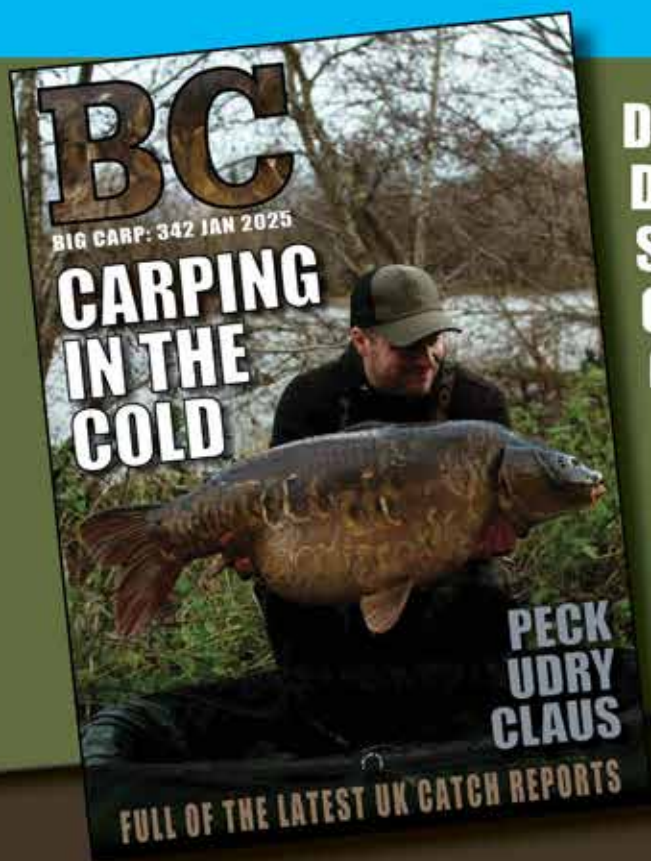


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Davy Claus - a 147 brace of 70s
Darrell Peck - The 40s Machine
Steve Freeman - Redmire Dreams
Carl Udry - Use The Winter for Prep
Oscar Thornton - His Winter Approach



Adam Honeyett - Rivers
Ken Beech - Watercraft
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10	ANGLING DIRECT CHELMSFORD

Top 10 Iconic Carp Waters

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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



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BC

BIG CARP: 342 JAN 2025

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Carp Tackle Online owner Mark Russell battled the traffic, the wind, and rain for a night on Doddington Lane Pits, here's what he had to say: "A little after 6am I lay in bed watching the bobbin slowly lift up to the alarm and stopped. I assumed it was the wind until it started taking line from the reel. I lifted into light resistance and called Alan who was quickly out holding the net for me, I asked if there were bream in the lake as it was just coming straight in, that was until about 2 rod lengths out - then it woke up. After a short tussle, Alan graciously slipped my net under a chunky looking mirror. On lifting it out, Alan said it was a decent fish. It had a decent girth and was thick across the shoulders, in the sling and up on the scales, 31lb bang on! Absolutely blown away, literally!"

Caught using #carptackleonline size 4 Scorpion Wide Gape fished blowback style, our CTO Pro hooklink and safety lead clips. Bait was Sticky Baits 15mm peach and black pepper orange pop up, and a 20mm Sticky Krill bottom bait."

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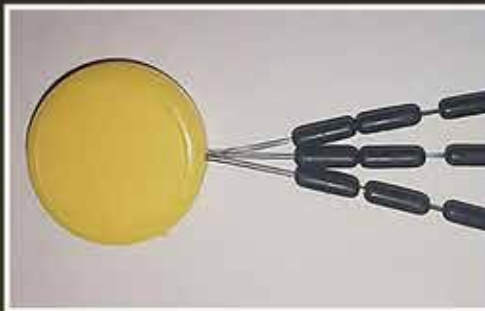
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BIG CARP 342:
January 2025

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Publications 2025



Front Cover:
Craig Runham with
'One Pec' at 46lb 8oz



What is going on with the weather? Last month I was penning this and it was double figures and it looks like Christmas Day is going to much the same. One thing this does mean is the carp are still feeding and there should be some BIG surprises this spring for many waters.

This month's mag has plenty to keep you going through these cooler months. If you're not out fishing making a few hours for preparation can be key. Both Carl Udry and Scott Sweetman have tips for making the most of your prep.

Darrell Peck has just had his 20th UK 40 of the year - what a season!! Davy Claus banked a massive brace of 70s. Steve Freeman completed a life long dream to fish Redmire - did he bank one of the hallowed carp? We also take a look at the Katran brand and some innovative products.

8. SHOCKLEADER

News from around the fishing industry. Keep up to date with all the goings on in and around the angling community.

14. TAC-TEC

Our look at some of the best fishing products around. Are you looking to tart up your set up or a new bait to try out?

18. CATCH REPORTS

Check out some of the biggest carp to be caught in the UK, the last few weeks.

34. PREPARATION

Carl Udry utilises the winter to prepare for the coming season. Check out his top tips here

46. 20TH 40 OF 2024

Darrell Peck has had an awesome 2024 and to top it off he's just had his 20th UK 40 of the year. Find out his successful tactics.

54. 147 BRACE

Davy Claus had a session to remember when he banked this incredible brace for a whopping 147lb.



60. DON'T QUIT

It's easy to pack the gear away for the colder months but you can be missing out on some bonus results. Check out the tips from these leading winter anglers and see if they can motivate you to bag a big winter carp!

66. KATRAN

This innovative company are making big inroads into the UK market. These are the boys that brought you UV line - a major edge for night fishing. They also do an extensive range of hook links and main lines.

82 OSCAR THORNTON

The ever consistent Oscar talks us through his winter approach. Could his tactics turn your winter around?

86. REDMIRE

Steve Freeman made his dream pilgrimage to the hollowed waters of Redmire. How did he and his friends get on tackling the legendary home of carp fishing?

104. SCOTT SWEETMAN

It's all about the preparation for making winter a success.

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Wish list:

Seasonal Tactics and Techniques - Autumn/Winter

The History of Carp Fishing in Oxfordshire

The Darker Side of Carp Fishing

Old School Carping Volume 4

History of Yateley Volume 3

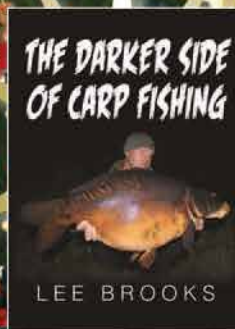
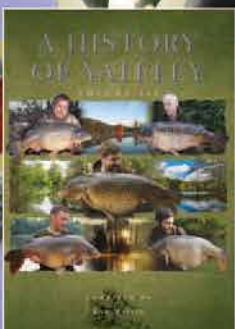
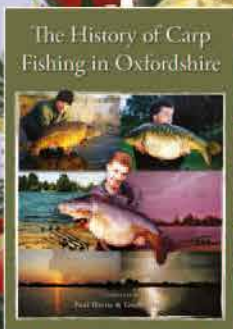
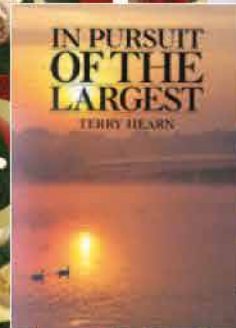
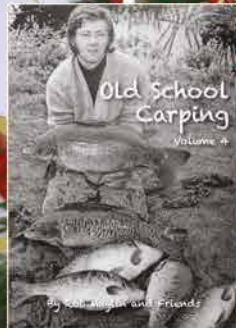
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Legacy Project - Young Anglers Support Group



So probably time to release some initial info on the challenge for 2025...The challenge starts on 1st Jan and will run till 1st Dec.

There are 15 species on the list. These have been carefully chosen and will test adapting skills to focus on a species, understanding conditions where these fish will be found and how much ingenuity the teams have in capturing the species. I have also considered age and skill sets of the teams and so there are a number of species that are not included.

Each species has points allocated - but these will not be published. The idea about the points is to enable individuals with less access to waters the ability to still compete. The aim is to

achieve the list.

The challenge is NOT solely about points. Consideration will be taken regarding the method used, the water caught from and in situations where a deciding factor has to be used between winning teams - weight.

There will be 5 prizes. x2 £100. x1 £200. x1 £300 and the overall prize of the rods and accompanying set up. This being funded by myself and additional set items being donated by [Chris Palmer]- these items will not be disclosed until the prize giving.

Regarding the prize giving - I have not made any plans. There are a number of options, but it will depend on how many would want to be involved. I could hire a hall in Kidlington and put on a 'talk night' with Julian Clundiff - he has offered to support. Or I could do it in my garden... but it will take some thinking about as I would like to be able to present the 'scores' the teams achieved and why. (This is on me, and I will think it through..)

So..... the list you have been

waiting for: Gudgeon, Bronze Bream, Silver Bream, Perch, Chub, Daddy Ruff, Tench, Dace, Stickle Back (any sub species), Minnow, Rudd, Roach, Rainbow Trout and Zander.

The point about photo identification... research the difference between Dace and Chub for example and therefore be able to display the characteristic required for clear identification in your photo. Multiple photos are accepted - x1 MUST be with the young angler - as already set out.

I am also pretty pleased with the reasons why the list is what it is - I am confident that none of you will already have a trophy shot of a Stickle Back...!!!!

I am open to questions. But I think it is pretty much explained.

There is NO time limit on when people want to join - but same format please @ALL - names and team name and I will create your individual album.

THE YOUNG ANGLER MUST BE UNDER 18 ON JAN 1ST 2024.

Love to all. Dyl. X

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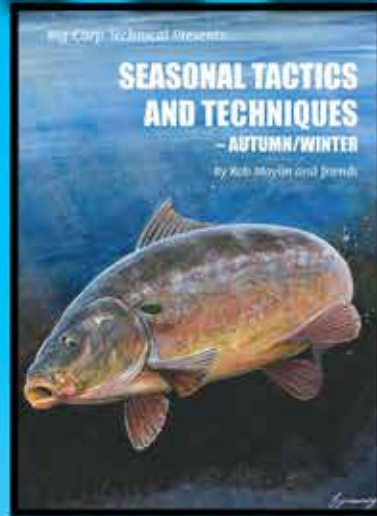
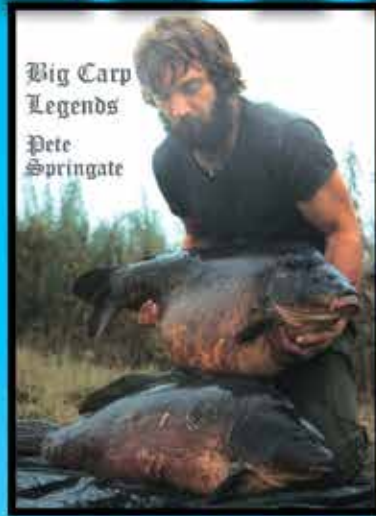
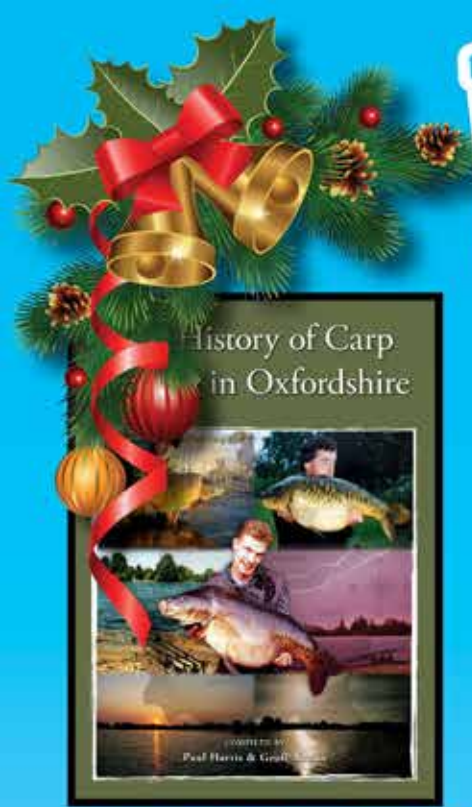
As an angling accountant and business owner I have over 30 years accounting experience and a lifelong passion for carp fishing. We currently work with many clients who fish and have businesses.

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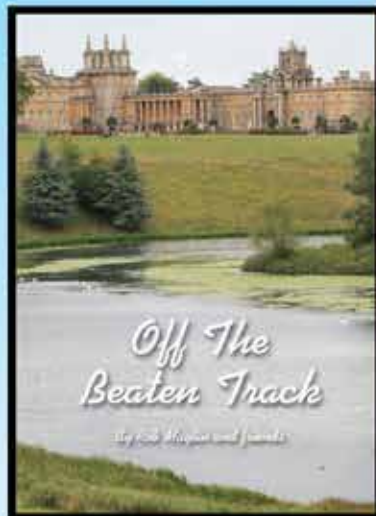
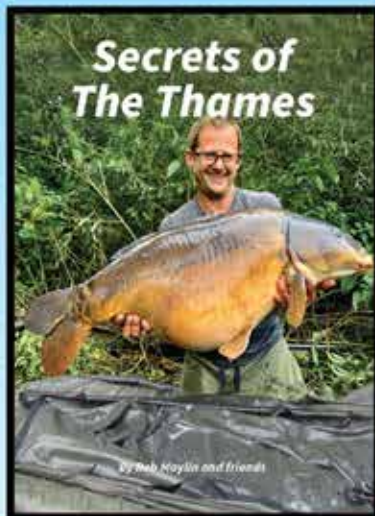
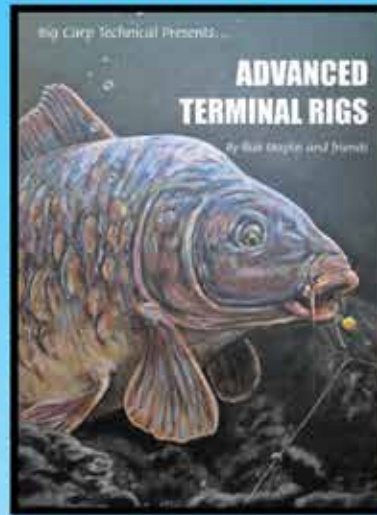
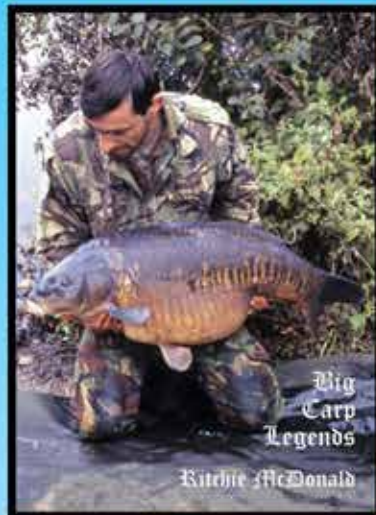
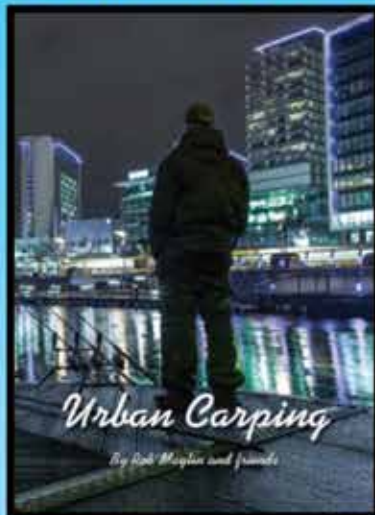
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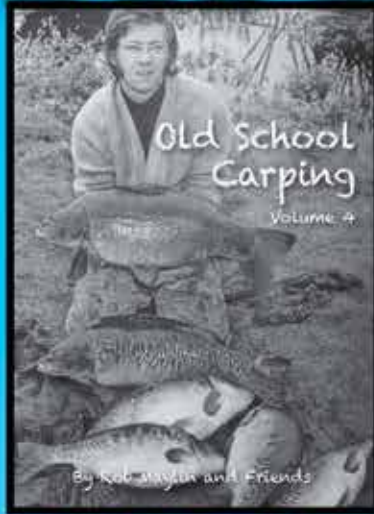
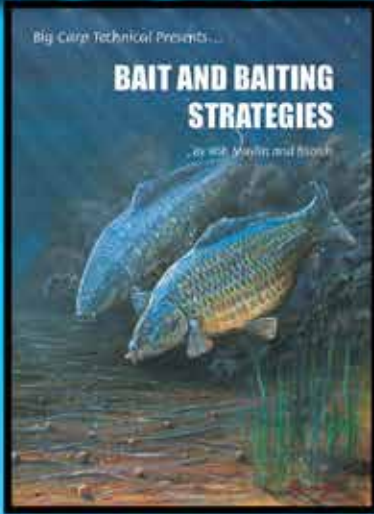


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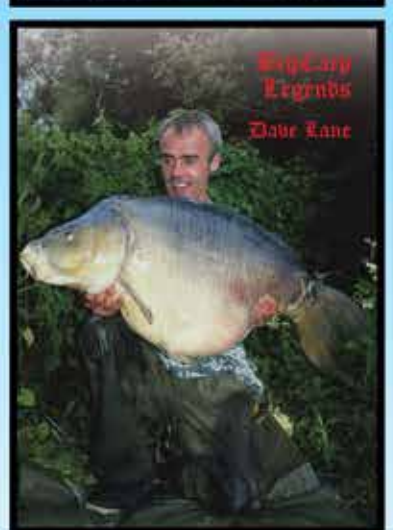
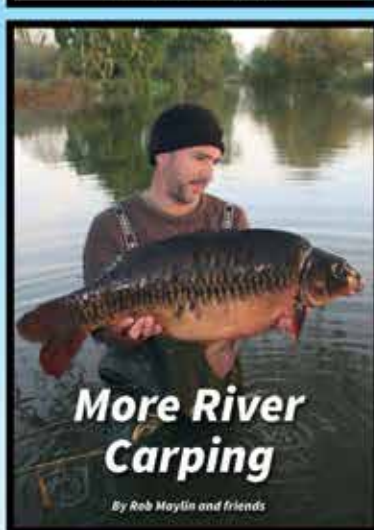
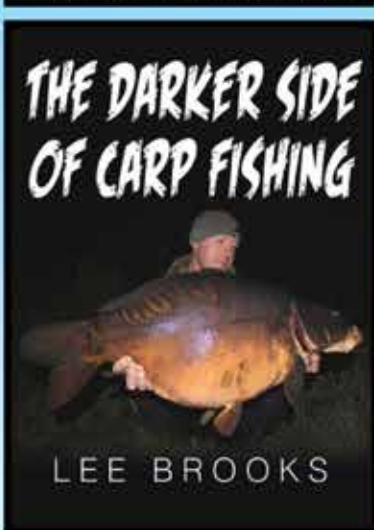
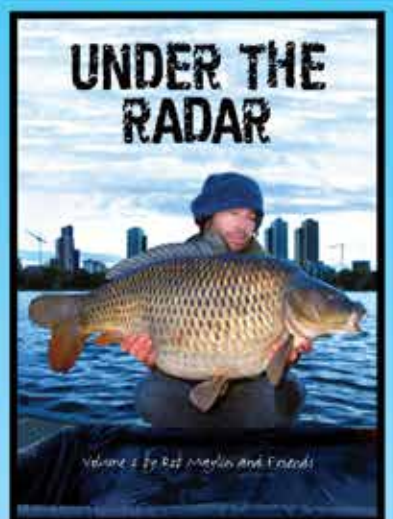
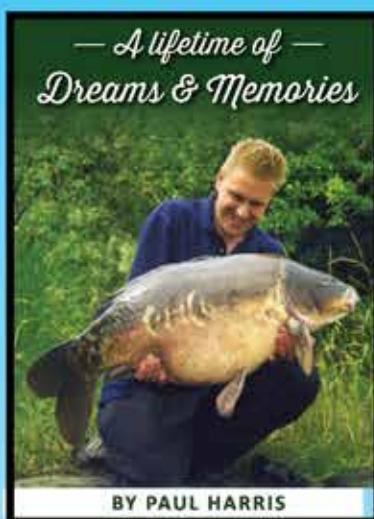
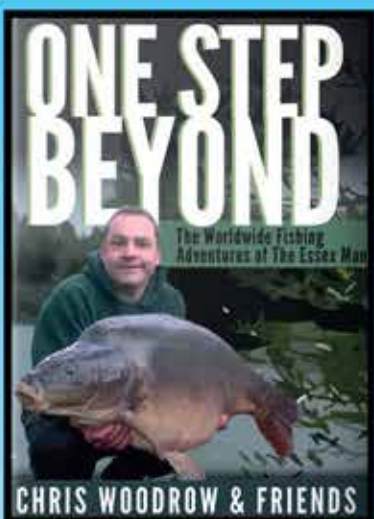


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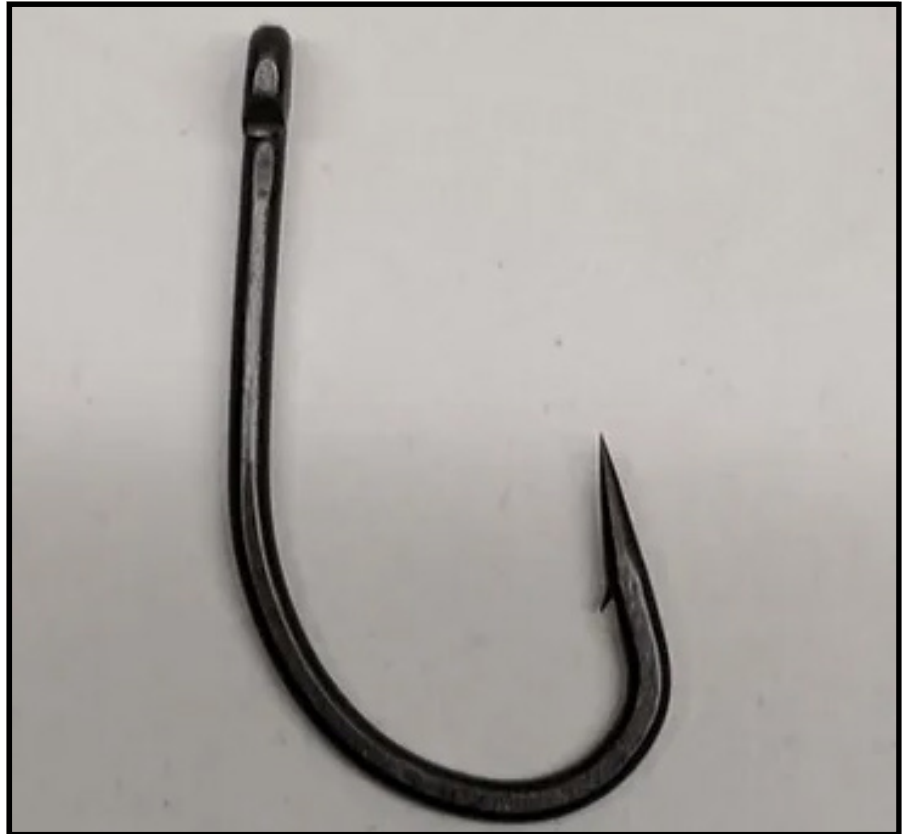
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DREAM 60



Never in my life did I think I would ever catch a carp this big in the Uk! The big common at 61.8 ,thank you Lewis Grainger and Ben Gregg for helping me out it's appreciated lads! An thank you to Chris Marler for letting me fish this special lake

EMBRYO 40



New Embryo Angling - Norton Disney 40lber featuring Jase Rouse. 'After spending over 5 hours walking around in the rain trying to settle on a swim without seeing any shows I decided to trust my instinct that was saying get on the the back of a cool SW wind. After finding a spot at close range, I put 12 spombs of Live System, Hemp and corn with a good soaking of matching Live Bait Booster and some chilli sauce.

The first bite camp around midnight, being a lovely 20lb mirror. The following morning passed without a bite, but I kept getting slicks off the spot. With that in mind I decided to freshen up the spot and re- do the rods. Not 20 minutes later the right hander went into meltdown and over the cord she went. I knew which fish it was straight away and it certainly made my year when I had my target of a 40lb common resting in the net! The hookbait of choice was an NS1 Yellow Wafter soaked in Yellow NS1 HALO!'

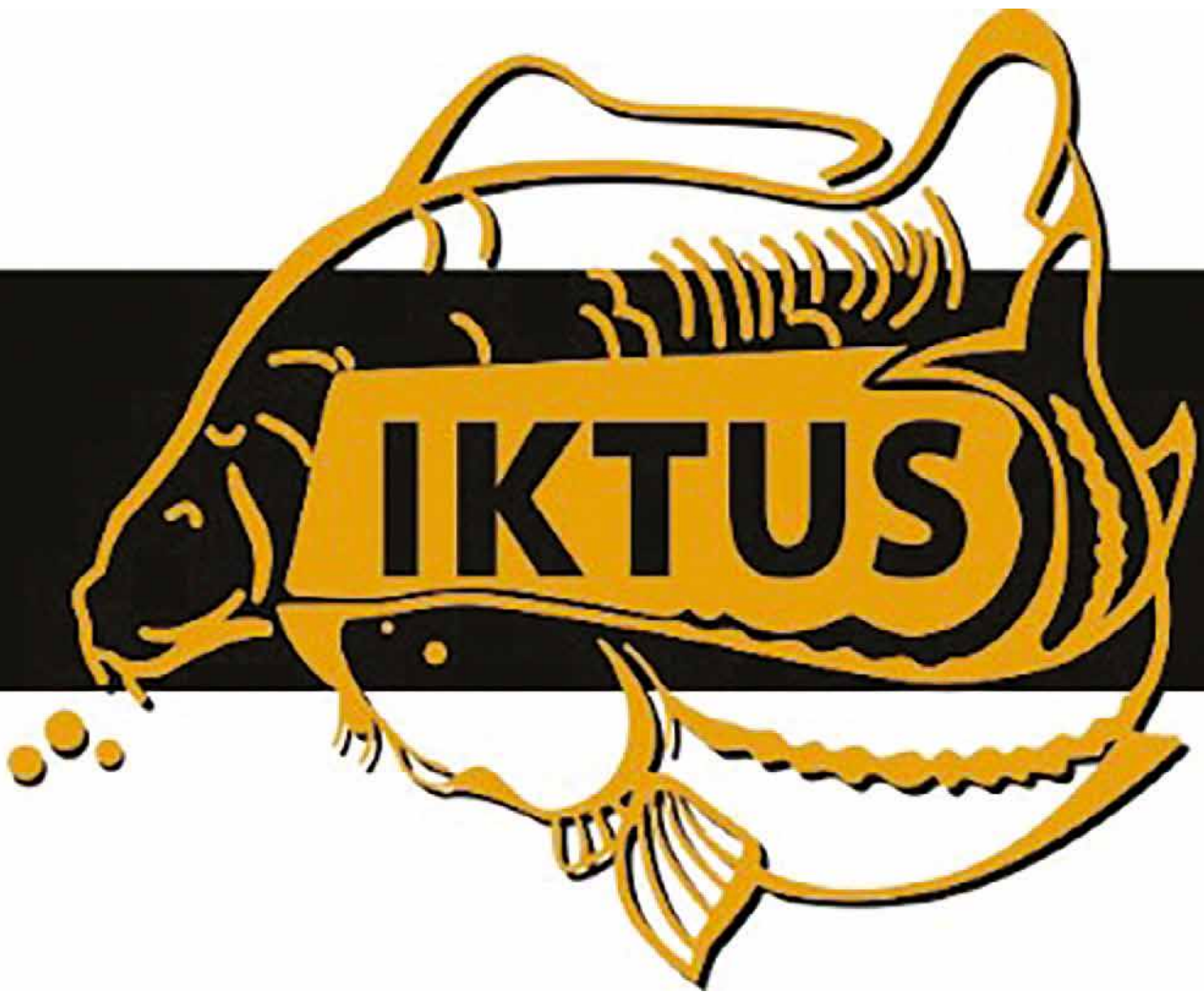
SNOW JOKE



'Having observed them subtly bubbling in the area the previous week, I baited it by throwing stick in the darkness with 5k of bait three days before my session.

A further 5kg was 'sticked' out and the three rods placed into the depression with 3 matching rigs; 5-inch spinners comprising of size 4 Spinner hooks on Slip D's, with the boom formed from 20lb Boom. Heli Safe systems to IQ2 leaders to keep things pinned and invisible then ran directly to a Sub Braid mainline.

Savage liners started shortly before midnight and in the early hours, I received the first bite, the smaller of the two mirrors. I didn't re do the rod as two were still in the zone and prime. Shortly after first light, one of the remaining rods was away, this time with the larger mirror, just as the snow had begun to settle.



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**FRANKLY
AWESOME**



Carp fishing legend Frank Warwick at his Cheshire syndicate had two stunning 40lb carp recently.



UNKNOWN 50



Josh couldn't believe his luck when this 52lb old English Linear came in like it was on a lead.

Stocked in the early 80s and most probably never seen in print until now, this capture won't be forgotten in a hurry on Josh's behalf. It's a mind blowing Carp!



We would like to welcome you to Crowsheath's brand new 40lb addition to the specimen lake

NOT SO GREEN



Some hard graft and consistency from Billy Green resulted in this brute, aptly named 'Cassius' at a new lake record of over 50lb.

GAV'S GHOST



50lb ghostie from Welly. They grew huge in that place and I'm sure this was the biggest one in the U.K. at the time according to the locals. Have they made it over 60lb anywhere yet??

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"The Peach" at
42lb 4oz



CANAL CLONKER



A very special canal carp for Micky 'Creeper' Christie, it certainly wouldn't have gone amiss in Yateley in it's hay day!



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BENOS BANKS 40

Well done to George Benos who banked this stunning mirror weighing 45lb 2oz from a Lea Valley pit.



NEW PB!!



Rob Yates recently visited Clover Lake at Coking Farm Fishery smashing his PB by 11lbs! with this chunky 43lb common,



STOKES GOES DEEP

A couple from a freezing cold trip a week or so ago, the common in the second pic was caught after the temperature dipped down to -4 during the night.

Just two of the 16 I have landed over the past month from a deep clay pit in Peterborough. The choice of venue being the key factor in these captures, with most of the lake being over 30ft and depths going down to over 50ft in places, it really is the perfect lake for the latter part of the autumn

All these bites came from around 34ft of water, fishing little yellow pop up's soaked in pineapple and isotonic goo, over a relatively simple mix of Boilie, 8mm pellet, and corn.

RARE SOV



Ian Asher with a 41lb mirror known as 'Sov' is one of the 'most wanted' from this particular water for obvious reasons.

RES RESULT



Andy Garwood with 'Big Shaq' @ 44lb 4oz

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30lb



27lb 5oz



28lb

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CARL UDRY

HOMework

Winter is just not the one for so many anglers, as it can feel like a constant test of resilience for a host of reasons. But we all know, the results are there is you dare. But winter can be a very good time to undertake some essential homework ahead of the optimum seasons that lay ahead. You just need the right kit, warm clothes, including decent gloves. Quieter banks, present the perfect opportunity to take a marker rod, spod rod and distance sticks, and have a decent plumb and mark about. With the significantly lower water temperatures, most weed dies back and

gives a greater opportunity to freely drag a market weight and float along the lakebed. All this essential information will significantly put you on the front foot and put those percentages in your favour. Especially if you are about to embark on a new water for the season ahead.

Having all this insights available to you ahead of the milder seasons is golden. When

you embark on future sessions, and see a carp bosh out or roll in a peg you have mapped out. I find it so satisfying dropping in and having all this pre-work in the locker. It saves so much time, and more importantly, avoids disturbance on the session ahead.

The reason I take my spod rod, which is loaded with braid (same as my market rod). It's the ideal tool loaded with a



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Custom build option is also available for the handle to match existing rods. We can offer the whippings in any colour plus metallic trim bands, if required. Grips are available in cork, burl cork, duplon, or shrink. Several butt cap options available. Custom decals/names available.

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RETURN YOUR
ROD TO
NEW**



3oz or 4oz marker weight, to start plumping about, feeling for any surplus or dead weed beds. And obviously feeling for drops, different areas of substrate (silt, gravel etc) and obviously distances. When you find areas of interest, you can clip up on the spod rod, retrieve and then whizz around the distance sticks to know how many wraps to that mark. You then match the same wraps on the market rod, and away you go. If the area you are marking, is weed free, absolutely nothing wrong starting with the marker rod.

The other huge benefit of having both rods, you can pop up the float on one mark. And then use the other rod to feel the drop around that mark. It just makes the whole procession of it, that much more satisfying and accurate.

I make all the notes I need in to my mobile. Ill take photos so I am clear on horizon markers and annotate on to photo

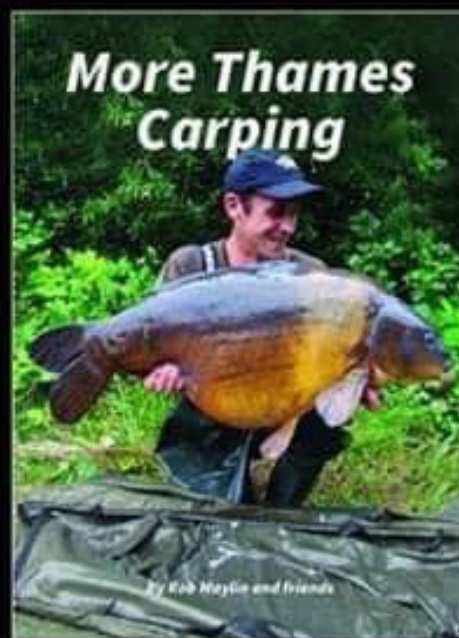
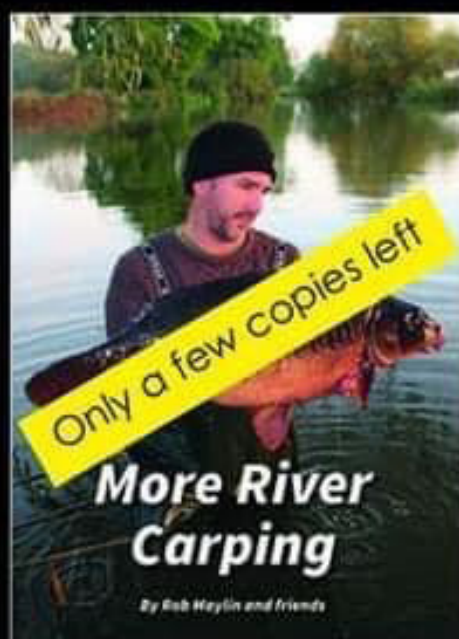
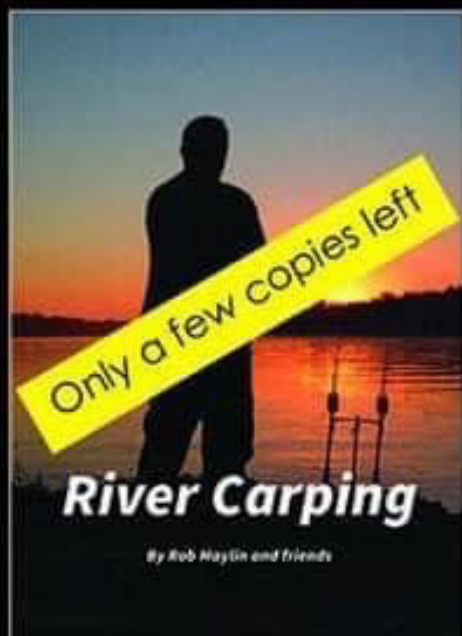
with arrows on specific lines of interest. Then correlating notes with those markers in notepad. One thing I do always make sure I do, is stand on the same spot within every swim. I also make a note of where I have stood, in my notepad. Sounds mad, but some of the smallest areas of interest, have been tiny and procession can be golden. Google earth is also a brilliant tool, to give you long distance starting points.

Having a decent pair of distance sticks also makes light work of continuous wrapping and re-chucks. The ground is most likely going to be allot harder (even frozen) during the winter, so I use the Evolve Tackle distance sticks which are high-quality stainless-steel, with an auger point and T-bar to aid drilling into the ground. These sticks also have a multiple array of grooves on each stick to keep line wraps more spread and prevent tangles. After



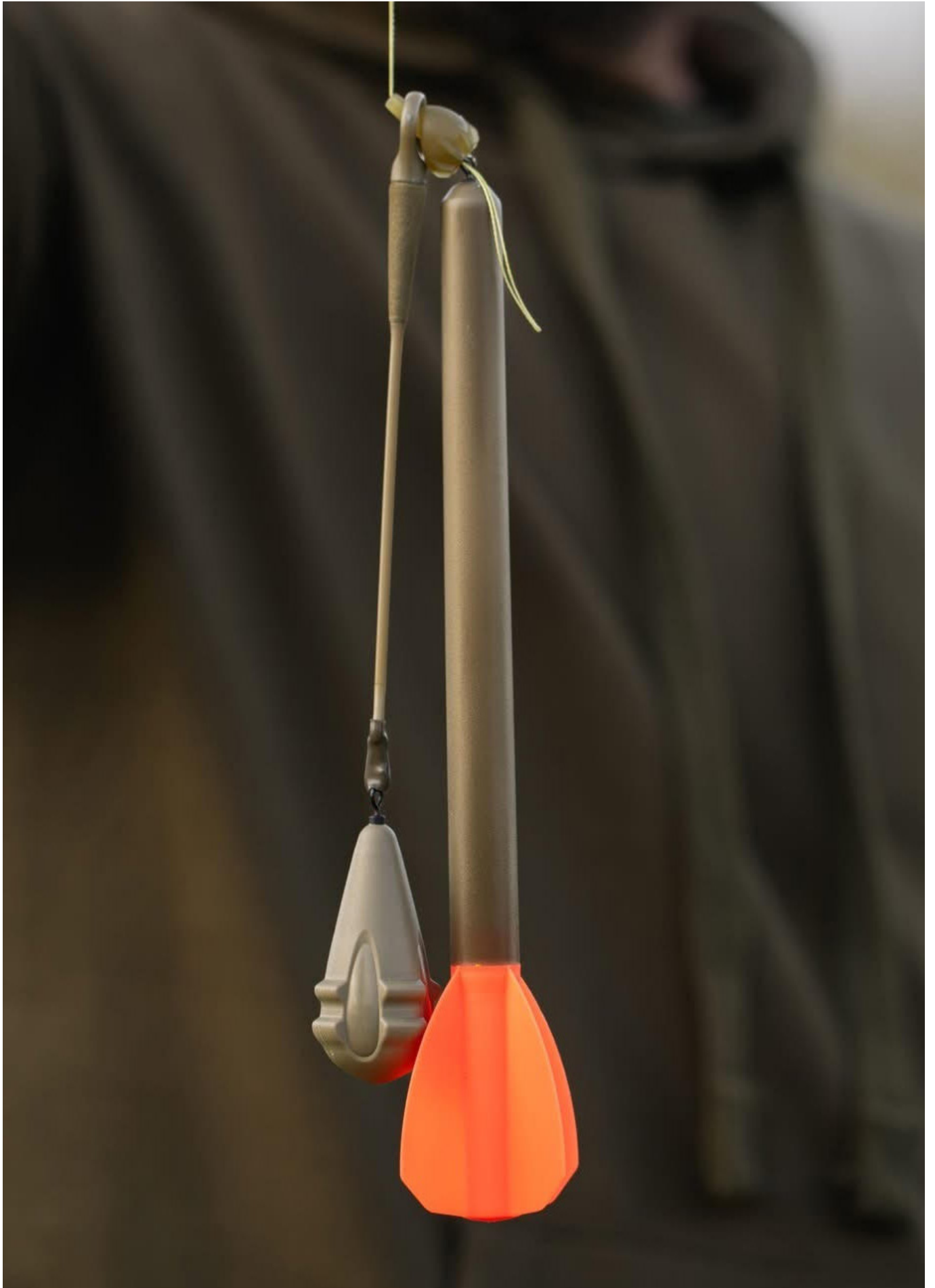
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Tales and Technical, a must-read series for the river angler



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wrapping around a lot of sticks, better option, but the ridges upon retrieval a lot of lines or braids can get snagged. With the array of grooves on these Evolve sticks, this seldom happens. They are fantastic, and exceptionally priced for the build quality.

Feeling smooth and bumpy areas back through the braid and marker rod, is also clearly essential. The Evolve market weights are not only lead free and an ecologically better option, but the ridges upon retrieval a lot of lines or braids can get snagged. With the array of grooves on these Evolve sticks, this seldom happens. They are fantastic, and exceptionally priced for the build quality.

are also perfect for amplified vibration and feel. The Evolve marker float has optimum aerodynamics, buoyancy, visibility, and strength. It's incredibly light weight, and highly buoyant. In fact, its bomb proof.

Make the effort. Leave nothing to chance. Ensure you are fishing effectively. It will pay you back.

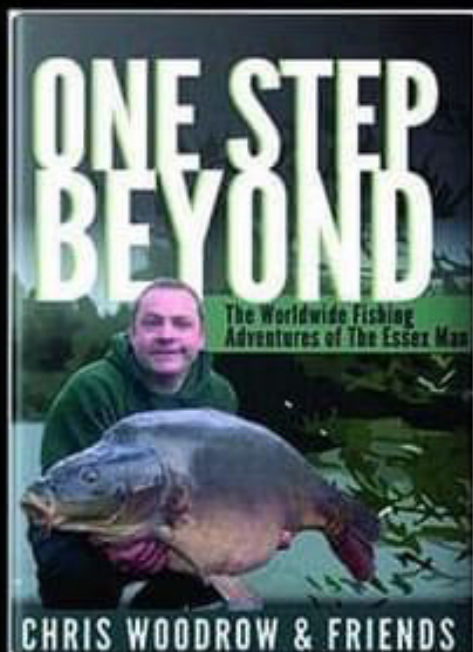
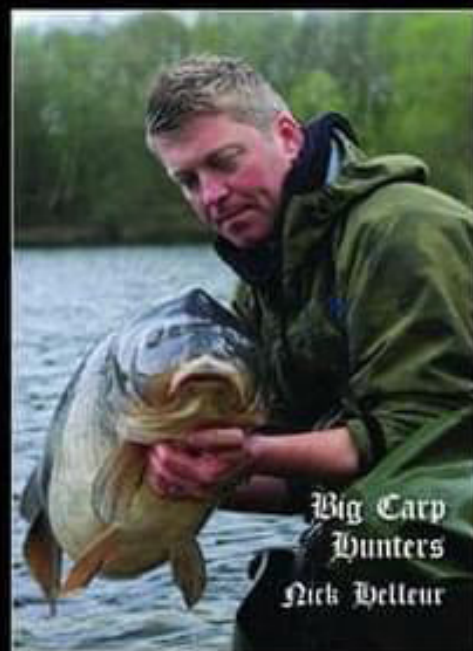
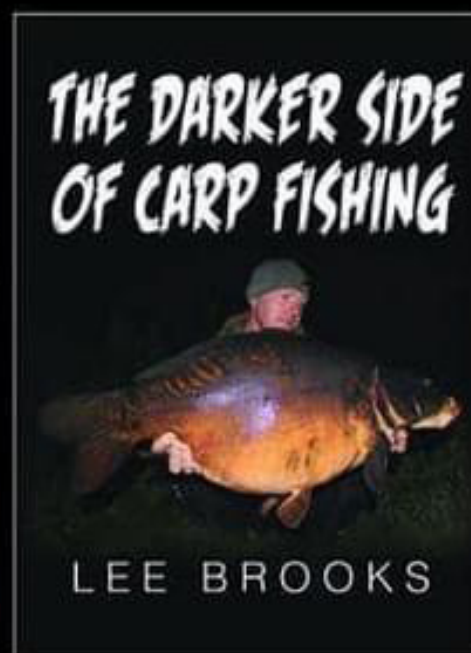
Be lucky, Carl.



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The History of Carp Fishing in Oxfordshire

Paul Harris and Geoff Adams

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

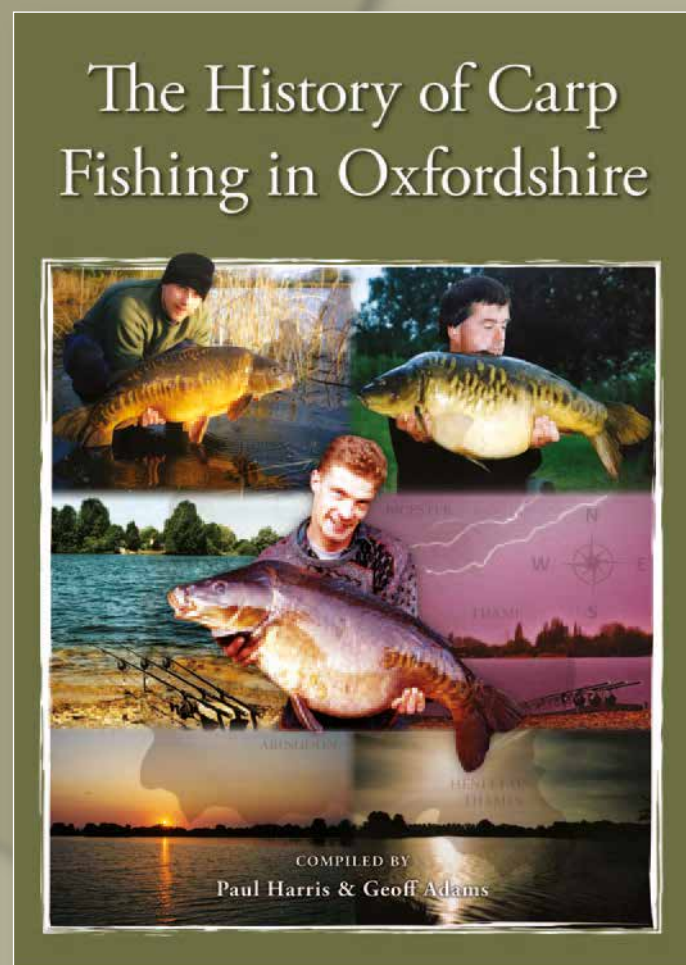
Nick Stansfield is a brilliant young Oxford carper who doesn't shout about his catches. We have two incredible chapters from him from two of the county's most iconic lakes, The Leisure Park and The Big S! Josh Chatfield has written a fantastic chapter which really gives you an insight into how fishing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

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

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

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

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



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A V A I L A B L E N O W



DARRELL PECK

20TH 40 OF 2024

You cannot of failed to have noticed the amazing results Darrell Peck has been enjoying of late fishing the phenomenon that is Grenville Lake.

Recently catching his 20th UK forty-pound carp this year! Posting a catch of this fantastic 45lb fish with this to say...

“Grenville truly is some lake... there are literally 100s of young carp just like this like climbing through the ranks.

Cell - undoubtedly one of the greatest boilie baits ever designed, and for me really comes into its own in cold water. And the Smart Liquid, I gotta be honest, I thought it a

bit gimmicky in the beginning, but the more I use it, the more convinced I am that it's a certified fish catcher. Unlike most attractors on the market this is highly palatable, and not only does it pull fish in,

but they unquestionably love eating it..."

We think there's certainly a lot of good angling involved too, which coupled with this baiting approach has proved too big a devastating tactic!









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DAVY CLAUS

147 BRACE

‘If you only fish for carp long enough, and you persistently keep putting in the effort, then inevitably there’ll be times when everything falls into place and the stars proverbially align.

Though, the outcome of my adventure on the “forest lake” –

a campaign that quite literally has cost me blood, sweat and tears – was beyond anything I’ve ever experienced before, and you really couldn’t have written how that quest came to an end.

Time was running out on several fronts that day. It



was halfway through the month November, so winter was looming, and on the last morning of a short, mild spell I only had an hour left before I had to pack up and go. Most likely not to return until the following autumn.

When the bite came – the moment I had contemplated so often - I stayed remarkably calm. Not at any point during the battle from the boat did I realize what I was attached to.

Once it came to the surface, an enormous amount of weed covered all of the hooked carp bar the wrist of its tail. And when I started removing the weed after an arduous netting manoeuvre, like a child unpacking its Christmas present, the receiver signalled a take on the other rod...

So, it was only after I slowly made it back to the bank, I finally discovered what laid in the net, hidden under a pile



of green, was the one it was all about - My holy grail. The real thing.

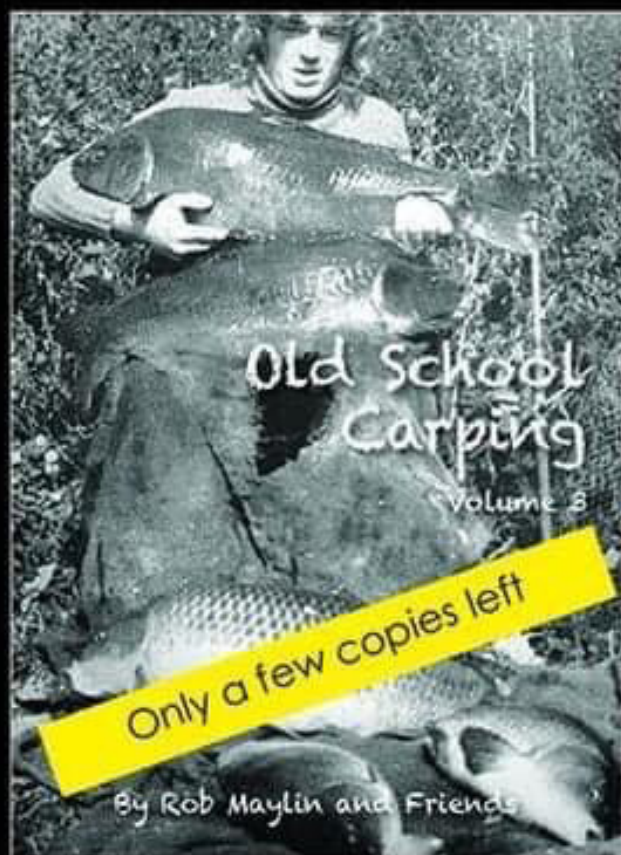
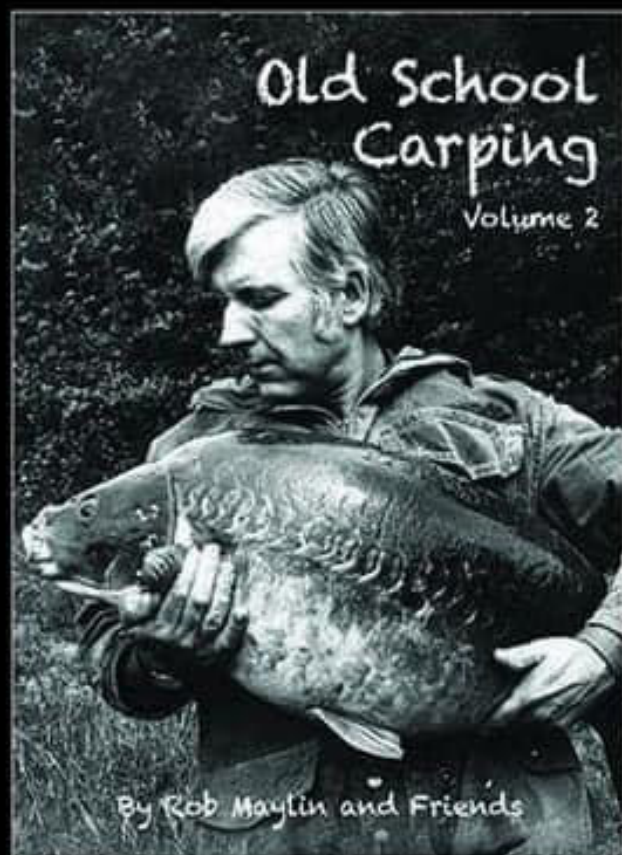
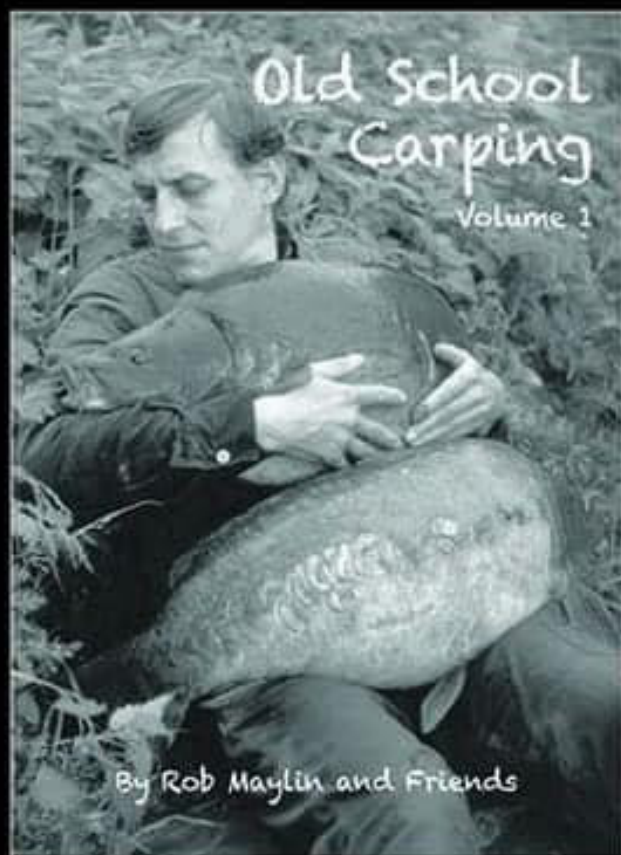
Somehow, I managed to keep my cool, unhooked the old giant and transferred it into a sling, before setting off in the boat again, bent over rod in hand.

Similar to the first, the fight was tense, taking place

over the deep underwater jungle, only this time I had an inkling which one it might be. My thoughts were confirmed when a dark, broad-shouldered beast rose to the surface, again with the size 6 Wide Gape X firmly embedded in its bottom lip.

The verdict on the scales: 77lb & 70lb.

OLD SCHOOL CARPING SERIES



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

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

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EXCLUSIVE



KEEP GOING DONT QUIT!!

Luke Stevenson – Having perhaps done plenty of fishing through the warmer months, with the first frost and those longer nights, you could be forgiven for staying indoors in the warm. But, that lure of one last biggun, at a big weight in perfect colour is enough drive to keep me keen and focussed throughout the colder months.

Oscar Thornton – You won't catch them sat at home.

If you're the only one willing to keep going, you'll be the only one holding the prize at the end. They'll likely be goruped up together, so one sighting can give away the entire stock.

Luke Vallory – Carp will continue to get caught throughout the colder months for those willing to persevere, it may just require a little more thought and patience. Get this

right and the results are there. There's no better feeling than catching them in winter.

Darrell Peck - When the going gets tough, the tough get going. There's always a chance, always a way. Having that drive, that determination, not to give in, to keep going, that's the mindset required. A big fish

in the winter is always one to be remembered.

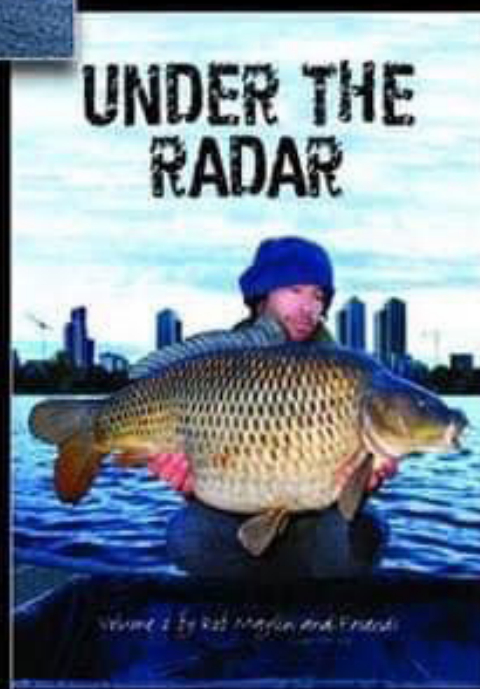
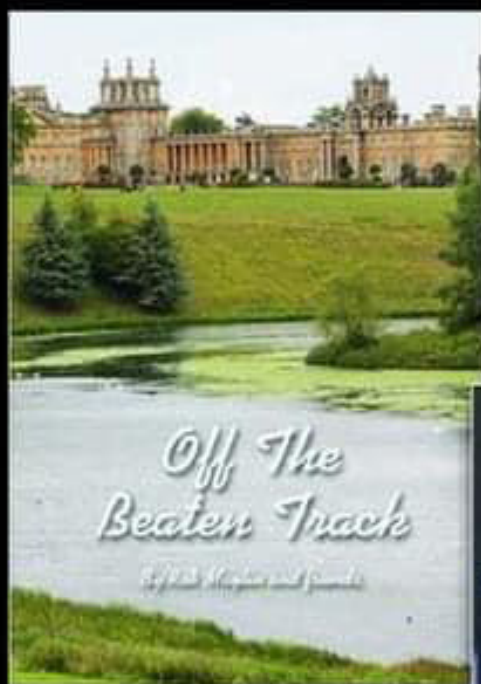
Joe Stephens - A chance of a bite is better than no chance of a bite. No matter how slim that chance may feel, effort always prevails. You're only ever one bite away, and give me a biggun in the winter over one in the summer .





OFF THE BEATEN TRACK SERIES

For lovers of the unknown, unnamed and uncaught



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WATERCOLOUR CARP PAINTINGS

The Legendary Big Carp Series

Burghfield Common

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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For distance casting

Setting

KATRAN

By now UK Carp anglers will have heard the name “Katran”; being talked about on social media and this I can presume is more than likely because of our mainline Crypton Carp that will illuminate under our head torch.

I believe it’s time to give you a little insight into who Katran are and what drives such an innovative company. Katran

is one of Europe’s premium manufacturers of line and hook link and are well established in over 30 different countries including the UK. The company is driven by an international team of professional anglers, experts and Consultants who actively test and approve our top products that have unique special characteristics and

are made of high-quality innovative materials.

Katran was born way back in 1989; it was a vision of Vitalii Kremnets the founder of Katran. The actual name “Katran “was inspired and derived from the Katran shark a unique species native to the black sea, this was to ensure a lasting association with the city of Odessa in Ukraine Vitalii’ hometown. This is why the Katran logo proudly

displays the shark.

It was in 2015 I met both Vitalii and Viktor who is Head of Sales and Mentor to all at the World Carp Classic at Lac de Madine in France, where we talked about the company and what I can only describe as exceptional quality and innovative products. Katran was building a strong community within Europe, and we wanted the UK to be part of it. we have since experienced remarkable growth and development.

Viktor is head of sales throughout Europe and holds a master’s degree in innovation management, his relationship with Katran spans over a decade, steering the critical infrastructure of sales and marketing whilst orchestrating the expertise of Katran’s dedicated team.

The role that Viktor undertakes sees him travelling the globe and has seen him visiting over 45 countries to date. Viktor does not see fishing merely as a sport or pastime but sees fishing as a



deeply integrated passion and a way of life for anglers worldwide.

Vitalii the founder of Katran is behind the product development and is extremely passionate and detailed in every aspect and this starts from the products name, its design, its type of packaging, its properties, its price and its description that is clearly defined in the yearly Katran Catalogue and the Katran website.

It is Vitalii's vision to produce the finest lines available and to accomplish this he personally checks and tests everything, an example of this extraordinary

passion is the development and time it took for the Comodo chain core to come to life. Vitalii spent around 4 years to find the correct weave and fibres for the outer core until he was 100% satisfied. Products can take 3-4 years from the initial idea, testing and to then appear on the market all under the meticulous eye of Vitalii. Katran have been manufacturing for many years but first appeared in Europe around 10yrs ago, around this time there was only a limited amount of Carp lines available.

Something that is at the



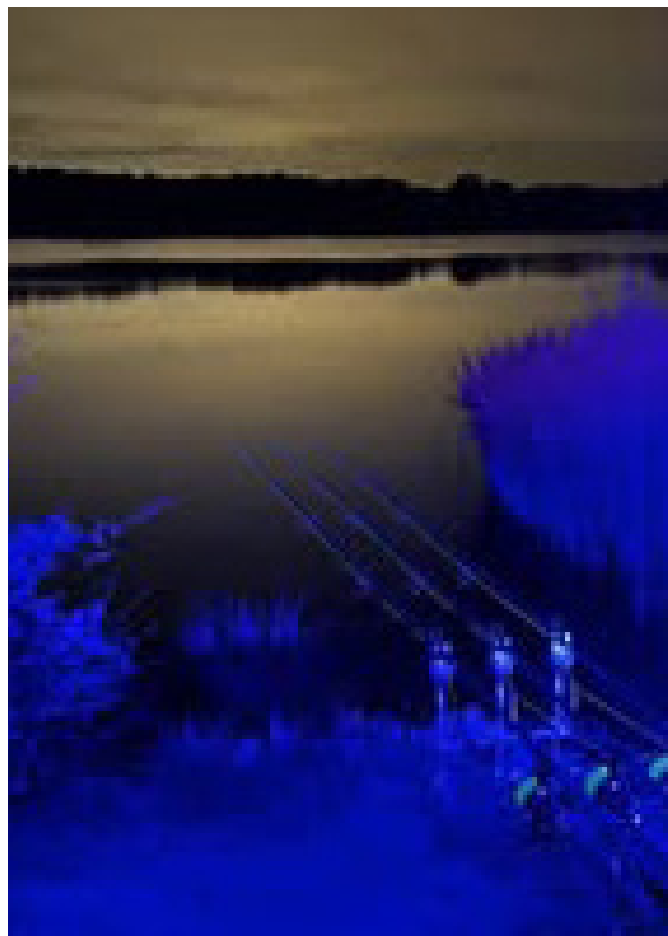
heart of Katran is we listen, and value you, the anglers' opinions, and it is the angler that decides what to add to the range, so when new products come out, it is something that the Carp angler wants to see. For example, it's fair to say that there was a lot of demand for an all-out casting line from Katran and the number of National Teams who now turn to Katran line to use in in many different competitions throughout the world is testament to what has already been achieved. Katran developed Crypton Carp mainline in 2018, it went through thorough testing throughout 2019 before it became available. It was however in 2020 that the Crypton Carp mainline hit the market and take its place in such a competitive market. There are not many products that you can say are game changes and to say the Crypton was a game changer is an understatement. To get the full benefit of the Crypton line Katran brought out the specially





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SINCE 1996**

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designed Head torch with the Blue diode namely the W/B 460 and was bought to market in 2022 , I think a lot of Carp anglers thought it was a gimmick initially and just couldn't see the benefits however as more and more anglers had seen the line in action and the immeasurable edge this line had not just anglers but some of the big companies started to take notice!!!!!!

It was the small number of UK carp anglers that put the

Crypton line to use. We knew that to brake into the highly competitive market in the UK, was going to be difficult and it was going to take persistence and hard work.

UK Carp angler Darren Weatherly has been using Katran products for a long time and knew the products inside out. Darren was using the Synapse Carp, one of the first lines developed by Katran, and the first line I also used. It was a dark olive



BRAND FOCUS

colour and had that silky smooth protective coating that enabled it to cast smoothly and give it the important abrasion resistance.

The Comodo chain core caught anglers attention initially in 2017 it was something that was needed as many fisheries were starting to ban the use of Lead core!!! Everything about the Comodo chain core worked from the weight, the colour, the strength and it is easy to splice. Vitalii had designed and developed

the Comodo chain core testing many different inner chains and outer braids ensuring it had the flexibility and toughness required for Europe.

The Crypton and neon lines were under development and when introduced to the market became one of Katran's premium lines. The Diameter to breaking strain is the best among the Katran range.

Luke Shepherd alongside his wife Zoe are the owners of the



BIG CARP

fine arts

WATERCOLOUR CARP PAINTINGS

The Legendary Big Carp Series



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

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

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

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highly successful 'Rig Locker', I can say hand on heart and in my personal opinion that getting the exposure that Katran deserved into the UK would of been extremely difficult and even not possible without Rig Locker. To explain this and more here's Luke's story....

“ It must have been nearly 4 years ago when I was introduced to Katran. At the time I was trying to source a specific hooklink material for business purposes but after speaking to a few trusted friends I was advised to contact Katran.

Being honest I was not aware of Katran and had no idea of



there vast catalogue of quality products. After early discussions with Viktor he suggested that he will send me some key products and 1 week later I received a parcel that included Crypton carp mainline, Katran head torch and Comodo Chain Core. I put the products to use and in a heartbeat everything changed. I wanted to introduce as many people as possible to Katran products with a long-term view of launching a business that specialized in the retail of Katran Fishing Line. For me the products were and still are a breath of fresh air, and I was confident that the UK market had a space for a new player and

even the unthinkable, a main line that flows in the dark.

Fortunately, I had a team of anglers that would help me raise awareness but first we had to test and retest in our own fishing and gain a full understanding of each product an understanding of Katran and the ethos behind the company. We took the products to every corner of the UK and various places across Europe to ensure we could confidently advise potential customers on the right products for them.

During this process Mike and Darren Weatherly came on the radar, they were working hard to promote Katran, so I reached out to them both and we spoke of my plans and what I hope to achieve with Katran.

Roll the clock forward a few months and the Rig Locker website was born in February 2022. A one stop shop managed by myself and my wife Zoe (Splice Queen), bolstered by a dedicated team of Carp anglers that were on hand to push the



brand in the UK. At this time there was only 2 retailers in the UK but to bring Katran into the forefront of UK carp fishing it needed hard work and regu6qaulity media, this is no disrespect to anyone, but current retailers were simply selling the products with little media support. For Katran to achieve any serious recognition we needed to change the direction of Katran and that is exactly what we did and continue to do.

So here we are now in 2025 and with Rig locker being the main wholesaler of Katran products the UK market is now fully aware of Katran, and I can only see the brand becoming more popular in the coming years.

For me personally it's good to know that despite the market being dominated by the big companies that we all know, the carp community recognises quality and genuine innovation.

Luke Shepard – Head of UK Sales Katran Fishing Line.
"Katran have taking massive

strides, in the UK and in fact worldwide, we are also represented in the USA we have a selected team of anglers that make up the Katran UK Team. The Team of Consultants know there Katran tackle inside out, this is part of the selection process and are at the top of there game. We are always ready to answer any questions.

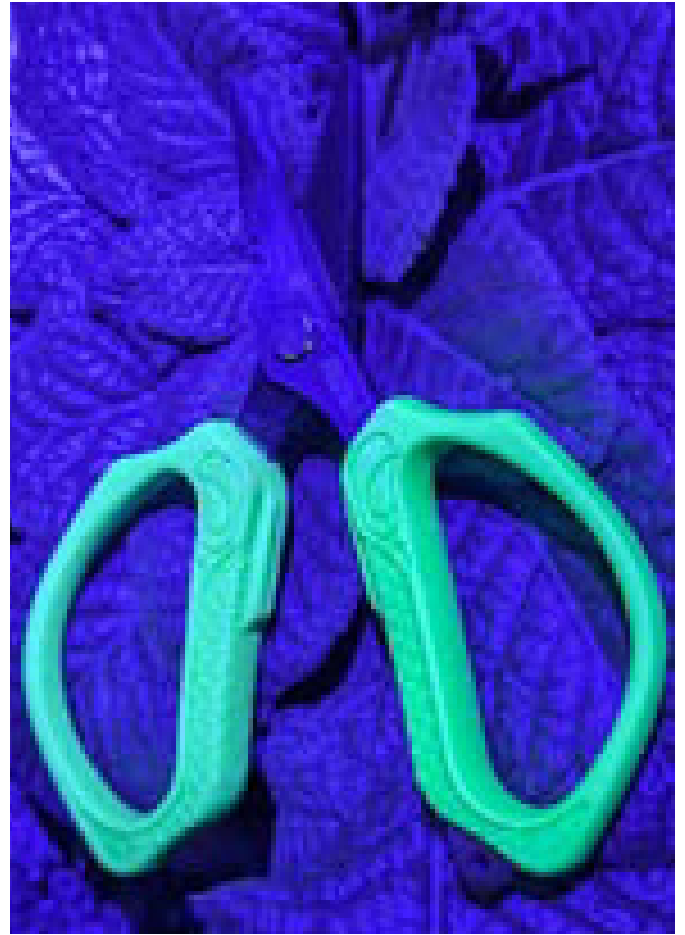
I hope you found this insight into Katran informative and interesting. Feel free to contact us over social media or direct, we are only happy as a Company if you are happy as an angler. Your views and opinions matter so if you have any ideas or questions let us know, it matters!! You can contact me personally via my email and I will be happy to take your ideas forward.

Happy fishing, go steady, be safe out there.

www.katran.eu

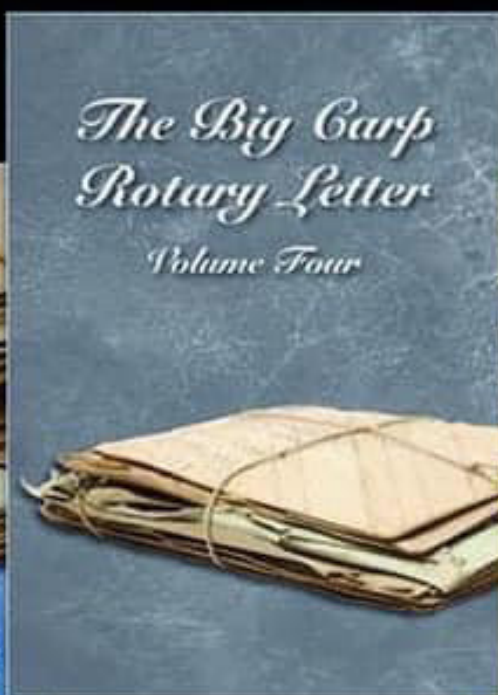
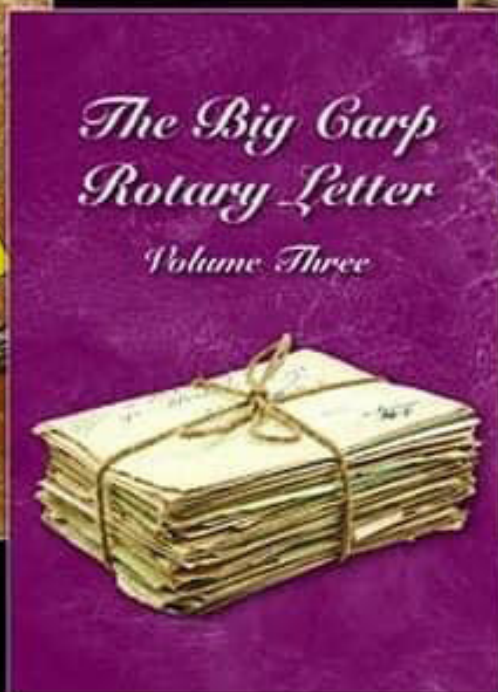
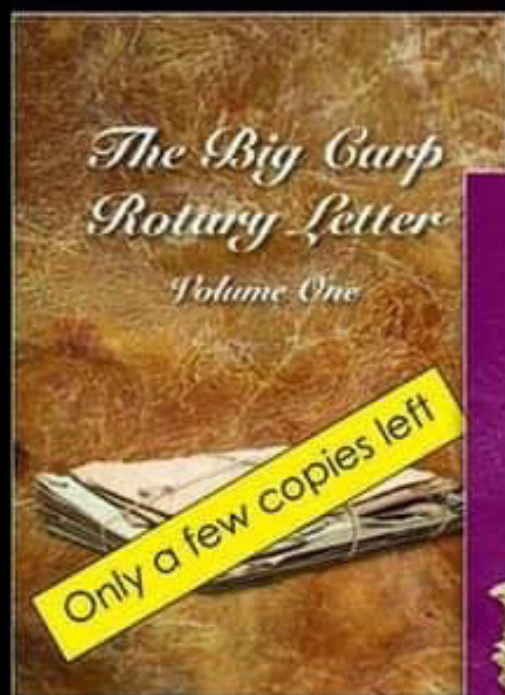
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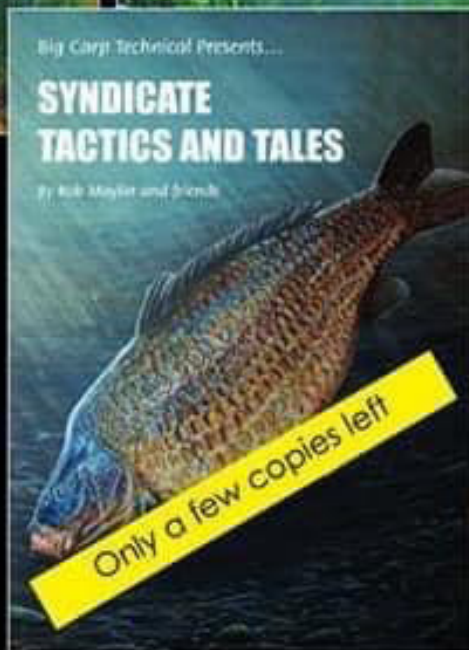
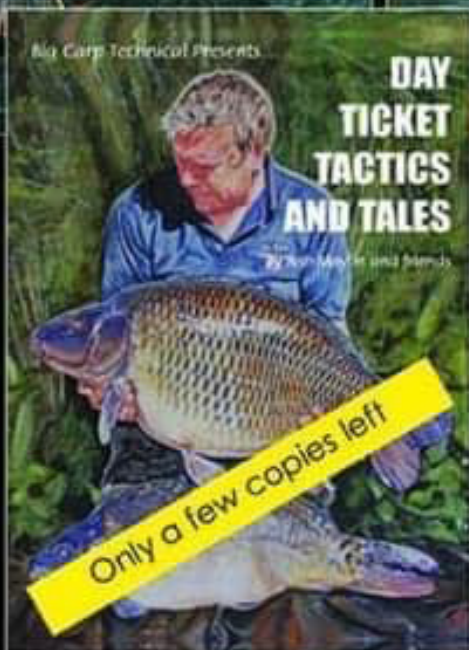
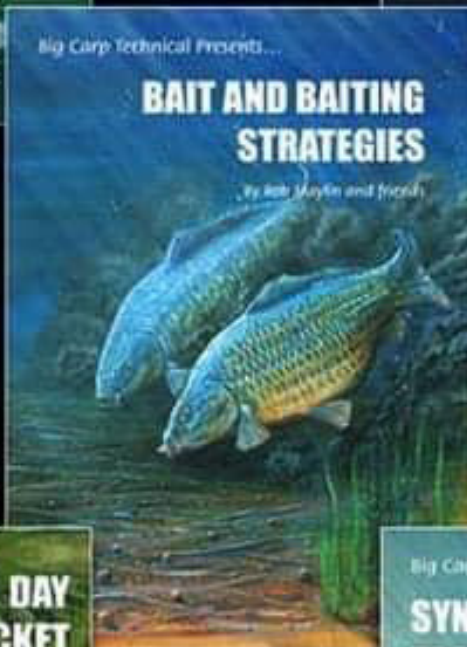
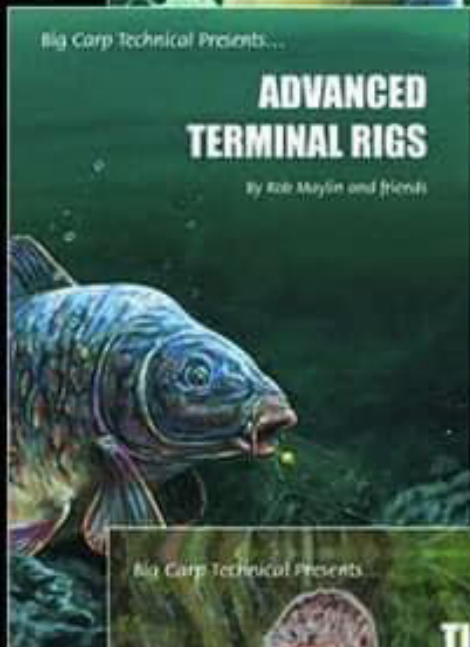
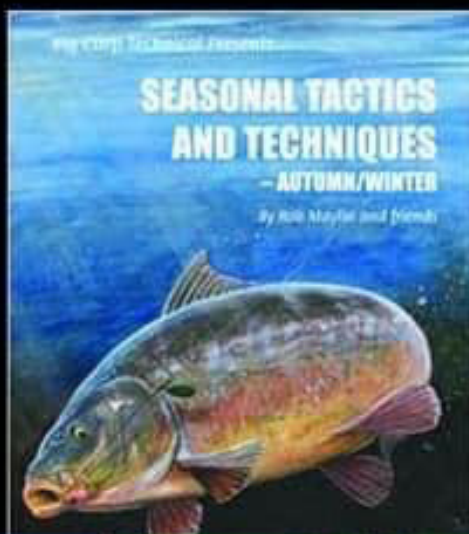
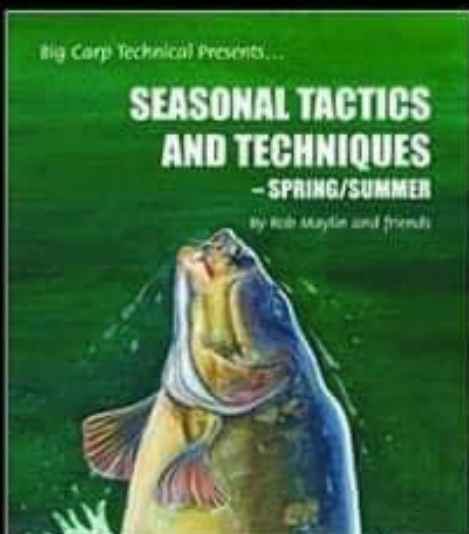


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20LB

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(21 TURNS)

KAMAKURA
WIDE GAPE X
SIZE 4

15MM
MILKY TOFFEE
MAINLINE POP-UP

35
RED MAGGOTS



COLD WATER RIG

With the cold weather now finally hitting us, the carp will no doubt begin to slow up as the water temperatures decrease. This is when natural baits can come into their own, a firm favourite of Oscar Thornton and here's how he sets up his maggot rig suited to clear water and firm lakebeds.

- 35 Red Maggots, tied with bait floss over a 15mm
- Pop Up
- Micro Ring Swivel
- Size 4 Kamakura Wide Gape X
- 21 Turn Knotless Knotless knot (the extra turns help extend the length of the D)
- 20lb IQ2 hooklink, invisible in the water (8-12 inches in length)
- Hybrid Lead Clip & 4oz Distance Lead







STEVE FREEMAN

REDMIRE 2024

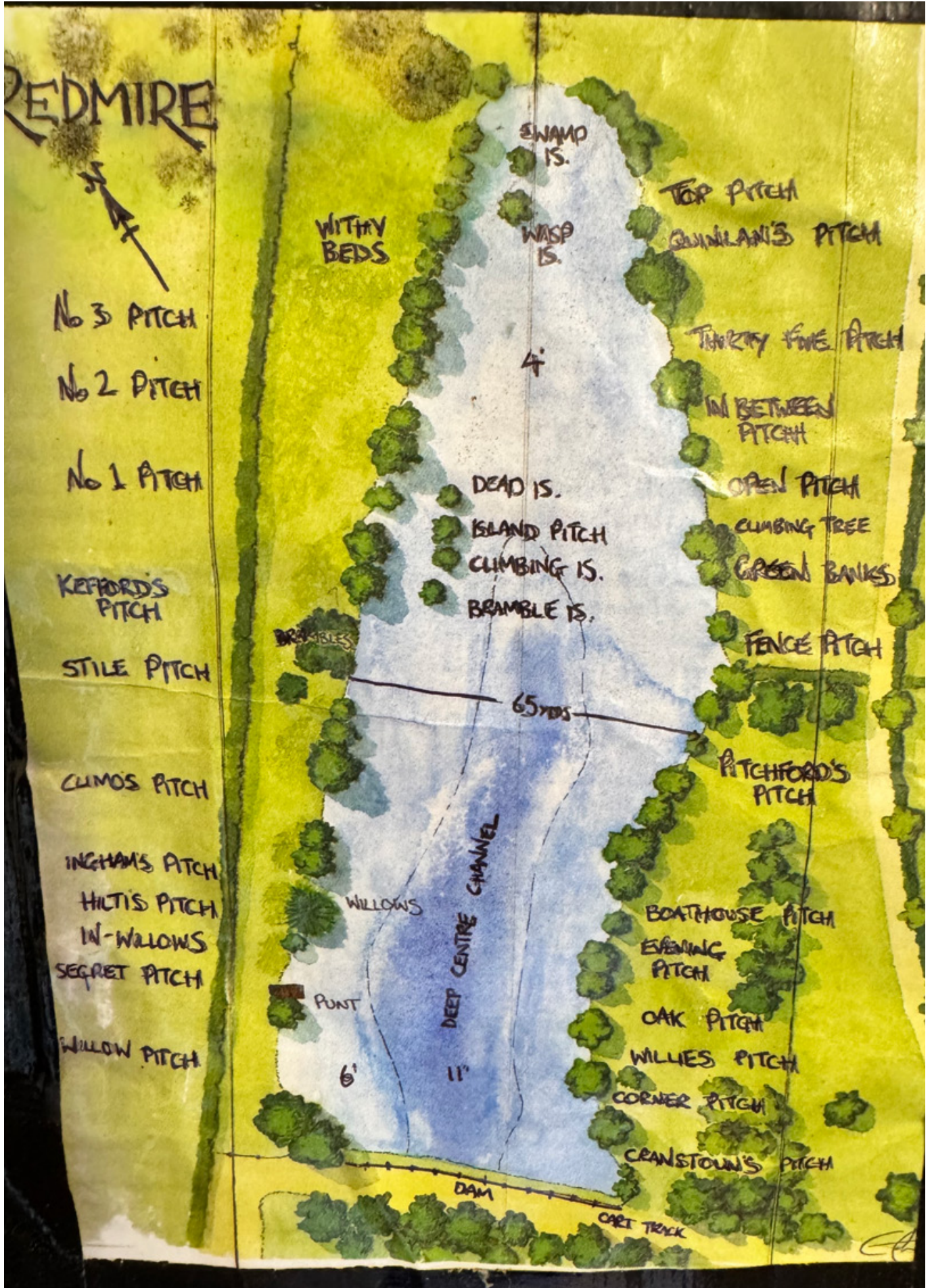
Redmire Pool, one of the most iconic locations in the world of carp fishing. Nestled in the tranquil Herefordshire countryside, this small yet legendary three-acre lake has etched its name into angling history. Renowned for its mysterious depths and the record-breaking carp it has produced, Redmire became a pilgrimage site for anglers after Richard Walker famously caught a 44lb common carp, known as "Clarissa," in 1952. Its serene, tree-lined banks and unspoiled waters exude a timeless charm, making it a

place not just for fishing, but for reconnecting with the roots of the sport. A random phone call in May that took me by surprise.. My friend Dean calls regularly to discuss all things carp but I was not expecting the incredible opportunity he presented me with.... One that doesn't come along every day... the chance to fish at the legendary Redmire Pool. As soon as he said it, I could hardly believe my ears.. Redmire, the birthplace of so much angling history, a place every carp angler dreams of visiting. The excitement was instant and overwhelming, knowing I'd be walking the very banks where legends like Chris Yeyes and Dick Walker once stood. It wasn't just about the fishing; it was about stepping into a piece of angling heritage. Dean's generosity and the opportunity to experience such a revered spot left me grinning from ear to ear, and I couldn't wait to make the

most of this trip of a lifetime!

So the countdown began, The build-up to fishing such a historic legendary pool was a mix of excitement, preparation, and anticipation that grew stronger with each passing day. From the moment the date was set, my mind was consumed with thoughts of the history of the pool and the angling legends who had cast their lines there before me.

I spent hours pouring over what bait I was going to take, rig approach I was going to use knowing that every detail mattered in a place as revered as Redmire. I envisioned the misty mornings, the glassy water, and the echo of birdsong as I waited for the telltale twitch of the line. The stories of the lake's mythical carp filled me with both hope and awe, while the thought of experiencing its tranquil beauty made the countdown feel even longer.



By the time October arrived, I was ready, not just to fish, but to embrace every magical moment Redmire had to offer.

Days, weeks and months had gone past with various conversations with Dean regarding the trip but when the day finally arrived the pure excitement I felt was almost indescribable. From the moment I woke up, my heart was racing with anticipation, knowing that I was about to step into a piece of angling history.

The drive to the lake felt like an eternity, my thoughts consumed with images of its tranquil waters and the legendary carp that called it home. As we pulled up and I caught my first glimpse of the iconic pool, a rush of emotion hit me, a mix of joy, gratitude, and disbelief that I was actually there.

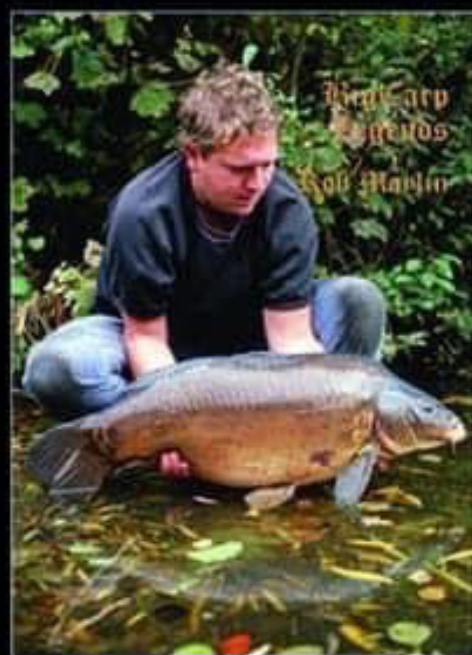
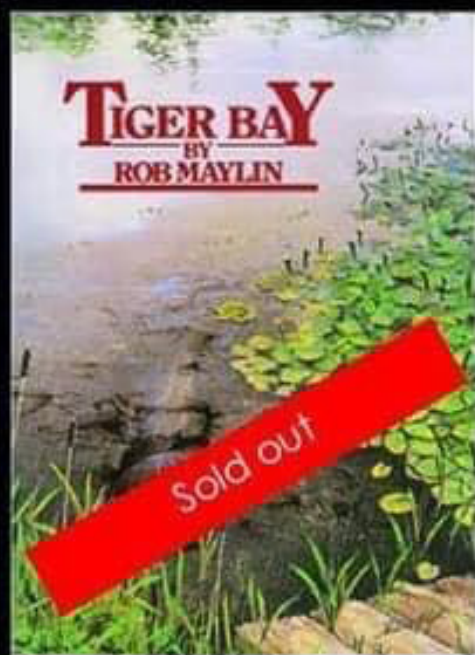
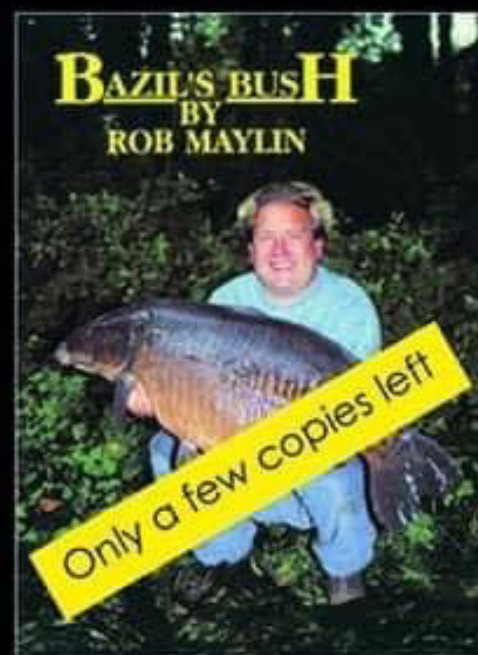
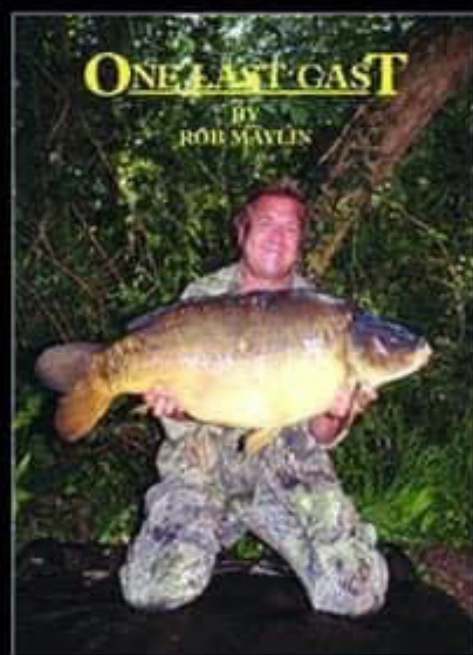
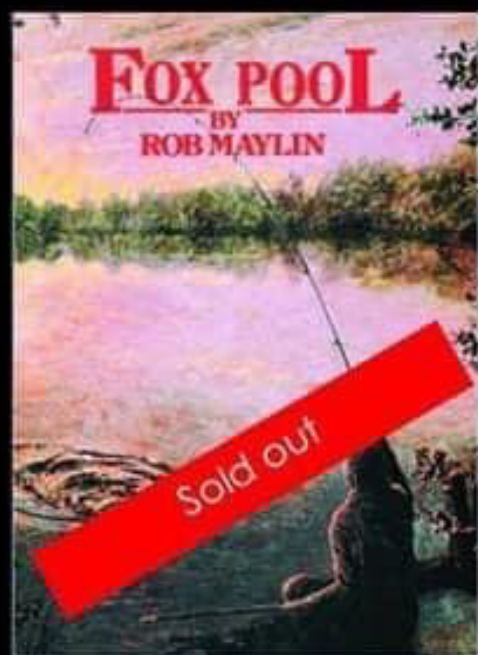
As we started to walk the infamous banks, every moment felt surreal, as if I were part of a dream. The knowledge that I was about to cast my line into the same waters where legends had been made filled me with an overwhelming sense of privilege and excitement that only a place like Redmire could inspire.

Upon witnessing a lot of activity in the middle section of the lake I decided to fish a swim called 'Fence Pitch' a swim that patrolled a good portion of the middle section yet giving me options to fish the marginal depths. It is often an overlooked part of any lake but with a lot of research I knew how much these mythical creatures loved to be in tight to the bank especially upon first light as the sun rose over the tall tree lines!

With the spots found and the rigs and bait deployed I remember taking a moment to sit and take it all in as if I was still part of that earlier dream! We decided to all gather for dinner and a beer in the old

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boathouse which is now a designated social area.

Before we knew it the first evening came and went in the swift blink of an eye as we were all returning to our swims! I should add that as night was drawing in it was as if we had been blindfolded...

Any lake or woodland gets dark but Redmire was different.... darkness like i had never witnessed before! Every aspect of the moonlight was almost swallowed up by the eerie depths of the grounds! At times you felt like you were being watched, listened to.... Only then did I recall reading about the haunted ongoing that had been witnessed by many in the past!

Ordinarily I wouldn't be one to believe in such eeriness... but this was Redmire after all.. it all fitted in with the sheer atmospheric feeling that stays with you from the second you arrive to the second you leave, almost keeping you on edge!

Although I was still taken back by the fact that I was actually fulfilling a childhood dream, I decided it was time to try and rest my eyes and reserve some energy for the following day as I planned for it to be a busy one stalking the pond!

Anyone that knows me knows that I am always awake before sunrise when I'm fishing, I like to sit and listen as nature wakes up whilst eating my breakfast and having my first coffee. A time that allows me to watch as the water wakes up and to see any early signs of activity. Barely even awake I was startled by a single yet deliberate bleep on my middle rod.... I was certainly awake now.... Partly through excitement but also anticipation that something could be about to happen.. magnified by the sheer fact of where I was!

Moments passed with no further signs of activity.. Still



a little startled, I remember feeling almost a little nervous yet slightly disappointed that nothing had materialised. I knew the pool was never going to throw anything up that easily!

A little under half an hour had passed and just as i was contemplating a recast with the thought hanging in the back of my mind 'have i been done'.. I heard a slap of a tail on the water somewhere

in the direction of the chosen spot... then out of nowhere the middle rod signalled another single bleep! This time it felt different... another single bleep.. and another!

By this time my heart was pounding.....was i really about to commence battle and realise a childhood dream?

I was rushing to put my shoes on in anticipation of a bite I was confident... I was adamant that something was



stirring beneath the surface.

Then, suddenly, the middle rod erupted... a one toner that unmistakably meant 'fish on'! The rod bent under the pressure, adrenaline surged as I ran and grabbed it, ready to battle whatever was on the other end. Those initial bleeps had been the prelude, a quiet warning of the excitement to come

The battle was brief but unforgettable, a clash of skill and determination. It began with a sudden, powerful run. The sheer strength was evident as it surged through the water. It was evident that this was no monster however it had some power. The rod bent under the pressure as I worked to keep control, every movement calculated to tire the fish without losing it. For a moment, it felt like a stalemate versus the ancient power of the lake's depths. Then, with a final, desperate lunge, the carp broke the surface,

its golden beauty taking my breath away. Seconds later, it was in the net, the tension giving way to triumph as I marveled at the legendary creature I'd been fortunate enough to encounter.

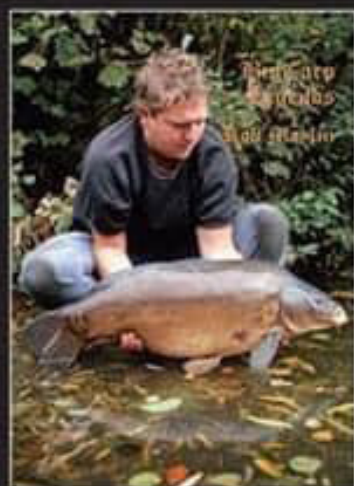
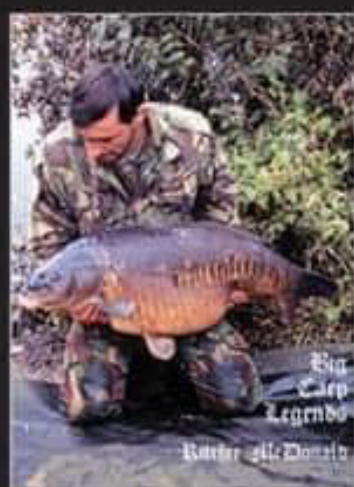
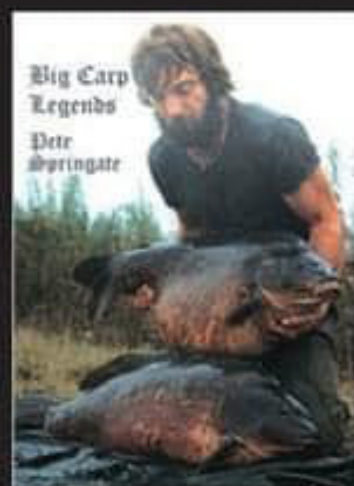
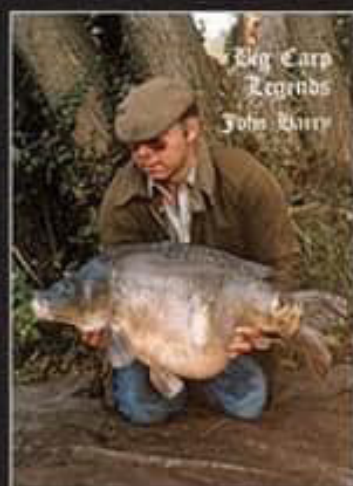
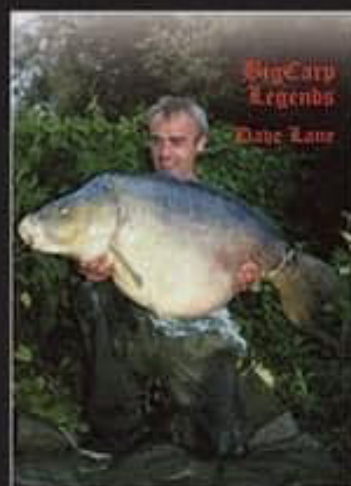
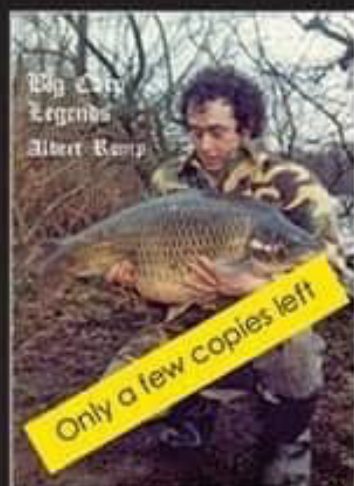
My prior thoughts were confirmed... this was no monster but it was a pristine mid double Redmire common... The old saying goes 'size is completely irrelevant' and never was this saying more fitting for the emotions, elation and privilege I was feeling as I glared in the depths of my net at this beautiful creature laying there with my wafter nestled in its bottom lip!

I think the smile tells the story itself!

With the photos taken and the fish slipped back to its magical home, it was time for me to sit back and come to terms with what had just taken place! A 2 part childhood dream to fish what is in my eyes the mecca of carp fishing and to catch one

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of the original Leney strain!
To say I was in utter disbelief
is mild understatement!

Sitting there on my bed
watching out over the water
I was contemplating putting
the rod back out but I was
still in shock and I needed to
bring myself back to reality.
We had a busy day planned
stalking around the lake from

some of the famous swims, the
boat house, Bramble island
and the damn wall to name
a few! The spot had fallen
silent and almost motionless
for some time now since the
eruption of my earlier action
so the preparation for the
day ahead began! Dean had
popped round to see if I was
ready to go but we decided



on another coffee and some biscuits before setting off.

The sun was high and bright, casting its golden glow over the shimmering surface of the Pool. It was a perfect day for stalking carp, the kind of day where every ripple in the water seemed to tell a story. The overhanging trees, their leaves rustling gently in the

breeze, dappled the water with dancing shadows, offering both beauty and a hint of mystery. The pool itself, steeped in legend, seemed to hum with life, beneath its surface, the dark, shadowy shapes of carp could be seen cruising lazily, their movements slow as if unbothered by the heat of the midday sun.

As we crept along the bank, each step taken with care to avoid snapping a twig or disturbing the stillness, the anticipation grew. The sun's warmth on our backs only added to the sense of connection to this timeless ritual. In the shallows, the telltale swirl carp betrayed their presence. It was a game of patience and precision, reading the signs and selecting the perfect moment to present our freelined hookbait. A nice marble sized ball of cold water green beast paste being my chosen method. In the quiet, broken only by the occasional birdcall or the gentle lap of water against the reeds, we became part of the landscape, absorbed in the thrill of the hunt.

We had both been close on one or two occasions, however the tricky carp proved to be more tricky than we had hoped. Still revelling in my earlier action I was a little less concerned.. for once in my angling life despite wanting

to catch more, I found myself in some ways content!

Much like the day before, the time and light seemed to vanish in what felt like only a couple of hours.

Back in our swims, readying ourselves to face the night ahead, our rods were soon back on the same open water spots from the night before, though I had made the decision to change my baiting slightly, opting for more DT Bait Developments Cold Water Green Beast boilies than the previous night!

Meeting in the social area for our final supper of the trip, Dean was treating us to his famous chilli as we sat with the log burner in full flow!

Going into the night I need to add the carp seemed less active than the last but still the odd slap of a tale here and there made it feel less likely that we would see any action but still I was confident!

I awoke to the sound of my







alarm, unfortunately not the alarm I was hoping for!

This was the sound of my phone waking me up for my usual morning wake up. Following my usual ritual I dwelled over the quiet night that had passed!

Packing up my gear felt like closing a chapter I wasn't ready to finish. Redmire had been more than just a destination, it was a sanctuary, a stage for moments of stillness, excitement, and quiet

triumph. Now, the thought of leaving it behind filled me with a hollow sadness, as though I were leaving a piece of myself there among the shadows and secrets of the pool. I knew I would return one day, but the weight of parting was undeniable. The magic of Redmire will linger in my heart, its waters calling to me even as I walked away, leaving the echoes of my time there to drift into the hallow grounds!



SCOTT SWEETMAN

PREPARATION

It's absolutely vital to have everything prepped and ready to go at this time of year, with most of the trips being done in the dark. It's a fine balance between taking everything you need to keeping warm and comfortable, but also limiting the gear so you're not weighed down and able to react and move if need be.

The more you fish going into the winter, you tend to work out the type of baiting approach you'll use, so naturally through time, you'll be about to remove any bait or bits that aren't going to

be used and leave them at home or in the van. This then gives me space to pack a few autumn essentials; extra clothes, Coleman stove and hot water bottle, making the trip more comfortable.

I make sure to use my lunch breaks at work sat in the car tying rigs, new leaders and going through my tackle, so I know that when I arrive to the lake, my full focus is on location, not faffing about trying to tie rigs in the dark.

I get into a habit of popping out to the garage through the week to make sure my lights, charger, camera etc are all charged, I also keep on top of my food / tea kit supplies (gas / petrol) are all topped up - Ultimately, you want to make sure everything is ready to go so when it comes to getting to the lake, everything is to hand and ready, allowing you get the rods out with minimal fuss, as those few hours upon arrival are the most important.





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Carp Tackle Online owner Mark Russell battled the traffic, the wind, and rain for a night on Doddington Lane Pits, here's what he had to say: "A little after 6am I lay in bed watching the bobbin slowly lift up to the alarm and stopped. I assumed it was the wind until it started taking line from the reel. I lifted into light resistance and called Alan who was quickly out holding the net for me, I asked if there were bream in the lake as it was just coming straight in, that was until about 2 rod lengths out - then it woke up. After a short tussle, Alan graciously slipped my net under a chunky looking mirror. On lifting it out, Alan said it was a decent fish. It had a decent girth and was thick across the shoulders, in the sling and up on the scales, 31lb bang on! Absolutely blown away, literally!"

Caught using #carptackleonline size 4 Scorpion Wide Gape fished blowback style, our CTO Pro hooklink and safety lead clips. Bait was Sticky Baits 15mm peach and black pepper orange pop up, and a 20mm Sticky Krill bottom bait."

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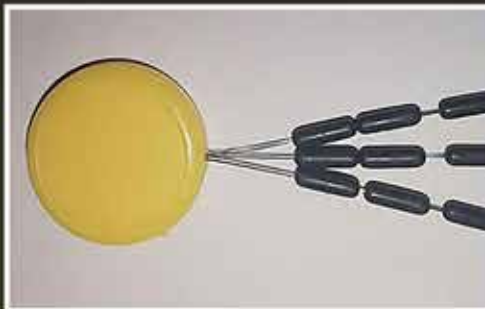
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Design & Production
James Harrison

Also available this
month Big Carp issue
342.



Front Cover:
Ken Beech puts his
watercraft to good use.



Another successful Anglers Against Litter event was carried out on Sunday 17th November with the Trust and River Lea Anglers Club partnering up to remove as much litter as possible from one of the stretches of the Lea Navigation. A great turnout from club members and other members from the local community who managed to remove 25 sacks of litter from between Chalk bridge & Ponders End Lock. 99% of the litter collected was non-angling related. A huge thank you to everyone who turned up and to Canal & River Trust Angling, who removed the litter on the day. We also presented 2 young “litter heroes” with a limited edition #Shimano cap which made their day!

8. CARP CHAT



16. CARP SCENE

24. KEN BEECH



46. CONNOR
BRUTON

54. ADAM
HONEYSETT

74. WAYNE ISZATT



116. JACK
THOMPSON

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The Darker Side of Carp Fishing

Old School Carping Volume 4

History of Yateley Volume 3

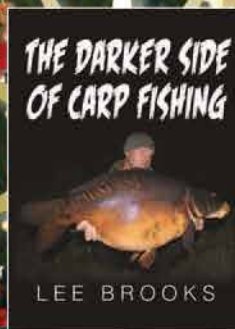
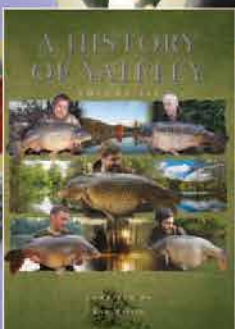
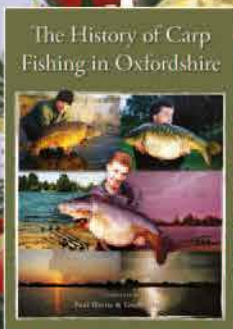
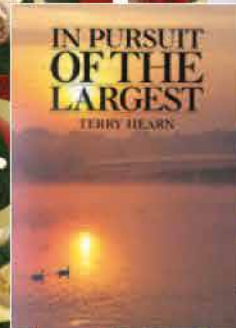
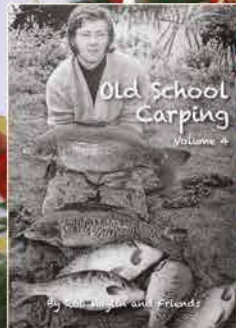
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In Pursuit of the Largest

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New Look For Angling Trust and Fish Legal Cards



Renowned fish and wildlife artist David Miller has kindly agreed to provide illustrations for the cards which are issued annually to adults, young adults, juniors and senior citizens.

David is well known by freshwater anglers for providing the fish artwork which featured on the Environment Agency's annual rod licence for 15 years until the move to digital rod licences earlier this year.

His first rod licence artwork in 2009 featured a perch about to devour a worm and over the years he has continued to showcase the beauty of British fish, with each annual licence depicting a different species for

coarse, game and carp anglers. They have included brown trout, salmon, grayling, pike, rudd, roach, barbel, tench, carp and gudgeon, and such has been the appeal of the Miller-illustrated rod licences, they have become collector's items among many anglers.

David said: "I'm a long-time supporter of the work of the Angling Trust, particularly the work that they and Fish Legal do to fight against pollution and preserve our precious rivers, lakes and oceans, so I'm delighted that my artwork will be featuring on the Angling Trust membership card going forward."

Jamie Cook, Angling Trust CEO, said: "I want to thank David for kindly offering to provide the artwork for our membership cards. We know how much many anglers enjoyed collecting the miniature works of art depicted on the rod licences over many years, and we are delighted that David's wonderful images will portray the many species the Angling Trust and Fish Legal fight so hard to protect, promote and develop."

The first Angling Trust and Fish Legal membership cards to include David's work will feature a pike and will be sent out from this week to new members and existing members once they renew - so make sure you join or renew now to receive one of these beautiful membership cards.

David has also agreed to offer an exclusive discount of 5% to Angling Trust and Fish Legal members purchasing artwork from his online store. Members can access the discount code through My Dashboard on the Angling Trust website.

If you're not yet a member of the Angling Trust, please consider joining. Not only will you be supporting our work to protect the waters we fish from pollution, promote the health and wellbeing benefits of fishing to the next generation of anglers, and develop angling opportunities for grassroots competitions, but also receive fantastic member benefits including discounts on tackle and bait, day tickets, fishing holidays, high street goods and more! You can find more information here.

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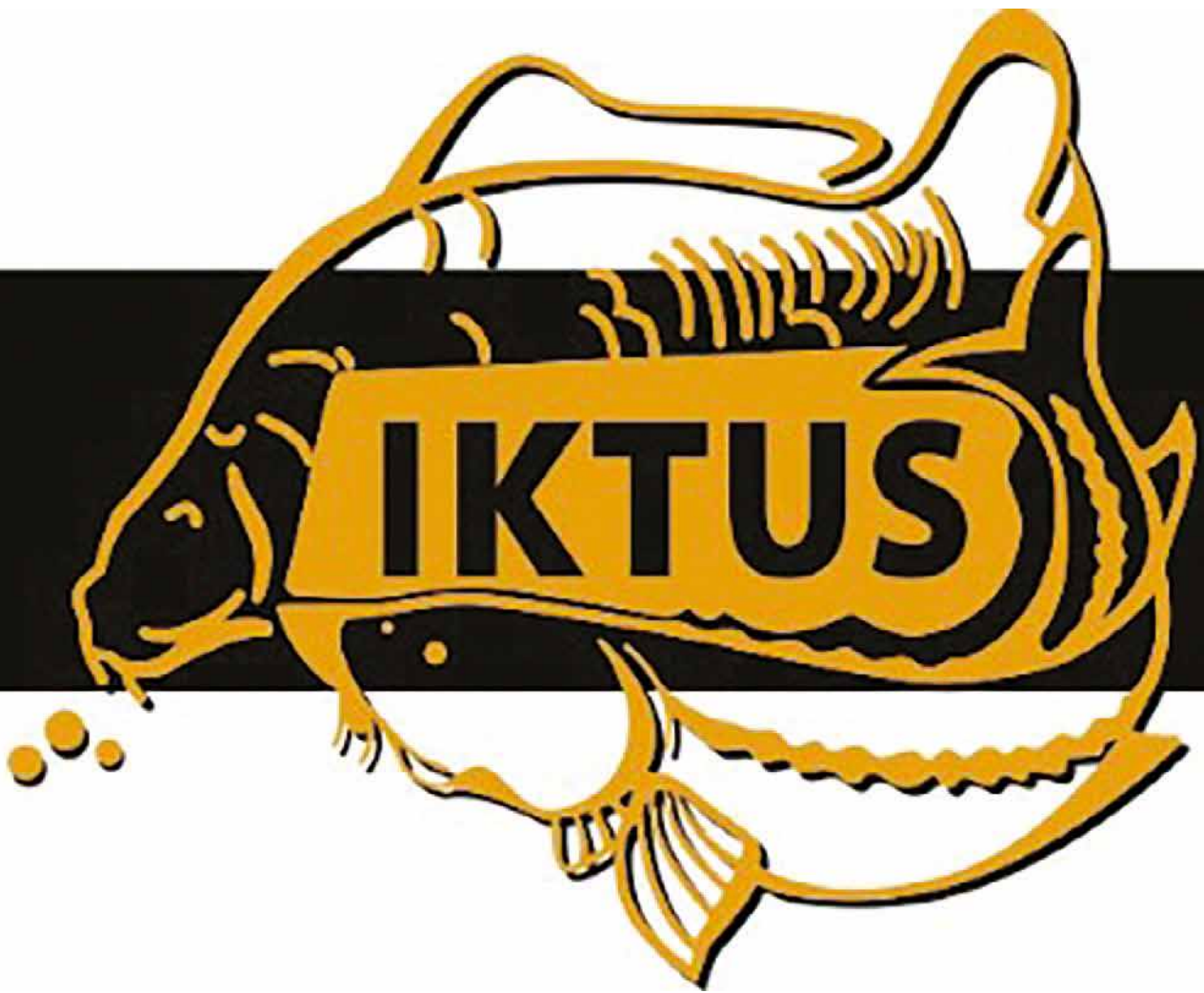
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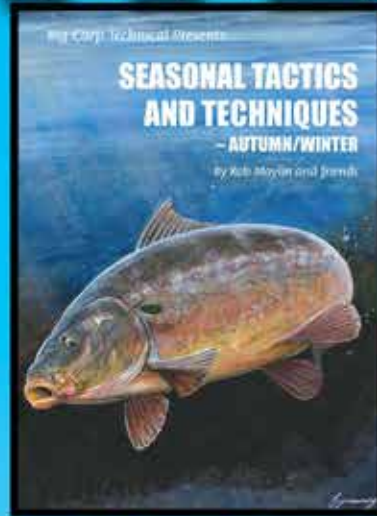
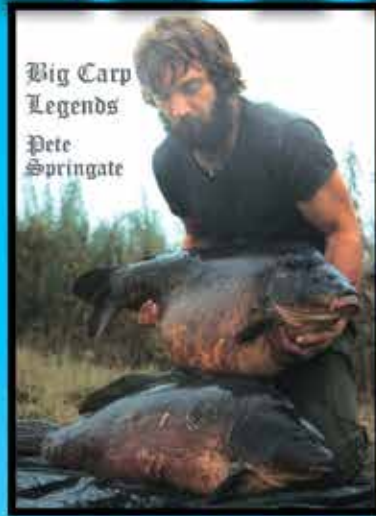
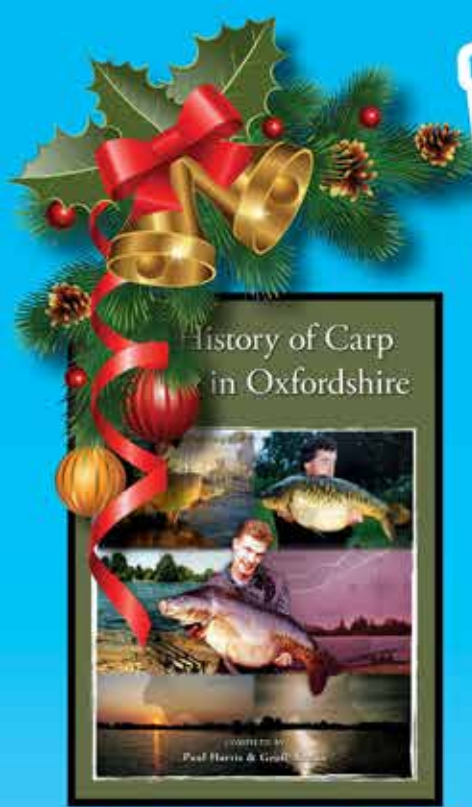
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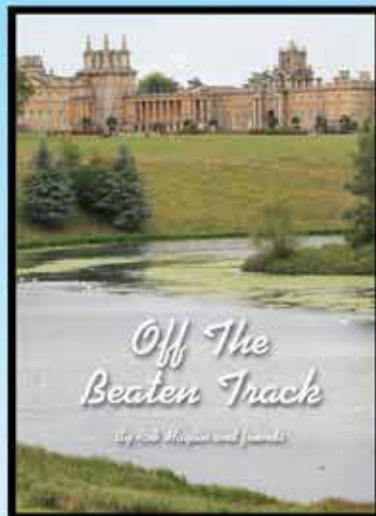
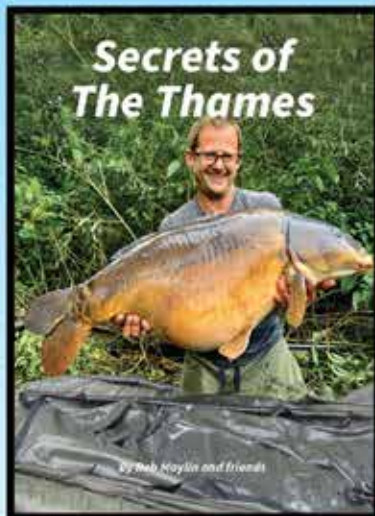
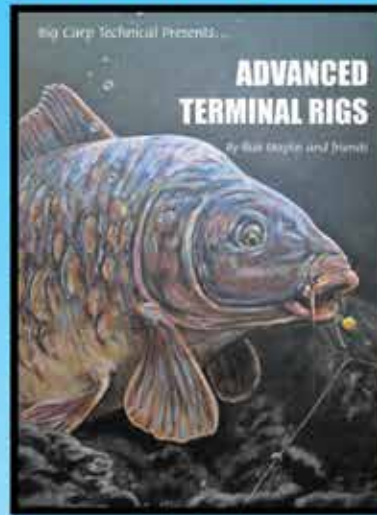
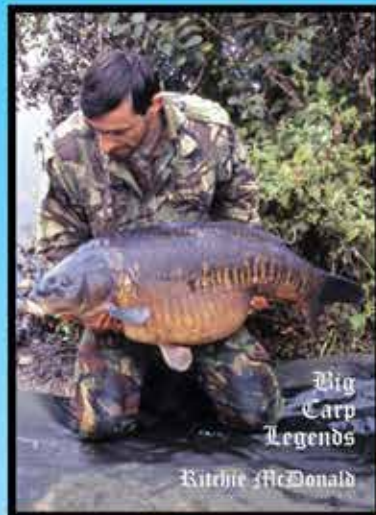
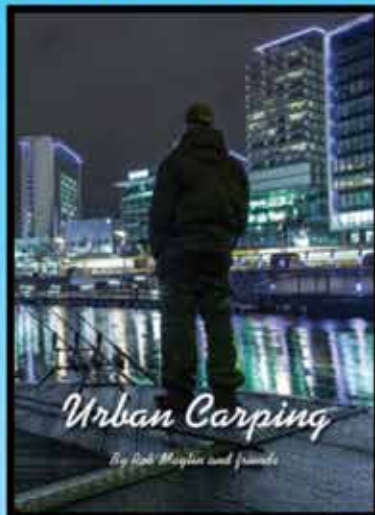
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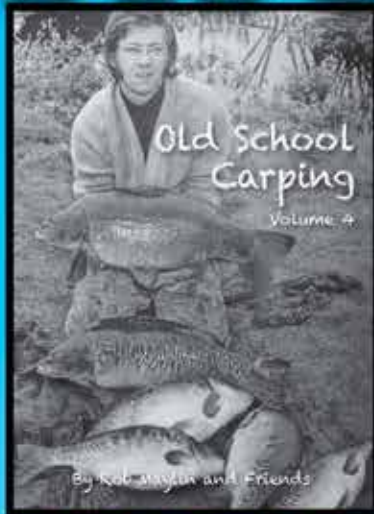
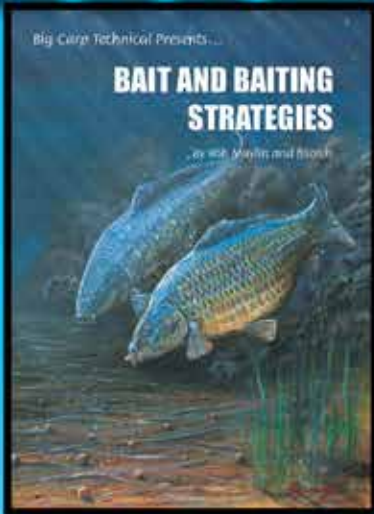


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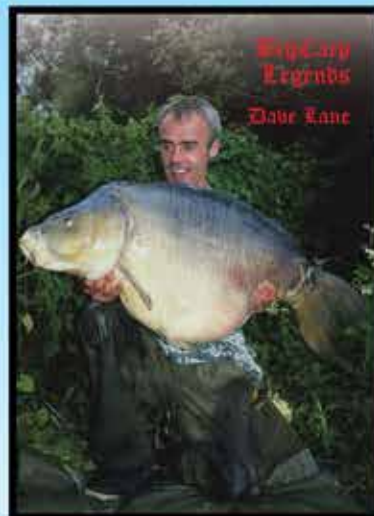
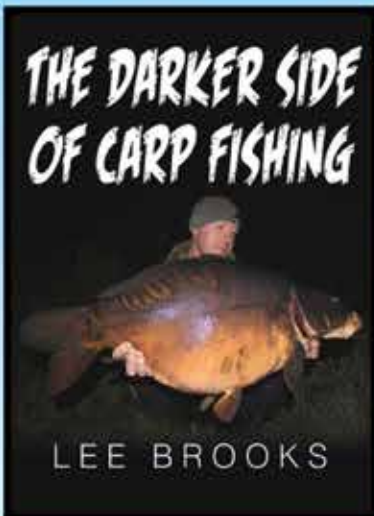
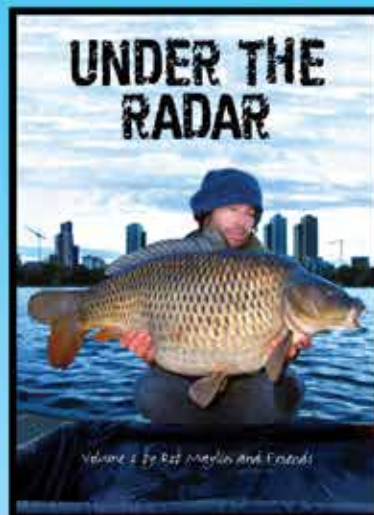
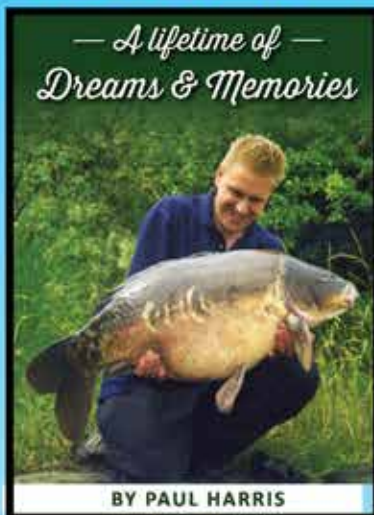
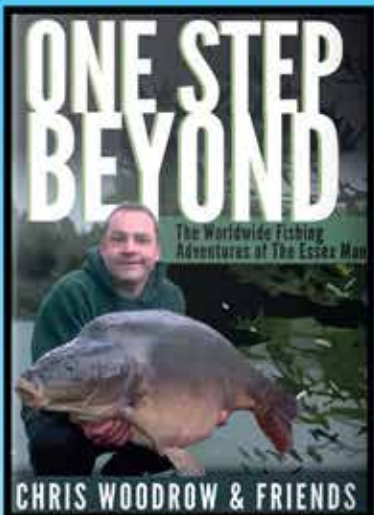


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RIVER TALES

Going back a few years I remember deciding to do a midweek between work overnighter with my brother Ben on a stretch of the river Medway close to where I live. We hadn't done any prebaiting; this was literally an off the bat decision. We decided on swims, but didn't want to be too close together to risk cutting each other off with fish travelling from the left or right. We got into our chosen swims promptly at around 5pm, and this was in July time so with plenty of light to spare.

As I had decided on an area I had fished before, I needed to find a couple of clear spots, so I had a brief lead around and found a nice gravel shelf at the foot of the margin and the same in my near margin, one fishing across up to my left beside a bramble bush and the other in my own margin at the foot of a small oak tree to my right. I wasted no time in putting some bait on the spots, around 40/50 18mm boilies and four or

five catapults of 6mm pellets over each. Soon I had my 25lb Kryston Merlin hook links in place both with 18mm bottom baits attached.

It was a hot but stormy evening with dark clouds gathering, so I wasted no time in getting my broolly up and getting everything sorted. It had been a hard day at work up on the roof in the heat of the sun, so I decided to turn in, feeling the effects of the heat. As I sat there on my bed chair, I remember seeing my right hand rod tip flicker. I didn't think much of it because it happens a lot in the river with plenty of roach, chub and bream present. I had just laid down and shut my eyes, facing the back of the broolly when I had a single bleep followed by a strange click.

Knowing something wasn't right, I rolled over and flew off the bed chair as I saw my right hand rod in my own margin was hooped right round where an angry carp was trying to take line from a reel that was locked up. I grabbed the rod and remember having to step forward to take the pressure off just to be able to give the fish a bit of line in order for the battle to commence. The fish put up a hell of a scrap, luckily staying deep up and down the middle of the river away from any snags. I knew I was attached to a good one, and after it had gone left and right several times, the fish decided to make one last break for freedom, going right, but this time I could feel the fish's strength starting to weaken.

I held firm, and she came up to the surface on tight line. I started pumping the fish back towards me, and it just stayed on the top with its dorsal fin out of the water. I grabbed the net and sat on the steep bank. I pushed the net down to the water but then realised the net needed to be further in the



water to get this fish in it. After a few moments panicking, I had no choice but to trust the dense bramble to my left with my body weight and literally stand on it above the water for a split second to net the fish. Thankfully she went in first time. I promptly parked my bum on firm ground and gave myself a few seconds for the adrenalin to calm down, as I was proper shaking after that battle. I could clearly see I had a special fish of upper twenties in my net.

I grabbed my phone and tried to ring my brother, but his phone was off, so I managed to briefly wedge my landing net and pole up on the brambles whilst I got my camera, mat, scales and sling ready. I managed to get the fish up out of the water, although it was a bit of struggle to place her inside the sling and carry her 70/80 yards to where my brother was fishing, where she could be rested and dealt with properly without

Adam Honeysett

her coming to any harm on the steep banks.

I went crashing into Ben's swim, and as he looked out from under his umbrella and looked at the bulging weigh sling, he said, "Bloody hell, geez! What you got there?" At this point, it was all a bit rushed. We rested her in the water for about ten minutes while we got everything ready for the photos. We soon had her up on the mat weighed and ready for the photos, and it was then that I realised what an incredible fish I had just caught. She had little red specks under her leathery looking body and looked great. It wasn't until I held her up for the photos that I realised it was her – a fish that in conversation we referred to as Scale on the Shoulder, a fish that had haunted us for a couple of years having had seen her in different areas. I was absolutely blown away. We got the photos done, and I released her with a very big grin on my face... Oh, and she went 26lb 11oz – good times!



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NEW FOREST TREASURES

Throughout life, the speed of time never fails to surprise me. It's been almost three years since I started my New Forest adventure in pursuit of what I believe to be some of the most characteristic carp around. I use the word "*adventure*" with a high degree of enthusiasm because this part of the country has by far exceeded all expectation, throwing up numerous surprises along the way, which I have had the pleasure of sharing with some good friends. I feel that in this case, the word "*campaign*" would be far too clinical or generic, as I had no idea of what was ahead of me back in 2014 or how it would change my angling for the better.

Towards the back end of 2016, it was a pleasure to have documented and published my greatest achievements in Big Carp, but anyone with a passion for angling in their blood would know that it doesn't just stop at one moment in time; a willingness to go on and accomplish more is always on the horizon.

My winter fishing tends to be a little more relaxed these days, I find that it's both rewarding and healthy to keep long durations of time on the bank for the more productive months. Not to say that carping cannot be just as rewarding at other times of the year, but I find that this balance works for me. I tend to find myself reflecting more in the colder months, pondering over the recent year, and to an extent, what will happen with the year ahead.

The winter of 2016 was to be a little different, as my wife and I were expecting our first child, and with this new family addition soon to be arriving, I decided to put myself amongst the elements and explore a small lake not far from home where I would be able to get back home at the drop of a hat. I believe that the saying "*Just one last cast*" would have not been the correct response in this case. Without going into too much detail, winter was quite productive. I was only managing a few very short sessions per month on which I did manage to locate a few carp, not big target fish, but it kept my feet well planted, as far more respect for the sport can be accomplished through admiring the smaller things, making it all that more special when something a little bigger turns up.

Personally, I find it far too easy to get wrapped up in big fish hits and chasing a lake's biggest resident on the latest method through the social media channels and platforms,



thinking that this is what carp fishing is all about, forgetting the fundamentals of where our passion began.

With average winter temperatures slightly higher these days, I found myself on some occasions watching handfuls of carp mooching around very shallow areas of the lake, making the most of the warmer water, although catching them was to be a different ballgame altogether. On one occasion I watched what I believed be a double figure carp take my hookbait under the rod tip, only to observe it tighten up the hook link and spit

Connor Bruton

the hook along with a handful of light gravel, which it also wasn't keen on. Through these observations, I find it quite easy to doubt my angling ability, thinking to myself, how is it possible to catch these creatures when viewing points are not an option? How many times must this happen to us out in the pond away from sight?

After a short mild spell of weather, the sub-zero temperatures finally arrived. Frozen lakes and the sound of frost crunching under my boots were there only observations made in a last minute attempt to catch some more carp that year. Before I knew it, 2017 was in, and the weather had slightly improved along with a reasonable amount of low pressure, which brought in some rain and much preferred fishing conditions. Plans at home were also ramping up, as our first child was



now weeks from arriving. With only one or two more short sessions expected before little one arrived, every hour on the bank counted, and a few short laps around the little pond prior to a morning's angling enabled me to introduce a handful of bait, stacking the odds in my favour. Following this approach, I was lucky enough to catch one of pond's well known residents known as Popeye, not a huge fish but another example of a lovely old New Forest carp.

These winter trips were never intended to locate or catch a single carp, but when one of the known characters turned up, I wasn't going to grumble. A few more successful short sessions followed, complemented obviously with one or two frustrating ones with the carp back to playing the hard-to-get game. At this point January had passed, and the arrival of our baby was now well past the due date. In true angling style, one last Sunday morning's angling was on the cards with the phone glued to my side. Shortly after releasing another double figure common, it was all hands on deck. A vibration from the pocket with the name Stephanie Bruton on the home screen could only have meant one thing. In all my life as an angler, I don't believe to this day that I have ever packed up so fast, with equipment thrown into any available carryall, wet nets and slings chucked on top of camera equipment - it was a real sense of urgency, as nothing was getting in the way of me being off that lake in under five minutes.

Within 48 hours, my wife had given birth to our wonderful son, Edward James Bruton, and what a bundle of joy he was. I probably speak for most us, not only as anglers, but as fathers or mothers in general, when I say that the gift of a child is without doubt the best feeling in life. That moment of making

eye contact with your own creation is just one that I will personally cherish for the rest of my life.

For February and March, the rods lay dormant, nets and slings left to dry, cameras turned off, diaries closed and a desire to fish on pause, as there were much more important things to attend to back at home. I have often been told in the past that as adults we can learn from our children, but I have always struggled to believe or make sense of this. Looking back, Edward had somehow managed to make me appreciate the art of patience. It sounds silly I know, but through all those weeks of sleepless nights, long days that started at around 4am due to feeds and watching the early spring sun appear over the garden fence enabled me to take a step back from life and just think – let the cogs turn so to speak. If I was to go into detail about what I would find myself thinking about whilst listening to the morning birds waking up and the mist disappearing from the garden lawn, I would probably bore myself, let alone the readers of this article.

One topic that continued to filter through my thoughts was my angling and what balance I could find between being the type of father that Edward would look up to whilst fulfilling my passion to catch carp. I concluded that this new approach to angling would require a far more delicate and well thought out system, meaning that time spent away from the lakes required a lot more thought, since actual time wetting a line was now a huge factor. I make this approach sound easy, but putting it into practice was for sure somewhat different, as at times I found myself watching carp waking up as spring progressed, churning through the silt at one of my favourite estate lakes that played a big role in my article last year.

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Observing these fish with no ability to fish for them was proving to be very frustrating, but to keep myself from going mad the only option I had was to plan for my next trip, which could have been anywhere between one to two weeks away. As Edward started to settle slightly towards the middle of spring, the rods began to make an appearance. A big improvement in the weather was happening, and the little estate lake came alive with carp cruising around midwater, small insect hatches making an appearance and the daylight hours stretching out into the evening.

I remember my first trip back to the lake like it was yesterday. It was like reliving my youth all over again – the thought of that first bite from this place just filled me with such excitement. A quick dash down the long meadow that leads to the lake was quickly completed, and on a first lap, a small group of carp escaping from the strong spring sun were spotted amongst a small snag. After watching the behaviour of these carp, I opted for a very light approach in a bid to stop them from spooking. A small offering of broken up baits were deployed by hand from above whilst trying to keep my balance on the only tree stem that allowed me to get directly over the spot. Thinking back to my experience on the little pond during the winter months, I was curious to see how these carp reacted when a hookbait was placed in front of them.

After five or so minutes, a number of bigger carp were now ripping up the spot in an attempt to get to every last piece of bait. I was so excited about dropping in a rig but knew that I needed to wait for these fish to clear off, as placing a rig in at this point would for sure ruin any chance of a bite. After what felt like hours, the carp finally moved down the bank,

basking under another snag. After a quick shuffle down the tree, I managed to place a small white pop-up over the spot. As casting was not to play a part in deploying a rig, I could fish a much preferred 4oz lead, ensuring that any hook hold would be made efficiently and effectively once the hookbait was picked up.

From the viewing point, I was now watching the same group of carp heading back towards me. I found myself evaluating each of them, trying to work out which ones I had not caught the previous year. I soon found myself back where I was over the winter period. I could see the carp actively looking for the free offerings, avoiding the hookbait, which instantly made me doubt my approach. I knew that I had to get this pop-up out of the spot and replace it with a much less obvious option. Once the right moment to remove and change the hookbait came, I quickly clocked a small common dashing for the spot, looking like it was on the hunt for food. It was obvious that this fish was moving at some pace and wanted my hookbait quite a distance from the spot.

Whilst I stood in a poised position, it was all over in a matter of seconds – the hookbait taken and lead discharged whilst I listened to my clutch tearing off at the base of the tree. After a quick fight under the rod tip, a lovely old dark common carp lay in the net, not the biggest of fish, but after a few months away from the bank, it could have been half the size and I would still have been just as happy. On the journey home, I couldn't help but try to figure out the rationale to what I had observed. How was it that I had hooked 90% of my bites last year from the same water on white pop-ups but struggled to hook feeding fish this morning? This isn't the first time that

Connor Bruton

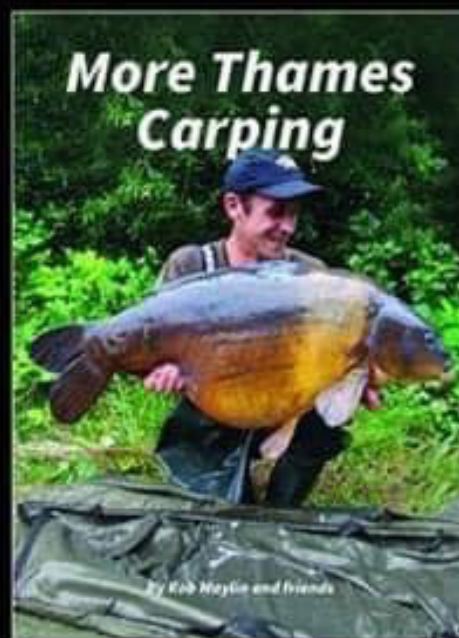
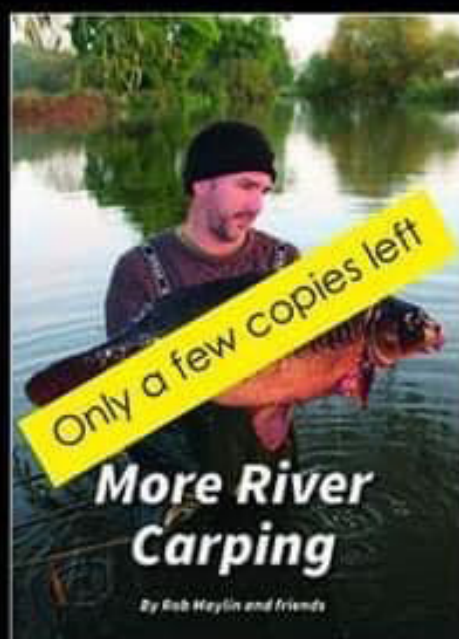
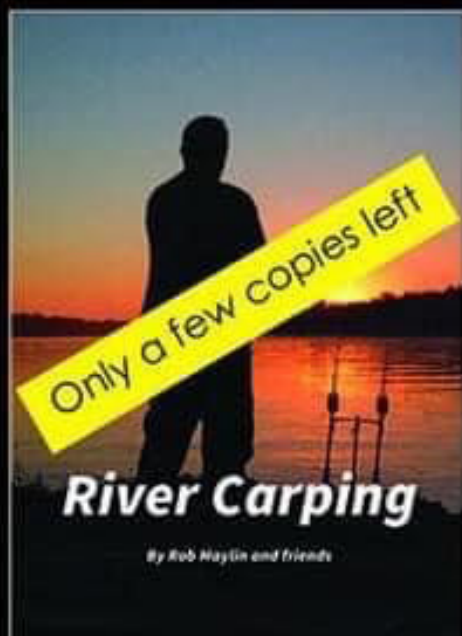
I have racked my brain for answers within my carp fishing, and it will certainly not be the last. I am a strong believer that what makes us better anglers is the determination to put these findings into our future sessions on the bank, ensuring that when a similar situation occurs, we are one step ahead of our quarry.

Before I knew it, spring was almost over. Following a few more short sessions on the estate, a few more small carp were caught along with a much larger mirror carp that had certainly seen some action over the years but was still going strong. To my surprise, this carp was amongst the pack that I had previously



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attempted to stalk earlier in the season, although now it had decided to take a liking to a white pop-up – a true mystery, right? Or going back to a previous conclusion – right place, right time, all of which must come together to succeed.

Towards the back end of May, it was time to start preparing for my annual trip across the channel with some great friends. In a similar fashion to my angling, getting ready for the trip turned out to be a little more tedious, as free time during the evenings were pretty much taken up with family time after long days at work, but over several weeks, things progressed, and I finally got things in order. Come early June, I was making my way across the channel full of excitement, as the capture of

some pretty big carp was on the cards. With the focus of this article being on captures from the New Forest, I will spare the detail of this trip, as there were more important things to attend to back home, as I would be returning just before the open season of 2017. Fishing in France early June always comes with its problems, but through the intense heat, high-pressure systems and late spawning fish, a few nice ones made an appearance, which I was more than happy with, given the conditions.

Thinking back, it's been a funny old year for my campaign angling. In previous years I have been hungry to get back behind the rods at any given opportunity; the build-up to the open season was always exciting. At times when I was frustrated waiting for the lakes to open, I would find myself still making the effort to walk around them to get one step ahead of them, but this year proved to be totally different. I remember coming back from France looking through thread after thread on social media at the sheer number of anglers all focusing on capturing the one that evaded me in 2016, wondering how I would find the time to compete in such a rat race, but something was missing from my motivation that I could not put my finger on. I wondered if all my efforts in the summer of 2016 had put a pause on my determination to catch this individual carp. The endless days spent hunting this carp, watching it over my spots on so many occasions but to not hook it were back playing mind games, stopping me from thinking about how to approach the summer ahead.

June 16th unfortunately fell on a weekday this year, which I always struggle to contend with, as work commitments tend to take priority over my angling, but I guess that there are

Connor Bruton

thousands of anglers out there in the same boat, so I will not single myself out here in a bid to make it sound like I am the only one with this disadvantage. Unfortunately, things went from bad to worse on the afternoon of June 16th 2017... After logging into one of my social media applications later in the day, the killer emoji, which seems to have taken over all ways of communicating, appeared – a single image of that well known blue whale coupled with a fishing rod, followed a picture of that one carp that I had wanted to catch so badly in previous years. It was game over before the campaign had even started, the result being something that was well and truly out of my



control. That said, fair play to the angler who caught it that year, as I believe that his quest for this capture had gone on far longer than my previous attempts.

It took a few weeks for me to pick myself back up and find the energy to get back out into the forest, only this time I had decided to put a hold on this campaign, knowing that the one carp left for me to catch in the pond had been out a few weeks previously, so I decided to fish another venue that I was familiar with that allowed me to just keep momentum going whilst I waited for what I believed to be a good amount of time before heading back for another go at my quarry. As the summer passed, I had a few productive sessions on the big public park lake, banking another old character known as Nelson, not a big fish, but one with plenty of character.

I tend to be a firm believer that certain things happen for a reason. Sometimes I think that for many of us this is an overused saying when a goal is achieved through much difficulty or complication, but that hunger for going after my last target that I lacked earlier in the year had now been given the time to fester, providing me with plenty of determination to get back out and finish what I had started. By the time I had organised myself and come to the decision on the perfect time to angle for this specific carp, it was now August. Things were looking good for the weeks ahead, and a small flurry of low pressure was forecast along with a handful of blustery days that were providing a much-preferred southwesterly wind blowing straight across the New Forest.

A few days prior to fishing, I managed to free up some time for a few laps of the pond just to get in tune with the place, and with a light donk-rod rod in hand, I managed to find a

couple of presentable spots along a boggy marsh bank that sees little angling pressure. The weather was making this spot perfect, as the thick onion weed stopped only feet from the bank, allowing a lovely gravel run to be exposed. After a little further investigation, I managed to locate the perfect spot, only two rod lengths from the bank – a small hole in the weed just inches from where the gravel run started. It was a very soft silty spot, no bigger than an unhooking mat, and it was to be the perfect ambush point along this margin.

Over the coming days before my first session on the pond was planned, conditions were still looking perfect. The summer heat had cooled off and pressure had dropped, which was followed by that desirable southwesterly breeze fresh off the Atlantic, sweeping itself across the New Forest. The weekend had finally arrived, and I was as eager as ever to get back behind the rods knowing full well that time once again was not on my side and was for sure not standing still. With all the belief in the world that I was fishing the right spots, the reality of this difficult little pond soon arrived. 20 yards or so across the pond, I clocked my quarry showing over a heavily weeded up area to which presenting a hookbait was impossible. I frustratingly spent the next few hours watching this carp show with no signs of moving, and a few rig changes were made to present a bait, but with no reward. With my tail between my legs, once again it was home time. However, just by luck, I was able to revisit the pond the following week for a morning's fishing, and as per the previous week, a very precise baiting campaign followed on the spots that I was sure that this fish would eventually visit at some point.

On Saturday the 12th of August, it was time to get back behind

The History of Carp Fishing in Oxfordshire

Paul Harris and Geoff Adams

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

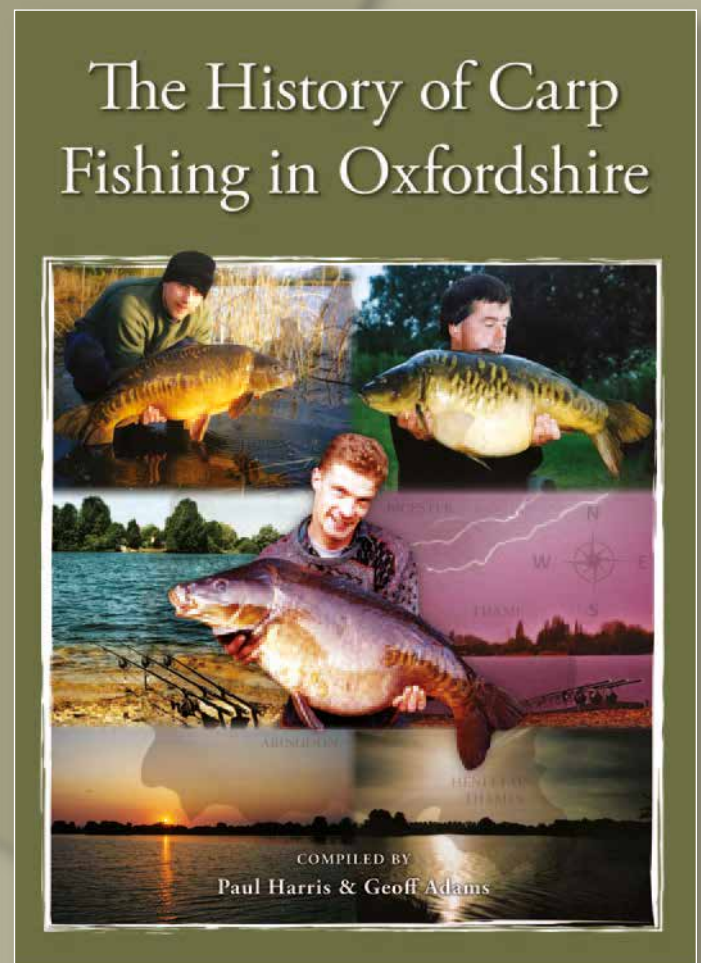
Nick Stansfield is a brilliant young Oxford carper who doesn't shout about his catches. We have two incredible chapters from him from two of the county's most iconic lakes, The Leisure Park and The Big S! Josh Chatfield has written a fantastic chapter which really gives you an insight into how fishing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

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

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

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

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



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A V A I L A B L E N O W

those rods. The week running up seemed to pass so slowly as my mind continued to focus on the job in hand. In past campaigns when prebaiting has played a vital role in my angling, I have tended to use a more qualitative approach when applying bait, casually filling a bait bucket or airdry bag with a quantity of bait that seemed identical to the prior baiting session. For the campaign outlined in this article, I decided on a much more quantitative approach or OCD as some would call it. Small bags were filled with very specific amounts of bait according to the weather conditions in the days leading up to my next session, as this lake in particular only contains a handful of carp, so I certainly did not want to overfeed. My plan for the baiting regime that week would be to force the carp through an aggressive feeding spell at the start, then hopefully through a much lighter one towards my session, as I wasn't planning to fish for more than half a day, so I needed to have my target ready for being angled for versus feeding it off.

On the morning of the 12th, the rods were out just after daybreak. All was quiet throughout the forest, and the only noise that could be heard for miles were the morning birds waking up, followed by large groups of squawking crows in the distance breaking free from their evening nests. With every minute that passed that morning, I became more and more tense, pacing up and down the margin, ensuring that I could not see any signs of my target in another part of the lake. To calm myself down, a strong cup of coffee was made shortly followed by that moment that I had waited so long for. A couple of bleeps from my right-hand alarm were heard, followed by a pause... A liner, I thought, but not this time...

The bobbin soon rose aggressively towards the rod blank, jamming itself in front of the alarm.

It was such an ordeal that I lost one of my shoes running across the boggy marsh that separated me from my rods, as I had no time to reach for my waders. Shoeless, I ran towards the rod, and suddenly all seemed wrong. The bobbin had dropped to the deck, and I could now see the slack line drooping from my tip ring. As I lifted the rod, hoping dearly that the fish had not ejected the hook, all fear was removed, as a heavy dead weight was soon felt as I got back into contact with the fish that was now only yards from the bank. I hadn't even seen the fish, but



I knew that it was him. That slow fight that I had heard other anglers talk about was now something that I had the pleasure of experiencing, and as the net went into the water all was revealed and my knees were like jelly. I was even struggling to adjust the clutch on my reel, as my fingers were shaking, coupled with that surge of adrenalin that I am sure all of you as anglers have experienced. As I write this piece I can almost feel the same emotions as I did that day.

As my capture took one last gulp of oxygen from the human world, it was guided straight towards the spreader block and into the net. The New Forest was quiet that morning until my ordeal, as you can imagine. With a few photos captured and this memory embedded well into my carp fishing journey, the big old creature was returned. I could continue with many more words on how characteristic this fish is, but I will let the pictures do the talking. Estimated at well over 40 years old, I hope that many other anglers get to appreciate this carp. For me it will probably go down as one of my best captures to date.

Earlier in this article, I referred to the speed of time and how quickly things seem to come around, which is kind or ironic, because as I sit here bankside completing the last few words of this piece, I find myself back where the year started, that lovely little intimate venue where I enjoyed some great winter action. 2017 will be another great year to remember, not only for my angling achievements but also the birth of my son who seems to have also expressed an interest in fishing... Some would say not through choice, but there is always hope.

To be continued...



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FORBIDDEN ROUTES

I suppose my love for “guesting” started quite a few years back now; I remember the sheer thrill and excitement of hooking into my very first lump from an old estate lake that had been forgotten about many years ago. It wasn’t just the fact I didn’t know what I was attached to, but also the pure adrenaline rushing through my body as I try to stay low and get my prize netted, pictured and slipped back before I get any unwanted company. I also love the fact that if you want to catch these rare or uncaught carp you are going to have to take major risks and be as dedicated as me. Keeping hidden has always got to add to this amazing style of angling for me; camouflaging your broly and rods can be the difference between getting caught or getting away with it.

Forbidden Routes started from other people's interests in my angling. They loved the photography and filming that I was sharing of this rare, risky type of fishing you don't see much of these days. It soon gained a big following on social media sights, and I was amazed by this. I was given such a buzz by people's response that I wanted to start taking people on my journeys and what I put myself through to try and outwit some of these amazing carp and of course the property owners. Giving away locations of these venues is never going to be a part of what I do and would be a very silly decision by me, as it could lead to me being caught or the worst case scenario, prosecuted.

My goal as an angler is to catch a 40lb carp from one of my crazy venues, just to try and prove not every big carp in the country has been caught. A carp of that size is worth a lot more to me than catching it from any day ticket or syndicate. Talking of special ones we all know and have heard of, the Black Mirror from the Mere that has now sadly passed away. That fish was on another level and only caught by some of the best and dedicated anglers in the land such as Dave Lane, Terry Hearn, Jim Shelly, Jason Hayward etc. The story of this beautiful mirror and the fact it was in a lake that couldn't be accessed, but some anglers were still able to catch it amazed me. This has only encouraged me to look further afield to find my own special equivalent to a Colnemere pit.

Let's take it back now to spring 2017 when I set myself a target of catching a few carp from two venues. The first lake is on a very busy private golf course, and I'm sure they won't take too kindly to anglers. The top end of the lake is right on the green, so during the day that is not fishable, and I was going



to have to spend my time at the shallow part, which could still be spotted by the golfers, so a bit of extra attention was required. By the looks of things, hot spring days were going to be the key factor for getting these fish up in the shallows and also to keep a lot of bait being introduced to keep these nomadic carp returning.

On my first afternoon scope around with the rods, I could see from a distance the sight of four or five tails up in the layers, which obviously meant they were going hard on the area.

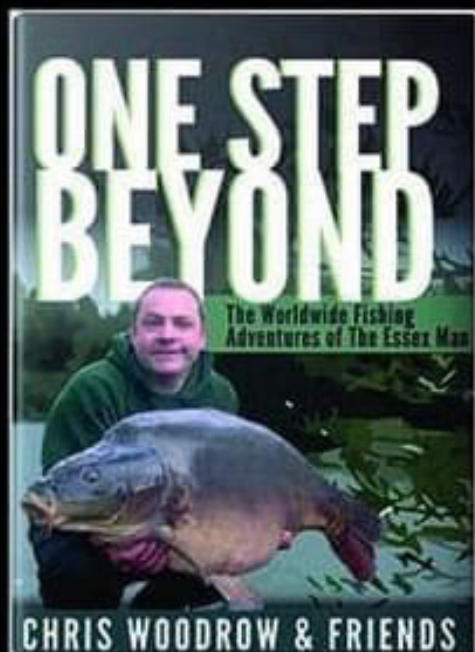
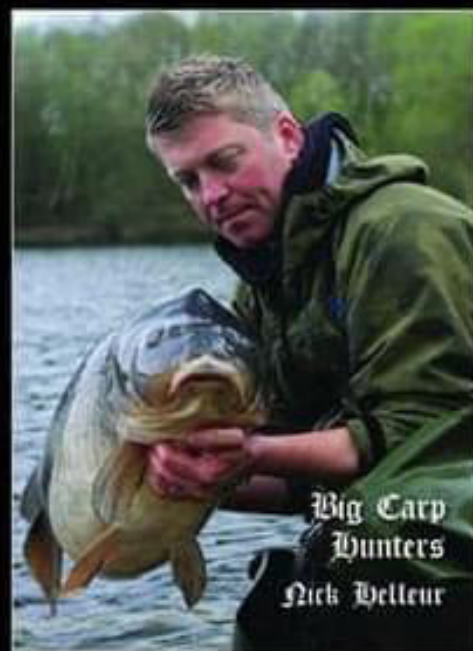
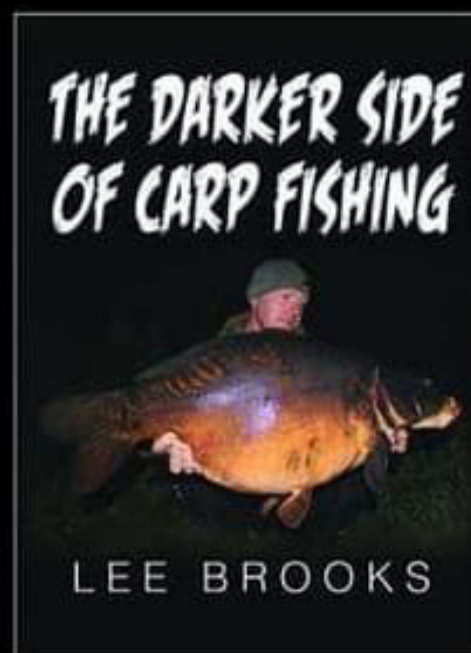
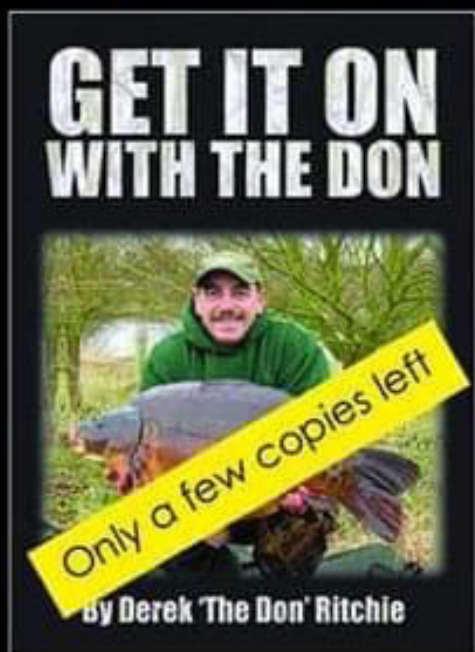
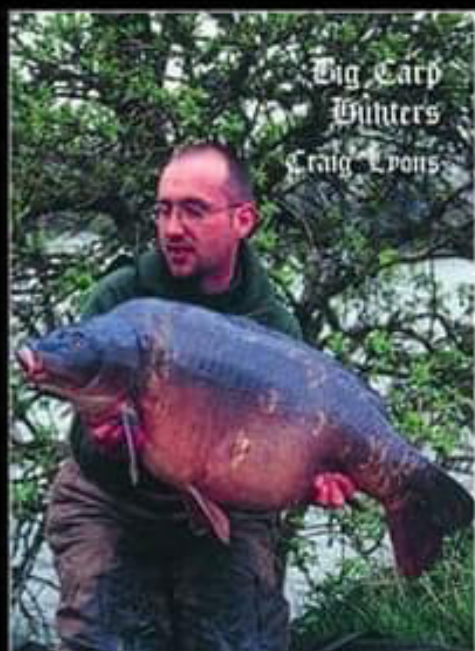
Jack Thompson

With no time to lose, I checked the surrounding perimeters for gamekeepers, rigged up and lowered the rig onto the spot. Before I could get my rod covered up, the water absolutely erupted and my spool went into meltdown... I was in. At the exact time of hooking this angry carp, five men walked up onto the green to make their putt, so I stayed lodged in a bush with the rod tip submerged low in the water. The fish on the other hand had other ideas of giving my position away; it continued to take line and churned up the shallows like it was some sort of wave pool. At a glance I could see the players standing there watching the disturbance, but little did I know the fish was about to give them a show. I had never seen anything like it before; the carp thought it was some sort of marlin and exited the water at least five times. I could hear the amazement of



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Jack Thompson

the golfers as they said, “Wow, did you see that fish?” To my astonishment, they didn’t come to investigate. I managed to get the fish netted and merge back into the undergrowth until the golfers departed. That was a close call. I was lucky it wasn’t the gamekeepers and it was just the golfers. They weren’t going to venture into the woods and get their shoes dirty! That sort of situation is an absolute heart racing moment that couldn’t have been any more badly timed by the carp, but that’s what makes those memories so special. As I lifted the carp out of the water to get the prized shots, I could see it was in pristine condition and the colours were just absolutely bewildering. It was a beautiful double-bellied common, which I was extremely happy to open my campaign with. As usual I tried to get the best of self-takes for my album and then returned her back to her home before making a fast exit.



On lakes like the golf course, I find it easier if it's a quick in and out water. What I mean by this is to keep visiting the lake on a regular basis, introducing bait little by little. So when it comes to dropping the rods on the spots, the fish are normally up feeding on the area, making outwitting the carp the only thing you have to worry about. On my small amount of time on this water, this approach worked extremely well for me, catching three fish within minutes of arrival up to 20lb in the first few trips. Hooking into these fish is completely mindblowing, as on a couple of occasions I watched it happen from a tree looking out over the gin clear water, so when the fish were hooked it really was explosive. I really enjoyed my short time here, and I will certainly be back at some point, as there is still one fish in particular I would like to catch, which I have seen numerous times. When I started on this water, I





had no idea how amazingly clean and scale perfect these carp were going to be; it was better than I had hoped for.

Venturing on to the second half of this campaign, this lake is set in the most beautiful surroundings deep inside the south east countryside. This is a lake that used to be a syndicate around twenty years ago, but some of the stock still lurk in the depths that had slipped the net back in the day. I spent some time walking it over the previous years and knew of a few spots that looked as if I could get myself tucked away. There are two different sides to this beautiful estate lake: one half is set on the boundary of deep English woodland, and the other is a nice grass bank. The grass banks are what you need to keep your eyes locked on, because if you're going to get any unwanted company this is the direction they approach you from. This place is no runs water by any means, and they

certainly don't jump up the rods. It was going to take a lot more time than the previous water, so doing nights was essential to give myself the chance of hooking some of these incredible carp.

There is a slight problem when it comes to this place... I know it sounds silly, but this lake is the spookiest lake I have ever tried doing nights on. It is set miles off the beaten track and there are no roads or houses in miles. Also it's extremely dark with the most horrendous noises that call out during the night. I fish everywhere on my own, but this place just has you jumping and spooking off every noise, and if I were to brave the nights by myself, I would be a nervous wreck by morning. I had to ask the help of my good mate, Ollie Matthews, to join me on this mission, and as you can imagine, he absolutely jumped at the chance.



Jack Thompson

Before I get started on this short campaign of nights, I just want to have a recap of the previous year when I managed a couple of absolute pearlers when just visiting the lake on very limited time. I had been walking down there and introducing bait, around two kilo the day before I was going to fish. On arrival at the lake, I managed to check the coast was clear before settling into my little hideout. I looked out over the murky shallows of a weedy bay and could see my spot alive with bubbles; it was fizzing up like a Jacuzzi. With this happening on the area, I couldn't waste any time and flicked a single out to it. The lead landed with such a hard thud I knew the spot was clean of any debris and my rig must be fishing spot-on. I sat back and enjoyed the incredible views and wildlife that this place had to offer.



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When about twenty minutes had passed, I was rudely disturbed by an absolutely outrageous take; it was shredding line as if it hadn't been hooked before. After a hard battle with what felt like a steam train, I managed to get the prize over the net. That fish really didn't like being pricked. When I went to lift the fish out of the water, I couldn't believe the weight of it for my first capture; it felt like a unit. When I unravelled the sides of the sling, I revealed some amazingly big apple sliced scales, which had a tinge of green coating them. I had never seen such a beautiful mirror, and it truly was an amazing feeling coming from a private, non-fishing water. After some impressive trophy shots of the 26lb mirror, I slipped her back

gracefully and watched her submerge back into the depths of the murky estate.

I was on such a high at that time, I had been a bit sloppy keeping my eyes peeled for visitors. This is when I learnt the valuable lesson of being on the ball when guesting lakes, as when I turned my head to a slight noise in the distance, there was a springer spaniel and a Labrador staring at me as if to say, "What are you doing on our lake?" In a panic, I grabbed my rucksack and my rod and made a dash as quick as I could towards the cover of the woods. The dogs were making an absolute racket, and I could hear the voices of the owners getting gradually closer. I knew the owners hadn't seen me and just probably thought the dogs were barking at the wildlife. I lay deep in the cover of the woodlands and waited patiently for the company to pass before making a beeline back to the motor and disappear without being recognised. That by all means isn't my only close encounter over the years, and it's always a heart racing emotion that never gets easier to deal with. Some of my experiences have been very close indeed.

One night, my friend and I had put the brolly up on the dam just as the light had faded. A couple of hours on I managed a really quick bite, which turned out to be a small common, so I just slipped it back without any commotion. But what happened after that was a true experience. My hook point had become blunt, and I needed to change the rig, so I sat inside the brolly on my laid out sleeping bag, tying a rig, when suddenly my mate tapped me on the shoulder in pure fear and said, "Look!" A torch had immediately switched on at the opposite end of the lake. I thought that was it, my time had come for being caught, and I was ready to receive the consequences. We

Jack Thompson

didn't even know if we had been spotted, as it was pitch black, but I didn't think we had the time to depart. Then without a word, my mate rushed to his rods, but the pure adrenaline had kicked in, and he forgot to switch his alarm off as he reeled in, setting off a loud bleep. I looked at him in pure disgust, as he had just given away our location, not knowing that I was just about to make the exact same mistake.

I picked the rod up and started to reel in ever so fast, as we had set off a handful of distressing bleeps by now. Luckily I had taped up the LED, so we didn't become lit up. With the person getting closer, we just collapsed everything and stuffed any



loose items into our rucksack. We then chucked all the gear behind a bush and covered it with camouflage netting and hid behind a couple of the closest trees. I can remember how fast my heart was beating; I could literally hear it pumping away as the torch light got closer. I stayed as still as possible as I could hear the steps of the person no more than ten metres away, when they stopped and began looking around. I didn't even know if my mate had made it out as we split up, so the fact I was in the middle of nowhere in the pitch black with this human hunting me was incredibly frightening.

About fifteen minutes had passed when the person started to fade away, as he had not caught me. I thought this might have been a trick to catch me leaving, so I stayed put and lay in the dirt for what felt like a couple of hours. Then all of a sudden I heard a slight whisper from my friend, "Jack, are you there?" My spirits lifted straight away, as I knew I wasn't alone. All that time he was tucked away behind a tree next to me, and we both obviously had the same plan. We then gathered our gear and made a sprint out of the woods. That night seemed like forever, and it was definitely an experience I don't want to relive.

On my next trip to the lake, I was hoping the exit wasn't going to be as dramatic as the previous trip and hopefully no close ones this time. As always, I checked the boundaries before getting the rods out. This time I had noticed a few carp grazing in the corner of the lake on a sunny afternoon, lapping up the sunshine. I didn't want to spook them, so I adjusted my tackle and put on a choddy accompanied with a light lead for minimal disturbance. I waded a few feet down the silty margin to get the angle before casting to them. Back in my undercut swim, I

Jack Thompson

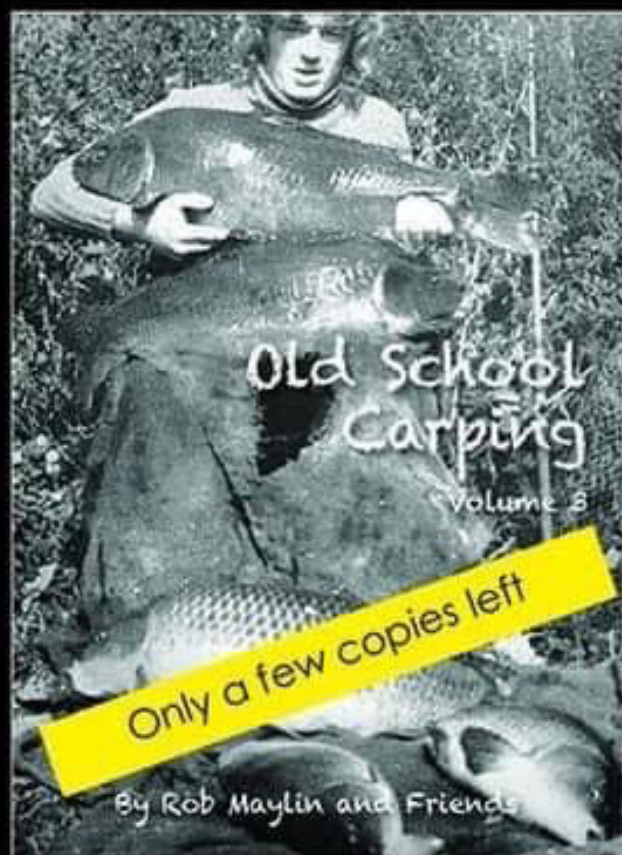
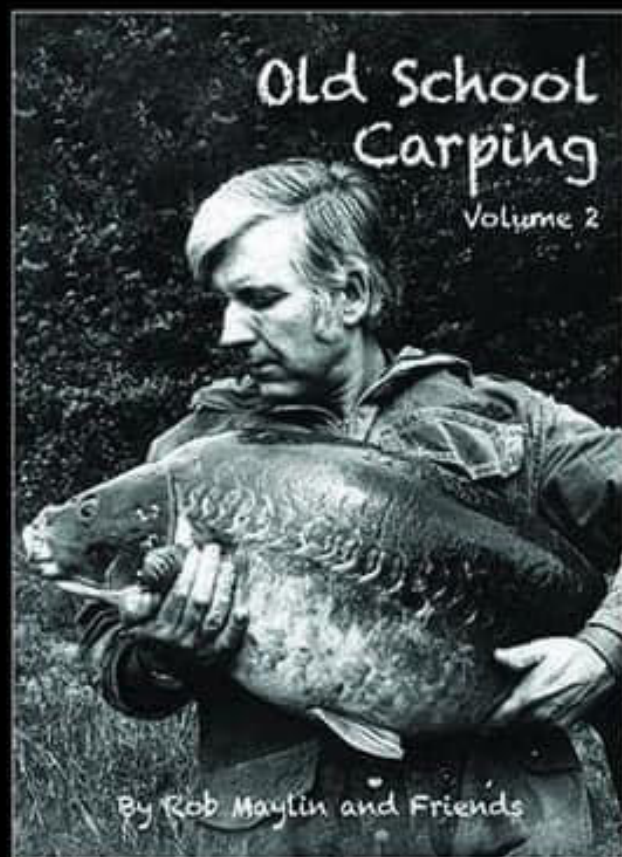
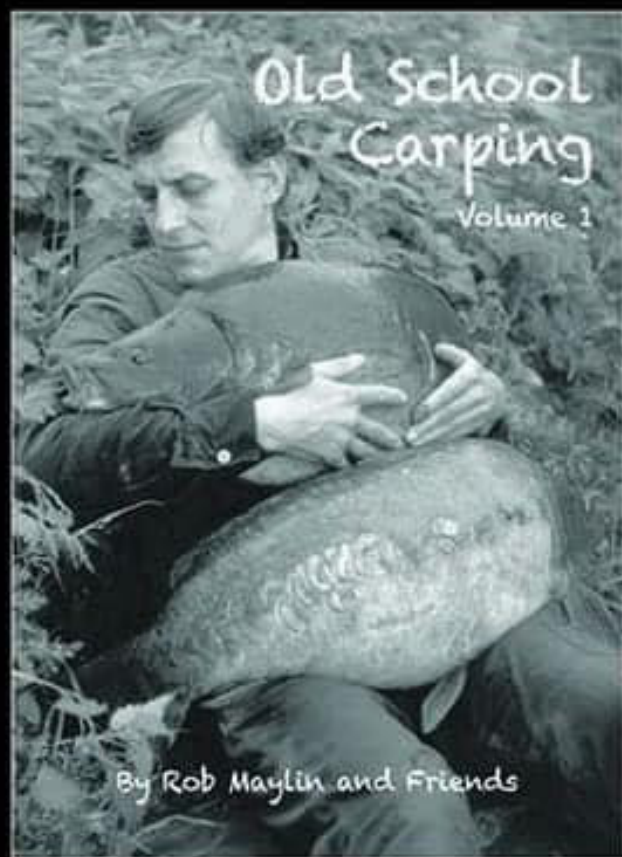
waited patiently for a few hours, as I watched the carp move over the hook bait. I was starting to get quite frustrated, as I knew the carp were very near to the hook bait.

Later on that afternoon, the weather suddenly changed, and there was a big drop in light, which seemed to be a trigger to the fish, and with that I was into my second estate lake carp. This fish was just as epic as the previous capture, another mirror and one that looked as old as the hills with some really superb scales. This beautiful carp pulled the needle around to 27lb, and I was well happy. I just couldn't believe my luck - two mid twenties in the first two sessions - things were kicking off!

Going back to the short campaign I set myself in spring 2017, my good mate Ollie and I were ready to set upon this challenge.



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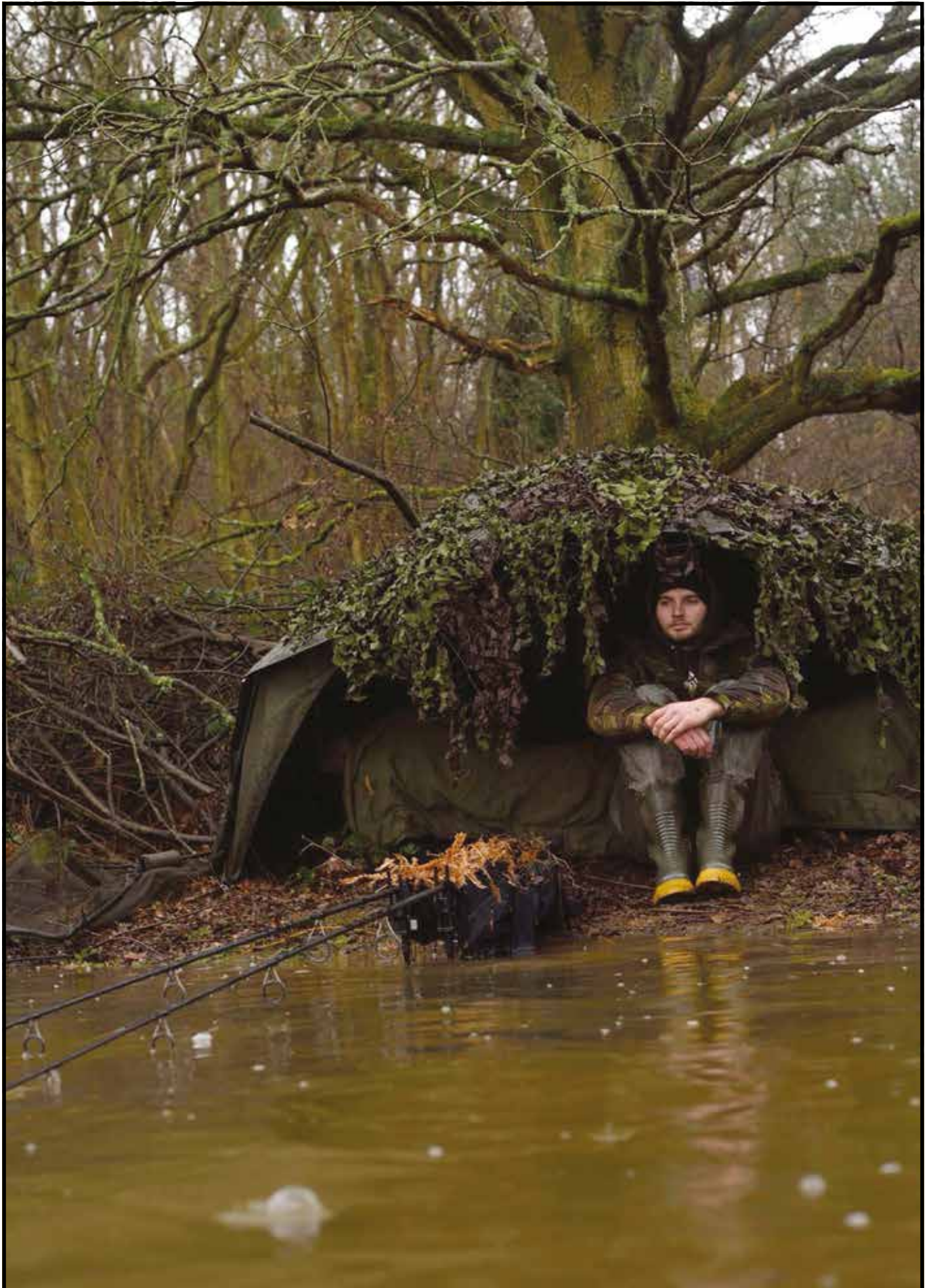
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I had been introducing a lot of bait the previous two weeks leading up to this night, and this hopefully ensured that the fish were getting used to feeding on the spot by the time we drop a rig in. On a short baiting trip after work one sunny evening, I was lucky enough to stumble across a dark mirror grazing in a shallow corner of the lake. Just seeing this one fish was enough for me to rush back to the car to grab a rod. It was such a rare sight to see the fish this close in, so I had to take advantage of this situation. I opted for a free line tactic for fewer disturbances, as I tried to snare this fish of the surface. As the bread hit the water, the carp turned and seemed to show immediate interest, as it darted straight for the bait. My heart was pounding in excitement as I watched it inhale my bread. As I struck, the water erupted like a barrel had been dropped in the lake; it really did make some commotion. This is one part of guesting that is now out of your control, and this is when you become most vulnerable to being sighted. In this situation you need to stay calm, keep hidden and get the fight over with as quickly as possible. This is exactly what I did, and I was very fortunate not to have had any visitors as I slipped the net under this gnarly old mirror. Once the fish was in the net, I sacked her up and packed up my gear ready for a swift exit. I introduced the bait for the next session, and then I was ready for some amazing photos. The scenery really is picturesque at this venue, and even doing self-takes I was able to capture some really special moments with a really stunning mirror just under the magical 20lb mark. Size really isn't important to me, and even though my goal is a 40lb carp from one of these venues, it needs to be special just like these fish - amazing and full of character.



On my and Ollie's first night, we made sure we were hidden in the woods well out of sight and used our receivers to give us the detection of a bite. With company from a mate, it was so much easier to get some shut-eye and not have to worry about being on watch constantly on your own. Very early that morning around 3am we were very rudely awoken by Ollie's rod busting off. All disoriented, he stumbled down the steep verge and started his battle with his first angry carp from the estate. With a really epic fight underway, I was now there to give a helping hand on netting duties. The carp really tested his tackle to the full as it made a beeline to the trees in the near margin and underwater snags.

Using strong and reliable tackle is a real key to landing these fish, and as they probably haven't been caught before, they surely let you know they don't like it, and they do put up the most difficult fights. With a really hairy scrap, I managed to net Ollie's prize for him, and he was overwhelmed that he had managed one... and so was I! We unhooked his incredible mirror and slipped it in to the sling for a couple of hours whilst the light emerged. As it was early spring, the bluebells in the woods were in fullblossom, something that we had really been looking forward to photographing. As the sun came up, we revealed the fish from the sling, and once again it was just the most incredible mirror that looked ancient and was full of scales. This place surely had some mirrors from the past, absolutely full of character and everything thing a carp angler dreams of... This is why we take these risks. As he held the carp up to the camera in the most superb scenery, you could see all over his face just how much that fish meant to him, and I was so glad that I was there to share the moment and get him



Jack Thompson

some shots he could cherish.

A few days had passed, and the nerves had calmed down; it was time to start thinking about our next venture down to the water. Once organised, we dropped back onto the prebaited spots for another night, hoping it was going to be as good as the last. When making our way down to the lake, we always make sure it's late and just starting to get dark. This is to ensure the owners have done their evening stroll with the dogs and we don't stand any chance of bumping into them on arrival. I know this from previous encounters, and I always try to learn from my mistakes, as it's not worth making any silly errors that could be prevented.

For some reason, 3am seemed to be the feeding time for these nomadic carp, as we were dragged from our pits once again for Ollie's rod. After another backbreaking battle, I couldn't





believe it when he slipped the net under another carp. This time it was what seemed like a rare sight as he lifted a common from the water. Amazingly it was as lovely as the mirrors; it was in superb condition with a two-tone effect that ran along its flank. The same procedure was taken and we slipped her into the retainer for an hour or two whilst it gets light enough for us to do the photos. Once it's done, we waste no time on packing up and making a fast exit, as again before the owners venture out on their early morning dog walk.

My time had come to an end on these waters shortly after that session, as it seemed like they needed to be left alone for a while. Even though I only fished it for a short amount of time, there had been a lot of hours spent by me scoping out the venue and trips to bait up. Vegetation was starting to look trampled and ruined; you could see something or someone had been there. As much as I wanted to get my own personal bluebell shot, it wasn't worth taking the risk, and it would

only impede my chances of getting one in the future. This year I will be back, and I will get that photograph!

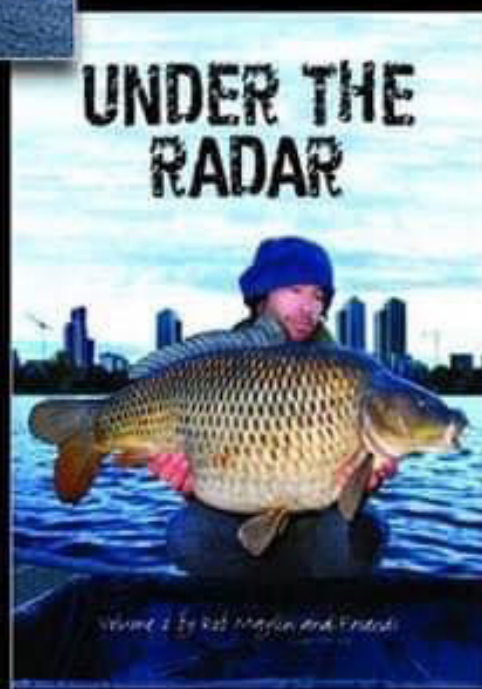
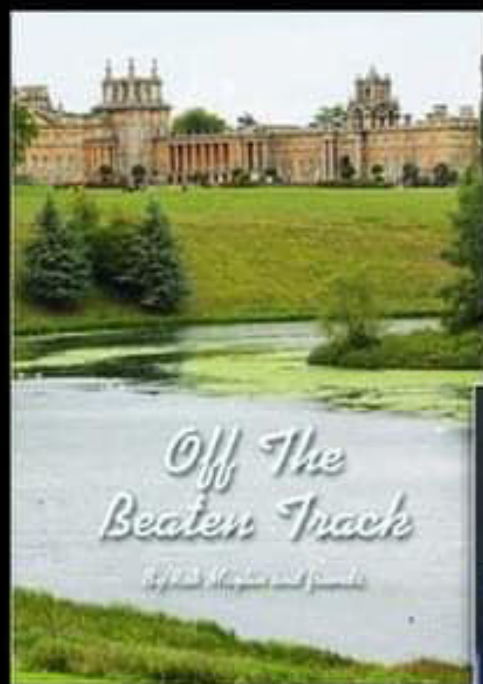
After this campaign, I said to myself I was going to kick back on a club water and enjoy the privileges of being able to fish it for a while. The problem with this is that I got bored extremely quickly, and I hate it that I can't roam the lake and fish where I want. I've always been a very mobile angler, and if I can't move onto showing fish, there is no point in being there in my eyes. So I did a little bit of research on some abandoned pits that could potentially hold some carp, and there were a couple of possibilities that needed investigating. On my first time exploring one of these venues, I noticed carp basking in the sun, which told me what I needed to know. This lake is a large 60-acre sand pit, which is just the most desirable water to any serious carp angler; it is just like fishing for carp in the Amazon. After doing some homework on the venue, I soon realised that it wasn't just me fishing this place, as there were some very big carp that reside in there. Out of respect to the other anglers, I won't say much. All I can say at the moment is things couldn't have started any better for me. I have had well over ten fish up to 31lb, and there are a lot bigger to go at. I will be returning, and I will be making the second instalment of Forbidden Routes without disclosing the location of this venue.

Forbidden Routes is something that I will continue to do, as it gives me the buzz a carp angler needs. We all have our different ways of angling, and I just enjoy the sheer excitement of fishing for the desirable and unknown specimens. Only if I get caught I will then consider slowing this style of angling down. Until that day, I will be keeping out of sight, out of mind.



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WATERCRAFT

Pt 2

Carrying on from my last piece where I introduced the three key areas I base my angling on: preparation, watercraft and angling effectively and efficiently, I will now take the opportunity to share my thoughts on watercraft.

My take on watercraft is thus: the more time you spend on different venues in varying weather conditions, having noted where and when you and other anglers have caught fish in certain weather conditions after taking into consideration the work you have done in the preparation stage, you should be in a much better position to make the right decisions more often regarding swim choice and where to place your traps.

I like catching carp and try to work hard to put myself in the best position possible when I'm angling. My routine is fairly straightforward, and again I can summarise it into three key areas: Always keep an open mind, use your eyes and ears to find the fish, and drive and determination... Again they are in no order of preference and are expanded upon below.

Prior to a session, I will always access a five to seven-day detailed weather forecast and check the predicted surface pressure. These days, I am going fishing when I am off work, so I will be going regardless. However when I was self employed a few years ago, I could move jobs around at times to suit favourable weather and pressure conditions and even went as far as to include the moon phases.

If it's a new venue you are starting on, then you will get to know other members and will probably exchange text messages etc. This is particularly useful if they are fishing when you aren't to help build a picture of what's happening when you are away from the lake. I would never let this info blinker me into any choices I might make in my angling be it bait/swim choice/rigs etc. I would take it on board and make a note of the key elements. I use the journey to the lake to process the weather and barometric pressure forecast, how the lake has been fishing, which areas the forecasted weather will affect, how many anglers have been and are present along with which areas may look favourable.

Once at the lake, I will take my flask and go for a wander around the lake at least once (sometimes for hours) with my Polaroids on, stopping to chat to anglers on my way round, taking on board the available swims and what weather is on the way. It's a minefield and one that pleasantly batters my



head every time I turn up at the lake, especially if I have the lake to myself. Other anglers have turned up in the past and asked if I have decided which swim I want. If I haven't, then I'll let them choose where they want to set up and carry on walking and looking. It has cost me fish in the past, but it's also caught me fish on my own terms.

What time you arrive at your chosen venue will also determine if you see any fish crashing, rolling, bubbling and clouding up the bottom. Are the fish just chilling in an area enjoying the warmth of the sun or hiding from the current angling pressure?

If the latter is the case, you may pick up fish stalking or floater fishing, but once darkness falls, they may move to other areas of the lake to feed. Few lakes these days offer you the freedom to indulge in both due to angling pressure so outside bite times can seem like camping. A good example of the above was during my time on Wellington Country Park. Initially I would travel down very early morning to arrive at 4am before it got light to hopefully see fish crashing. This approach worked to a certain degree, as I could set up on or near fish.

During my stays bankside, I watch the water intensely from early morning until late at night. At some point I knew there would be numbers of fish feeding, as they don't get big by not feeding, and I could use my eyes, ears and drive to find them. I needed to see what was occurring during the night when 99.9%





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of the anglers were sleeping. I set my alarm for 2am and 3am and found that I could hear numbers of fish in certain areas crashing and rolling. Over the course of a couple of sessions, this became the pattern, so I shifted my arrival times to suit. I could commute the 180 miles to the lake when the roads were quieter, arrive, load the barrow, leave the barrow in a convenient place and stand, watch and listen in a couple of areas and see or hear where they were.

It was tiring fishing, but it meant I was on feeding fish and maximising my time when everyone else was asleep. I got into a routine of catching, taking my own pics, sleeping then possibly moving again that night, then repeating the cycle, and no one knew what I was up to other than when they woke up in the morning and saw that I was gone. I could catch up on some sleep during the day when the fish had moved into their





preferred daytime haunts when not a lot would get caught. I enjoyed considerable success during my time on the lake, and fishing less than 80 nights in two seasons, I landed over 120 fish, many of which were 30lb-plus with a good proportion over the magical 35lb mark along with six different forties including a brace of forties. The lake paid me back big time for the extra effort and sleepless nights and forged my approach for future campaigns.

So to summarise, there are no hard or fast rules as to how weather/air pressure/moon phases/angling pressure etc affects your venue and its residents, watercraft is an ever changing skill, which is all about spending time bankside watching and listening and building a bank of experiences to draw on from swim to swim and venue to venue. As you get

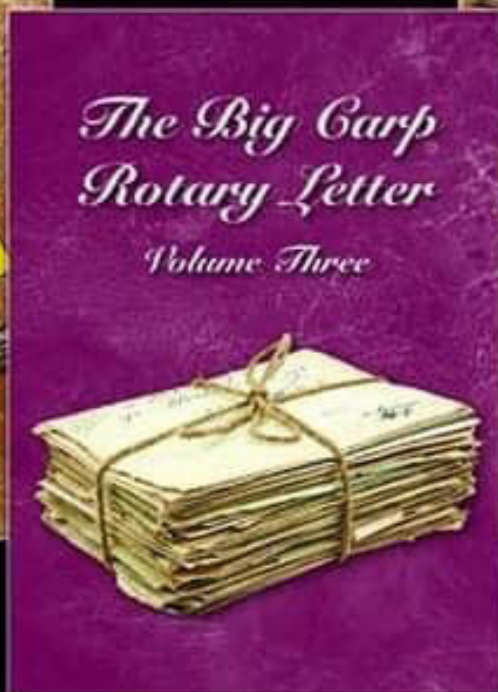
to know a venue or move to a new one, you bring or take your experiences with you and apply them in the scenarios you encounter.

I am currently starting my preparation work on a new, exciting venue. The plan so far is to fish some key swims and have a good lead around, finding and noting possible areas, watching and listening for any signs day and night, talking to the regulars for any pointers and areas and making new friends along the way. So far the nights have been way too cold, but hopefully as day and night time temperatures rise along with the water temperature, the fish will start to play ball and my approach will yield fruit.



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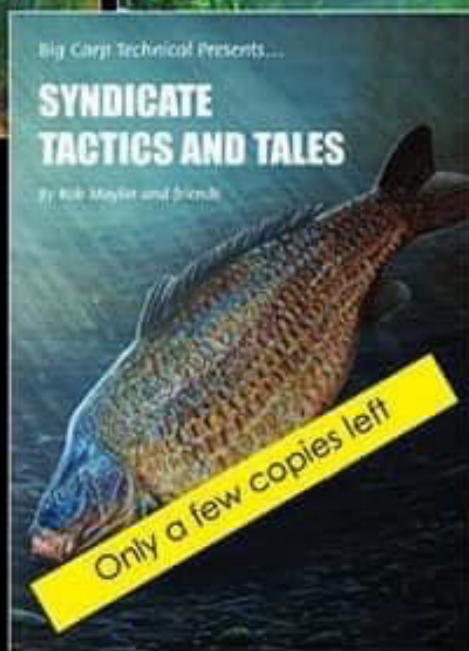
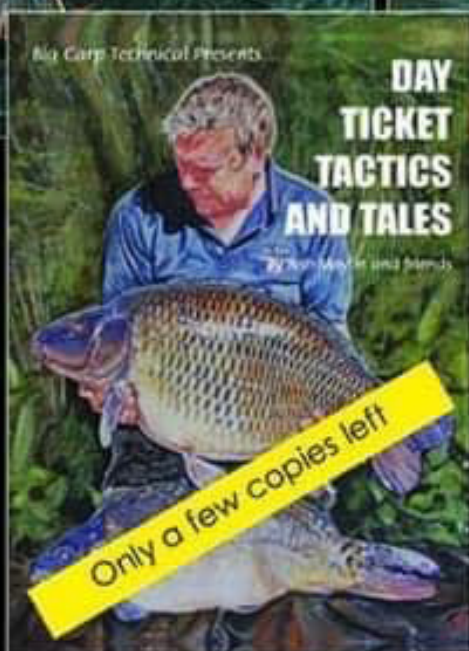
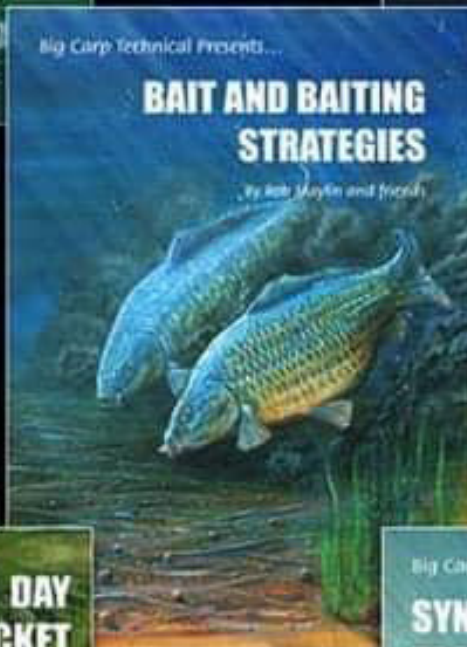
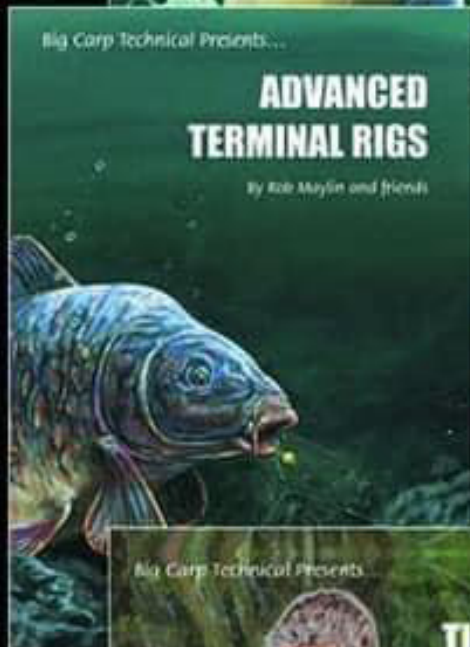
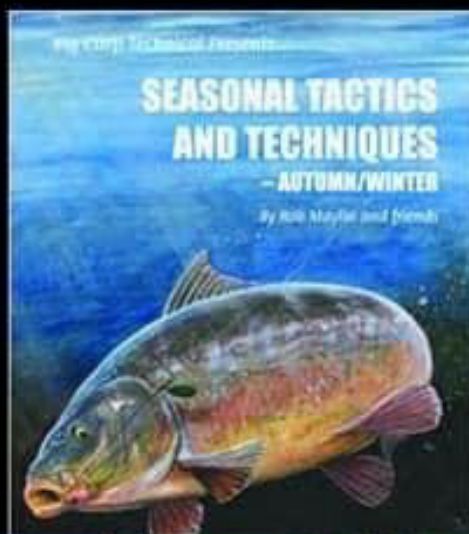
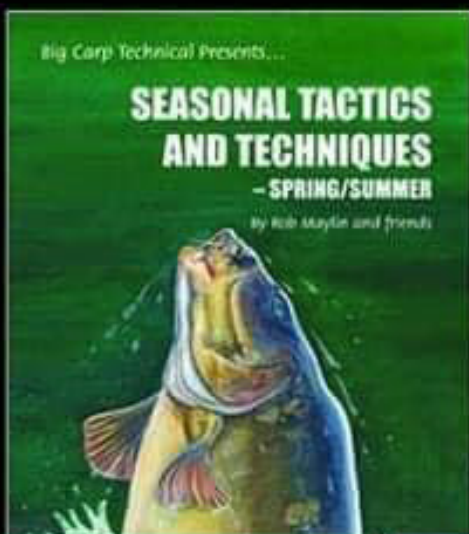


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FORBIDDEN DEPTHS

As I found myself hiding in thorn-armoured bushes, ankle deep in stinking swamp and out of breath from running away from the sight of a dog walker that I almost crossed paths with, I had to question my sanity! I had a really good syndicate ticket with access to some large, homegrown carp, so what an earth was I doing here, I wondered? It was late October. I had seen a fairly good start to that season, but bites had really slowed off on my chosen pit since mid summer. I was definitely rocking a lean spell, and the highs of the spring felt a lifetime away. I had been fishing hard the past few months, determined to get things going again, but it was one of those periods where it just felt like the gods were not on my side! You know - prebaiting hard only for some unknowing angler to drop in, catch, then you can't get in the swim, or the fish finally start showing within your range when you have got to reel in, or I couldn't go fishing when the

pit was doing bites, and I lost what felt like the heaviest carp I had ever hooked, along with freak tangles and things going wrong that never would normally happen – that kind of thing.

We all have these spells, I'm sure, but this spell seemed to drag on and on, and the harder I worked for bites, the more I seemed to be messing the swim up and the further away I felt. It felt like the lake was red-carding me, I didn't belong there anymore, and in all honesty, I was no longer enjoying my fishing. I thought about the sacrifices I make for my angling time and started to question why I do it and if it was still worth it. I was so hung up on attaining goals and feeling that sense of achievement that I was failing to notice all the wonderful things that make angling so special. It wasn't healthy; I needed to walk away from those goals and find a way to remind myself why I loved angling.

So there I was on my way to my first cast into new depths, battling my way through the dense and unforgiving woods towards this forbidden pool, sweating, scratched and muddy, but most importantly, buzzing with anticipation. My location was an old abandoned Victorian brick pit, deep within rural Lincolnshire. Stories about this pool had been whispered around my area since I was a kid, overheard in the tackle shop, that sort of thing. The tales told of a bottomless pit that held uncatchable monsters, and if anyone dared to try then the ghosts of the haunted woods would make sure they ended up lost to her depths forever! The bottom was littered with skeletons of anglers that dared, they said! Then there are the stories of a trigger-happy alcoholic that lives in the spooky house nearby that will do you with his shotgun if you get caught angling.



Okay, now I am all grown up, I can see that those tales were a bit far fetched – Chinese whispers likely started by an angler or two who was trying to keep the place to themselves, but I have to say, it definitely had that naughty feel about it, like I was being watched... as if the trees had eyes! And in honesty I enjoyed the feeling; it was just what I needed. Access was tricky; there was nowhere to park nearby, only a country road that passed through the woods, so I had been parking outside the woods and walking in when prebaiting, with the bait in a rucksack and my camera visible in the hope that any passing vehicle would assume I was just doing some wildlife photography and that was my lined-up excuse. Maybe I shouldn't have been on the land, but there weren't any signs

Wayne Iszatt

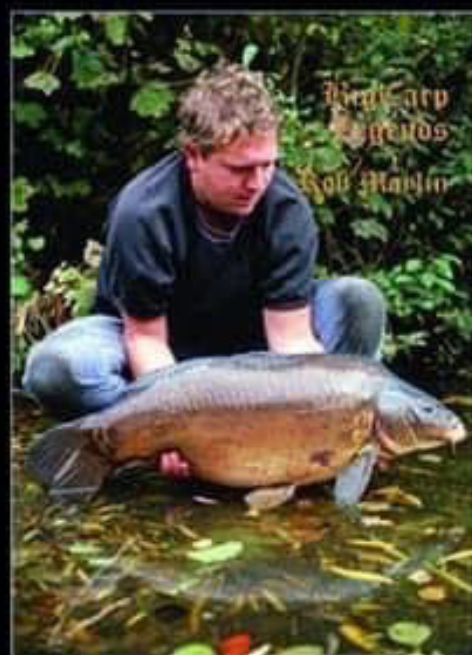
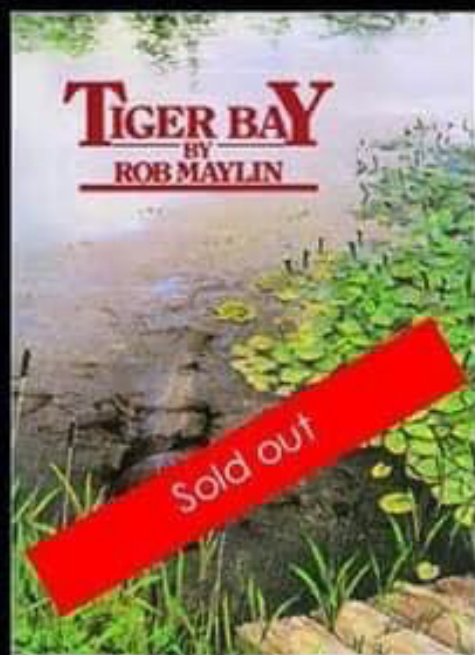
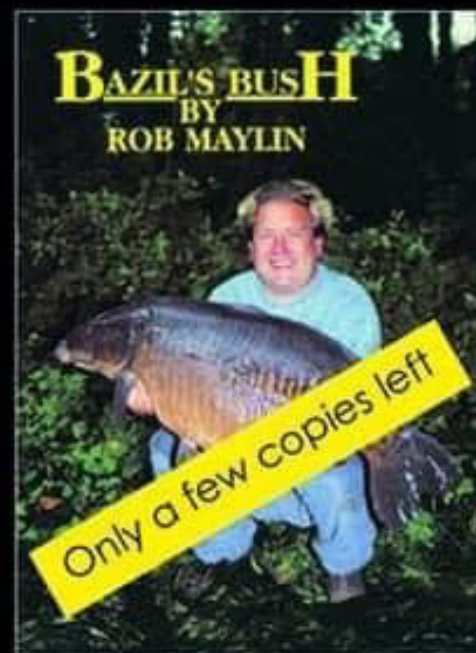
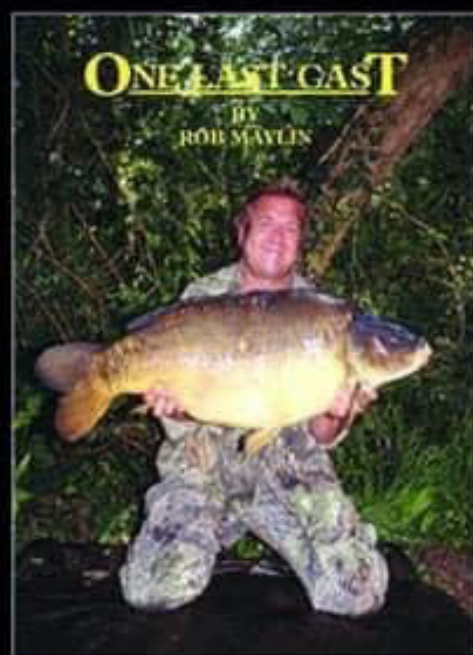
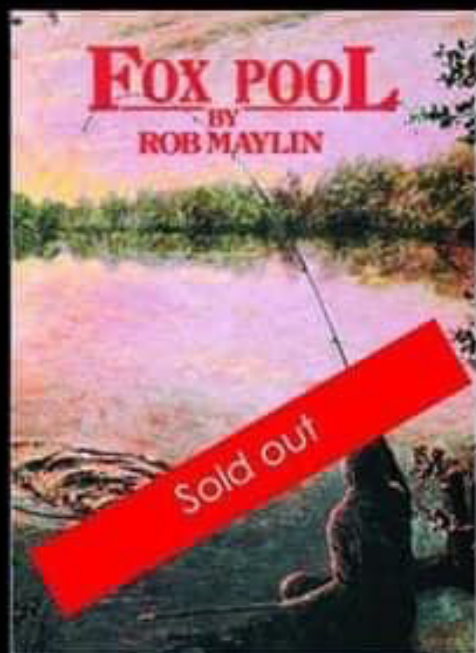
to state that nor any fencing, and as I had been hoofing in lots of nutritional fish food and filling my rucksack up with stray litter to take home, my conscience felt clear. I had also been sneaking in a few items of tackle to stash down there – an old unhooking mat, retainer, sacking stick etc and my dilapidated old 1997 Titan bivvy that was missing a leg and was holier than the Pope himself but still stood up with a bit of persuasion, and failing that... duck tape!

The spot I had chosen had dense cover from the road and the spooky house with the garden that backs onto the lake, which was said to be the residence of crazed shotgun man that allegedly has commandeered this seemingly unclaimed



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pool as his own. There was no path around most of the pit; it was densely overgrown and left untouched, like time had swallowed it up. The stock of carp it contained was still a bit of a mystery, although another angler had fished it hard a couple of springs before and had kindly filled me in on his results. It appeared there was only a handful, maybe ten carp present, although there could have been one or two more that avoided capture. Although nothing massive had been confirmed, they were really old, mottled fish in various shapes and strains that screamed decades and were of unknown origin. In fact size never entered my head; they were sure enough older than me, and that was all the fuel I needed.

I had been baiting it up most days for a couple of weeks, and it was a case of now or never, so I committed myself to the first overnighter. I stripped my kit right back, with my bedchair on my back, two rods and net strapped together in one hand and a small holdall in the other, and if it didn't all fit in the holdall then it got stripped back further until it did, and I ended up with only bare essentials. Now came the most dodgy part and that was entering with rods in hand. I timed it to enter in the half-light just as it was getting dark. I needed to see a little to manoeuvre through the thorny foliage, but the low light level gave me less chance of being spotted.

So anyway, back to hiding from the dog walkers on my way in. When I am zoned into a session, I refer to any non-anglers I meet as 'The Others'. Now, you should never cross worlds by engaging with The Others when you are tuned in to your fishing because it will only end in misunderstanding. For example, when I was on my way back from baiting up, I saw two of The Others and their dog walking down the path



towards me. It's OK, I thought, as I had Realtree camos on – I will just stand perfectly still in front of this bush and I will be just like Predator and remain undetected. “Morning,” said The Others. “Damn!” It was then I realised I had no camo on my face, and that must have given the game away. “Hi,” I replied. The Others looked uneasy (well I guess you would be talking to a floating head!). Their spaniel immediately picked up on the scent of bait from me rubbing my oily hands clean on my combat trousers moments before, and he started licking my thigh. We then proceeded to tell each other about the current weather, obviously both assuming the other party could not

Wayne Iszatt



FREELINE 100

see or had any grasp on their own surroundings.

Once that exhilarating 12 seconds were over, next we turned our attention to the dog that was by now dangerously close to gnawing on my manhood. "Oh look! Squirrel!" I pointed in the other direction to distract The Others and give me a split second to give Licky the dog a little deterring slap round the chops before I got circumcised. The dog thought this meant play and began prancing up and down on the spot. The Others looked a little confused as to why their dog was jumping around and now sporting a side parting. The mallards behind burst into fits of quacks in amusement. This had to end.

Then came the dreaded question: "Have you caught anything?" asked The Others. "What, me? No, no I'm not fishing," I replied. "I'm just looking for somewhere suitable to brick down a traffic warden. He's starting to stink in the boot." With that, they broke into a power walk, without so much as a cheerio, with disappointed dog dragging behind with his new crap hairstyle. I passed the approaching blue lights on the way home. Like I said, never cross worlds.

So, I had finally made it to the swim with rods in hand and dropped my kit. The atmosphere instantly felt electric, and I quickly got to work baiting up the rigs and lowered them on the spots before I lost the last of the light. Due to the overhanging tree canopy above and the steep drop of margin, it was fishing at the rod tip style over the area I had been baiting. The prebait makeup was a bright mix, mainly consisting of White Chocolate and Coconut boilies and groundbait, Frenzied Maize and Corn, as I figured that with the fish not being pressured then high visibility bait was a good bet. There was some old camo netting left there by the previous angler, which I made good use of

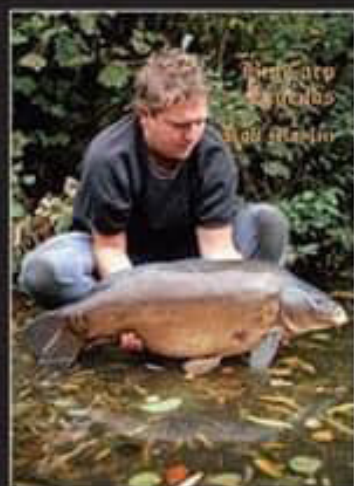
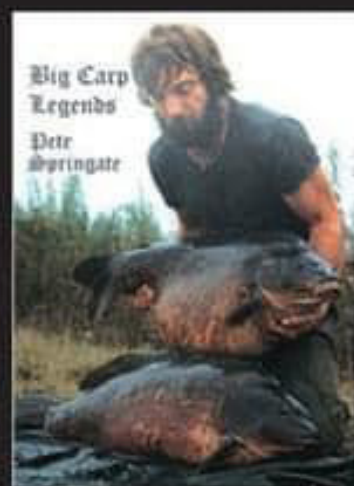
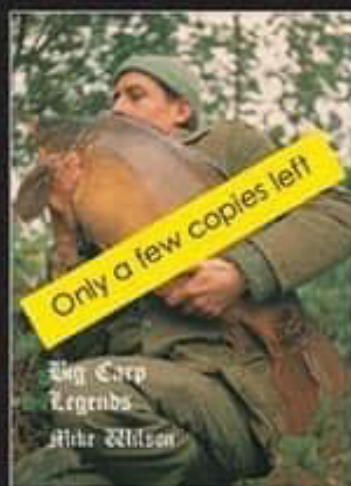
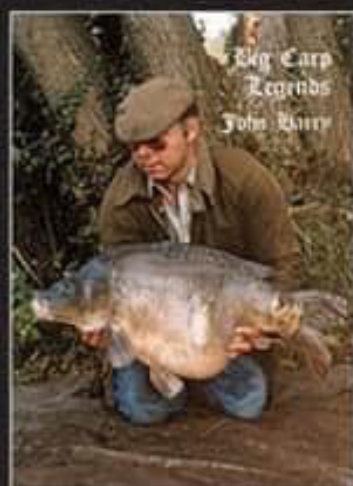
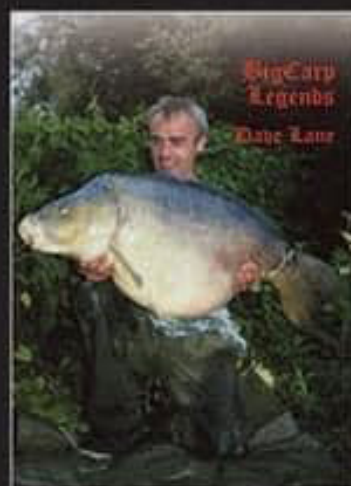
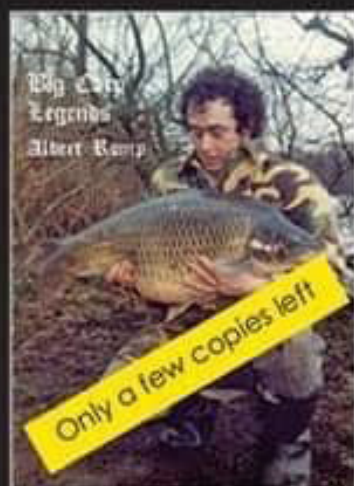
(cheers, James) and got myself tucked away nicely. Darkness was falling at around 6pm at the time, and before I knew it, it was 10pm, and I had just stood there the whole time as silent as a mouse, gazing around, not even glancing at my watch or phone, totally mesmerised with the place, absorbing all the sounds and smells, but mainly listening out for a carp to show.

Owls were calling from every direction, and the occasional engine noise from a lonely vehicle on the wooded road would filter through the trees. The woods had about lost all their leaves, and with the mist forming around, it made the place look quite eerie, which just added to the buzz. It was strictly no headtorches unless it was a last resort, as the house opposite may have seen. A little more time passed, and I hadn't heard anything that resembled a carp, and I thought I would try to get a few hours' shut-eye, as it was a work night. I was too excited to sleep deeply though, plus any noise I heard just made me listen out in case it was the madman from over the pond, who, in my head, I imagined to be a 6ft skinhead, beer gut, rocking the oil stained white T-shirt and denim dungaree combo, probably going by the name of 'Bubba' and was that much of a bad aim that his warning shot fired to the ground would actually hit you square in the face! So, yes I was keeping my wits about me!

It was around 1am, and my buzzer let out a few bleeps, then a few more. I checked it wasn't a liner, and saw the tip was knocking and lifted into it, although my heart sank when I realised I was playing something that resembled those plastic bags I used to catch as a kid! Yep, you guessed it! My mate never said anything about bream in here! Oh well... I quickly dealt with that, and as the hook point was undamaged, I just

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put a fresh pop-up on and lowered it back down on the spot, retired again to the bedchair and got back to dreaming of scaly old mirror carp.

It must have been around 5:30am in the faintest glimmer of daylight when I had another set of bleeps on the same rod. I swung my legs out of bed and slipped my boots on (as the floor was littered with hawthorn branches) just as the bite started to pick up pace and the spool started ticking. I lifted into the fish and was elated when I realised by the powerful retaliation that there had to be a carp on the other end. This quickly turned into concern when the other bite alarm started to sound, and it was clear that the fish had taken an unorthodox route to get away from me initially by bolting towards me and along the margin and had picked up the other line, which suggested that it had never been hooked before. I did try in vain to pass the necessary rod under the other but to no avail, and the overhanging brambles and thorns grabbed a hold of lines, rods, net – everything just made things more difficult, especially with no headtorch or moonlight.

The fish powered off on another run, and I could feel the grating of the other line, then everything locked up solid as the fish found weed – this was not looking good. I muttered a few pleading prayers to anyone that may have been listening above and did my best to stay cool, keeping steady pressure on. Eventually things got moving again, but the fish then steamed off to the left still attached to the other line and then kited under the overhanging tree, and I felt more grating. I dipped the rod tip and prayed as again everything locked solid. The feeling of guilt washed over me, and I began to prepare myself mentally for a lost battle. I slackened off for a second in

tactical desperation and then felt a kick of the tail. Thankfully I was using both a fluorocarbon leader and six metres of braid shock to give durability for such a situation, and with steady pressure back on, the fish came kiting my way again and out of the danger zone and inched towards my awaiting net.

Another good move was using drop-off inline leads, which fall off very easily, meaning the other attached line was also lead free, which would not have happened on a lead clip system due to the lead being dragged in the wrong direction to drop off. I was so relieved when the fish bobbed over the cord and I scooped her safely. A fist pump in the air and all the world was glorious again! I cut through the braid above the leader so I could roll down the net and safely lift the fish over the horrid foliage, and laid her on the mat.

In the halflight, I could see she had that Leney shape and vintage beauty that I had desired, an old warrior for sure. I removed the hook and white cholate pop-up from her bottom lip and retained her for a short while so I could quickly get packed up ready for the exit mission, but not before getting some self-takes of course. I tell you, I left there a very happy man; the hunter's thirst had been quenched. It wasn't the biggest carp in the world, but to me it meant much more than any number ever could. With adrenalin pumping through my veins, it was the drug I had been craving. You see, I think I speak on behalf of many of you when I say that adrenalin is a big part of the reason we are addicted to angling. When I have that high, I am a better person in general, and I take that back to my home life on the other side of the fence. This capture was a reminder to me that fishing is what you make of it – if things aren't going well, then it's probably a sign that your

Wayne Iszatt

name is just not on that one (yet at least) and to go and find some fun!

I carried on baiting and did go back and do two more overnights the following week, but with a cold snap setting in, I only had more bream to show for my efforts. In a way, I was quite happy with that, as it proved to me that they don't just jump on your hooks, which made the one I did catch feel more special. My winter ticket on another pit came through the door after that, a venue I was keen to crack on with, and with my passion for carp fishing fully restored, I left things there. Maybe I will go back and try for another ancient scaly again one day. Until then, thanks for reading and best of luck.



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