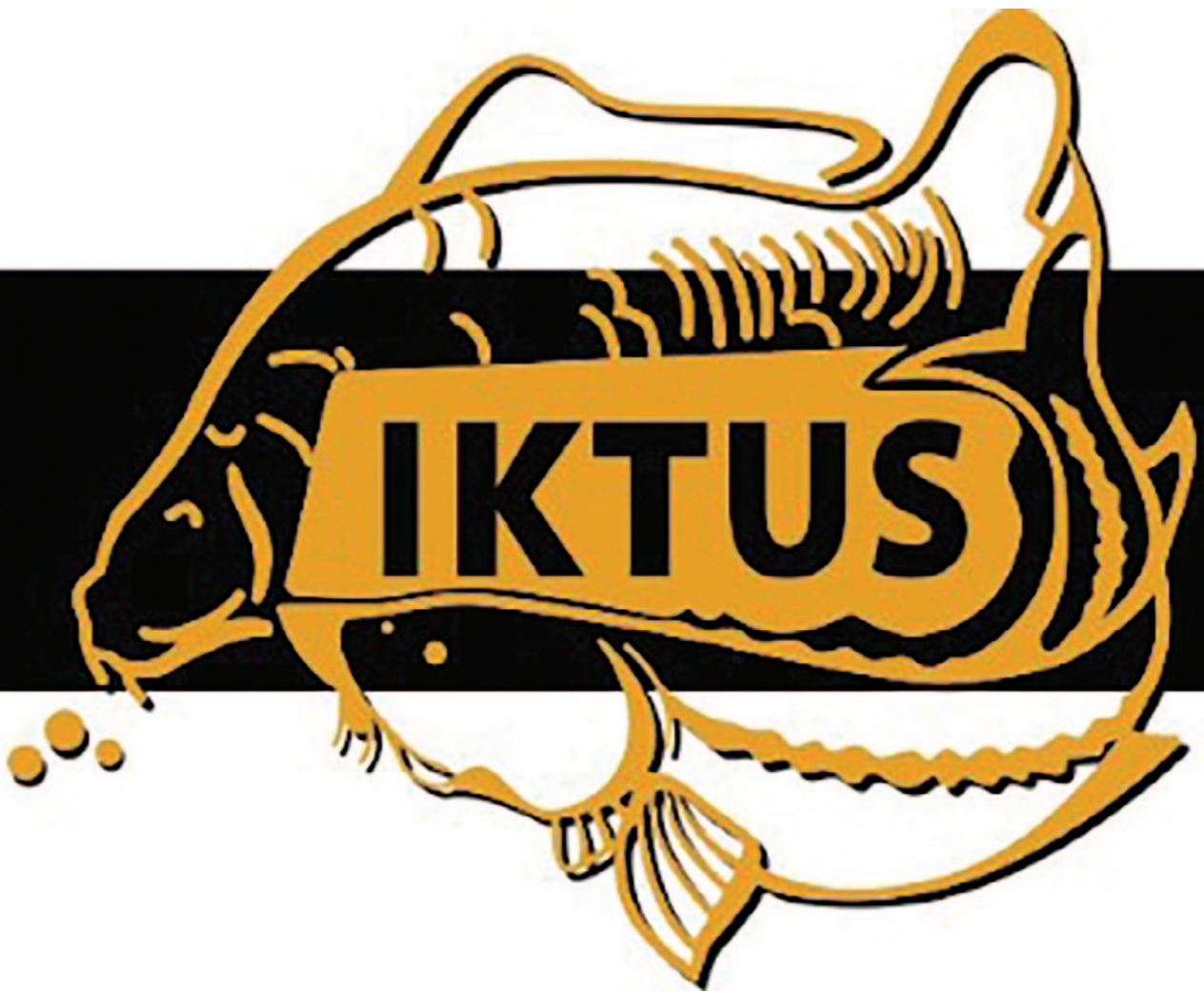
(Above right) Dicky Lang – thanks so much for all your help, mate.

(Below) Tel and Nick enjoying a spot of winter carp fishing on Brooke Lake.

Another fish, an immaculate common, was pushing on, coming out bigger each time it was caught, but not that often I have to add. We named this one Tango – it is an immense carp, and stunning in every way.

One thing we all noticed was how clever these fish were. Okay, at first, with a good class of anglers and lots of bait going in, they were naturally getting caught, but they soon cottoned on to that. I'm not just saying this, but now, years later, they are probably some of the most difficult fish I have come across. Don't get me wrong; in early spring they do let their guard down, as do most fish, but it's only a small window, and then it's back normal once they get their collar





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felt. Lots of anglers over the years would vouch for their wily behaviour. The times they crash and show over your rods without any action is crazy compared to how often the rod actually pulls away.

It soon became apparent that I had to close the lake for six weeks as and when the fish started to spawn. We used to just close areas off, but this was stupid really because after they had stopped for a rest, there was nothing to stop them from leaving the spawning areas and venturing around the lake to feed and replenish themselves. This resulted in an already worn-out carp fighting a battle – not really ideal, and as a result we lost a few gems, carp that could not revive after such exhaustion. We lost an immaculate common I'd never seen before close to 30, and that's after spawning, and a cracking zip linear we called the Pukka Lin. I was gutted to lose such beautiful carp that I am sure I would not have been lost had



we been closed.

Anyway lessons learnt, and we now close for six weeks at first sign of spawning. The first weekend of closure we have a work party, and on the

Sunday we do a draw for swims for the start when we reopen. This is great for many reasons – firstly and more important than anything, the carp get their much deserved rest that they undoubtedly need, and the anglers that draw a swim are permitted to feed their swims up for the start, so they are more than happy and the carp are free to swim the whole lake and feed as much as they want. I believe this really does help them to recover and put good weights on for the autumn. Also I miss the old close season, but it was definitely at the wrong time, as we always used to be fishing when they



(Top left) Carthagera Lake, a view down towards Pumphouse Bay.
(Top right) Scott Dove with Neptune at 35lb, Carthagera Lake.
(Above) Gary Hodges with Ash.
(Left) The incredible Tango.



were spawning. I love the lakes when they are closed – so peaceful, and the carp know it. I watch them for hours.

Brooke Lake was coming along really well. It had to be Siltexed due to the buildup of black anaerobic silt that over many years of rotting lily pads and vegetation, was building up between its many gravel bars. This black silt was causing oxygen crashes, and the carp were not happy. It seems the application of Siltex (fine Champagne chalk dust) did the trick, and everything thrived from there onwards. All the works that were carried out on Brooke Lake, I would not be able to cover in this short article, but briefly, after tons of snag and lily pad removals over the years, it now represents a perfect little carp haven. It's a perfect water for anglers to learn and practice their skills as anglers. Brooke Lake, unlike the main lake, has always responded well to beds of bait, and when the angler gets it right he or she can be in for a good session. The lake is riddled with bars, gravel humps, groups of lily pads, and so many little

features for the thinking angler to try and outwit the carp. Some lovely fish were coming through in Brooke too, and with the way they liked to eat the bait, I knew in time there would be some big fish.

Most of my old mates that I had fished with in the past had got tickets for Carthageana Lake. It was great, as I lived on site, and when the missus had Coronation Street on, I'd duck out the door and be over at the lake to socialise with the chaps. I put my own angling on hold for the first few years, and just really fished at Carthageana. It was great times fishing with my old mates again, as we had all sort of split up and were fishing other waters previously.

As the years went by, the carp were getting bigger, but certain ones would just disappear and not even be seen for years at a time. We would always talk about these elusive carp and ask the question, just how do they do it, evading capture for so long. After around four years of being there, carp would get caught that we had

not seen, and not small fish – you are talking mid twenties. One comes to mind, a fish we called Hollie. My head bailiff at the time, Ea Si, caught this stunning mirror, and he named it after his daughter. Even today, Hollie is in its thirties and only makes the odd visit to the bank.

Here's another example of elusive fish... My good friend Neil and I were making a video. We had an underwater pole cam that we would push into areas to see what was there. It was amazing how close we were able to get to some fish before they got spooked, and pushing the cam into the Norfolk reeds, we came up against a nice sized common. It was hard to judge its size being that close, but was definitely a mid twenty. The most distinguishing thing about this

(Top left) Harry Law with one of the Suttons, Schnaps – what a carp. (Top right) The Mint at 39lb 9oz. (Below left) Carthageana Lake. (Below right) Intimate times, Pumphouse Bay.





fish was the fact that it had a blind eye – just a black grown-over eye socket – and no one had ever seen this fish. Anyway, we spoke of this fish for a while, and over the years just forgot about it... that is, until last year when an angler caught this mid-thirty blind-eyed common. To my knowledge this fish had never graced the banks in the fifteen years I'd lived there.

I decided to turn Brooke Lake into another syndicate water in the end, as some fish were getting damaged. I don't mean this in a bad way, but beginner anglers would be much better off on nice open waters with no snags or bars or pads where they can learn their skills first. Brooke Lake was clearly not for novices, and on day tickets you just never know who will turn up and what experience they

may have. A couple of commons in Brooke were doing thirty pounds now along with a few mirrors, so it was all going in the right direction. On the main lake, the Mint was pushing up there, always going over mid thirties. DD made a few more appearances (its best weight was 42lb 8oz and a fish I dearly wanted to catch), and the Parrot Lin was creeping up, as was Tango.

Then one day I was summonsed up to the end of the lake that we called Pumphouse Bay, as there was a good fish floating. You know what, I knew even before I got there which fish it was, and my thoughts were confirmed their she lay not too far from her home, D's bush. I was so gutted to have lost this fish, as I am with any lost fish, but it's something I learned to deal with over the years as a fishery

(Top left) It's all about mates – Jay Willis with the Parrot at 42.
(Top right) Nathan with Brooke Lake's Woodcarving.
(Bottom left) One I was so happy to catch, the Old Leather.

manager... very sad. There was nothing wrong with the old girl, just age related I would guess, and over the years to follow I would lose these old characters from time to time.

The stock fish had been in the lake a good few years now, and these fish would one day be the ones to take over. They were really coming along nicely and had learnt well from their older friends in the way they adapted to becoming barely catchable. These fish were of the Sutton strain and Italian – they were all stunning. The Mint was getting caught in the high thirties, and I managed to catch her one day at 39lb 9oz. What a carp this was! Any of these old characters were such a privilege for anyone to catch, and they were now like my friends. I spent so many hours up the tall Wil-lows around various parts of the lake, but I knew I had to try and catch them, as they were very old carp.

I have so many tales and stories to tell; I could probably write a small book, but as I am running out of room in Rob's mag I'll just run over a few highlights. I was lucky to catch the Parrot Lin one morning in December after a stormy night, a fish I really wanted. This fish is a lovely old girl, and I did actually feel bad to have put a hook in her. She was just shy of forty pounds, and what special carp – she has made a good few anglers very happy. On a few occasions now, I have been there when good mates have landed her, and now at over





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forty, memorable times when shared with really good friends makes it all worthwhile indeed.

Tango had been on the missing a few years. I had just got back from Gillham's resort in Thailand in November and decided to get the rods out, as you do, living so close. I managed a bite the first morning, a nice old upper double leathery mirror, and the next morning around the same time, 10am, I was into another fish. After landing what was a fair sized common, I proceeded to get all the required bits sorted to attend to the fish. On glancing in the net, I realised which fish it was – none other than the elusive Tango. This common is so perfect in every way – a proper tool some would say. At just over 40 pound for the first time, Christmas had come early for me, and I was well made up. Staying with Tango, she then proceeded to go missing for a three-year period, as they do in Cartha, and then a really nice (and crazy) member, Mark Smith, landed her at just under 46lbs – what an achievement.

The main lake today I would guess holds somewhere in the region of 35-40 thirty-pound-plus carp – it's come such along way. I managed to catch the old leather carp one Spring at just shy of 37, its best weight. Later on it was caught at 39-plus by Martin Collier, one of my bailiffs. Another fish that completely went on the missing was caught last year, a fish named June, another real gem. June was 39-plus, and it's so good when they finally do make an appearance.

Talking of bailiffs, I really do have a good team. My head bailiff, or Turkish



as we call him (he likes that, but his real name Steve) is very, very firm but friendly, but only when you know him... No, seriously, he's a good mate. We don't shove rules down anglers' throats; it's not nice fishing lakes like that. I would not like it, but it works well on both lakes, and everyone toes the line. So a big thanks to my bailiffs Dan, Toby, Martin and Jamie. Cheers, guys, you make the place it is... Oh, and Turkish.

Back over to Brooke Lake, I was lucky to catch its first 40-pound carp, one called Dyson, once again in freezing conditions in early January. Dyson was always going to get big; it's such a long common. It has a slight bit of ghostie in it, but this adds to its beauty. It really is a stunning fish on the bank. It was a real red gingery colour, and a fish I'm sure will make very good weights in the future. Another beast of a common in Brooke is one named Bullnose. This fish is



(Top) One of Cartha's proper old ones, the OAP.

(Above) RIP, my lovely boy... x.

(Bottom) No caption supplied.

high on my list, and I'm actually fishing Brooke as I write this, hoping she may turn up. Its next capture will be comfortably over 40 pounds – a very special carp.

Like I said, there are so many more fish and friends to still talk about. I can't write up 15 years in one small story, but what I can say is that I feel blessed to have had this opportunity in my life to literally live my dream, to be surrounded by water, living on an island... I could not have wished for anything else, and for that I am ever grateful. A massive thank-you to all my friends along the way, my wife Joanne and TV programmes like Coronation Street.

Be lucky, everyone, Sgt Hammond.





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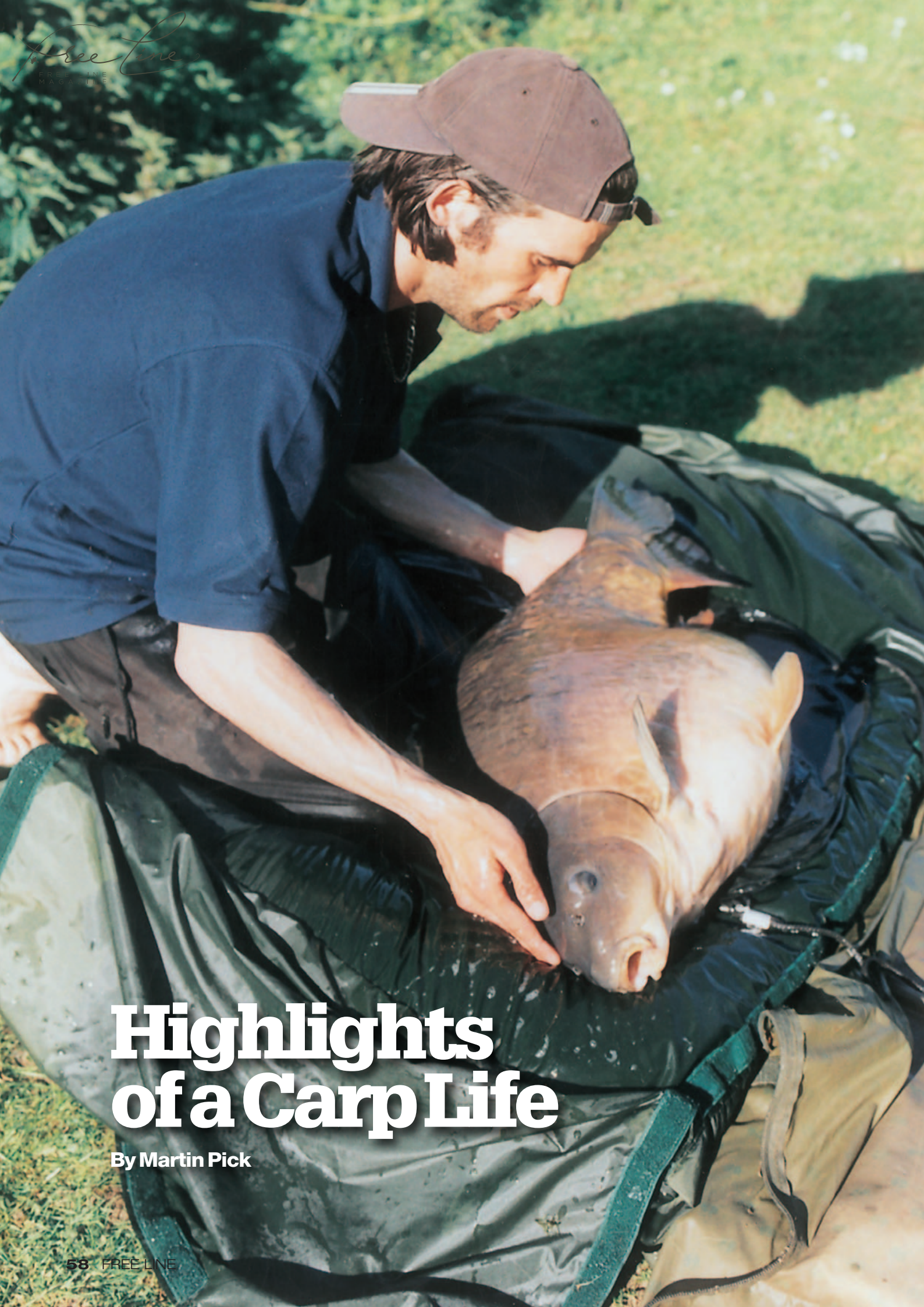
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Highlights of a Carp Life

By Martin Pick

First Thirty

My fishing started in my hometown of Leicester back in the 90s before the days of social media and way before the days of ready tied rigs and rolled boilies. As a young kid, I wanted nothing more than to be able to catch carp, but with so little help available, I spent many hours trying to make sense of how things worked and how the carp behaved, what they liked to eat etc. I did this to the point of going crazy because I had so little knowledge, and with money being a major issue, I couldn't afford to make any mistakes because bait ingredients and much needed tackle wasn't cheap, that was if you could get it at all.

I'd caught my first twenty the previous year after a gruelling spring on a lake called the Wanlip Country Club,

then finally I was accepted on the Willow Farm carp syndicate not far from where I live.

I started to catch fish straight from the first session, and within two weeks, I had upped my PB from 22lb up to just under 28lb. It seemed such a different world compared to the previous lakes I'd fished. The biggest difference was that the lake I was now on had a good head of decent sized carp instead of just a handful. I spent the next couple of years catching plenty of carp, which got me thinking about the two thirty-pounders that live in there, thinking I must be in a chance of catching one of them. I hooked the smaller one of the two some months later, only for the hook to pull out just before I netted it and went into one of its fins. After painfully putting it back without a picture, I was even more determined to get one of them.

Thankfully though only a few weeks after losing second biggest fish in the lake, my day came for a fight

with the big'un. I'd been fishing in a corner swim where I'd woken to a typical early morning run, but this time, after a short fight, I was left with a fish called Split Tail in my net. I was still pretty sleepy at the time and didn't realise which fish it was until I was putting it in a carp sack to give me a few minutes to wake up and sort a cameraman out. I saw the big split in its tail then realised I'd finally achieved my goal to be in what was at the time the elusive thirty club.

Leaving Leicester

This was something that went against the grain because I am and was a very shy and timid person, so to be so far away from anyone or anything I knew was massively scary for me, but a decision I just had to make in order to go on to bigger and better things. A very good angler named Jan Porter told me after I'd caught Split Tail that I couldn't just stay on Willow Farm and had to go and see what the rest of the country had to offer and



First 30lb - Split Tail.

that fishing wasn't just confined to Leicester. I decided that if I was going to do this, the lake in question had to contain a forty-pounder. This was what was needed to give me the determination and courage to take the jump into the unknown, knowing this was what I needed to do to at least have a chance to catch something that was beyond my wildest dreams.

First forty – Christchurch

Linch Hill was the venue that ticked all the boxes for me, and it worked out even better, as a couple of my mates from Willow Farm had decided to join there as well. I couldn't fish the days they could fish due to being at work, but it was a great advantage knowing that they were down there when I wasn't. This meant that I could keep up with what was going on when I wasn't there.

Christchurch was a massive learning curve for me. The fish behaved so differently to anything I was used to because of the sheer amount of

angling pressure the lake received. The fish spent many days just sitting under the surface a good ten to twelve feet off the bottom, making it so hard to get a bite. When they did go down to feed, they used to be able to get away with it. They were getting hooked but staying close to the lead spinning around until they shed the hook and left your rig in a ball of mess. Getting my head around using zig rigs and shortening my bottom rigs to around four inches seemed to sort the problem out, and I was back to catching pretty consistently and started to make my way through the impressive stock of fish that still live in there to this day.

That year one of the lads I'd joined with, Lee Petty, rang me just as I left from work, saying that he had caught the only forty of the lake called Petals. I wasn't jealous but very, very envious. It got me thinking about whether I could actually catch it, thinking that if I kept fishing for numbers of fish, it would eventually make a mistake, and it would be mine. I was catching loads of fish on zigs at the time, but

after putting a little work into finding out about what Petals got caught on, it seemed apparent that it got caught pretty often from the four corners of the lake but off the bottom and not on zigs. Although this slowed my catches down somewhat, I knew that I was in with a much better chance of the fish I really wanted, and on 1st June the following year I finally got her to pick my hookbait up after watching her in my swim for two days milling about. My mind went to pieces when I was playing it; I just waded out into the water fully clothed with my landing net just praying and hoping it didn't fall off. Thankfully it wasn't a hard fighter, and after a short fight that felt like forever, it waddled in and straight into the waiting net. After the pics were done, I packed up on Christchurch for the last time, feeling on top of the world and instantly thinking about what to do next.

The red-letter week on Horton

After Christchurch, my ticket for Horton Church Lake came up, which at



Petals.



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Red letter - Shoulders.



First Brace – Unattended Elstow 42lb 9oz.

the time I thought was too big of a step up from the heavily stocked lakes of Christchurch, but in reality it was much closer to the stock levels of where I'd spent most of my life fishing back in Leicester, only the fish in Horton were considerably bigger. With many anglers fishing the lake, most of the time it was also very pressured, unlike in Leicester. I had read about the lake when I was very young and knew that it wasn't easy and many had been and failed, so I was already lacking in confidence and beginning to doubt my abilities. This was made worse by struggling most of my first season almost to the point of quitting, but I knew that if I quit then I would have spent the rest of my life wondering what if.

On my second season, things went very differently, and having the information I'd learned from the previous season, I seemed to stay one step ahead of the carp and was catching carp more often than not. This didn't prepare me though for one mental session that October when I managed a carp a day for a whole week including what was to be my second

encounter with a forty. This time it was the historic Shoulders, a fish that I had read about so much as a kid. I had agreed with one of the members that he could shave my hair off if I did ever manage to catch it, and whilst he was busy shaving my hair off in the old Horton lodge, I was looking at a pic on the wall of Shoulders at 17lb in 1971 and grinning to myself thinking how worth it it all was.

First brace of forties – Elstow

I've never really written that much before about my days on Elstow. They were such special days to me that I did want to keep to myself, but I can't do this without including my first brace of forties. I can remember it being quite windy during the days, and the fish had been following the wind, but during the night the wind had been dying off. The fish were drifting back to around the middle of the lake during the night. I could see them showing from the other bank but had to wait for someone to pack up before carting my gear all the way round for my last night where I saw

them showing. I got all my disturbance done before dark and sat on my hands waiting for something to happen. Fish started to show out in front around 10pm; I could hear them but couldn't see them from this bank. All I could do was wait for the ripples to come in and decide how far away they were from me. They were coming in fast, meaning that they must be close to me.

Shortly after a few liners, one of the rods pulled out the clip and melted off. The fish in Elstow really know how to scrap, and this one was no exception. Whilst playing the fish, I could hear fish still showing over my area. When it finally went in the net, I was shocked to see a fish called the Unattended at 42lb 9oz. Normally I'd be happy just to get the fish dealt with before getting the rod back out, but with them showing so much, I borrowed a spare net off someone and put the rod back out on the spot waiting for him to come and help do the pics. I was just setting the bobbin when the line pulled out of my hand and started tearing off. Shortly after, I had a fish in the spare net called Bun-



First Brace – Bunters 40lb 15oz.

ters at 40lb 15oz. I nearly never moved that day, thinking was it worth all that effort just for one night? Thankfully, I did.

Winter socials on Sandhurst

Less of a milestone but certainly a highlight of my fishing life is the socials. Over the years, I've met some great people that have become true friends. The thing with chasing big fish is that sometimes the reason you go in the first place (to enjoy yourself with your friends) can be lost in the pursuit of getting amongst the big'uns. The fact that the winter is very hard going at times allows me to go back to old times and spend the winter on much easier lakes with my pals just simply enjoying myself, none more so than when I'm down at Sandhurst with my good mate Jamie Smith. I've not always caught fish, but every single time I go fishing with Jamie, I realise why I took up carp fishing, and for days after I giggle about the madness that we got up to, constantly thinking about when we can do it again.

First forty common

Commons have always been a rarity in my life, especially the big ones, having never really fished many lakes with them in. I caught a few thirties out of Christchurch when I was there like the Box Common and Crinkle Tail and a few out of Sandhurst like Bub-

ble Tail but never caught any of them over forty, with my PB being just under 38lb. There were only four commons over forty in Wellington Country Park when I joined, but unbelievably they are all close to and over the fifty mark, so I knew if I did get one, it was going to be massive. The lake had



Winter Socials – Jamie filming at Sandhurst.



First 40lb common – Picky the big common 49lb.

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.

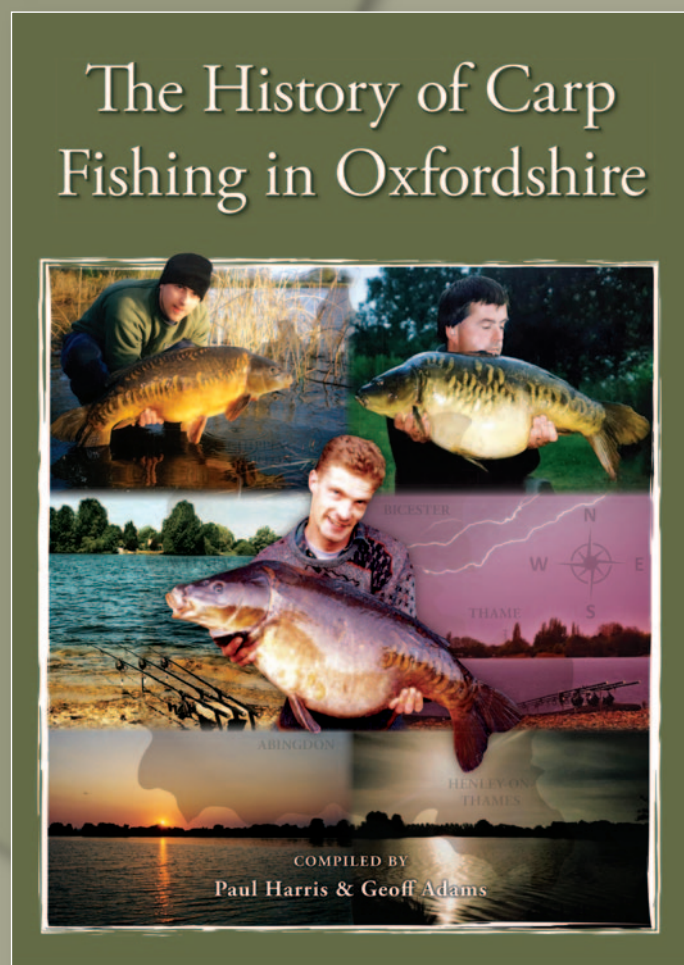
Nick Stansfield is a brilliant young Oxford carper who doesn't shout about his catches. We have two incredible chapters from him from two of the county's most iconic lakes, The Leisure Park and The Big S! Josh Chatfield has written a fantastic chapter which really gives you an insight into how fishing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



First 50lb common – This is the Chinese common.

been shut for a couple of weeks due to green algae, and when it was due to open, I was busy doing the Carp Academy for Korda.

The following week, I raced down for first light, only to find the lake completely empty of anglers. I actually thought the lake had been shut again, but after a chat with a few members on the phone, I was told it had been so busy the week before most had been down and gone, so it was expected to be fairly quiet. I went round to the Hole in the Bush because it's the best swim on the lake and is rarely empty. After a walk around the whole lake seeing nothing, I came back to see one lump out right on one of the spots I've already caught a few from in the past. In the following three days, I caught five carp, topped by one of the massive bars of gold named the Big Common at a massive 49lb 4oz. I've wanted a forty common for most of my life, so to finally achieve it felt extra special.

first fifty common

It was getting towards the end of the year. The leaves were on the turn, but the fish had been fairly active. I managed to get a fish I really wanted the week before out of the Finger Arm, but when I turned up, the fish had done the off, as nothing had been seen or caught all weekend. I scoured the lake twice then finally saw a few bubbles in a channel between an island and the bank on the opposite side of the lake to the Finger Arm. I scooted my gear round, and after a few pouches of 10mms in the catapult and an underarm flick, I had a rod out where I saw the fizzing. During the night I heard a few splashes that sounded carpy, but I wasn't certain.

Just as the light was coming up in the morning, the channel rod was away. I jumped out of bed and leaned into the fish, but it powered off down the channel. The line was touching the bush to my left, so I had no time to think – I just went in. By wading up to

my knees, I could easily turn the fish, and all calm was restored. When I got it in the net, I thought it was one of the big ghosties at first, but soon as I got it out the water, I could see that it was the Chinese Common, weighing a massive 53lb 6oz. I hadn't seen it on the bank before but recognised it from pictures. As luck had it, there were a few lads around to help me photograph it, and then they stayed so I could tell them the story time and time again like a kid that just got his favourite toy, so thanks to Pete and big carp Dave for putting up with me buzzing.

First fifty mirror

I had arranged to meet up at Welly for a bit of filming with Korda for their website. I hadn't been to Welly for ages due to work and other things going down, which meant I was totally clueless of what had been going on and what the fish were up to. When I arrived, it was fairly busy as usual, and on a good look round, I saw



First 50lb mirror – Little big head 1st 50 mirror.



King of the pond – Picky Turtle.



King of the pond – 46lb ghost caught with the Turtle.

the fish were in the bush and someone was in there. I decided to go in Daisy, which is the other side of the island to the hole in the bush, but there is a channel that the fish go down.

Coincidentally, it's the same channel that I had caught the Chinese Common from almost a year to the day previously. Around exactly the same time, I had take from in front of the swim, and the fish starting plodding towards the channel. Luckily though, it seemed to come in like a dog on a lead almost to the point of I was unsure if it was a carp at all. When it went in the net, it wasn't quite light enough to see properly, so I shone my head torch in the net and about fell over when looking back at me was a right chunk of a fish called Little Big Head at 53lb 8oz and yet another PB. Needless to say the pressure was well and truly off, and the filming went sweet as a nut.

The king of the pond

Sometimes you get the odd fish that rarely sees the bank. These fish are

pretty hard to target and impossible at times. The Turtle is to me one of those fish. Although it is one of the biggest fish in Welly, I already decided that I'd probably not be fortunate enough to get it in my net, partly because in the four years I'd been on the lake, I hadn't seen anyone else catch it, so I played down having a chance so as not to get too disappointed if I didn't get the chance.

This time however there was someone looking down on me because on a random visit I'd found some fish in the snags. They weren't in the snags like usual; they were slightly off the snags and looked quite up for a feed. I had a take off a 31lb common before I could get my second rod in, then shortly after doing the pics it happened again with a 46lb 6oz ghostie. It all went quiet then. When I was just about to settle for the night, the rod I had caught the ghostie on went again, and an almighty scrap kicked off. It went across in front of me, but I had made enough line up to stop it reaching the snags, and a good few minutes had

passed before it even thought about coming closer.

Luckily I hadn't seen the fish so I gave it all I dared and finally started to get it closer to the net. When it went over the net cord, I was so relieved it was over. I thought I was close to losing it a few times, and as much as I wanted to land it, I was actually dying to know what the hell it was because it made the 46 ghostie feel like a tench. When I tried to lift it out of the water, I realised it was the mighty Turtle, and it looked so impressive in the flesh as opposed to the pictures I'd seen of it. I was the only person on my bank, so I quickly weighed it at 55lb 12oz then popped it in a retainer and got on the phone to Doctor Dave on the other bank who sent my mate Pete over to do me some awesome shots. I was so terrified about the fish's wellbeing, making sure he went back as quickly and safely as possible. The sheer length of it made it so hard to hold, but thankfully it all went well, and some time later the realisation was that I'd actually gone and done it! ■

SECRETS OF THE THAMES

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Secrets of The Thames



By Rob Maylin and friends



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

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

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

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

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

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

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Carp Mags Now and Then

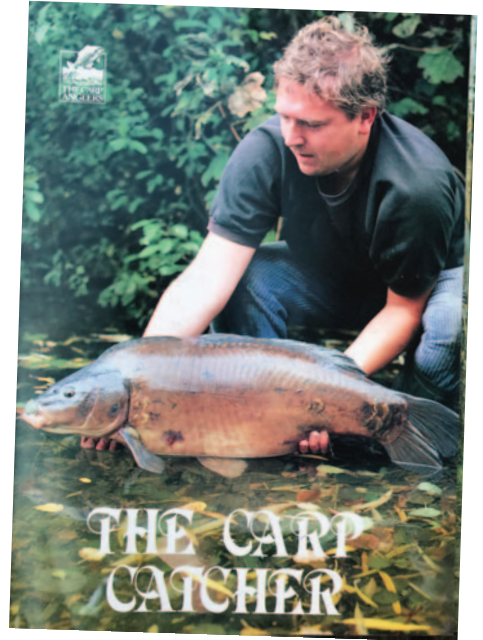
By Rob Maylin

Two hundred and fifty issues! When you write it like that, it sounds a huge amount, but to be honest, it's flown by. I was in my thirties when I had the bright idea to start a carp fishing magazine, and I'm in my sixties now, so I don't suppose it actually flew by. More of a lifetime's work really. It was very different back then, carp fishing, or at least the huge commercial side of carp fishing was in its infancy. There were no full-time, paid to fish carp anglers. The big tackle companies were yet to make their millions, and I was a keen carper with a love of writing.

If nothing else that's one thing I brought to carp fishing – a wealth of angling literature. In those days there was a shortage of carpy writings; the Carp Society was yet to form, carp books came out every ten years or so, and unless you belonged to the CAA, The Carp Angler's Association or were among Peter Mohan's "chosen ones" in the BCSG, there were no carp magazines available. 1990 saw the first bi-monthly carp mag, Carpworld and to fill those bi-monthly gaps, I brought out Big Carp in 1991, and it stayed like that for quite a while.

I wanted to write something meaningful for this special 250th issue, but I was a little stumped as to what until this week, the last week of March 2017, when I got the shock news that Advanced Carp Magazine had gone to the wall. I say shocked because to be honest I thought they were safe within the David Hall Publishing empire, but it just goes to prove that no one is safe, and in fact the bigger they are the harder they fall. It's tough out there for everyone, and the carp fishing press are not having an easy time. Facebook, YouTube and the Internet generally offer a huge amount of free carp stuff, and mark my words, Advanced Carp will not be the last mag to go pop if we are not supported by you guys out there.

The magazines rely on advertisers, but with so much free advertising out there on the social media, why should they pay to be in magazines? It's a valid point that made for a total restructure here at BC. We now offer free advertising in our electronic APP magazine, and we are the only carp mag to actually post the adverts on all our social media platforms, although it's only a matter of time before the other mags follow us. WE see that the social media is the place to advertise, and we offer a service most compa-



nies would have to employ someone to do. We have six Facebook accounts, three Twitter and two Instagram, and we also post the adverts on the top carp pages. So our advertisers not only get magazine advertising but all the social media platforms too.

Magazine content is just as important. The public are not stupid, and if you keep on regurgitating the same old drivel year after year they are not going to buy it. Articles that are written to sell products have never been a part of BC, but it's easy to understand how some magazines wrapped up in





the marketing budgets of the top manufactures have to churn this stuff out every month to keep them happy and the money coming in. Big over-heads put big pressure on these magazines to pay the bills, so it's no wonder these magazines are under pressure.

I'm proud to have reached this milestone; 250 issues is a great achievement, but I could not have done it without you, the people who



subscribe, the people who buy BC and advertise in BC, so thank you from the bottom of my heart.

The number of carp magazines exploded in the nineties, but not all would survive. The CAA was the first to go, I believe, and its magazine Carp Catcher was lost forever once the mighty Carp Society magazine Carp Fisher came into prominence. Tim Hodges jumped on the bandwagon around this time with his contribu-



tion, which was called Carp Fishing Tactics or something like that. It lasted only a few months, but was the stepping-stone for Tim to join David Hall Publishing and increase their magazines from one to two a month with Total Carp joining Advanced Carp. Both Carpworld and BC had now gone monthly. Carp-Talk came out as a weekly newspaper, and Crafty Carper made it two for Angling Pubs. Then it went quiet for a while...





surely the market was saturated? But no!

Virtually at the same time Carp Addict and Carpology popped up. Carpology was a small A5 freebie for a while, but could not survive for long like that, and Carp Addict soon disappeared. There were then a few months of Carp and Coarse by the same group, but that too fizzled out in a few short months. So surely it was clear that the market was at capacity? No, not quite... Maximum Carp became the last "new" addition, destined for failure though, and the Carpology crew reluctantly shut it down, which I think brings us up to date, with Advanced Carp the latest (nearly said last, but I don't think so) to print

its final edition.

I know it's competition, but I've always believed competition is a good thing; it's certainly helped me shape Big Carp into the magazine it is today. It is without a doubt the normal carper's read; it's not full of advertorials and sponsored angler advertorials. It's a chance for the successful average guy to see his captures in print – a chance he would not get in other magazines. Yes we have well-known anglers too, especially in our milestone issues, but the difference is they are not plugging gear, and that's the big difference and why we are still here.

Our print runs have dropped of course. Gone are the heyday print runs of the nineties when I was printing nearly 30,000 copies a month. In recent years even the special issues only reach 7,000 copies a month, but our advertisers get real value for money with us putting their adverts on our social platforms. BC is the ONLY carp mag to do this!! Now the advert can be seen by upwards of 200,000 anglers, an unrivalled exposure.

As for my own angling, I still have a love of carp fishing beyond anything else, but gone (for now) are the days of sitting alone all winter on a lake with a handful of carp in it, hoping and praying for my target to join me on the bank. This style of carping has taken a back seat for a while as I nurture my young son Max's interest in our beloved sport. As I write this he's ten tomorrow and has a PB of 12lb, a damn sight bigger than my PB at his age. Hopefully he will get the bug and

continue fishing. It's a great hobby for a boy, and I would love for him to ask me one day for the latest tackle box rather than the latest Xbox... time will tell.

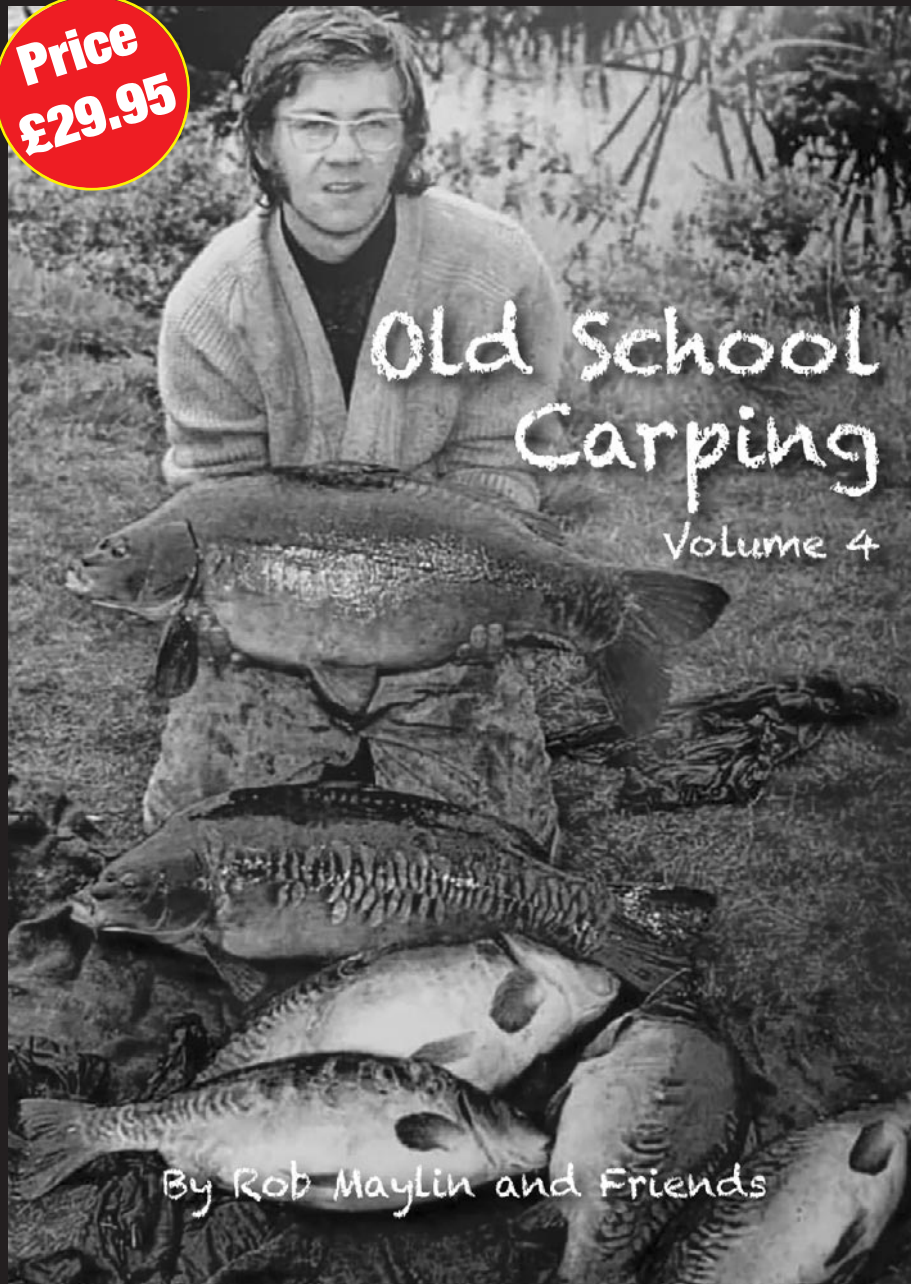
I hope you enjoy the special 250th pieces I have for you. I promise there will be lots more great stuff for you in the future, and if you have enjoyed Big Carp over the past three decades and want to continue seeing it pop through your letterbox each month or stand proud in your local newsagent, I will be proud to put it together for you for as long as you all support it.

Thank you customers and advertisers. Without you there would be no more Big Carp mags and surely that would be a sad day for carp angling.



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The 'Old School' series has become one of our most popular sets of books we have ever published. It appears that, in this fast-moving society we find ourselves, more and more anglers are keen to look back at how things used to be, where it all started, before the commercialism that now controls our angling, before the 'sponsored angler', before Facebook, the Internet, or even mobile phones! However, did we survive? It certainly was a very different sort of carp angling to today's high pace, remote control, Snapchattling, wannabe blogger's world we find ourselves in.

Our contributors to volume 4 are the unsung heroes of that bygone age who were catching carp years ago before the hair rig when not everyone could catch them quite so easily.

But the big difference between the line-up for this volume is that these anglers' names may not be known to you. Unlike our previous volumes this one is not all about the famous anglers of this time. Volume 4 is about many of the very successful anglers who did not seek fame by publicising their catches at the time.

Anglers who smashed their venues and the record books but kept quiet until

now. So, let's take a look at what Volume 4 has to offer, and why I consider it the best yet. Here is a brief synopsis of volume 4's line up and what their chapters are about. A Brief Moment in Time by Kevin Grozier, My Early Carp Life by Anthony Rogers, A Tale of Two Twenties by Dave Miller, Back to the Old Days by William Lovett, Blackroot Pool by Brian Ingram, The Old School Scrapbook, The Seventies by Christopher Davis, Yateley North Lake June 1985 by Nick Peat, Early Carping Memories of Broadwater by Phil Martyn, The Tale of a Twenty Pounder (My first) by Steven Hall, Looking Back – Old School by Steve Fisher, Early Seventies Carping by Gerry Giles, My Introduction to Carp Fishing by Lee Fisher, Billingsgate in Focus by Kris Ford, Old Skool Carping by Paul Tidiman, 'Billy' the Mirror, Church Pool, Patshull by Tim Thornton and My First Doubles by Stewart Crowther.

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Terry Dempsey's Top Highlights of 250 issues of Big Carp



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Magic Moments

By Steve Briggs



When I think back to the start of Big Carp magazine, I had only just started to venture abroad for my fishing, and I'd not long had my best winter's fishing on the Tip Lake in the Darenth Valley. I wrote about all of that in the early issues and was very proud to have been a part of the Big Carp team back then and pleased to still be able to contribute today! So much has happened since those early days, but some things have remained constant – Rob is still a good friend, and he still produces a quality read! To write something for this special issue was fairly straightforward in one way: it made sense to relive some of the great moments that have happened since that first issue was published. So that was the easy part, but I've done so much fishing since then and had so many highlights that it wasn't so easy to decide which ones to include? Some will have been covered before – the Mere for instance – but there's no way I could leave that out, so I've tried to write it from a slightly different angle. I guess I will

have written about all of the following somewhere before, as they were all landmarks for me at the times, but I know that I'm going to enjoy reliving all of these moments in time, so I hope that you do too!

My first UK 40

Most people will remember their first twenty, thirty or if they are lucky enough their first forty. They are landmark captures and always remain special. My first twenty was from Brooklands in Kent, and my first thirty from Darenth Tip Lake. To me they were memorable fish from very notable waters at the time, and I wanted my first UK 40 to be something special too. I had fished a few waters with a forty in such as Fox Pool and Yateley Pads Lake but without much success. But closer to home there was one lake that I'd been a member of for some time, and although I'd never devoted much time to it, the lake did hold some beautiful old carp, in particular some old scaly Leney fish, which had been in there for donkey's years. The lake was always a 'no-publicity' water, so very little was known about it to outsiders, and the carp lived fairly shel-

tered lives. It was tough fishing; the lake was quite deep and weedy, and captures were few and far between most years. Of the Leney fish, most were mid twenty to low thirty range, but there was one called the Double Linear, which I had been watching over the years, and that was the biggest and best of the lot, reaching high 30s. It looked set to go over forty some time soon, and so I started giving the lake more attention than before.

The good thing was that the lake was always fairly quiet; many of the members had been on there for years, and most only fished at weekends or a few days here and there, and so getting into swims wasn't a problem, but that didn't make it any easier. I did manage to catch the odd fish here and there, my first being a common just over 20lb, followed by a high double mirror from a later stocking. It was hard to get anything going consistently – every capture seemed to be a one-off and varying tactics and baits didn't make any difference. It was no surprise really, as some people literally went years without catching anything.

After a long series of blank days



The lake held some lovely old Leneys.



and nights, I was on the field bank having done two nights of a four-night session. I was fishing a nice channel in the thick weed, but I hadn't caught, or seen anything. Mid afternoon, and it was time to reel in and go for wander. My hopes weren't really too high, but it was a warm July day, and the sun was out, so I had

nothing to lose. In the crystal clear water I saw nothing until I reached the far corner where I stopped in my tracks and held my breath! Three fish were cruising slowly down the margin towards me. No one else was on the lake, so the fish were quite relaxed. I stood still and watched as they got closer. I could also make out

a couple of other shapes further out. I'd seen enough, and as soon as the coast was clear I raced back and grabbed my gear.

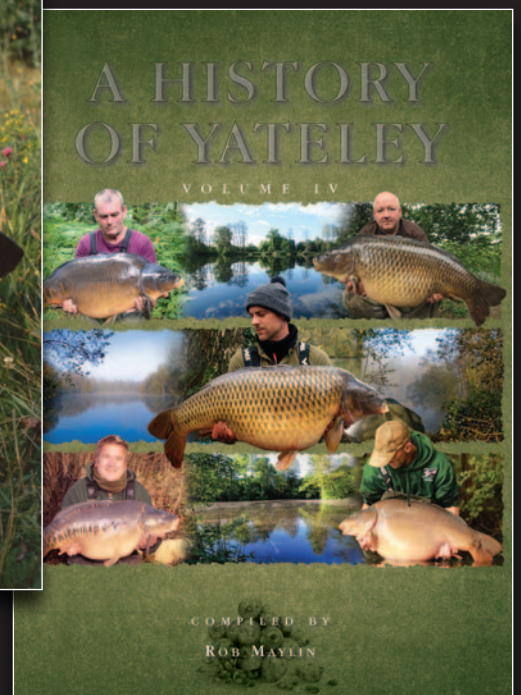
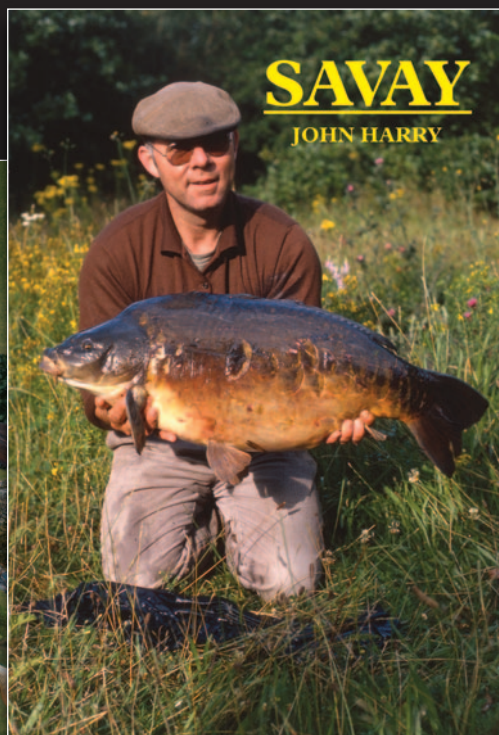
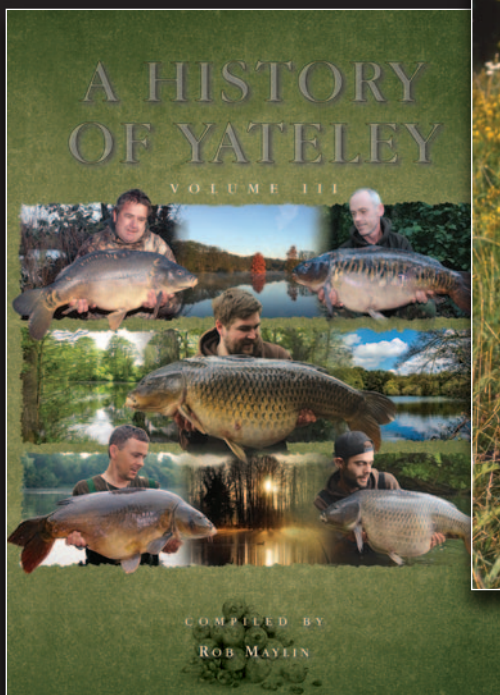
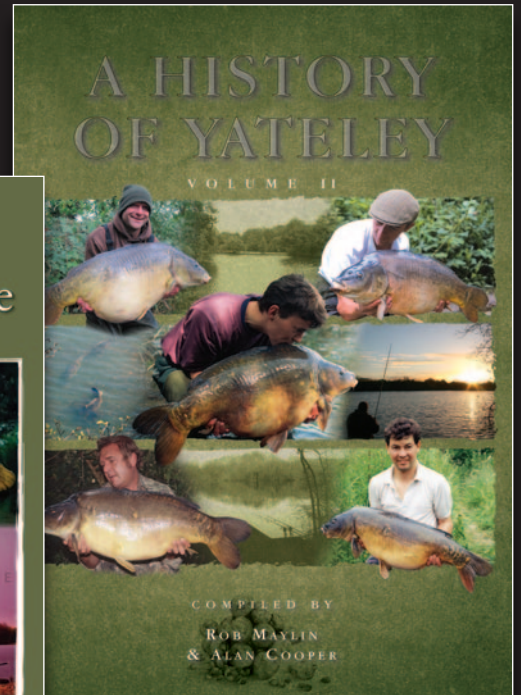
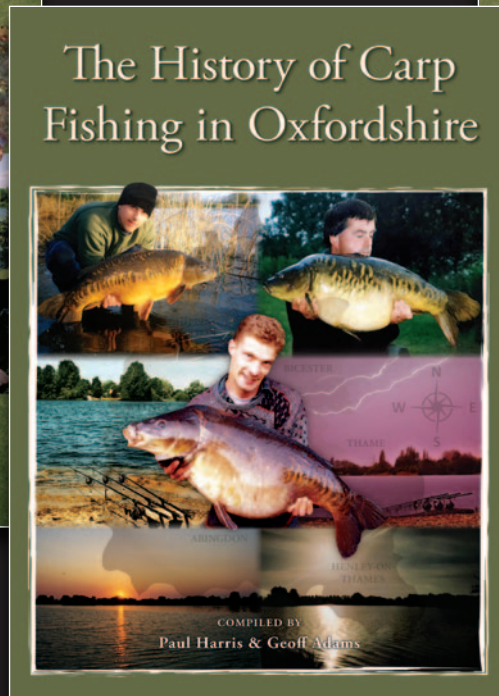
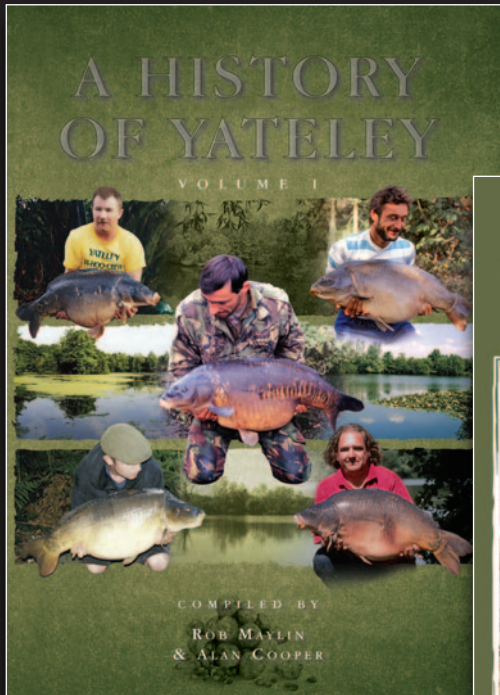
Back in my new swim, I set about placing the baits. Everywhere was solid weed, so I lengthened my hook lengths, and I flicked one bait across to the left margin between a set of pads and a clump of weed. I raced around, and I could clearly make out the slow sinking bait had come to rest nicely on the weed. The other rod was more or less just lowered in the near margin where at least it was presentable.

That night was quiet, and in the morning I couldn't see any signs, but as the sun rose higher, gradually a few shapes started to appear. I fired a few mixers out to see if they were interested, and sure enough after about ten minutes one or two started to be slurped down. Now I was buzzing,

(Top) The bait was positioned just between the weed and the pads. (Below) I couldn't have hoped for a better fish to be my first UK forty.



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Warty drastically spawned out at 36lb 4oz.

and it was a choice of which rod to reel in and set up with the floater gear? Just then the left hand rod stuttered into life. I can clearly remember being a little bit annoyed at the time, as all I could think was that this was going to spook the fish taking the mixers! But I grabbed the rod, and the fish, which was obviously a carp, charged off and through about three weedbeds before grinding to a halt.

I was still keeping one eye on the surface feeders as I slowly started easing the fish out of the weed and back towards me. It was difficult to tell what was on the end, as it just felt like a huge lump of weed. But as it got closer I just saw a flash of scales, and all of a sudden my whole mood changed! There were several linears in the lake, but this one looked big, and the knees started trembling. As it went over the net cord, I dropped the rod and grabbed the net with both hands to make sure, and without a doubt it was the big one – the king of the lake! I scrambled around for everything and found my scales, which hadn't been used much up to that point, and I made a makeshift tripod from some long bank sticks. The moment of truth came when the nee-

dle settled on 40lb 6oz – the first forty ever from the lake, and indeed my first UK forty. I was up in the clouds; it was everything that I could've hoped for. It was one of the best-looking big fish in the country, and to prove that point it won the Gardner Classic Carp of the Year that year. It was a very special carp and a very special and memorable moment.

Warty the (almost) forty

I enjoyed fishing several of the Boyer Leisure waters in the Colne Valley, Farlows and Harefield to name but two. But I think it was my old mate Glum (Paul Sanders) who said that I should give Colbrook West a go, as it was only a small lake, and it held one big mirror that wasn't particularly shy. It all sounded good, and I actually went there with Glum for the first time one evening to do some floater fishing, which went really well. I think I caught four fish, nothing large, but the action was more than welcome. In fact I liked it so much I started to do the odd night on there, mainly on the Second Point, as that always seemed to be the only one free when I arrived. Most times I would catch one or two

on pop-ups over fishmeals, but they were always the same sort of sizes. There was nothing really special about Colbrook West, but for some reason I liked it there, and I didn't mind spending my weekends there and any other available time.

It was the start of the season one year, and I wasn't there, but I remember it well, as Warty got caught at a very big weight of 44lb 12oz, and that spurred me on even more! A few weeks later, I was set up in the Plateau swim, and there was just Joan and me on the lake. I'd already caught some fish, but in the early morning sun, I watched a fish on the far side just slowly mooching about with its back out of the water. Over probably twenty minutes, that same fish gradually circled and moved slowly over towards me. I kept watching, and just when the fish reached the spot where my bait was, it sank from view, and with that my alarm sounded! It was a surreal moment, but sure enough it had gone straight down and picked my bait up. After a good battle, I could clearly see that it was none other than Warty, and I couldn't believe my luck, except that something didn't look right. Sure



I kept the bait going in on one spot.

enough the fish had spawned, and Warty the 'forty' now weighed 36lb 4oz! Yes I was disappointed, but that's life, and although I'd caught the fish I was after, I carried on fishing there.

One day I weighed Warty for some-

one else at 42lb 12oz. I'd caught 25 fish that week, and he'd just turned up and caught Warty ten minutes later – that's life again! I always thought that I would get another chance, and I was always catching

other fish to keep me occupied. Eventually another chance did come my way. It was the start of the season, and I'd managed to secure the Bailiff's swim for the first week. I caught a few commons up to 25lb from various spots, but I was keeping one area in the middle baited every day. After a few days the baited area kicked in and started producing big time! I think it was the sixth or seventh take that day when I hit into something that felt five times heavier than anything else. It just held its weight out in the middle, and it could only be one fish. Sure enough, after a lengthy battle, I saw the unmistakable shape of Warty coming up to the net. It looked good, and the crowd gathered. I could hear the whispers... "42lb?" "No must be 44lb at least!" "Could be a lake record!" The scales came out and everyone's eyes focused on the needle... 38lb!

I must admit I was a bit shocked, but there was no mistake. Would you believe that Warty got caught about another nine times that year and EVERY other time it was over 40lb, even just a week or so after my capture. Some things are just not meant



Warty again but still not 40.

to happen, and although Warty was never the forty for me, I did enjoy my time immensely on that little lake, and after all, weight is merely a number, and Warty was the great character of the lake and made many anglers very happy – including me!

Wraysbury 1's biggest carp

Having moved up to the Colne Valley at the start of the 1990s, waters such as Wraysbury were all of a sudden right on my doorstep. Catching the biggest carp wasn't always my main priority, but as time went by I did start to get the urge to target something really big. Mary was of course one of the biggest carp the country had ever produced and had indeed been a UK record. But there was one big problem for me in that many years before I'd been given a ban from Leisure Sport waters, which was a proper stitch-up, and it was many years later that I found out for sure who was behind it! That's another story, but it had stopped me applying for a Wraysbury ticket before then. However, now I needed to be on there, so a few phone calls and a bit of groveling later I could once more apply for a Leisure Sport (now Cemex), and in particular Wraysbury 1 permit.

Some things just don't go to plan and on the very day that my new permit dropped through the letterbox, the news also broke that Mary had been found dead that day! My heart just sank, and I cursed myself for not making the effort to join earlier. Having received my ticket and the gate

keys, I thought I might as well at least have a look down there, and so that's what I did. I was surprised to see a couple of people fishing, and one was Derek Rance who I'd met on Cassien some years earlier. We talked of course about Mary, and he was sad, but said that I should still come down and fish – after all, there were other very special fish in there. Of course it made perfect sense; there weren't many fish in Wraysbury 1, maybe 20 originals in 120 acres, but among them were some of the most respected carp in the country, and so my mind was made up!

A couple of days later I arrived back with all my gear. All I'd been told was to look under trees and also to look for clear spots where the fish had obviously fed. But the lake was 120 acres of overhanging trees on the banks and around the islands! I had my little BIC 252 boat, which made it easier to scan the margins, but after a whole day of looking everywhere I was no nearer finding a Wraysbury carp than I was at the start. I resigned myself to setting up in Dredger Bay, as it was central and just looked good with a load of good features to choose from.

The night passed quietly apart from the planes and I was just making a cup of tea when someone arrived for a chat – little did I know but this was to totally transform my trip! It was one of the twins, which I'd got to know a bit from my time on Fox Pool and it was good to see a friendly face. He knew plenty about the lake, and in particular pointed out a couple of spots along one of the islands where

the carp often visited. I could feel my spirits rising, and as soon as he was gone I rowed over to the island. I pulled the boat up and crept slowly along the bank. Much of it looked the same as what I'd seen already, but then I spotted an unmistakable clear area, which almost shone through the clear water. I knew I'd found what I was looking for, and as I crept closer I caught my breath as there before me was a Wraysbury carp! It wasn't a big one; in fact it was one of the small stockies, but it was enough to get my heart beating fast. As I crouched quietly watching, something caught my eye, and I glanced left to see the shape of something much larger! It was a big mirror, and I'm sure it was the Pug, certainly over 40lb. I'd taken some bait with me, and in no time at all I had both fish feeding well right in front of me – this was like heaven. The one big problem was that this particular spot was out of bounds to angling, and so I had to hatch a plan.

Back in the swim I took to the boat and headed back to where I'd seen the fish. I could actually get within about 15 yards of where I'd fed the fish without breaking the rules, and surely if the fish liked the bait that much they would venture out? The bottom had a light covering of weed, but I could see the baits clearly on the bottom once I'd placed them carefully, and it all looked good!

That evening I had very little chance of sleeping after what I'd seen, and I was just lying in the bag when at around 11pm one single bleep alerted me to the rod in prime position. I saw the indicator pull up tight and was on it before it had the chance to bleep again! I had to be quick, as I was close to the trailing branches. I held on tight and gradually eased the fish towards me. There was an eruption on the surface as the fish kited left into a large bay, but all the time I was gaining line. Soon I had the fish in front of me, but it shot left down a small channel, and I felt the line grating. I eased off the pressure until it turned and came back towards me.

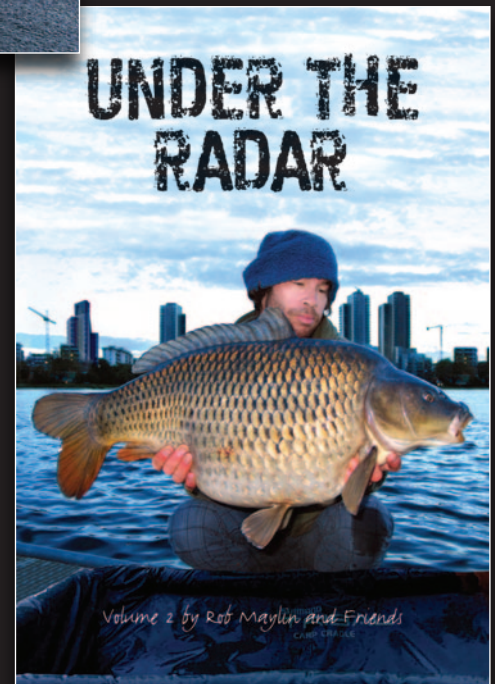
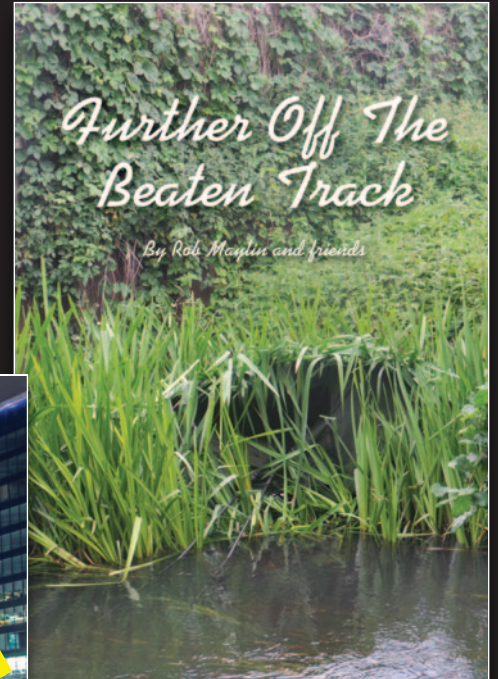
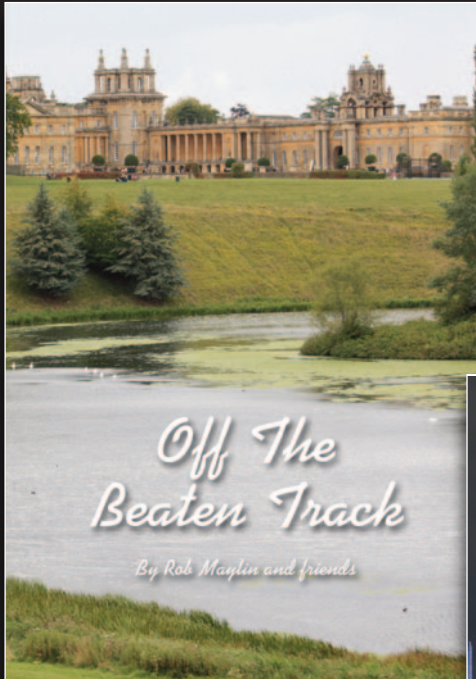
I wondered which fish it was... I guessed it would be the stockie, but a large flank rolled in front of the net, and I knew it was bigger. Surely it had to be the Pug then? The net engulfed the fish, and as I peered in I realised it was neither fish that I'd fed earlier but



The very atmospheric Dredger Bay.

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one with a patch of scales on the wrist of its tail. "It must be Cluster!" I said to myself, and sure enough it was! It was a new UK PB at the time of 44lb 7oz, and it was only a while later when we realised that after the demise of Mary, this was actually the biggest carp in the lake. I might have missed out on my chance to fish for Mary, but I thanked my lucky stars that I'd made the effort to get myself down there and certainly said a little

thank-you to those that had pointed me in the right direction.

My first 30kg carp

Throughout the early years of my carp fishing abroad, I'd mainly stuck to the public lakes, but a trip to a commercial water came up that changed my mind, and that was my first trip to Rainbow Lake. If I've done one thing well it's that I've managed to get on waters in the early years,

and I saw that potential in Rainbow for it to be something special. Back in 2004, it had only just produced its first 70lb carp, but it was the start of something special.

I had a couple of trips in 2004, but in April 2005 came the first trip that I undertook by myself rather than as part of a group. I'd booked swim 18, and I had sort of picked that one out as the swim I wanted to be in. It had the reputation of being tough, but a swim that could produce some of the big fish. I arrived with Joan very tired after driving through the night, but it was lovely in the warm April sunshine. Swim 18 isn't a particularly difficult swim to work out; the main areas are all along an island margin at around 90 yards' range where there are a number of trees that have fallen in over the years creating a fairly safe haven for the fish. So it's always a balancing act of getting close enough to the trees while fishing safely enough to retrieve the fish and also using gear that is up to the job – I'd never used such strong gear as I used there, but it was needed for the job – 45lb Quick-

(Top) I found them!
(Below) The amazing Cluster.



silver hook links, 50lb mono leaders, 8oz to 10oz leads and size 2 hooks all became part of the regular Rainbow setup!

The week started slowly enough with a small mirror of around 15lb on the first day and then a couple of quiet days. For some reason it was quite common in that swim to get one quick and then have to wait a few days. I didn't mind, but I was on a mission for a big one and sat patiently by the rods all day every day. It was very important to be on the ball there if a rod went off; every second really did count, and the faster you were, the more the odds were in your favour – tense but exciting stuff!

Wednesday was a warm, windy day, and the fish liked it. I banked four fish up to 39lb, and I hoped that it would carry on like that. But on Thursday I awoke to the sound of rain falling on the bivvy and the wind had dropped right off. The early morning period passed without a fish, and I was getting a bit anxious. At around 10am there was one bleep and a slight nod on the tip of one rod fishing in the deeper water around 15ft. It was a liner for sure, and it showed fish were in the area. Over the next 45 minutes or so I received a few more of those liners, and my heart jumped every time! Then it happened – That rod suddenly wrenched over alarmingly and the alarm screamed! I was on it in a flash, but the power of the fish nearly pulled me off my feet. It was trying hard to reach the sanctuary of the trees, and I held on as hard as I could.

As soon as there was a brief let-up



in the pressure, I walked back with the rod at its full test curve and eased the fish away from the danger area. As soon as it was ten yards away from the snags, the fish realised what was happening and kited left in to deeper water where it got snagged. I jumped in the boat with my heart pounding, and thankfully as soon as I was above the fish I felt it ease out of the snag. I had it under control, and then it was a matter of just tiring it out. As it came up from the depths, I just saw this huge frame, and my first attempt at netting it failed, as I had less than half the fish in the net without realising it. But on the second attempt, it went in.

I peered into the net and knew it was big, but I also knew it wasn't the 70lb fish. I struggled up the bank and got it on to the scales, which gave a reading of 68lb 4oz, my first 30kg fish

(Above) The swim 18 snags were a safe haven for the fish. (Bottom) The rain fell but the liners began!

and a new PB beating my old Cassien one that had stood for 18 years! It was an epic moment in my fishing, but I had no idea of which fish it was... I guessed that when I showed the regulars or the owner, Pascal, they would tell me. But would you believe that none of them recognised the fish and to this day no one has ever showed me a picture of the fish before that capture? I find it quite incredible that a fish like that can grow to such a huge size without being captured, but that's how it was. In the end it wasn't just a special fish for me, but it went on to be one of Rainbow's finest fish and even went on to break the world record when Martin Locke caught it at 94lb. It was an amazing carp, and a capture that remains very special to me.

My first Mere carp

Some waters just leave a lasting impression on you, and the Mere is certainly the best UK water that I've ever fished. It was a proper head-banger for sure, but there was a magic to the Mere that no other water had. My biggest problem was really that I went in totally blind. I didn't know anyone who was fishing there, and I hadn't spoken to anyone about fishing there; I literally picked up my rods and just went for it! In hindsight it wasn't the best way to go, but it did mean that I did it all my own way, and I had to learn from my mistakes – of





which there were many!

I did lose a fish early on after about nine or ten nights, and I thought then that my first Mere carp was just around the corner, but the Mere had a strange way of throwing obstacles in the way. The water would turn green overnight, meaning that you couldn't see the spots you had baited up, and if you could see them then a tree would fall in or something like that. It's strange, but it was like the Mere used to protect the fish in one way or another. It was all mind games stuff, but several of the other anglers used to feel the same way about things there.

After a fair bit of time on the lake, I was getting nowhere. I somehow expected that sooner or later it would all just fall right... but it didn't. The trouble was that I was so worried about being caught that I was hiding

well rather than fishing well, and I knew that I needed to put in more time and also use that time more effectively. I fished spots and baited other spots without much success. I found one area where the Mere carp liked to rest up, and I spent many hours watching the fish come and go

there. Sometimes the big ones would be there, and on at least three occasions I watched the mysterious big common that people talked about in hushed tones. It was about as big as the Black Mirror, but it evaded capture by anyone, and in fact many of the guys on there never even saw it,

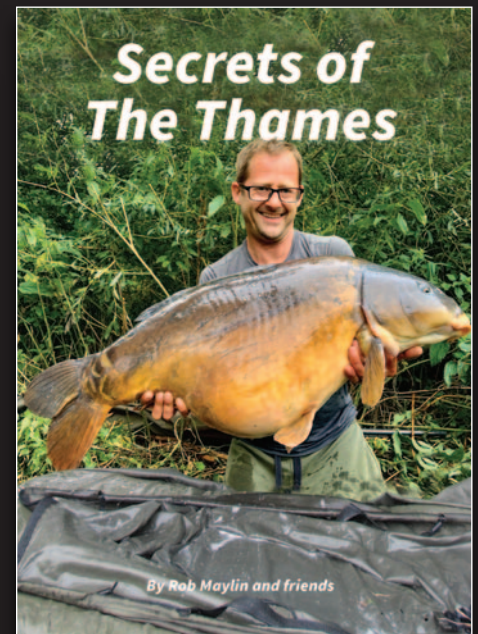
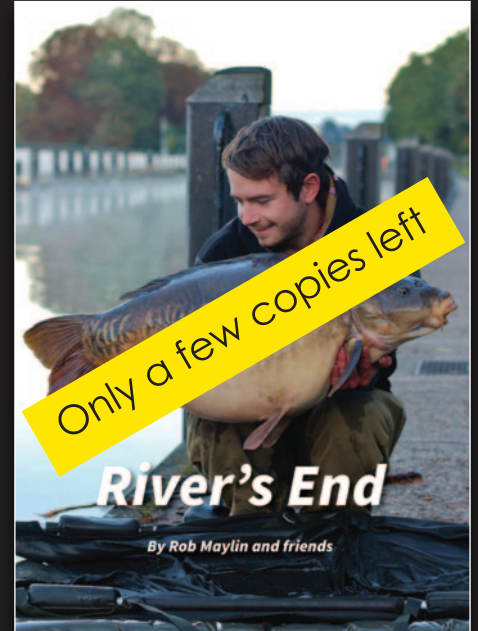
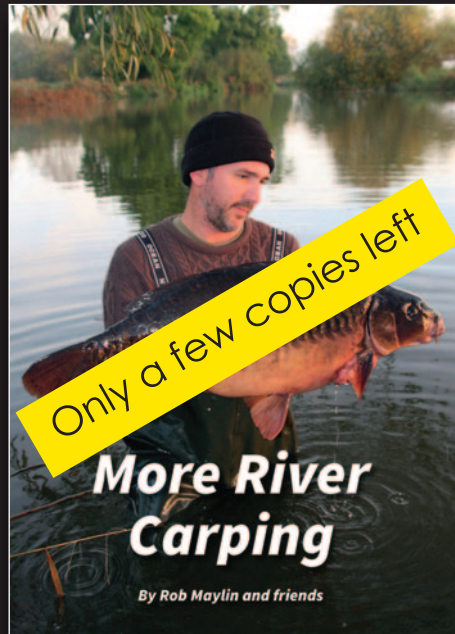
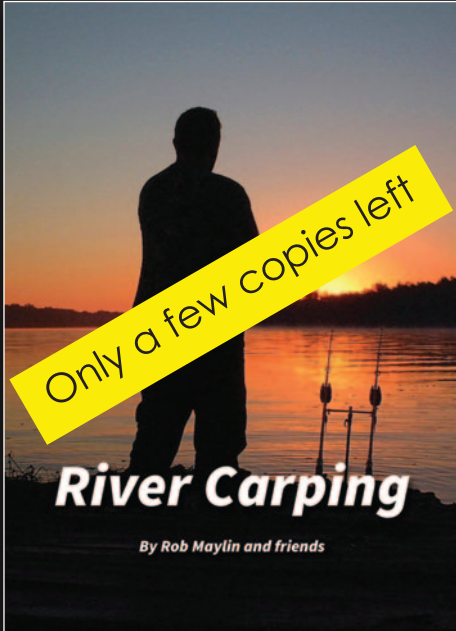


(Top) The amazing Rainbow carp and a new PB.

(Right) The Mere – deep, weedy and very difficult!

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so I felt privileged in that way.

But eventually one day I was leaving the lake mid-morning; I had been fishing but there were a few people about that I weren't sure about so I decided to make myself scarce. As I came to the last corner of the lake, I thought I might as well check the area I had baited a day or two earlier. I climbed that familiar tree for the

umpteenth time, and my eyes nearly popped out of my head, as down below me the area looked like a tractor had been through. The weed had been ripped up and all of the bait was gone – and right then a decent common entered the swim and was looking for bait. I wanted to grab my rods so badly, but it was just too risky, and all I could do was to come back later

that evening when hopefully all would be safe.

I sat at home all day just clock-watching. I was just itching to get back, as I knew this was my chance, and in the end I couldn't wait any longer. It was a big relief just to be back in that small corner of the lake. I couldn't see any fish, but I was sure they would be back. I only used one rod; there was only enough room for one, and it was all I needed anyway. I was so sure that it was going to happen that I slept in my chest waders, as I knew they would be needed as soon as a fish was hooked.

I awoke just as it was getting light; the watch said 4.13am. I couldn't believe that it hadn't gone off, and I flopped back on the bed in disappointment. Literally a couple of seconds later the alarm screamed, and the rod bent at alarming angle. The bait had only been 6ft in front of the rod tip, and the fish was belting off!

**(Above left) I got a spot going in one corner at last!
(Below) Finally after 63 nights – a Mere carp!**



Thankfully it headed for open water, and I walked out following it until I was beyond the danger of the trailing branches. It must have stripped about 60 yards of line before it slowed and I could start the slow retrieve. In typical wild carp fashion, it had spent most of its energy on that initial run, and I just had to lead it slowly back to the waiting net. There were no cheers or anything like that – more just a feeling of immense relief. It had taken 63 nights for that moment to happen, and I'd never waited that long for a carp or indeed worked so hard for one. For the record the lovely common weighed 20lb 8oz, hardly a fish of any size these days, but at that moment it was undoubtedly one of the best carp I'd ever caught!

Cassien – the final winter

I was fishing Cassien when Big Carp magazine started, and I'm still fishing there today. It's fair to say that no other water has ever had the same effect on me, and I sort of fell in love with it as soon as I stepped onto those sandy banks. 30 years later, and I still want to be there every year, but things have obviously changed in that time. Originally no night fishing was allowed on there, but if we were careful we could get away with doing the nights. Then in 1994 night fishing was made legal, and that made it possible to fish in comfort and also to fish all year round. Winter trips became the norm, and my most anticipated trip of the year, but after many years, there were rumblings of discontent from the new head of the fishing federation who didn't really like carp angling or carp anglers. I knew that the night fishing was on borrowed time, and when we headed down for our December trip in 2013, I was just grateful that no bans had yet been put in place. In truth none of us knew what the future held.

For the previous couple of winters, we'd fished in the West Arm and had caught well, but Cassien is never a place you can take for granted, and this time around we fished all of the swims I'd caught from the year before, but the fish just weren't there. By the time ten days had passed, I'd only caught one 25lb common, and I'd fished four different swims. Just moving swims in the winter on Cassien was a bit of an ordeal; we obviously

needed a fair bit of gear, and it all had to be moved by boat. It was cold enough to have cat ice in the edge, and Joan wasn't keen on moving again, but I knew we weren't on fish, and I fancied moving the half a mile or so to the North Arm. I managed to convince her that it was the right thing to do, and so once again boats were loaded and we set off.

Our target was the Second Point, but just as we headed under the bridge, we could see someone pulling in there. I cursed our luck and went instead for the First Point – not high on the list of choices, but it would have to do. It was more than ten years since we'd last fished the First Point, but I knew all of the old spots in the swim, and it didn't take long to get all the rods in position.

It rained hard, but in the night I had a 37lb mirror to boost my spirits. We had the door all zipped up to keep us dry, and at 7am I was just lying there listening to the drops of water hitting the bivvy from the trees when the sounder box burst in to life. It was a rod I'd put over to the right near a drop-off in 18ft, and I was soon out in the boat doing battle. After a slow, plodding fight, a big set of shoulders broke the surface, and I knew that it was much bigger than the previous fish. It was a common too – a massive one! It was a fantastic, deep-bodied fish of 63lb 8oz and my biggest ever from the lake. It actually beat a 61lb 8oz mirror that I'd caught way back in 1987, so you can imagine how chuffed

I was with that!

Little did I know, but it was the start of what was to be an epic week. The next evening we were sitting in the bivvy reading when my other rod on the right in just 10ft bleeped a few times. Not much was happening, and I thought it might even be a roach on the end, but I went to check anyway, and it turned out to be a 56lb 12oz mirror, a real old battle-scarred warrior.

Conditions were really good – it had warmed up a bit and rain was coming and going. I was already happy with what I'd caught, but the next 24 hours was amazing by any standards, but especially on Cassien. On three different rods I caught fish of 52lb, 54lb 4oz and 55lb 12oz! It was just incredible fishing, and I'd somehow landed right on a group of the biggest fish in the lake. In all those years it had never really happened to me, and it was something I'd only read about happening to other people.

With a couple of nights left, it was the turn of the drop-off rod in 18ft again, and a screaming run had me scrambling out of bed and into the boat. I was being towed towards the bridge, and to be honest I thought I was playing a catfish as the power and strength seemed far too much to be a carp. I'd caught some winter catfish, and they tended to stay very deep as this one was doing. I gave it a lot more stick, as it was the only way to bully the cats up to the top, so



Time for a move to the North Arm.

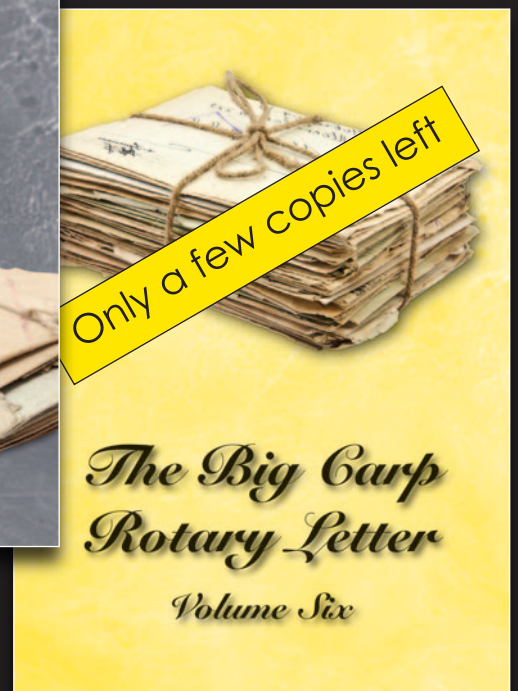
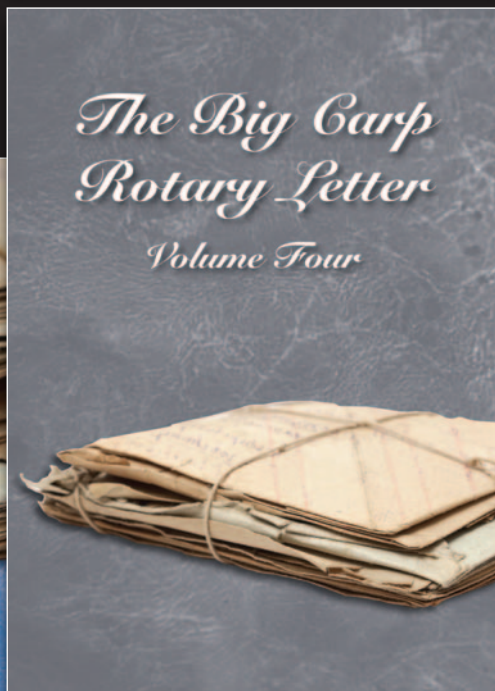
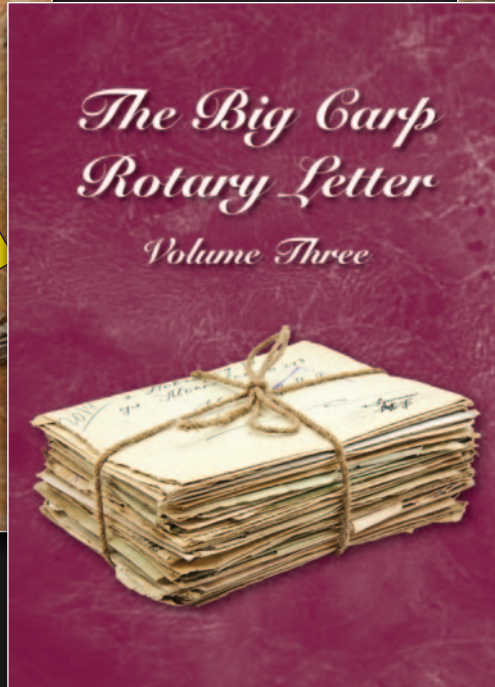


(Above) 17 The big common at 63lb 8oz first morning in the new swim.
(Below) My biggest ever Cassien carp!



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imagine my surprise when it surfaced and turned out to be a great big mirror! I eased off a bit once I'd seen it, and it fought for ages, but eventually it was lying beaten in the bottom of my net. It was a beautiful big grey fish of 64lb 8oz – another Cassien best! I'd caught my two biggest Cassien carp ever in the space of just a few days, one common and one mirror – it was amazing fishing.

I caught one more carp of 42lb before leaving a day or two later, and little did I know that they would probably be my last winter carp on Cassien. In April the news came through that the night fishing had indeed been banned again for the whole lake and all-year-round. By now the authorities knew all of the tricks and had all the equipment to patrol the lake both day and night, so the winter trips were over! That last week of fishing was the best I ever had on the lake, and it was like it was paying me back after all those years. We still go there of course, but now it's only day fishing in the summer time. We had 18 years of winter trips, and indeed Christmas times on the banks of Cassien, and although it's all over now, at least we made the most of it while we could – and what great times they were!

The Black Mirror

Of course out of all the memories and special moments over the years, the capture of the Black Mirror

remains head and shoulders above everything else. That one fish captured my imagination like no other, and it was considered by most people to be the greatest carp the UK has ever produced.

I had been fishing the Mere for some time, and after a very tough start, I had started to catch the odd fish or two. Most of my fishing was done in the open water, although 'open water' is hardly the correct term, as for the most part the Mere was 40 acres of weed! I much preferred the margin fishing, but when

the water was clear, the baited margin spots could be monitored, and if they weren't being touched then there wasn't much point in fishing them. I did catch two good fish from one area in open water, both commons, of 38lb 4oz and 29lb 12oz – they were my only two bites from the open water in five years of fishing the Mere! So it was tough, but the more I fished it, the more I began to suss out the habits and moods of the fish. Chances may have been few and far between, but there were small windows of opportunity that would come up maybe once or twice a month. It was one thing recognising those opportunities, and another being there at those brief times. So I was spending more time at the Mere, and for the most part nothing would happen, but it was time that wasn't wasted, as I was just waiting for the right signals.

The small corner where I had caught my first Mere carp gradually became my main focus of attention. Some carp, in particular the Black Mirror, were spending more time there, and although there were some very good anglers on there at the time, I felt like I had got everything together and was finding the fish more. It was my first job every time I

(Top) looking across the Mere to the corner where it all happened.

(Below) They were in the area!



arrived to check that spot, and I kept it constantly baited. As usual there were times when the bait was left for weeks, and it just rotted away, but as spring turned to summer, the fish visited the corner more frequently. My first capture that year was a recapture of the Fat Common that I'd caught at 38lb 4oz but this time down to 34lb. I just knew I was going to catch on that night.

A few weeks later, I spotted them there again, this time just three carp including the Black Mirror. The actual spot was very close to the path around the lake, so I had just one rod on the spot well covered, while I hid away in the undergrowth with my sounder box. I remember lying there in the morning sun just relaxing as I was well hidden when all hell broke loose, the sounder box screamed, and I found myself hurtling through brambles, bushes and mud until I could grab the rod. How my heart held out, I'll never know, as it was beating out of my chest, but on the other end was one of the commons, a lovely old original of 34lb 4oz.

I was close, but I felt a million miles from catching the Black Mirror. While most other people seemed sure that if I carried on I would get it, I just couldn't share their confidence! It came to June 18th; I had baited the corner as I'd left the previous time out on the 16th, and I walked those familiar paths and stopped as usual to check the area. As I peered over the reeds, I just froze, for down on the spot was the Twisty Common head down with its tail waving as it picked up my baits! The Twisty Common wasn't the biggest in the lake, but it was one that I really would love to have caught. So I raced into the undergrowth to get a rod set up asap! Once I had one rigged up with a single bottom bait, I returned to the corner and looked again. I couldn't see the fish anywhere, so that was my chance to get the rig in place, and as I lowered it from the rod tip I could see everything laid out nicely on the small patch of gravel. I stepped back after pushing a bank stick into the soft mud. Thinking that I might have to wait again for any action, I thought I'd send Joan a text

to let her know I'd seen one. But with that I just heard the sound of my alarm. I had to do a double take; it had only been there for less than a minute, but the phone was launched in to the brambles, and in one movement I jumped in up to my waist, grabbing the rod on my way!

The fish stripped line and charged through several weed beds before I slowed it down. I was bricking it, but I was in control, as I guessed I was playing an upper twenty common – it had to be that one, surely? The fish kept stripping line every time I thought I was starting to win the battle, and with the dark skies above, I just couldn't see into the water. Gradually it started to tire and the runs became shorter. I grabbed the net and got it ready, but what happened next was one of the biggest shocks of my life! As the fish came up through the depths and towards the net, my eyes nearly popped out, as this wasn't a common at all – but a mirror! It was all a bit of a blur... the size really meant it could only be one fish, but I stared at the tail, and of course there



The most amazing moment of my carp angling life.

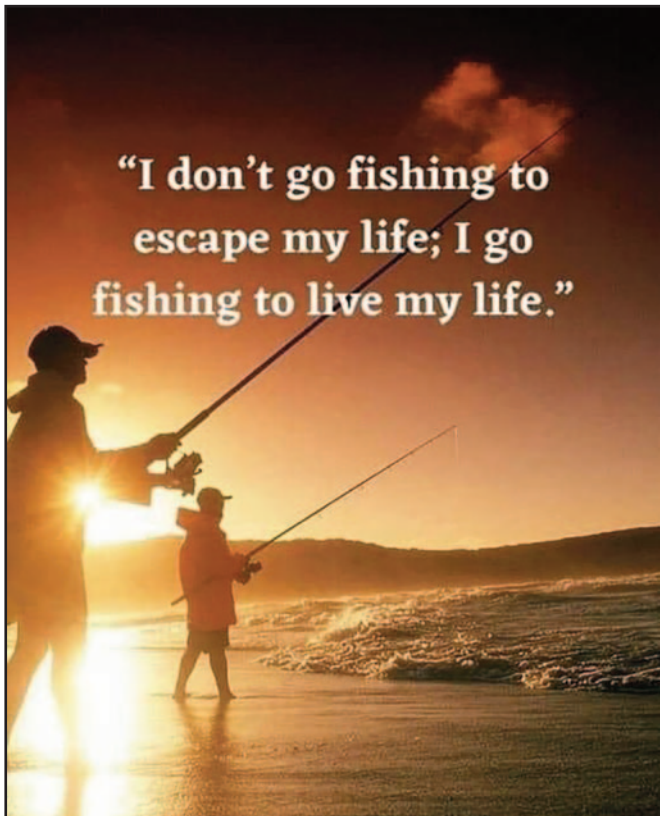
was that familiar flat lobe on the top, the one I'd looked at and admired so many times in other people's pictures and in the water as it cruised past me so many times. All of those times it was just a dream, a target that I thought I might never achieve, and yet there it was in MY net! I took the hook out and just launched the rod somewhere – I didn't need that anymore, it had done its job! All that mattered was the creature in the net – the Black Mirror.

After all the time I'd put in trying to catch that fish, the 'session' when it finally happened, I had actually fished for less than one minute – that was all the time it took! After the pictures were done and the fish safely returned, I just gathered all my bits and pieces together, retrieved my rod from the bushes and slowly made my way back to the car to load it up one last time with the Mere kit. It was an extraordinary fish living in an extraordinary lake, and I'm just so thankful that I got to spend some time there and got to hold some of the jewels, and especially the greatest one of them all. ■



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The Wasing Parrot

By Terry Hearn

Simply massive! The carp fishing grapevine has been abuzz with news of Terry Hearn's capture of the Parrot from the Berkshire syndicate. Here is the exclusive story from Tel, courtesy of ESP...

Same old faces, same old places. Well, well, old Storm Doris did the trick! I love carping whatever the time of year, but big winds and mild, rainy weather in the winter has always been a bit of a favourite for the big'uns. The windier the better, when the air's full of energy, the trees are creaking and cracking and you can barely hear yourself think... I love it!

It's funny how things go, but the old Parrot was one fish I was starting to think I'd never catch. Since starting

on the water back in September '15, up until last November, I'd been lucky enough to catch pretty much everything else in the lake, with the exception of one other good mirror known as Veiny Belly. 176 carp in all – that's a lot of rig tying, let me tell you! I'd done my time twice over, but still the number one prize was missing.

My first trip back after a long winter break was only last week, but the water temperature was still cold at 40f, and with otter fencing work being done around the lake, diggers and JCBs driving round and chainsaws buzzing away all day, I only fished a night before sneaking off onto one of the quieter lakes on site. In fact that's where I started my trip this week, but as soon as the work was finished, I headed straight back over to Cran-

wells for a walkabout. It was lovely and mild with a strengthening wind, and once I got round to the more sheltered side of the lake it didn't take long to see the signs. Three fish topped over the course of just a few minutes, possibly the same one each time, but at this time of the year, it was all I needed to see.

An hour later I was all moved and set up in the Lifebuoy swim, an area of the lake that I'd fished a lot in the past. As I set up, I already had a fair idea where I'd be putting my baits. Stretching out for over a hundred yards straight in front was shallows, just 3-4ft deep, and then tighter to the island the depth drops away to 9ft. The deeper gully always looked good for action, but I'd fallen into that trap plenty of times before and rarely



caught from it. No, not this time... instead all three rods were going shallow, nothing in more than 5ft. Temperatures that night were forecast to stay above double figures, ideal for the shallower ground, which my thermometer told me had already risen to 46f, a huge increase from just 40f the week before.

I waited until gone 4pm before boating the rods out, all at range, one to the left, one to the right, and the banker rod straight out in front in a slight depression where the depth increased from 4 to 4.5ft. I put two shaved tigers on the hairs, a couple of handfuls of hemp, a few chewed nuts and a sprinkling of 'super maize' and corn around each.

Try putting that out with a spod at 120 yards when it's blowing a hooligan! I heard fish topping closer in to my right in the night over only 2-3ft of water – typical here, as they often creep onto the shallowest ground under the cover of darkness in mild conditions, even in winter, but come dawn it was odds on they'd push further out again, so I resisted the temptation to move one of the baits. Good job!

I awoke at first light with no action, and with Storm Doris at its peak and my sleeping bag feeling even more snug than usual, I shut my eyes again and dozed back off. Just before 8am I woke to a single bleep, and focusing on the tips I saw that the middle one was starting to bend round. A few



more bleeps as I was putting my boots on, and by the time I got down to the rod, line was slowly ticking from the right clutch. The first few minutes were nothing out of the ordinary, a big heavy weight at range, typical of a usual Wasing battle. It wasn't until I got it halfway back that I started to get that 'hmmm, this is a possible' feeling. A little closer and suddenly its tail started slapping the surface over shallower ground. Shallower, but still around three feet deep, yet its head was on the bottom and its

tail was on the surface... It had to be it; I knew it, but I was still trying hard not to think it.

A few more turns of the reel handle, and it was probably only fifteen yards away when its wide, crusty back broke the surface. I was just about to slip into my chesties at that moment, but seeing that back turned my knees to jelly. It was him, for certain... sod the waders... instead I just walked straight in up to my waist. It picked up a small amount of weed when it hit the slightly deeper gully in my margin, making it a tad easier to guide over the cord, but as I went to lift, it woke up again and rolled back over the cord.

Now I was in bits, I knew 100% what I had on, and it was thrashing about on the surface, shaking its head from side to side. Proper heart in the mouth stuff, but the next time it settled down, I took another step or two out into the lake, pushed the net deep down beneath it and lifted... YES, YES! He was mine – 63lbs of long, dark, scaly mirror! One thing for sure, the longer the campaign, the longer you have to wait, the bigger the buzz at the end of it. I'm still on cloud nine now.

Editor's note: Terry used size 5 hooks to Tungsten Loaded hooklinks, ESP Leadcore and 18lb Syncro, and of course his Classic rods. Pictures courtesy of Mark Hibbs – Wasing Sporting. Text courtesy of ESP Carp Gear. ■



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