

FEBRUARY ISSUES OF **BIG CARP** & **FREELINE** MAGAZINES - FREE HERE:

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Steve Briggs - 50th Year Carping
Oscar Thornton - Winter Tips
Tom Stokes - Mega Year
Simon Crow - 2024 Hi-lights



Dan Stacey - Deepest Norfolk
Dave Coward - Church Lake
Gaz Jones - Change of Scenery
John Lam - Urban Canals

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BIG CARP READERS TOP TENS !!

TOP 10 DAY TICKET CARP WATERS

1	BLUEBELL LAKES
2	LINEAR FISHERIES
3	SANDHURST
4	COTTINGTON
5	FARLOWS LAKE
6	HORCOTT
7	COKING FARM
8	OAK LAKES FISHERY
9	ELPHICKS
10	ORCHID

TOP 10 FRENCH HOLIDAY VENUES

1	IKTUS
2	ABBAY LAKES
3	CRETE LAKES
4	RIBIERE
5	GIGANTICA
6	RAINBOW
7	THE AQUARIUM
8	DREAM LAKES
9	THE SECRET GARDEN
10	BROCARD

TOP 10 BAIT COMPANIES

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



TOP 10 END TACKLE COMPANIES

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

TOP 10 CARP FISHING BRANDS

1	DIAWA
2	SHIMANO
3	REUBEN HEATON
4	SOLAR
5	JAG
6	FREESPIRIT
7	FOX
8	TRAKKER
9	CHILTERN RODS
10	KUDOS

TOP 10 CARP TACKLE SHOPS

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

TOP 10 ICONIC CARP LAKES

1	YATELEY
2	SAVAY
3	REDMIRE
4	WRAYSBURY
5	FOX POOL
6	HORTON
7	CASSIEN
8	LINCHHILL
9	ROACH PIT
10	JOHNSON'S RAILWAY

BC

BIG CARP: 343 FEB 2025

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STORM IN TO 2025

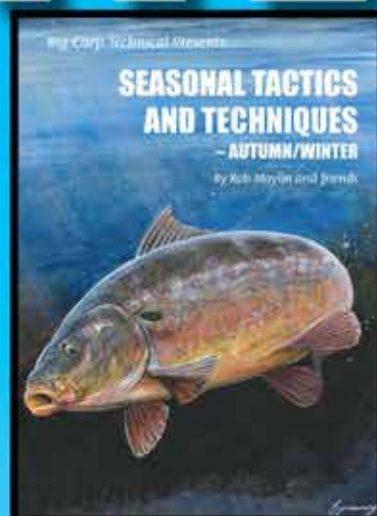
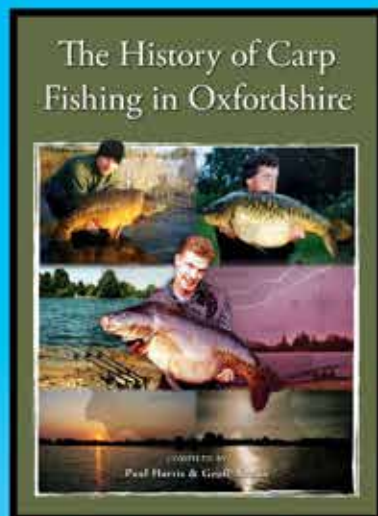


**CROW
MAKER
BRIGGS**

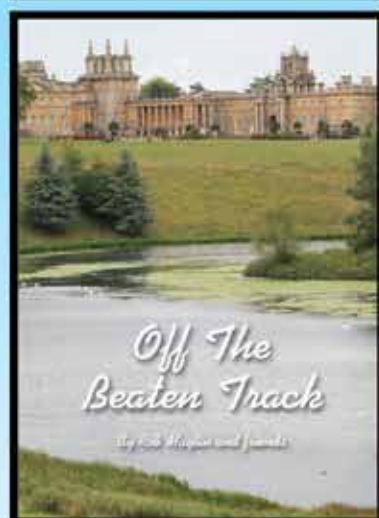
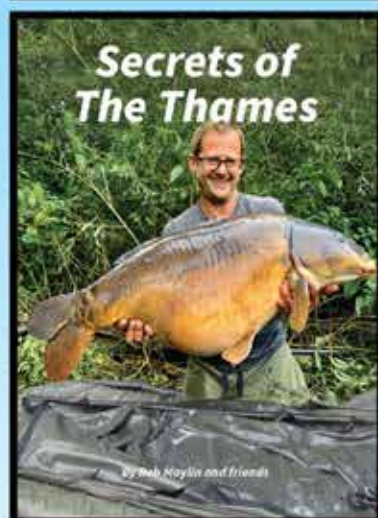
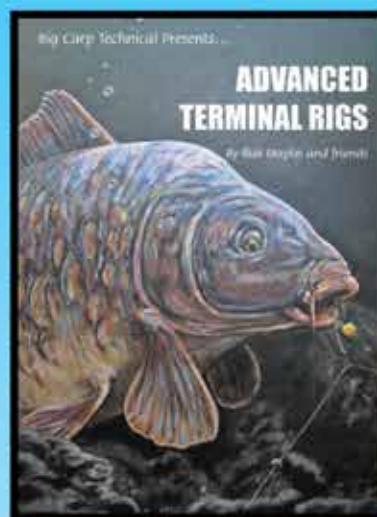
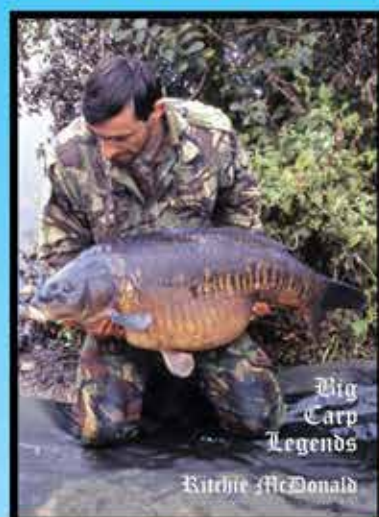
**STOKES
BELCHER
THORNTON**

FULL OF THE LATEST UK CATCH REPORTS

WINTER

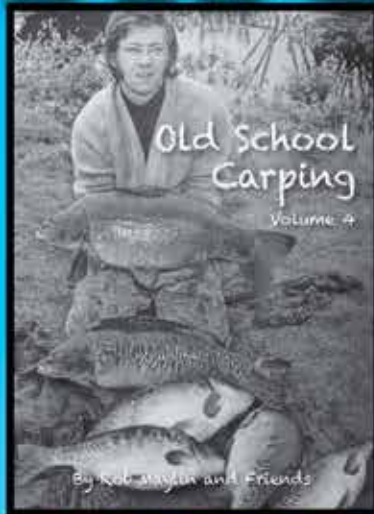
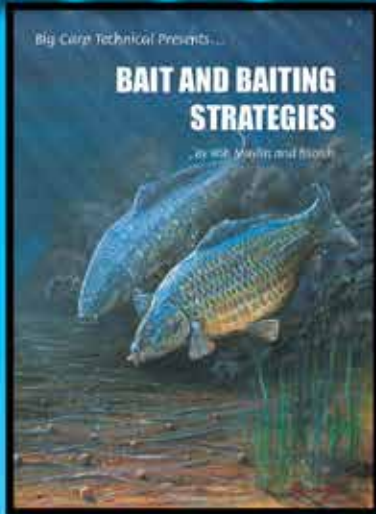


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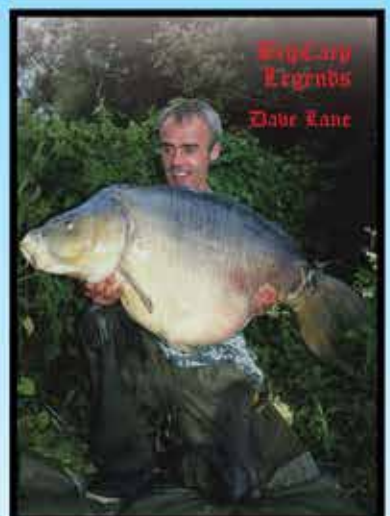
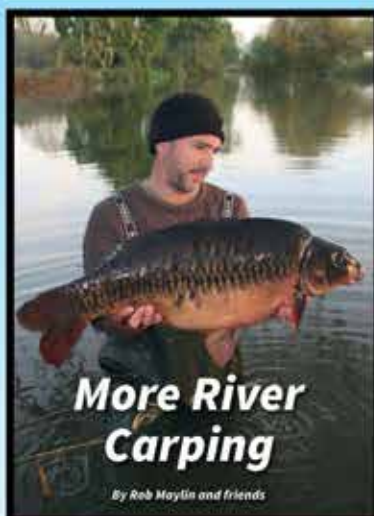
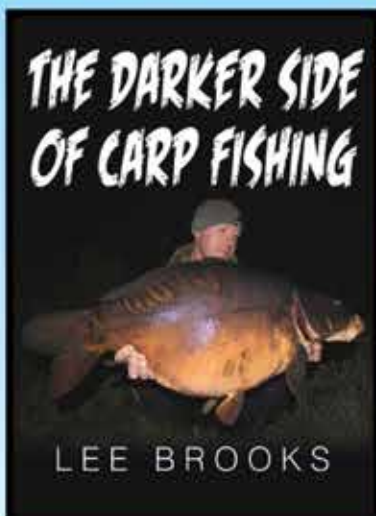
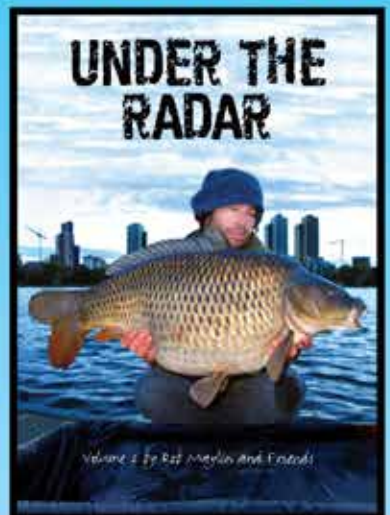
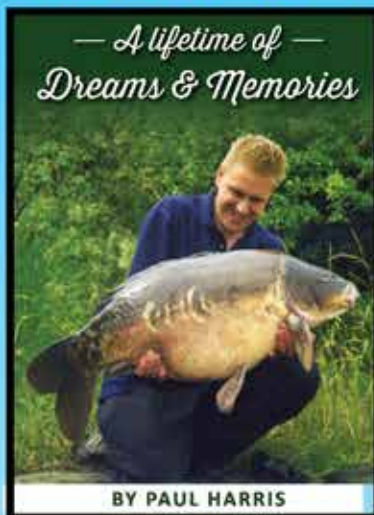
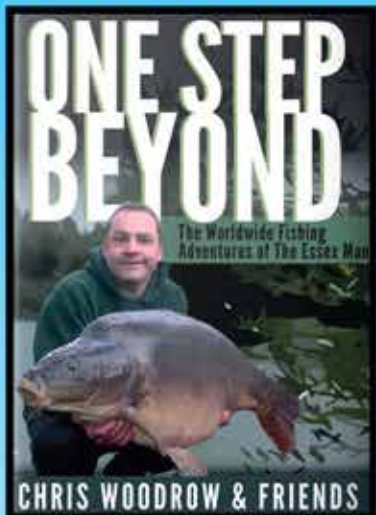


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Publications 2025



Front Cover:
Tom Stokes with one of
his 2024 hi-lights!!



Well Winter finally arrived before the now regular winter storms kicked in and soaked and battered our shores. That didn't put off everyone and there have been some impressive captures this month already - 'he who dares Rodney'

January is always a quiet month so we've taken a look at some of the biggest anglers around and their individual highlights of 2024. We've certainly let the pictures do the talking and hopefully it will give you some inspiration to get out there and brave the weather and hopefully put a carp or two on the bank. Steve Brigg's reached a milestone in his carp fishing by celebrating his 50th year chasing these illusive beasts. He's still as passionate about the sport as he was 50 years ago and 2024 has been a great year for him and all our contributors.

6. SHOCKLEADER

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

16. 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?

26. CATCH REPORTS

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54. STEVE BRIGGS

Steve is celebrating his 50th year carp fishing and wat a year he's had. check out his hilights of 2024

66. ROB BURGESS

Rob's had a awesome year with many hilights. Check out his pick of the bunch from what's been a hectic year for the him on anf off the bank.



76. SIMON CROW

The ever consistent Crowy relays has best captures of the 2024 year topped off with a 70 from the Devil's lake. Check out his favourite captures of 2024.

86. TOM MAKER

There's been no stopping Korda's latest recruit. He's banled some massive carp from both home and abroad, week in week out

96. WILL RANDALL

Will had an incredible run of big carp up to Christams. Find out exactly what he managed to bank.

102. TOM STOKES

What a year for Tom Stokes. He's been on both sides ofthe camera, banked some amazing carp both home and abroad and ever landed a girl-friend!!

114. OSCAR THORNTON

More winter tips but this time from Oscar who has a great track record of landing big, winter carp.

120. LUKE VALLORY

Luke swaps venues from still to running water. The extra challenge didnt stop him banking a string of river beauties.

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SHOCKLEADER

LUKE VALLORY JOINS DYNAMITE



We are absolutely THRILLED to welcome the incredibly talented Luke Vallory to the Dynamite Team! Luke's angling prowess is undeniable, and his passion for the sport is truly inspiring. We've been huge admirers of his career for years and we're confident that this partnership will be incredibly successful.

"I'm genuinely excited to be joining the Dynamite baits team," says Luke. "Every angler has used Dynamite at some point in their lives and the Monster Tiger Nut played a huge part in my early angling. I'm excited to work with such a respected brand and help develop some incredible new products."

Welcome to the team, Luke!



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**SWIMBOOKER
PARTNERSHIP WITH
ANGLING TRUST TO
DEVELOP BOOKING
PLATFORM**

This groundbreaking project aims to deliver a comprehensive, easy-to-use platform for coaches and organisers to effectively manage and promote their events online.

The need for this initiative was inspired by the growing necessity to digitise operations and streamline processes, making event management more efficient and accessible.

THE CARP SOCIETY LIMITED ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING NOTICE



Venue: The Lodge, Horseshoe Lake, Burford Road, Lechlade, Gloucestershire, GL7 3QQ

Date: Sunday 16th February 2025 – 1.30pm

Agenda:

1. Welcome from the chairman
 2. Update on the last 12 months
 3. To approve the minutes of the AGM held on the 3rd December 2023
 4. To adopt the annual report and financial statement for the years ending 31st May 2024
 5. To approve the annual accounts will be produced by an independent chartered accountant to a maximum fee as determined by the directors
 6. Election of directors & officers *(where applicable see note below)*
 7. AOB
 8. Following the closure of the formal meeting a question-and-answer session will commence.
-

NOTES

FR: This is the 2024 AGM date postponed to Feb 2025

The AGM will be conducted in accordance with the company Memorandum and articles of association which are available on the society website or via the head office located at Horseshoe Lake.

A current membership card is required for admission and the submitting of any proxy/voting forms.

Any questions relating to the accounts must be submitted in writing to the company secretary and be made 21 days prior to the AGM date. (Sunday 26th January 2025)

Director nominations (where vacancies are available) must be made in writing in accordance with the memorandum and articles no later than 21 days prior to the AGM date. (see note below)

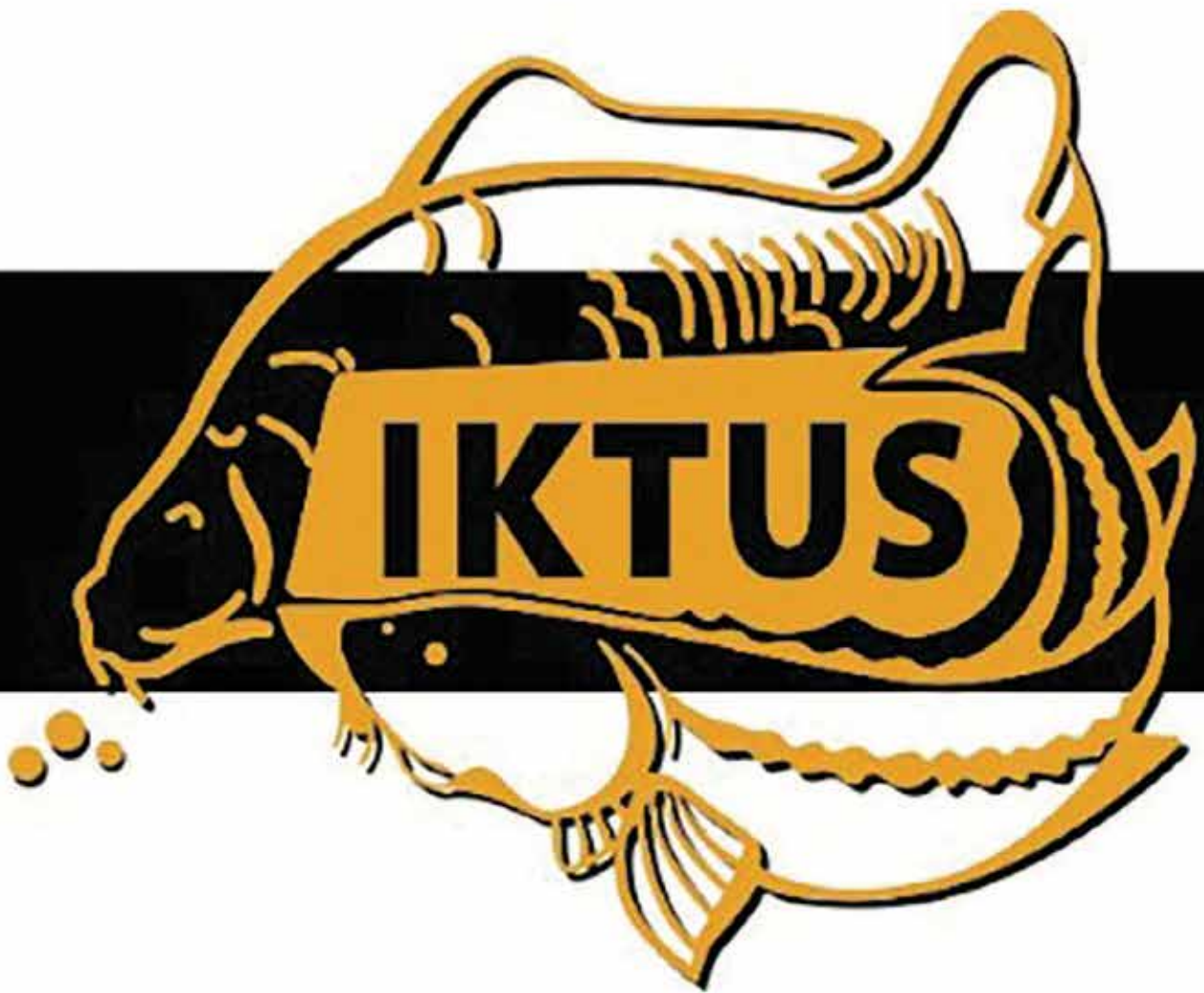
All questions/nominations should be sent in writing to The Secretary, The Carp Society, Horseshoe Lake,, Burford Road, Lechlade, Glos, GL7 3QQ or email sales@thecarpsociety.com quoting your current membership number.

Current directors: 8 / Vacancy: 1

Where applicable, elections shall be held by vote at the AGM meeting where applications are received.

Any director nominations (as per the M&A terms) must be submitted to the Society in writing no later than 21 days before the AGM date. (Sunday 26th January 2025)

After this time a full list of names standing and voting forms will be available 14 days prior to the meeting along with voting/proxy forms



FISHING RESORT



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DANNY TAYLOR JOINS KENT PARTICLES



Kent Particles are delighted to welcome big fish angler Danny Taylor to our consultants' team. Danny had the following to say....

I am a south coast-based angler that targets both intimate estate lakes as well as large gravel pits. My favourite type of angling is stalking big carp,

close up and personal, using baits such as corn and bread under a peacock quill on a barbel rod and centrepin reel.

I've had both Commons and Mirrors in the UK to over 47lb. I'm excited about joining Kent Particles and I'm sure my debut year with the brand will be a great one



LUXE LAKES
THE ESCAPE

www.luxelakes.co.uk



LUXE LAKES
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- Available through lakes exclusives, 3 and 6 day bivvy sessions and luxury accommodation, Luxe Lakes is premium UK Carp fishing at its best.
- Created 30 years ago capitalising on its stunning natural setting, our 2 spring-fed former Trout lakes are flanked by mature woodland and have a well-established Estate Lake feel, without the 200 years of silt.
- With average depths of 8' and perfect water quality, our stunning Carp will flourish, making Luxe Lakes one of the UK's newest mega waters, giving you the possibility of your first 45lb+ Carp as well as the all-important bend in your rod.
- If you appreciate nature and tranquility, then Luxe Lakes is The Escape for you.

The Cast

- The Cast are our stunning looking, deep bodied, big shouldered Mirrors and Commons from a bloodstock with a pedigree of producing many 60lb+ fish.
- 400 mega Carp populate our two lakes from mid-doubles, twenties, thirties to "The Prop," weighing in at over 45lb! We also have some original, pristine 30lb+ Grass Carp in the mix.
- The Cast are the stars of the show here at Luxe Lakes.



The Lakes

Carp Luxe 1

- 6 acre spring fed lake with average depths of 8'. This stunning water has a feature island, 3 double swims and 9 single swims. A massive carp stock of 300+ to over 45lbs.
- Home of "The Prop" our 45lb biggest of the pack (with the potential to break 50lbs in 2025) as well as "The Magic Mirror", a very special scaley mirror weighing in at over 37lb!

Carp Luxe 2

- 1.5 acre spring fed lake, beautifully established with average depths of 5'. The intimate water has 2 double swims as well as an island. Carp stock 60+ to over 30lb.





Accommodation

The Cow Shed

- 'The Cow Shed' is our restored former milking parlour with 2 double bedrooms, wet room, open plan living kitchen/living room and log burner.
- Finished to the highest of standards, the Cow Shed has everything you'll need for a luxury Carp fishing experience, including a hot tub that will keep the family well entertained during your stay.
- It can be booked for 3, 4 and 7 night stays and has its own 'Cow Shed' swim ☺ and will be available to book from May.

The Fly Lodge

- 'The Fly Lodge' is our tastefully renovated former fly fishermen's retreat and is located on the bank in the deepest area of the lake with average depths of 9'.
- It has 2 single beds and can be booked for 3 and 6 night stays, it boasts its own double swim ☺☺ and is ideal for Carpers that like to fish in luxury and comfort.



Q&A with Luke Roper

Q: Why Wales?

A: For 16 years we were searching for a complex to create our Carpy idyll. Mainly looking at venues in France, nothing was ever perfect and post Brexit it made us to look closer to home. We knew what we were looking for and in November 2023 we found our slice of paradise! Life is often quoted as being about 'the journey' but we believe it's also about 'the destination' and we've found it right here in our stunning former Trout fishery, in The Garden of Wales.

Q: What makes Luxe Lakes unique?

A: Location, location, location and our Carp! We are located in a gorgeous, unspoiled natural environment where time has stood still. Agriculture and rural communities dominate the landscape, when you are on the bank it feels like you have gone back in time. From our first viewing we could see the potential in this special site. Our unbelievable strain of Mirrors and Commons come from RH Fisheries with a pedigree of producing many 60lb+ fish, with their growth rates and our fantastic water quality the future is very bright!

Q: What has the first year as a fishery owner been like?

A: It's been whirlwind 8 months since we got the keys back in May. We knew the first year was always going to be the most challenging in transforming a Trout venue into a Carp fishery. We've created swims, netted, erected 1000m of Otter fence, installed security gates, added CCTV around the site and stocked 400 carp across our 2 lakes to 45lb+ as well as renovating the property's



on site, so in a word, hectic! That said we are very proud of our progress and really do have a mega venue on our hands! We are well on track for our opening in May and bookings are now open, please visit www.luxelakes.co.uk and follow the Swimbooker pop up to secure your session.

Q: What is your vision for Luxe Lakes and has your fishing and work life shaped it?

A: We have a clear vision to provide a premium Carp fishing experience with the option of luxury accommodation, all in the most stunning of natural settings. We will never be over developed or commercialised, anglers will feel away from their day to day and experience "The Escape". I've been fishing for 40 years, Carp fishing for over 25 and visited venues from 300 acre public waters, French rivers and pay lakes as well as being on some of the best syndicates in the Midlands. Drawing on these experiences and combining my passion for detail and quality (from my ongoing career in fashion) means everything needs to be, and will be, spot on!

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TACTIC

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Early spring is a time that most anglers welcome. The return of longer days, warmer weather and looking ahead to more time fishing in the great outdoors. That is unless you are allergic to tree pollen, when the delightful prospect of spring can be ruined by the impending doom of hay fever. Help is at hand though. Airborne allergens expert and creator of HayMax allergen barrier balm, Max Wiseberg, offers his advice to fellow hay fever sufferers to make their fishing a little happier this spring.

“The peak tree pollen season tends to be in April,” says Max, “but can be earlier depending on the type of tree pollen you are allergic

to. The main tree allergen, birch, pollinates in April until early May. Ash and plane pollen also peak in April, and oak in May. Alder, hazel, elm and willow peak earlier, in March. But this depends on the early spring weather and on the mildness or severity of the winter. A mild winter can mean earlier pollen.”

“As with all allergies, avoidance is key. If you are allergic to wheat, you avoid wheat, and it’s the same with tree pollen. Only it’s a bit trickier as pollen is in the air we breathe. So begin with an allergen barrier balm to help stop pollen getting in your body. If less gets in, there’s less for your body to deal with and less for it to react to. Allergen barrier balms, such as HayMax, which has been proven to trap over one third of pollen, are applied around the nostrils and bones of the eyes to trap pollen. Apply before you go out fishing and as needed during the rest of the day.”

“Wearing wrap around sunglasses whilst out fishing, and any time you’re outdoors, will also help stop pollen getting in your eyes and a hat, cap or other head covering will help prevent it getting trapped in your hair.”

“Try to time your activity when pollen levels are lower – so avoid early morning and early evening when pollen counts tend to be at their highest. And finding out which tree pollens you are allergic to can also help. You can try to plan your spot to avoid the trees whose pollen you are allergic to.”

“Take off your shoes when you return home so you don’t



tread pollen around your home. Washing your face, or better still taking a shower and changing your clothes on your return will get rid of pollen from your body and the clothes you are wearing.”

“And of course there are many remedies, treatments and natural products available that help deal with the symptoms once they occur. The body’s reaction to too much pollen in the body is to produce histamines – normal amounts are good, as they keep us attentive and awake, but too many, and we get the common symptoms of hay fever – sneezing, itchy eyes, streaming eyes, runny nose etc. So antihistamine tablets work by counteracting the affects of the histamines. Some are available over the counter from pharmacies, whilst others are available only on prescription. Natural antihistamines are also available, such as quercetin and butterbur.”

“Antihistamine nasal sprays can quickly ease itching, sneezing and watering but are generally only proof against mild symptoms. Steroid nasal sprays and drops reduce inflammation





in the nose; they work best for clearing nasal symptoms – itching, sneezing, watering and congestion – and sprays sometimes clear eye symptoms too. Eye drops may help reduce itchy, watering, swollen eyes.”

“And if one product doesn’t work try combining treatments – in other words create your own ‘Hay Fever First Aid Kit’. My recommendation is an allergen barrier balm, one (and only one) antihistamine, one (and only one) steroid nasal spray, eye drops and one or more natural remedy.”

- from £8.49
- www.haymax.biz

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THE VETERAN FEATURING RAF



An incredible way to end an incredible year for 'The Veteran', @rafcarp_fishing with this insane, old as the hills linear carp.

Cranking the scales only feathers away from 60lb, this capture will be Rafs' favourite for many years to come, probably.

Lots of effort was put into this capture as it definitely didn't go as we first planned, but when this one rolled over the net every single blank and all the hours watching the water became irrelevant. The moments we live for as dopamine levels skyrocket!

Raf has been on a haul this year as he caught 3 carp over the 35kg mark and another 30kg whilst we were in Romania. Let alone all the other big fish he's caught this year alone!

PAUL'S FULL SACK



A Moment in time that will be forever engraved , the perfect end to an amazing journey 11 nights stretched out over 4 wks and experiencing the most surreal winter action, 28 fish landed one loss 13 over 30lb a new lake 40lb common all coming to mainly work nights arriving at the lake for 6pm ,rods out by 7.pm packdowns at 6.am to then do the hr journey bk and to work all came to an end yesterday morning!

After spending the weekend with the family my supportive lady @ claire.allnutt thanks Wifey told me head to the lake after Marwell and finish it !! Well 2.am i did battle with Country biggest Fully scaled what a way to finish an already amazing year 2024 you have been kind!

MOHICAN IS A CLOSE SHAVE



On my second night I stayed up really late just listening for shows and I was just about to get ready for my bed in the early hours when I received a bleep on the left hand Nev. As I went to investigate I got two bleeps and the Neville just went into melt down. I picked the rod up and wound down into it with it feeling heavy thinking I was in control then things changed very quickly flat rodding me for about 50-60 yards it felt like an eternity honestly. The rest went smoothly with the fish hitting the spreader block I still really couldn't see that well with the headtorch it wasn't till I actually inspected what was in the net I actually realised what a unit I'd just landed After weighing her , she tipped the scales at 40lb 14oz a yateley 40 was mine after chatting to a pal he informed it was a fish called the Mohican last caught at 39-10 and that I was the first to catch her.



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Lloyd Birkin with 'One Scale' at its biggest ever weight of 48LB

Kevin Waters well pleased with his first UK forty, in less than promising conditions.>>

SPENCER MEETS ROYALTY



More Dinton Royalty, as he lands another 50+ from the historical country park.

KEVIN'S FORST FORTY



PETE STRIKES GOLD

Pete Day struck gold recently with this incredible 45lb+ December common!



LOOK AT LUKE



Luke Davies with a recent 45+



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TRIO OF FORTIES



A trio of 40s for Nigel Sharp on Sandhurst

PAYS TO BE SINGLE



Colin Bright had an absolute result catching this awesome 40lber on a single Live System Hard Hookbait cast towards a showing fish!

DARROW'S NEW RECORD



Congratulations to Richie on catching 'Marks Fish' at a new top weight of 41lb 4oz!!

STORMING RESULT

Jon Williams , this big old 48 pounder was the biggest of 15



MUSTANG RECORD



The mighty Tank, a new Mustang Lake record at 53lb 8oz. Well done to Andy Green, the captor.

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51 AFTER 48

After the 48lber last weekend this 51 pounder turned up too. I couldn't quite believe my luck!!



STORM 'SANDY'

The Armadillo at 43 for Nigel Sharp



2 FORTIES TOPS HAUL



We done to Adam Maplethorpe who had a great early Christmas present landing 14 carp including these three stunners. He told us: "I had a special trip mid December to end 2024 on a high. I'd put a lot of prep in prior to the trip and it paid off on my 150acre syndicate. In 48hrs I managed 14 carp including a new pb of 44lb 6oz and another 40 at 41lb 5oz. These two were backed up by 8 x 30s, with 6 of those going over 35lbs up to 38lb 14oz. The fish were loving the Cell in 15mm and 10mm covered in Smart Liquid and Syrup with either Cell, Pineapple Juice or Milky Toffee Pop-Ups making up the bait.

PERFECT START



Craig Runham has had the perfect start to the winter with this incredible mirror, "One Pec" at 46lb 8oz!

SCOTT POPS CHERRY

Mid 50 in December...
Yes please. Cherry on the
cake for Scott Larman's
incredible year.



Big Carp *Promotions*

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



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**THE PRICE
IS RIGHT**

How's that for a big framed common. This one from Luke Price tipped the scales at over 41lb, smashing the lake record!



Jack Stickley banked the impressive "Asylum mirror " at all time high weight of 51LB

**THAT'S
NUTS!!**



KING OF THE CASTLE

Early Christmas present for Ian Castle at 42lb and it's freezing in the wind .



'STOW' JOKE

Absolutely smashed my PB with one of London finest resident The Big Common from the 2&3 reservoirs at a massive 47+

**RESULT
MATE!!**



Alan Stagg has been making the most of the incredible Pit 3 at Frimley this winter with Charlie's Mate weighing 51lb 4oz!

**COOKING
CRACKER**



Nathan Hooper landed a stunning 40lb 2oz Mirror from Coking Farm

NOT SO BLAND



Fishing over on St Johns, Matthew Bland landed 4 carp to the biggest of the year so far at 45lb 6oz!!



OAK LAKE BIGGY

Ryan Swift couldn't have hoped for a better way to wrap up 2024, recording a 12-fish hit on Old Mill's Oak Lake, topped by the largest common in the lake, the mighty Peach Common at 46lb 6oz, backed up by a 32-pounder.

The 36-year-old from Manchester said: "I started the session with six stockies on the first day, but by the second day it was clear the smaller fish had moved out and a couple of larger residents had moved in. Just before last light, the rod tightened up and we were away! Feeling heavy, I knew it was a good fish and after a 15-20-minute battle, the biggest common in the lake rolled over the cord. I was a happy, happy man!"

Ryan focused on a spot at 100 yards, where he baited with 15mm Bug boilies all soaked in Bug Amino Smoke and then covered in Insect Meal. He then fished Bug Corker wafers over the top on six-inch D-rigs.

BIRTHDAY BANGER



Storm Darragh kept me off the lake, but it gave me time to prep the spot with 10kg of groats and boilies. Weekly baiting since November had been producing multiple bites every session, so I increased the bait with mild weather and a big moon phase approaching.

Arriving after my night shift on Friday, I was relieved to find the swim empty. The spot—a hump just over 80 yards out—was ready. After Spombing a kilo of corn and boilies, the rods were set.

An hour later, the right-hand rod screamed off. After a tense battle through snaggy margins, I landed The Italian—a crusty old mirror and the lake's biggest resident at 46lb 2oz!



CHRIS BELCHER

MY WINTER TIPS

LOCATION – Location is always the most important aspect of my angling. Reed beds, snags, dying weed beds and lilies are the first areas I will be looking, areas the carp can hold up and feel safe.

WEATHER - The weather plays a huge part in my Winter angling. I'm always studying the future forecasts, looking for milder spells and drops in air pressure. The carp will respond to the smallest



increase in water temperature, and if possible, I will aim to get out fishing around these periods.

BAIT - I've been having good success using a mix of @mainlinebaitsofficial Cell and Essential Cell boilie crumb, soaked in Cell Smart Liquid and Essential Cell Syrup. I also add a few whole baits in 10,15 and 18mm along with some matching Cell pellets. I add a small amount of lake water, this makes the mix heavy which helps it reach the

bottom quickly and accurately.

VENUE CHOICE - choose a venue that has good winter form. From my experience, lakes with a shallow average depth with not much weed present are a good starting point. Shallower lakes react to weather changes quickly, and the fish are never too far away from the bottom. Hopefully you can take something from this to apply to your own fishing. Get it right, and you'll be amazed just how enjoyable Winter fishing can be!







Secrets of The Thames



By Rob Maylin and friends



STEVE BRIGGS

2024 : A YEAR TO REMEMBER

2024 marked 50 years since I caught my first carp. In February, I went back to Brooklands lake in Kent, where it all started, and caught several fish from those same old swims, including a 16lb 4oz mirror, the same size as my first one, all on solid bags with Citruz hook baits. Fishing in the UK is always spread out between trips away, but I had great times on home waters, including a big one from Horton Church lake at 48lb 12oz aided by the Bushwhacker, shipping a bait right under a marginal bush. In April, I started trips away with a productive week at



Chavaignac in France, where I caught the lake's biggest at 63lb 8oz just before the end. A week later, in Poland's tough conditions, I landed good fish up to just under 50lb before heading to Germany for fun times with friends catching plenty! Mid-year was all about

France, first at the tough, weedy Saule Paquot, where a 56lb common topped a good week. Nash Days up north was great for meeting people and catching nice fish before heading to a vast inland sea where I battled the elements for big wild commons.



September saw a huge 4000-mile round trip to Romania and Italy. The driving was tough, but the lakes, people, food, and fishing made it unforgettable! The Citruz was unstoppable on this trip—the new version is fantastic. Monster Shrimp and Scopex Squid baits have also been brilliant, helping me catch consistently all year.

Most of the year, I stayed

under the Hide XL, my favorite shelter, but for big trips with Joan, it's always the Blockhouse. The Trax Evo Power Barrow has been essential for moving swims. Show season is coming, and I'll be traveling across Europe for talks before exciting fishing adventures in 2025—I can't wait to share them with everyone!"



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.

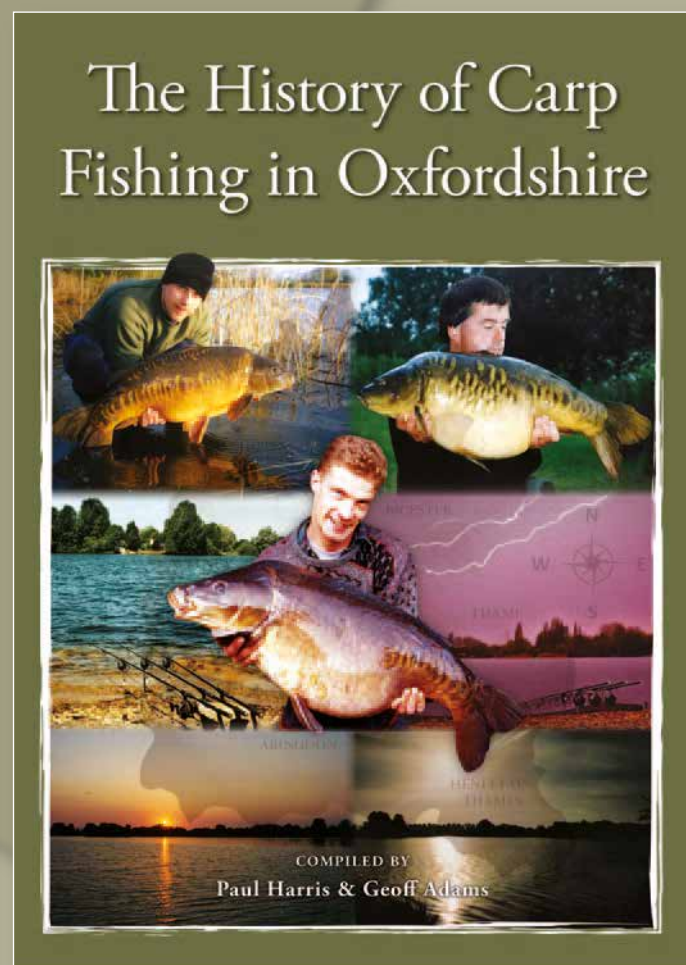
Nick Stansfield is a brilliant young Oxford carper who doesn't shout about his catches. We have two incredible chapters from him from two of the county's most iconic lakes, The Leisure Park and The Big S! Josh Chatfield has written a fantastic chapter which really gives you an insight into how fishing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

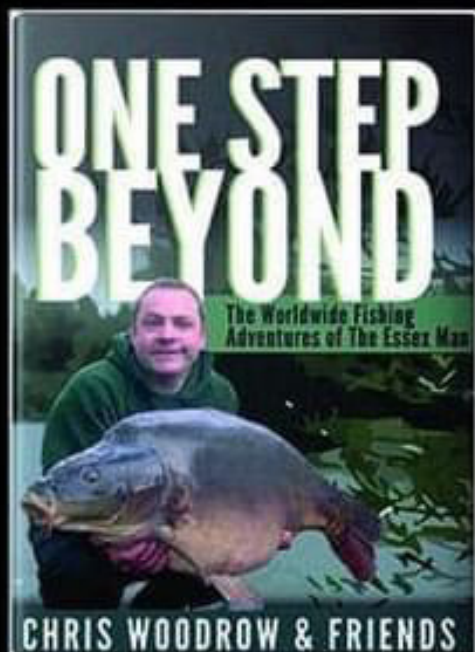
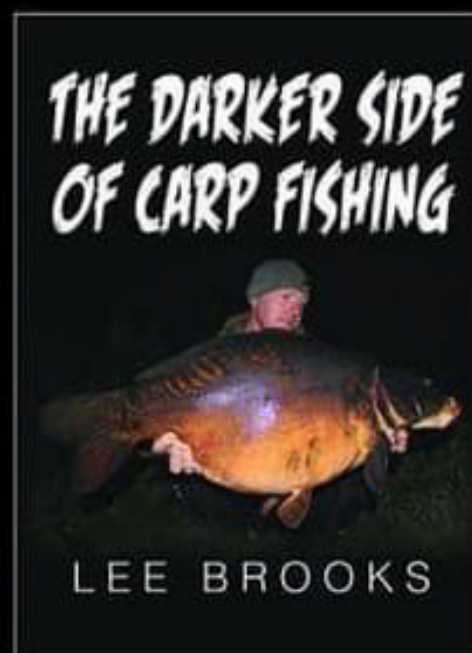
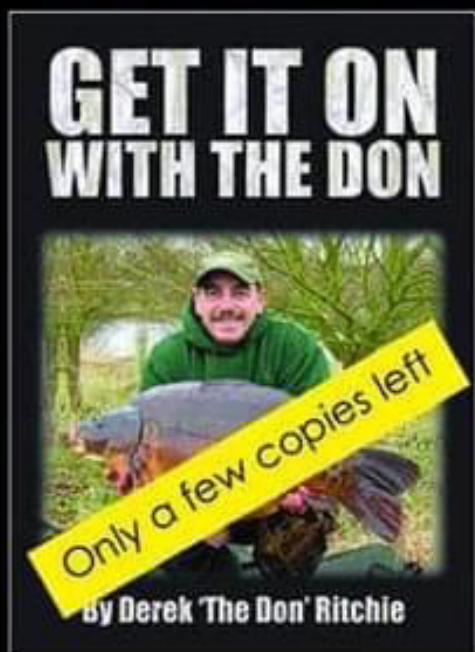
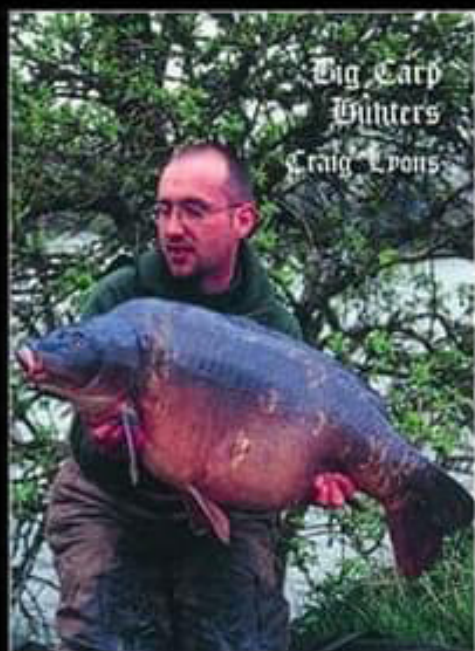






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ROB BURGESS

2024: A MEGA YEAR

Mega year on all fronts! From fishing, to family, to turning 40. As you get older the year seems to fly by and it only feels like last week I was looking forward to Spring! I must say that Spring was very kind with two 40lbbers from Pettitts lake at Norton Disney along with many incredible 30lbbers.

The matches are always something I look forward to and it was a good year! Semi-finals of the BCAC pairs, a second place overall in the

BCAC Singles and we've still got the final of the European Carp Angling championships to look forward to next Spring... We won't talk about the Crete Lakes match

We have also had some mega filming trips this year! Crete lakes Masterclass; the Norton Disney challenge; many successful trips out with Carp Fix and next year is already lining up to be a lot of fun on the filming front!

As far as personal trips went though, there were two

that really stood out for me... the much sort after Shoulders

The Korda social at Gigantica at 71.12lb!!

being the first! Amongst 15 My second favourite trip

carp that I managed to land was getting thew chance

were two very special carp (in to take the family away to

fact probably two of the best Redwood Lake in France.

carp I've ever caught)! The Special times and very fond

Spotty Leather at 68lb and memories for us.



Personal life has also been BIG! At the back end of November, my son turned 1 and a few days later I turned the big 40!!

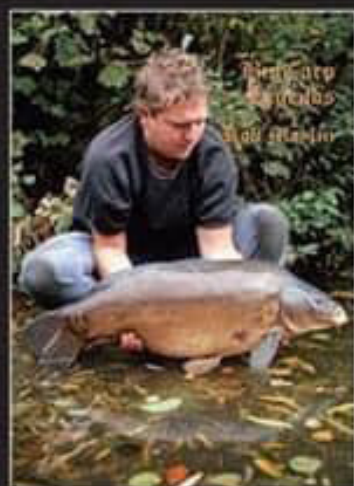
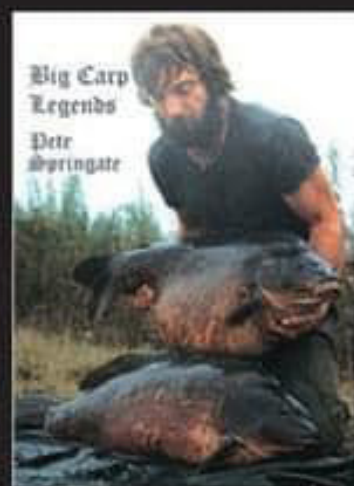
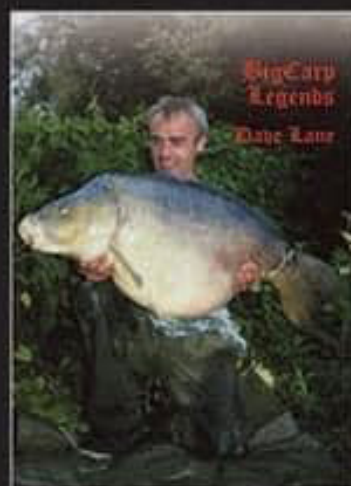
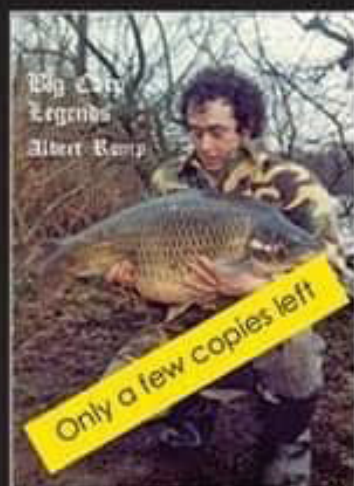
But as we wind down towards the end of the year, I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a happy New Year and good luck in 2025!





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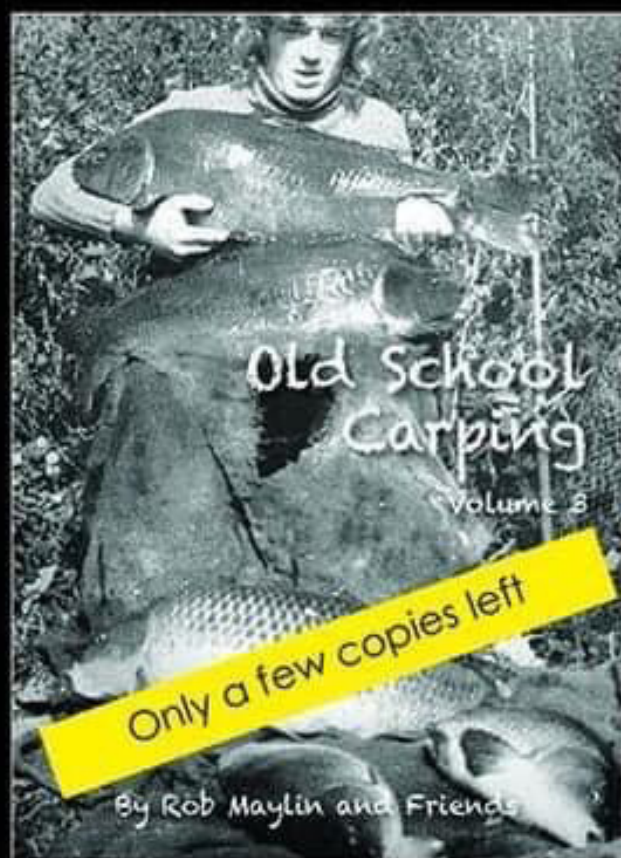
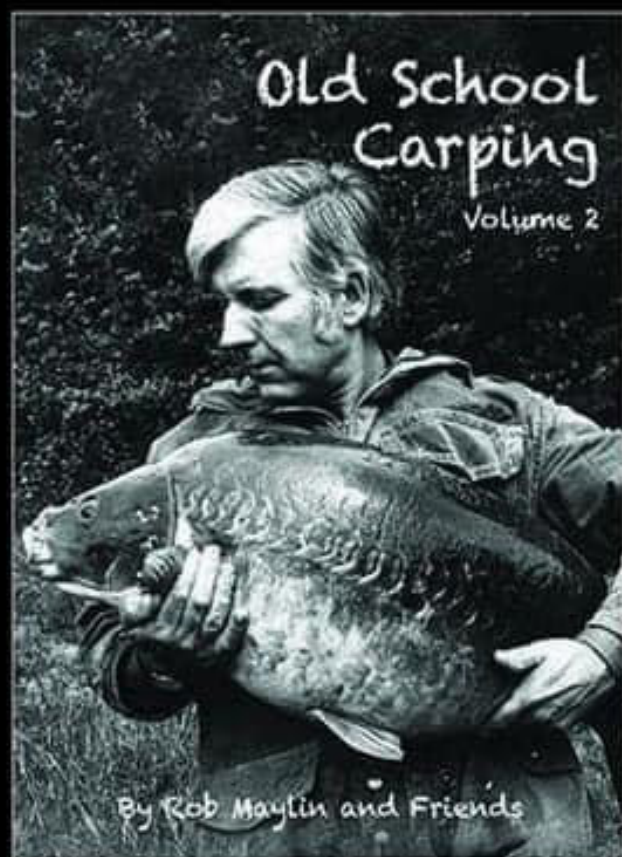
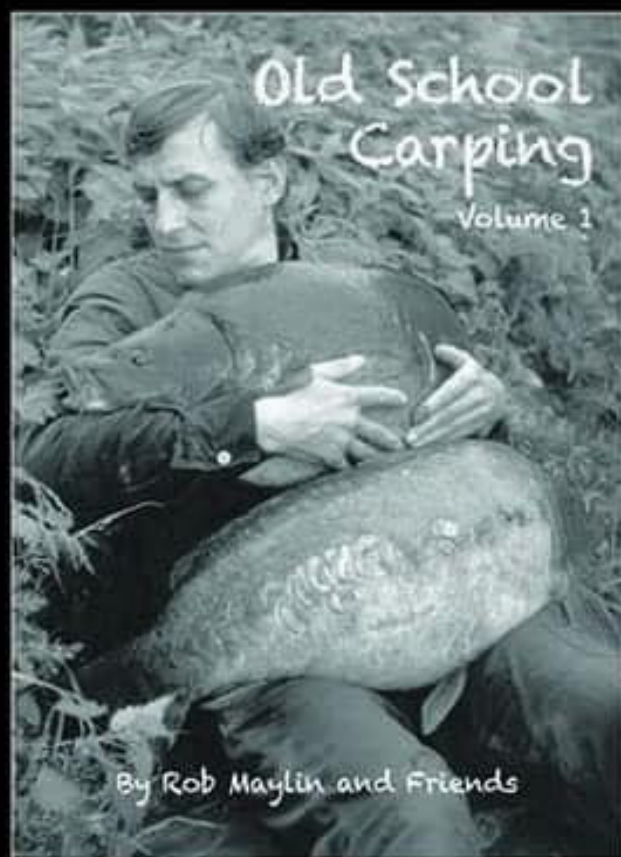
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SIMON CROW

2024: IT'S IN THE DNA

I've had another brilliant year's fishing at lots of different venues. A massive thanks to Avid Carp & DNA Baits for supporting me along the way. Also, to everyone who's watched my vlogs or liked my posts, it all helps, even the negative stuff I'll end with ten of my favourites from 2024. But one carp really stood out and what follows is an account of that trip.

A twelve-night trip to the 'Devil's Lake' in southern France saw all my dreams come true when I landed my 'carp of a lifetime' weighing 75lb 4oz or 34.13kg (after scales calibration). The session started badly when my camp was completely wiped out by a storm on the first night. Despite seeing warning signs for strong wind on the drive down, I stupidly set up in the wrong place, only to be woken in the early hours by my broly being ripped apart and in the bushes! Thankfully I had pliers, a needle, thread and lots of long bank sticks to get through the rest of the trip. It was by far the strongest wind I'd encountered while fishing, but nothing compared to what the

lake is known for (the 'Devil'). I knew there were carp in the area as I kicked things off with a low-thirty mirror in the morning. The next week saw me plagued by catfish and flat calm conditions. It wasn't the best weather for carp fishing, but with a change forecast on my last two days I sensed something might give when fish began to show. Just before first light on day ten I was woken by a bitty take which resulted in a slow plodding big fish battle. I could see it was a good 'un by the width of its shoulders, and when it rolled into the net my wishes of a big public water carp were before me. Despite enjoying all forms of carp fishing (public or pay lake), there is something very special about the public lakes

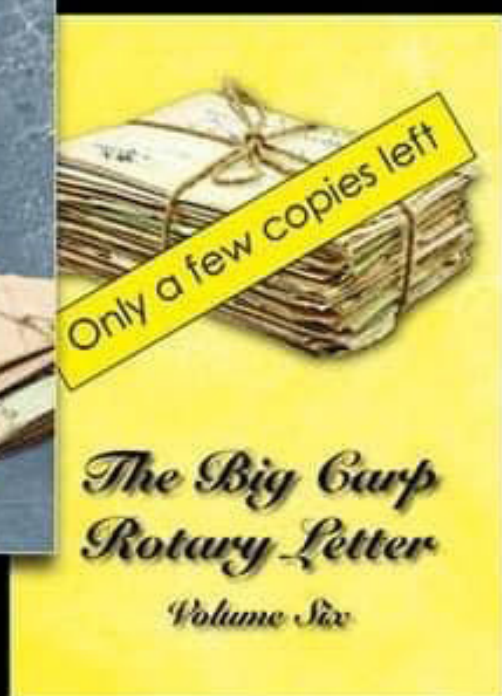
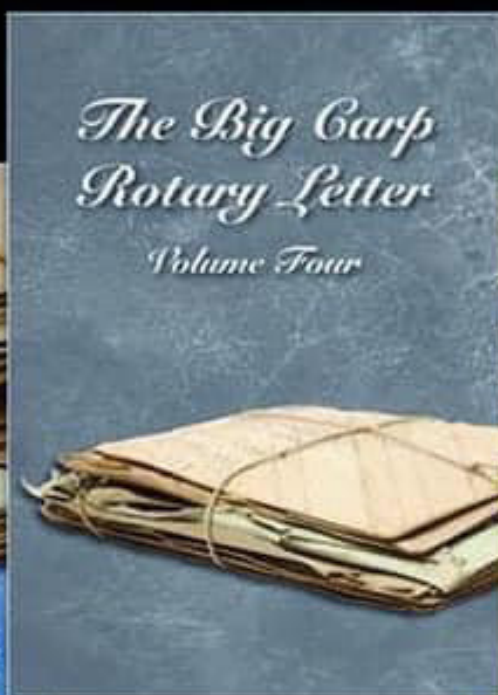
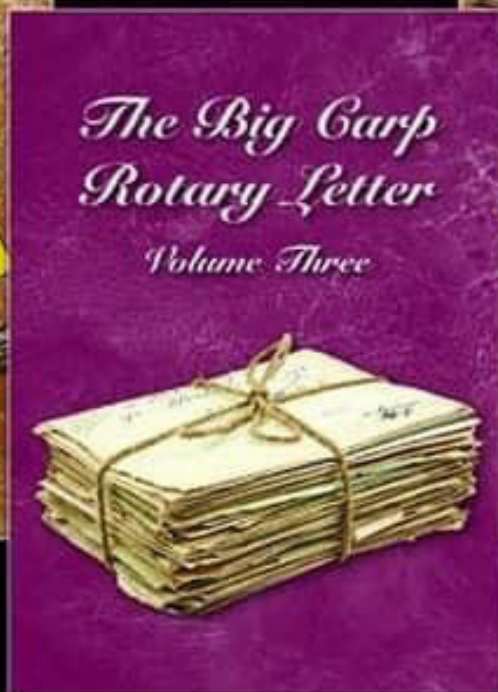
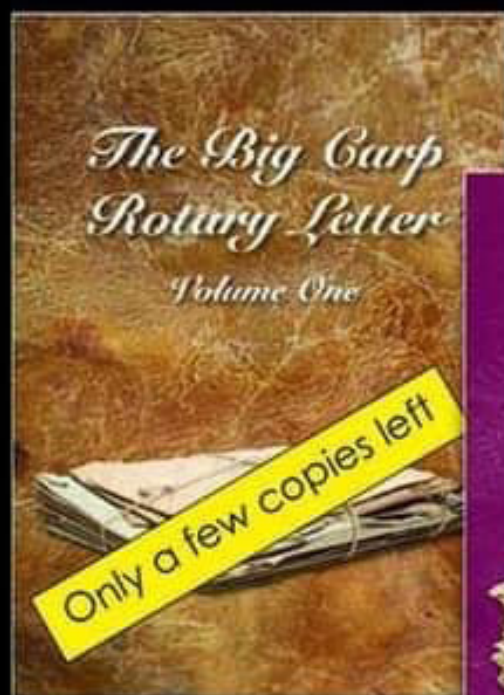






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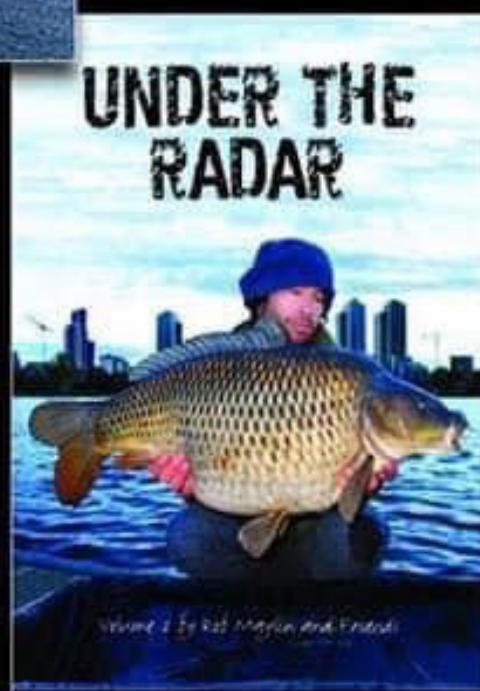
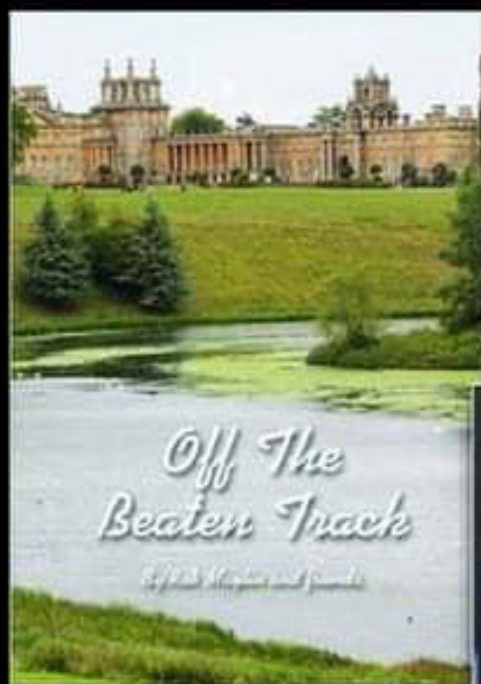






OFF THE BEATEN TRACK SERIES

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TOM MAKER

2024: BUSY BUSY, BUSY

“It’s crazy to think it’s already been a year since I joined Korda! Time really does fly when you’re having fun.

My goal has always been to get out as much as possible and enjoy every session, no matter where I go. This year has been one of my best yet—amazing venues, great people, and incredible carp.

I kicked off the year with successful trips to Linear Fisheries, landing plenty of carp, including a couple over 40lbs. I also filmed some social media content with the

Korda lads, tying fishing with fun collaborations.

Among day-ticket trips and filming with Cinecarp, I invested time on my Oxford syndicate, chasing the Oxfordshire record. While I haven’t caught it yet, I’ve had some great sessions, landing carp over 40lbs and learning more about the fish’s movements, setting me up for 2025.

A highlight this year has been quality time on the bank with my amazing fiancée, Laura. When we met, she knew

nothing about fishing, but now she's fully invested and supportive. We've had trips both in the UK and abroad, with carp to 45lbs at home and nearly 70lbs on the continent. She's my lucky charm!

Joining Korda has also brought exciting opportunities, from creating short-form content to being part of my first Masterclass

and recording a podcast at Korda HQ.

I'm ending the year in France, fishing with my Dad—a rare but special treat. Despite tough weather, we shared a lifelong memory when I caught a common just shy of 50lbs on the first morning.

What a year it's been, and I can't wait to see what 2025 holds!"

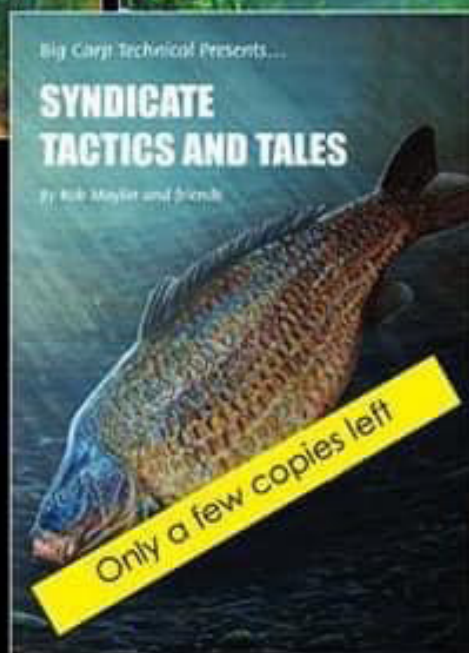
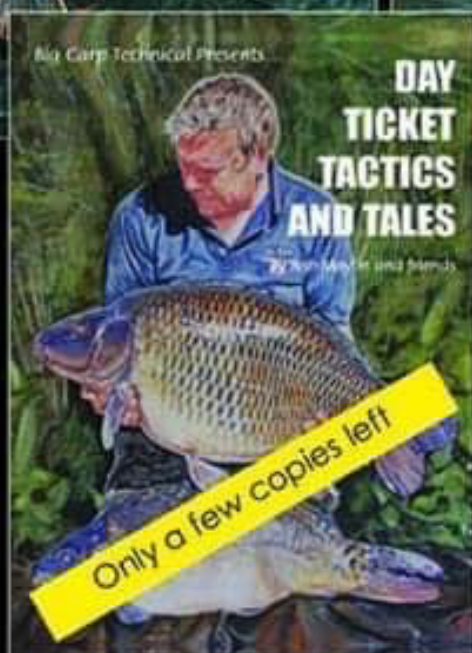
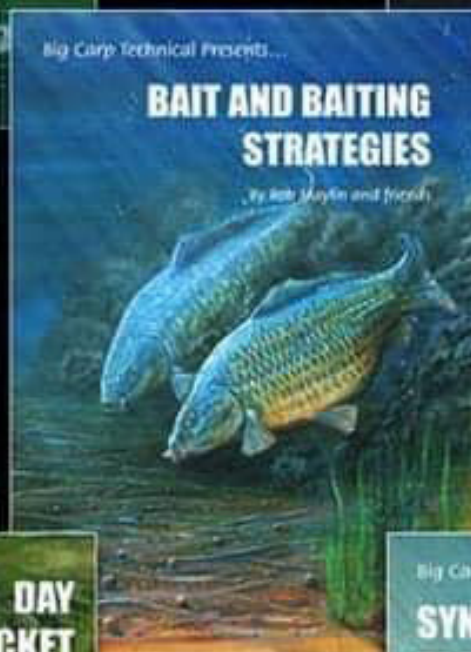
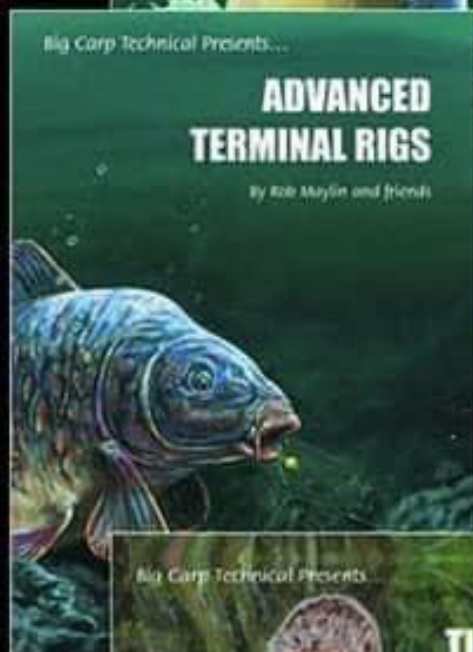
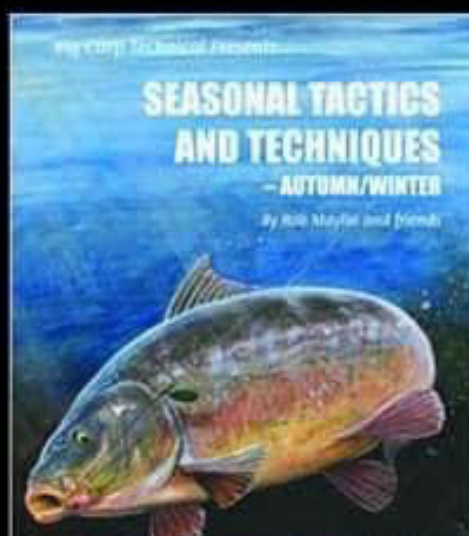
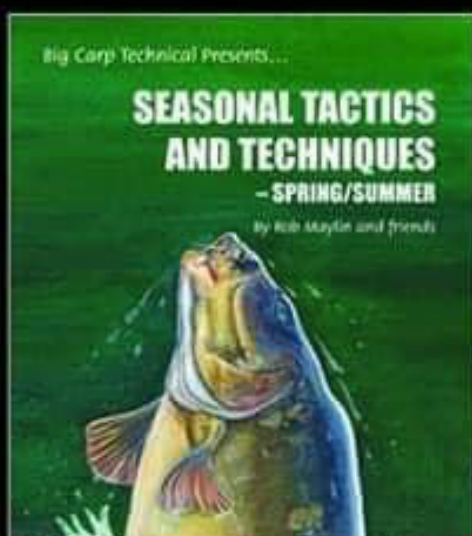






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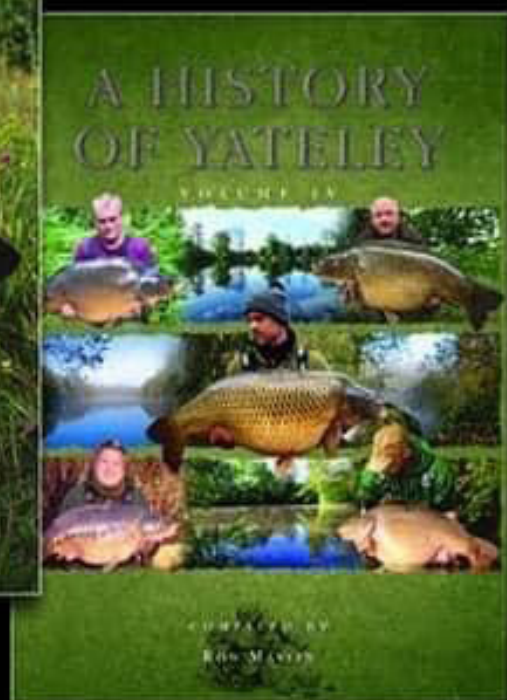
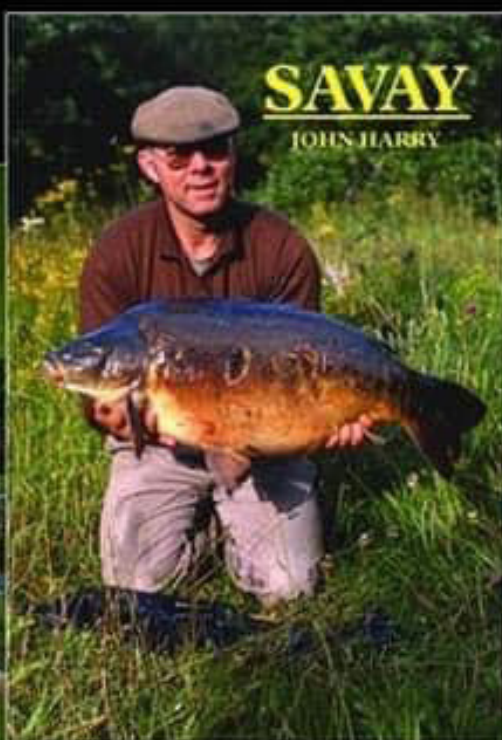
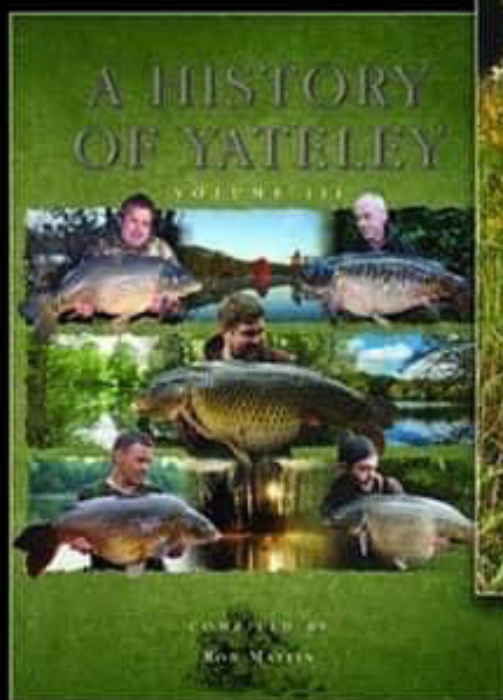
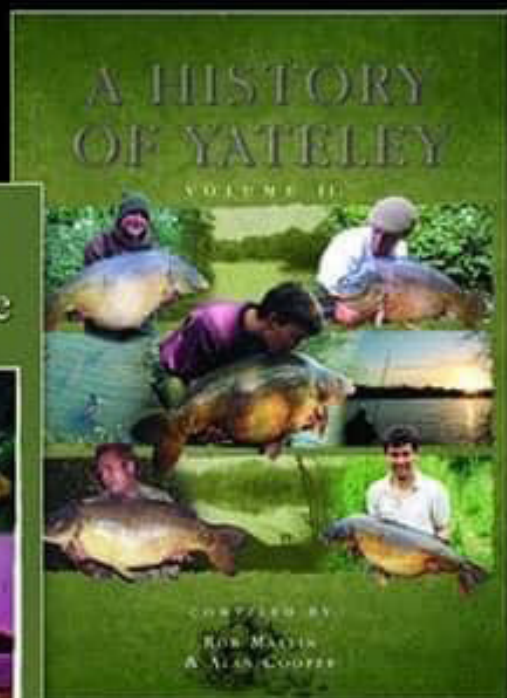
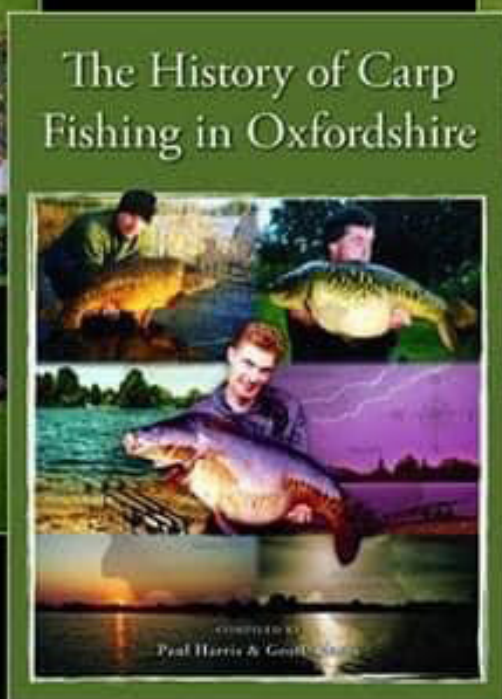
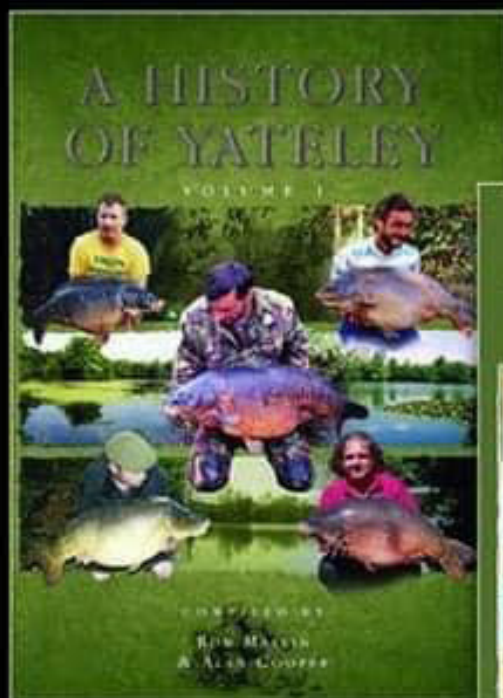
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WILL RANDALL

DECEMBER GIANT

Do early Christmas presents get any better than this!? Moony looking incredible at an all-time high of 47lb 10oz!

Having joined Phil's lake this year, Will Randall headed down in December after the flooding had subsided, to find an empty lake. With the water still carrying a chocolate colour from the floods, Will spent some time lapping the lake looking for signs of activity, finally settling into an area having seen a lone show.

Will fished Ronnie rigs over just enough pellet and boilie

to hopefully tempt a bite in the difficult conditions. It wasn't until 8am the following morning that things fell into place and he received the bite he could only dream of - one of the Phil's Lake A-team, and in prime winter condition to boot.

This awesome capture adds to what has already been a successful year on Embryo waters for Will, having caught a number of good fish from Stanton where he bailiffs, including the mighty Tyson back in Spring at a weight of 44lb 8oz.





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TOM STOKES

2024: WHAT A YEAR

“Although I wouldn’t say 2024 has been a standout year for me in terms of what I’ve caught, I’ve still managed to catch plenty of lovely carp, both at home and abroad.

The year started off with a mega trip to Lac Luna in France back in February with Lauren, catching a load of carp to over 50lbs. Then Darrell and I hauled at Carp Arena in April, again catching carp to over 50lbs. I also had a great couple of weeks filming a new Underwater with DF at Carplantis in May. I joined a new syndicate



back home in the UK, catching a few nice ones through the Summer up to upper 30s and then in the Autumn I finally managed to do a bit on Stoneacres, where I was fortunate enough to catch a handful of mega one's, topped by the incredible Mini Choco.

There have been loads of other trips to various venues and carp caught amongst those, but they are some of the more memorable trips and captures from the year.

.What does stand out about 2024 though, is at the start of the year I actually went and



got myself a girlfriend..... a shock I know lol. I've moved house, been on holiday multiple times, and so for the first time, in as long as I can remember, I've had other things to look forward to other than just fishing. I wouldn't say the fishing has suffered

as a result of this, but I've certainly not fished with the same intensity this Summer as have done for the last decade or more.

I wouldn't change it for the World though, as I've enjoyed every minute of it. Here's to 2025!"



BIG CARP

Fine arts
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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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EXCLUSIVE





BIG CARP

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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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BIG CARP

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WATERCOLOUR CARP PAINTINGS



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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OSCAR THORNTON

TOP WINTER TIPS

1. I can't stress enough how staying warm is up there with one of the biggest edges in winter. When you're cold, the last thing you want to be doing is standing and watching or waking up in the night to listen for shows. Having warm clothes (warm jackets, salopettes, thick socks etc) will undoubtedly encourage you to wake up and listen for shows. It's easy to sit back and watch things on your phone



during the winter, but getting up and listening can change your entire winter around.

2. Leading on from my first tip is waking up and listening during the night and early hour. Setting an alarm for 1am and a staying up for an hour or two can literally change your winter - One show can give away the entire stock.

3. You'll struggle to find a better bait than naturals during the winter. Personal favourites

for me are maggot and casters, you can't beat them. I've had many a winter where without having a go on the naturals, I would have probably blanked. They won't ever get bored of crunching down on a load of casters.

4. Carp spend most of their time swimming around off the bottom, especially in the winter when the slightly warmer water will often be in the mid / upper layers. Personally, I





think a lot of people write zigs off far too quickly or just go at it half-heartedly by using just one right. You've got to fully commit and work them - when you get it right, it can be devastating. Biggest tip - put them on all rods, change depths and colours and really really work them!

5. Monitor the weather and make the most of favourable conditions. Personally, I'm

not a fan of the over nighters but saying that if you've got a big low-pressure front or temperature rise coming, you've got to be there. Winter feeding spells can be really small windows, so sometimes you just need a few hours on the right spot. PVA bags amongst the fish on an area you've been tricking the bait in where the carp are holding can lead to some really consistent fishing.



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The Legendary Big Carp Series



'Heather The Leather' – The jewel of the Blackwater Valley. She is THE Yateley Car Park Lake legend; a fish that shaped and changed the lives of some of the greatest carp anglers this country has ever known. Pete Springate, Robin Dix, Ritchie MacDonald, Jock White, Terry Pethybridge, Nigel Sharpe, Terry Hearn... the list goes on of anglers who devoted weeks, months and years of their lives in pursuit of the queen of the lake. She has gone now; gone to that great carp lake in the sky, but here, thanks to one of the county's most talented young artists, she has been brought back to life for all to wonder at her beauty... I am proud to bring you No. 2 in the Big Carp Legendary Fish series – Heather – God save the Queen!

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LUKE VALLORY

WINTER ON THE RIVER

Other than getting out for one night in December, the rods have been collecting dust in the garage the last couple of months due to prioritising my free time doing home improvements. However, I do really enjoy winter fishing, especially when you find somewhere to angle with good winter form that will pay you back for your efforts.

I have fond memories of one winter back in 2018, the fishing

was a bit different being a stretch of river, although with it being damned off at each end, it felt more like an estate lake with a slow flow, shallow depths and a deep silty bottom all over. I began this 'mini-campaign' in the late autumn, catching consistently with a simple approach of boilies and a catapult, slinging pop ups on combi-multi rigs to wherever they were rooting around in the silt, big plumes of bubbling

gave away their presence and it was exciting stuff.

The stock consisted of lots of small wild commons, but there were a few gems in there too to keep me interested, with one particular mirror in mind. The action continued throughout the winter, but overnights were becoming hardwork and I was starting to wonder if I was going to catch the one I obsessed over. After continuing to persevere,

it all came good one morning in early February and all the effort paid off when the old mirror graced my net. I have forgotten the exact weight, it was an upper 20, but it wasn't about that; just a majestic creature in full winter colour with sunken scales and purple tones around its mouth and gill plate. Certainly made the effort worthwhile and a special period of angling throughout the winter









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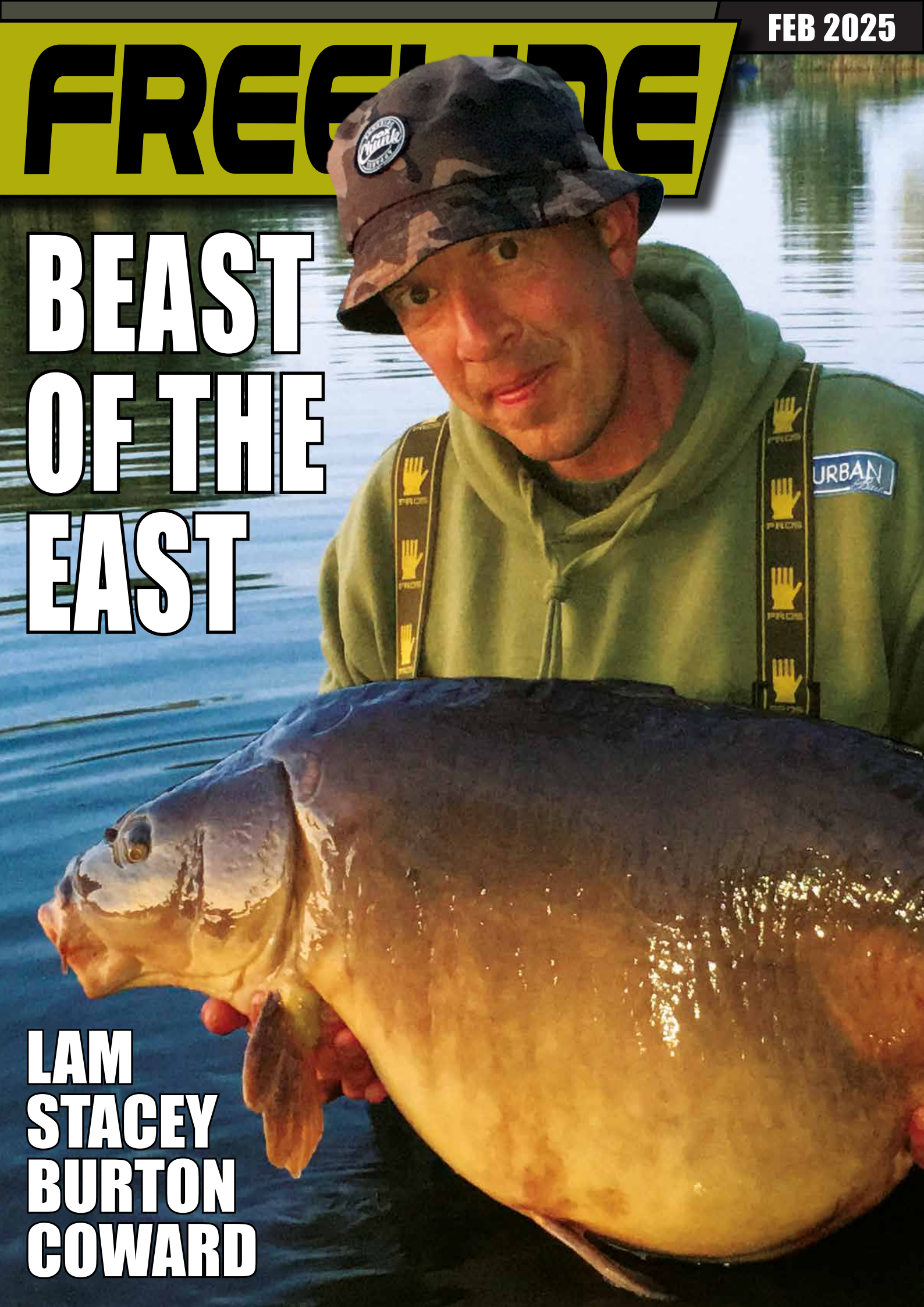


FEB 2025

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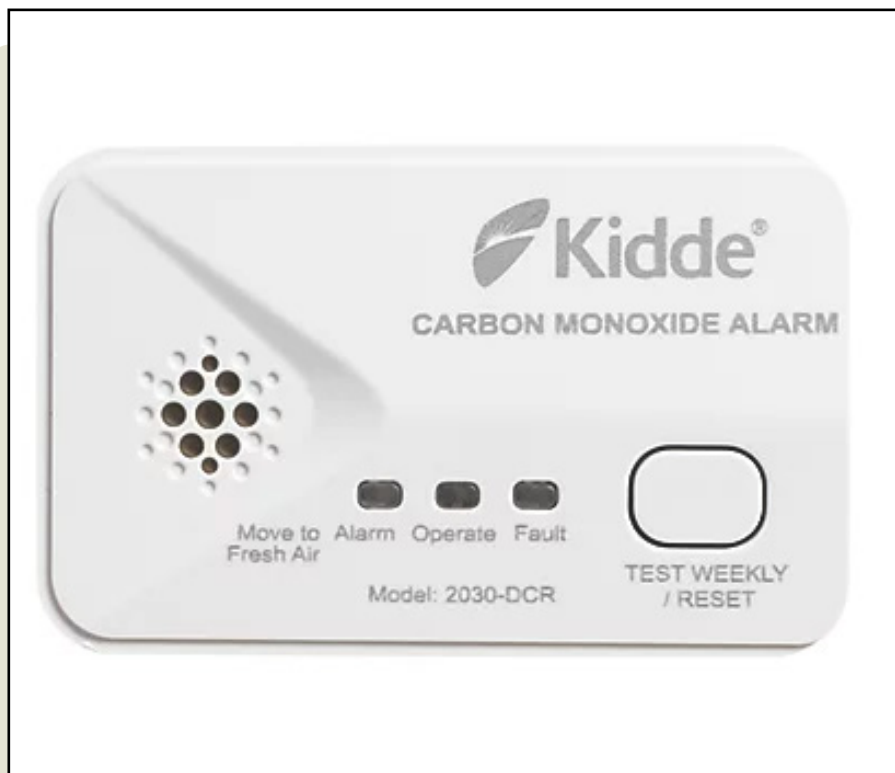
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Design & Production
James Harrison

Also available this
month Big Carp issue
343.



Front Cover:
Dave Coward with a
Church Lake resident.



It's with our deepest sadness that we learnt of another angler losing his life to carbon monoxide poisoning - this time from a Cobb oven. Some anglers have posted videos of the Cobb in use in a zipped up bivvy and the dangerous CO level is reached in only 10 minutes. A typical gas burner will take around 30 minutes. We can't stress enough the dangers of open flame fires inside a confined bivvy. You must always have the door open to allow ventilation.

There are a number of CO monitors you can pick up from most hardware stores. They don't cost the earth and are small and easily portable. A small investment that could really save your life.

6. CARP CHAT

16. CARP SCENE



20. DAN STACEY

36. DAVE COWARD

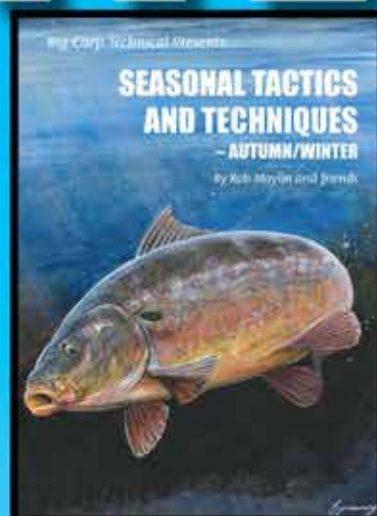
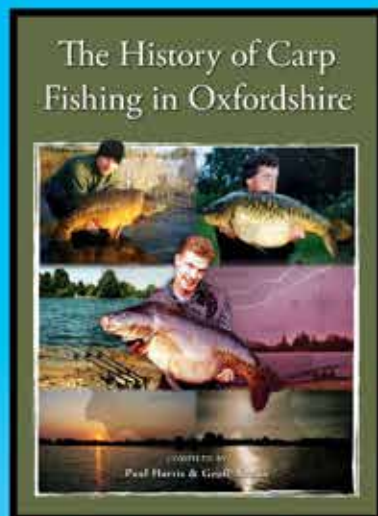


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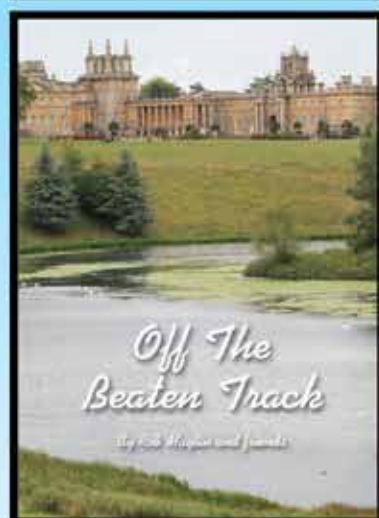
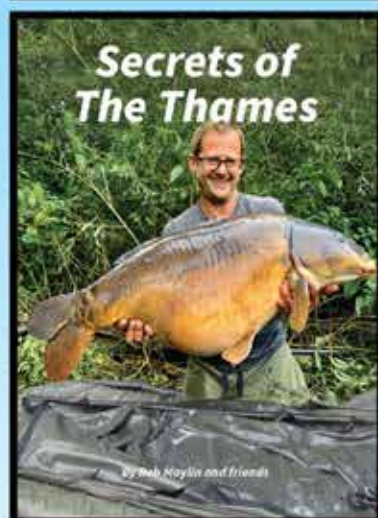
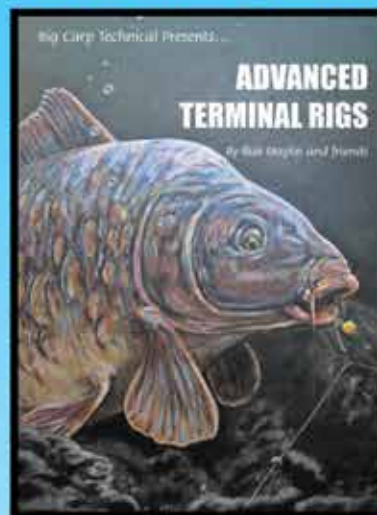
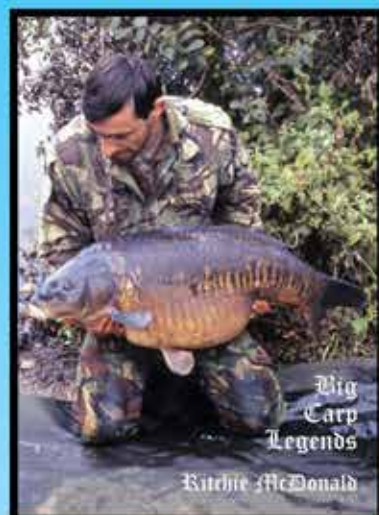
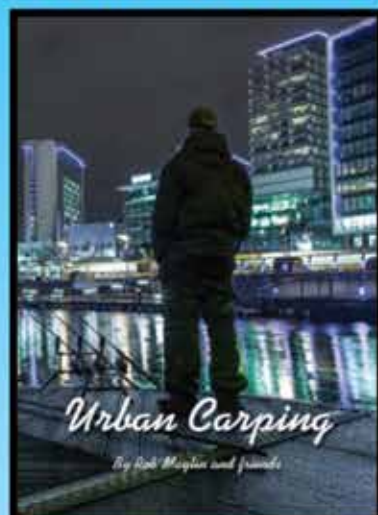
78. JOHN LAM



WINTER

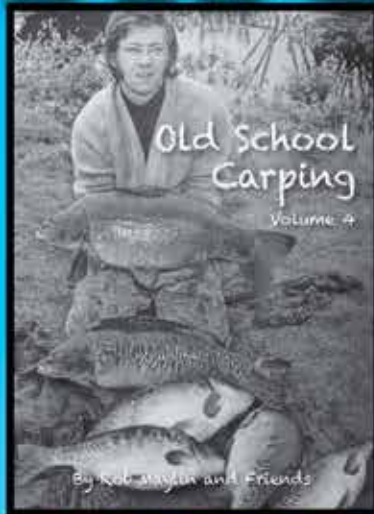
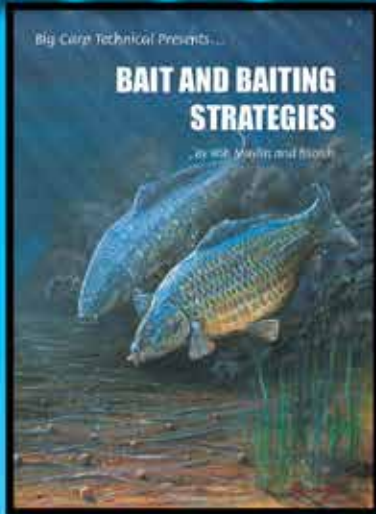


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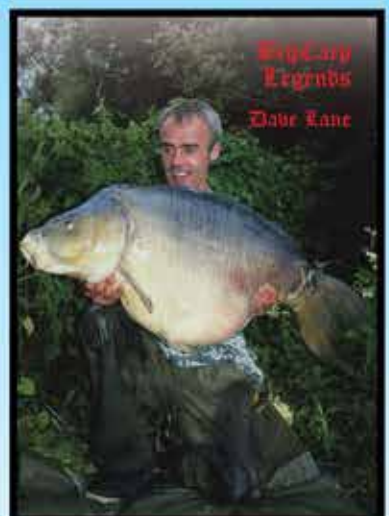
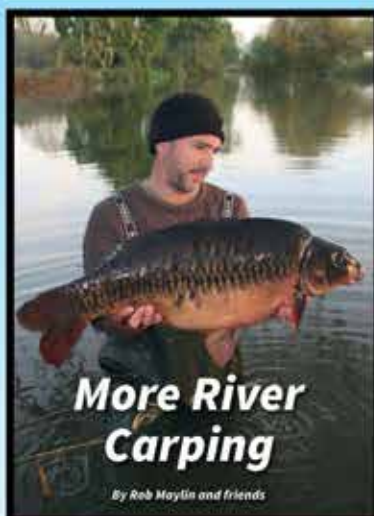
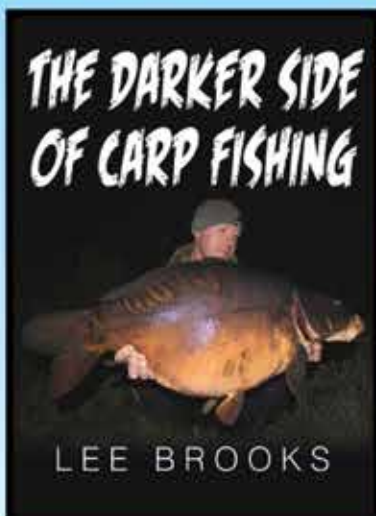
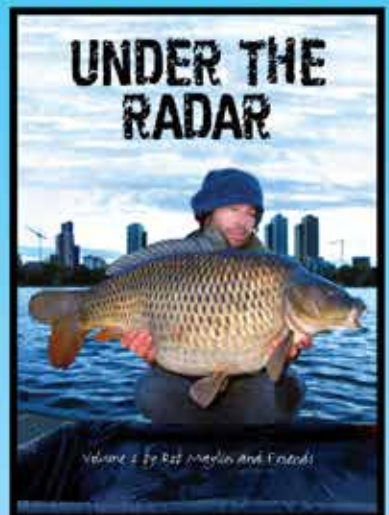
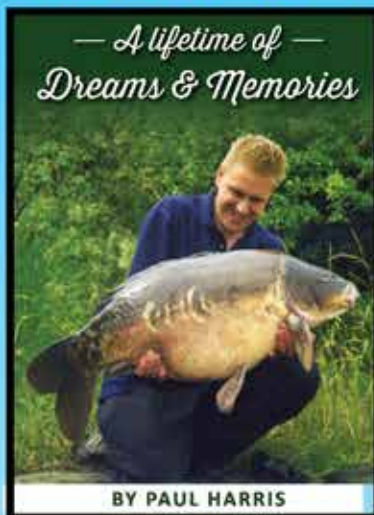
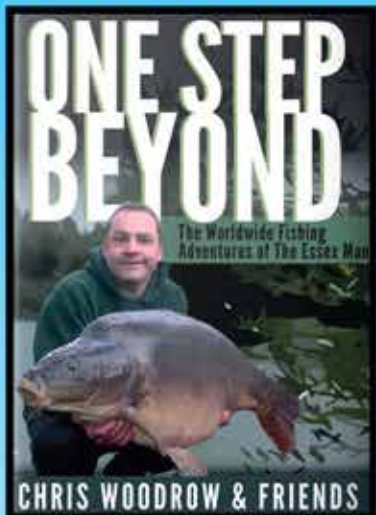


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Legacy Project - Young Anglers Support Group



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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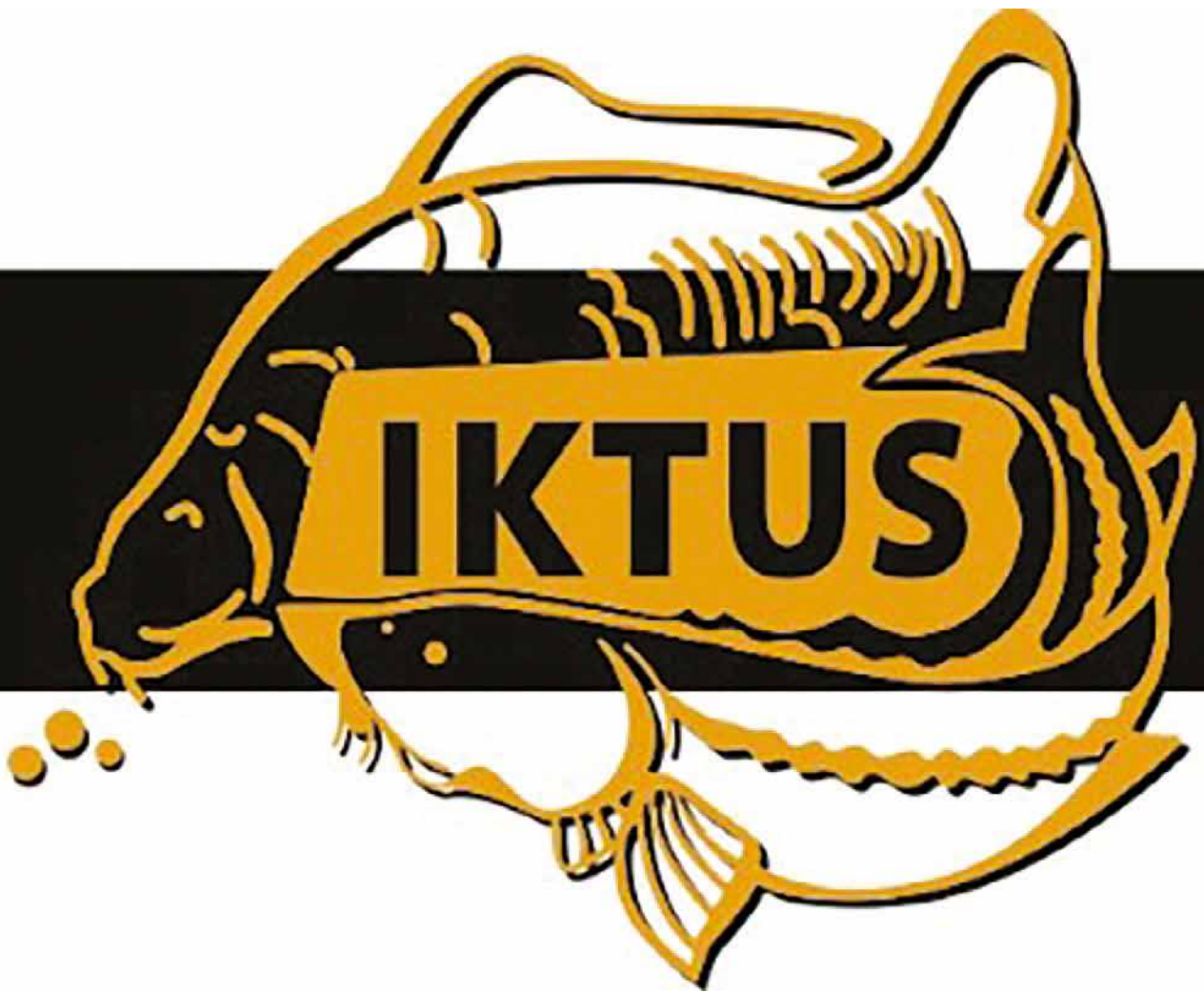
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The Cast

- The Cast are our stunning looking, deep bodied, big shouldered Mirrors and Commons from a bloodstock with a pedigree of producing many 60lb+ fish.
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- The Cast are the stars of the show here at Luxe Lakes.



The Lakes

Carp Luxe 1

- 6 acre spring fed lake with average depths of 8'. This stunning water has a feature island, 3 double swims and 9 single swims. A massive carp stock of 300+ to over 45lbs.
- Home of "The Prop" our 45lb biggest of the pack (with the potential to break 50lbs in 2025) as well as "The Magic Mirror", a very special scaley mirror weighing in at over 37lb!

Carp Luxe 2

- 1.5 acre spring fed lake, beautifully established with average depths of 5'. The intimate water has 2 double swims as well as an island. Carp stock 60+ to over 30lb.





Accommodation

The Cow Shed

- 'The Cow Shed' is our restored former milking parlour with 2 double bedrooms, wet room, open plan living kitchen/living room and log burner.
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- It can be booked for 3, 4 and 7 night stays and has its own 'Cow Shed' swim © and will be available to book from May.

The Fly Lodge

- 'The Fly Lodge' is our tastefully renovated former fly fishermen's retreat and is located on the bank in the deepest area of the lake with average depths of 9'.
- It has 2 single beds and can be booked for 3 and 6 night stays, it boasts its own double swim ② ③ and is ideal for Carpers that like to fish in luxury and comfort.



Q&A with Luke Roper

Q: Why Wales?

A: For 16 years we were searching for a complex to create our Carpy idyll. Mainly looking at venues in France, nothing was ever perfect and post Brexit it made us to look closer to home. We knew what we were looking for and in November 2023 we found our slice of paradise! Life is often quoted as being about 'the journey' but we believe it's also about 'the destination' and we've found it right here in our stunning former Trout fishery, in The Garden of Wales.

Q: What makes Luxe Lakes unique?

A: Location, location, location and our Carp! We are located in a gorgeous, unspoiled natural environment where time has stood still. Agriculture and rural communities dominate the landscape, when you are on the bank it feels like you have gone back in time. From our first viewing we could see the potential in this special site. Our unbelievable strain of Mirrors and Commons come from RH Fisheries with a pedigree of producing many 60lb+ fish, with their growth rates and our fantastic water quality the future is very bright!

Q: What has the first year as a fishery owner been like?

A: It's been whirlwind 8 months since we got the keys back in May. We knew the first year was always going to be the most challenging in transforming a Trout venue into a Carp fishery. We've created swims, netted, erected 1000m of Otter fence, installed security gates, added CCTV around the site and stocked 400 carp across our 2 lakes to 45lb+ as well as renovating the property's



on site, so in a word, hectic! That said we are very proud of our progress and really do have a mega venue on our hands! We are well on track for our opening in May and bookings are now open, please visit www.luxelakes.co.uk and follow the Swimbooker pop up to secure your session.

Q: What is your vision for Luxe Lakes and has your fishing and work life shaped it?

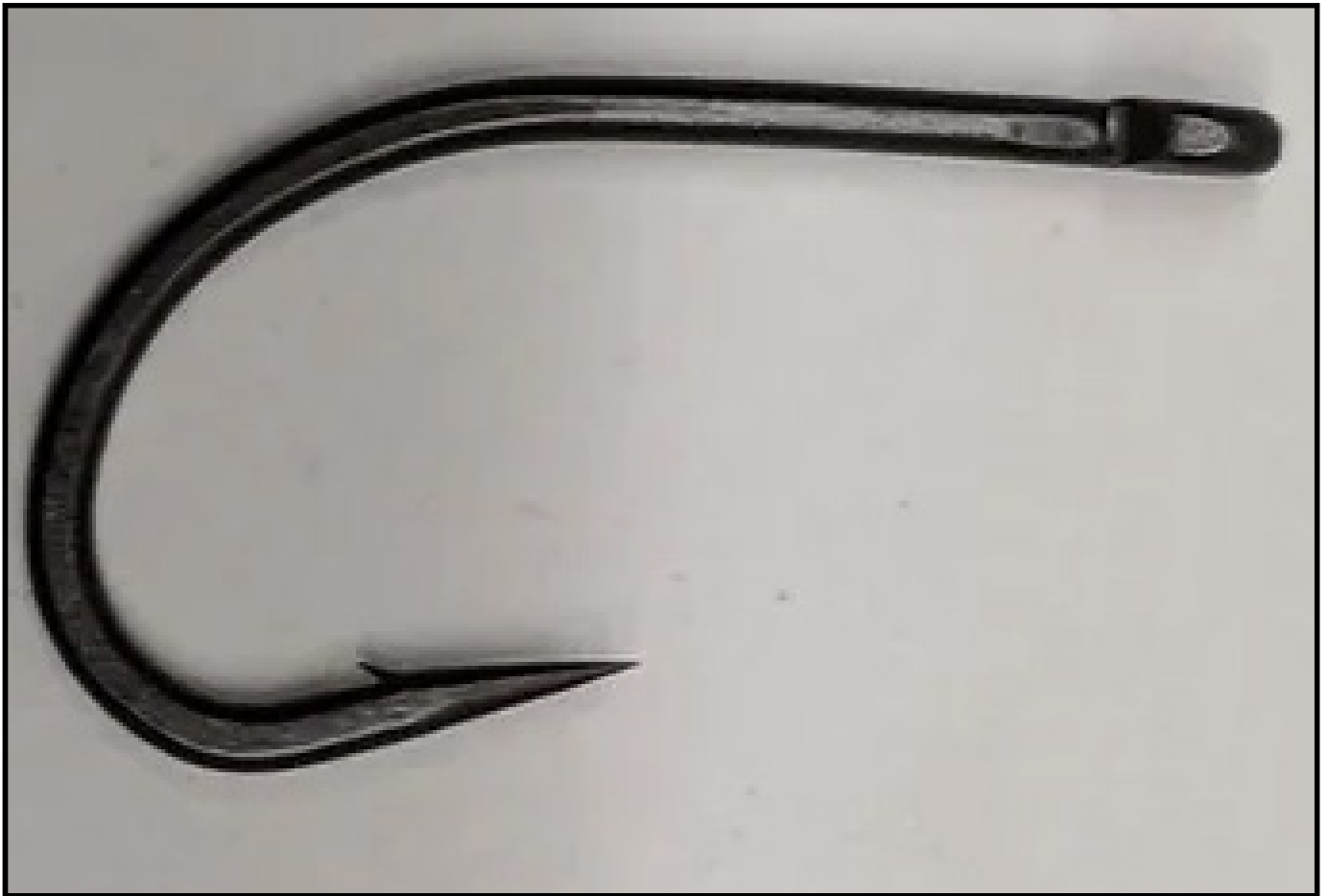
A: We have a clear vision to provide a premium Carp fishing experience with the option of luxury accommodation, all in the most stunning of natural settings. We will never be over developed or commercialised, anglers will feel away from their day to day and experience "The Escape". I've been fishing for 40 years, Carp fishing for over 25 and visited venues from 300 acre public waters, French rivers and pay lakes as well as being on some of the best syndicates in the Midlands. Drawing on these experiences and combining my passion for detail and quality (from my ongoing career in fashion) means everything needs to be, and will be, spot on!

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A YEAR IN DEEPEST DARKEST NORFOLK

Carp fishing for me has always been a personal challenge; I always set myself realistic goals around my work commitments and personal life. A 40lb common is a big fish, but I've always wanted to catch a Norfolk 40lb common, and living in Cambridgeshire it was going to be a real struggle to gain access to let my dream have a realistic chance of happening. Anyway, after a long winter doing my research and talking to a few lads I know around Norwich, I had a water in mind. After speaking with the owner and having a walk around one crispy, frosty February morning, I instantly fell in love with the place.

It was around eight or nine acres in size with a large island closest to the SW corner, full of weed, deep clear water and a few snags dotted around. It also held around 85 fish. Compared to my own angling around Cambridgeshire, it definitely held more fish than I normally fished for, but saying that, I had been told these gnarly old Norfolk carp did see a lot of pressure.

April was soon here, when the ticket started, and after a long night shift, I was soon racing to the lake on a cold misty morning, avoiding all the wildlife on the narrow bendy roads. I was definitely in deepest darkest Norfolk, and all I was expecting was to see a farmer with wellies, flat cap and some straw hanging from his mouth. Arriving at the lake, I saw four cars in the car park, and to say I was deflated was an understatement. I've always fished quite untapped waters. I walked around the pond taking to a few members who informed me it had been slow going – just what you want to hear after a 90-minute drive after a night's work. I looked until my eyes started bleeding, and I was slightly attracted to an open area down the bottom end, mainly because it didn't have any other members, and I did see the odd show and a few lumps at that – surprising. I just begun to wake myself up, and a game plan entered my head.

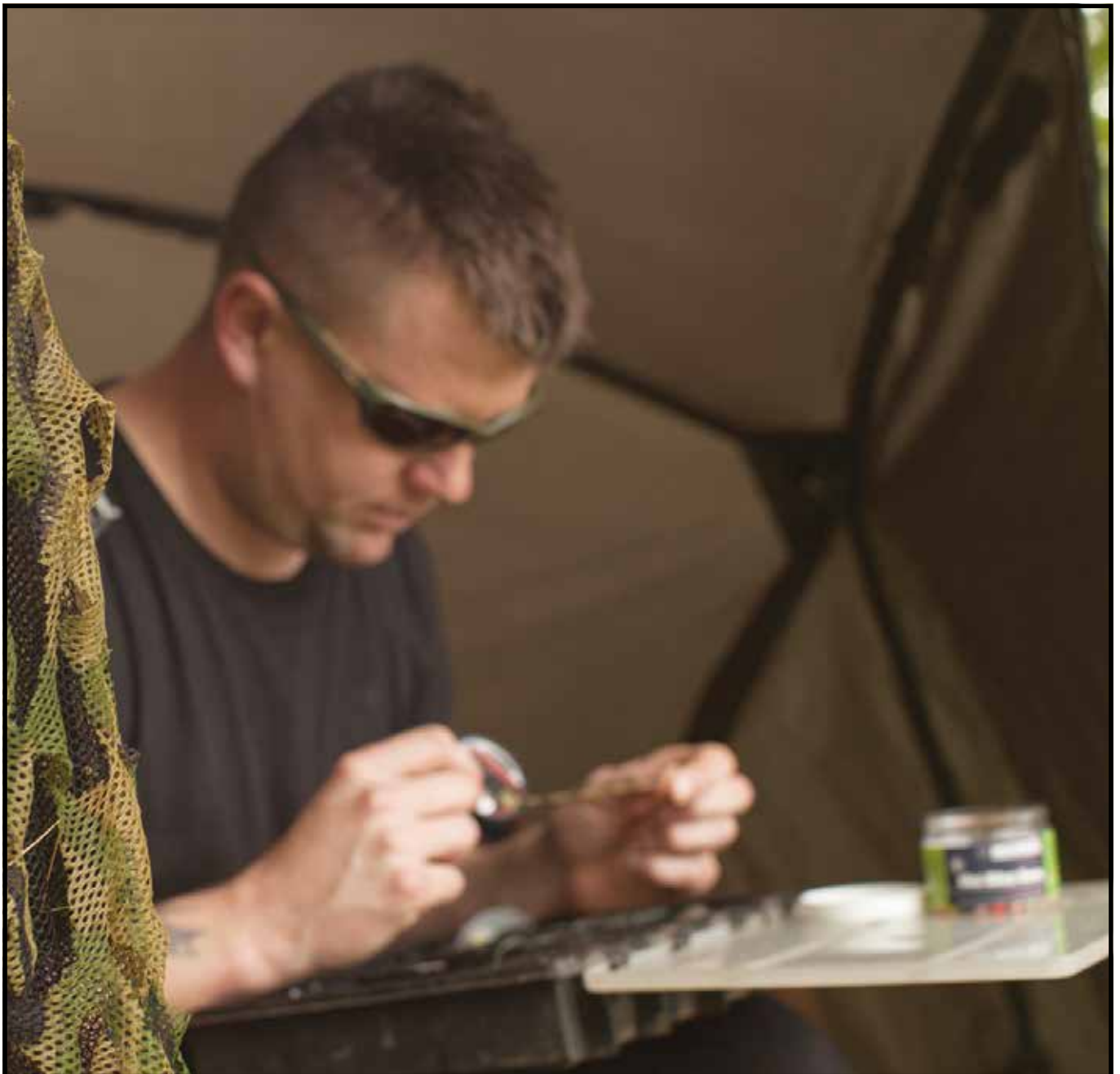
If I said everything went well, I would be telling a lie. To be honest, it was completely the opposite... I had a flat tyre on the barrow, forgot to get milk from the shops and for me that's like forgetting my rods! Everyone needs a brew... and lastly, I just wasn't happy with my areas. I couldn't find something I was completely happy with, so I popped to the nearest shop that charged a rocket for a few bits. I thought I'd need a mortgage.

Anyway when I got back to the lake 15 minutes later, I made a strong Yorkshire tea and had a stomp around the pond again. When returning to the bottom end, I felt I was in the best place to start my campaign. Then I saw a show in the next swim, so I ran up there with my rod, cast at the ripples, and surprisingly the lead smashed down. All the rods went out and the broolly was up, but I decided to bait up later in the day just because I thought I could get a quick bite, as it was still early. It was funny, as I watched the others bait up with catapults and throwing sticks, and I honestly think every seagull from Great Yarmouth had come for a lunchtime feast. Surely no bait



Dan Stacey

could be getting to the bottom? I can remember just before dark I baited up with my chosen bait, CC Moore's Pacific Tuna covered in Response and fished with a good helping of snails on top. I put 5kg over my three rods, all fished a rod length apart at 75 yards, when a old Norfolk local walked past, laughing at me, saying I had probably ruined any chance I had, saying the carp weren't really having it, and they didn't respond to large amounts of bait. Now I've always fished like this, so I was still confident.





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After completely crashing out to exhaustion and missing my tea, I received a bream-like take. Jumping off the bedchair not knowing where I was, I grabbed the rod, hitting into a fish that absolutely destroyed me, after netting the fish with no head-torch and wiping my other rods out, I could see it was a proper unit. Surely... surely... surely not...? Oh yessssss! I was punching the air shouting and doing a little dance. I got the old girl on the unhooking mat, and I knew that I had my first Norfolk 40 in front of me, all 45lb 10oz of her. I couldn't believe my luck, but it's definitely better being lucky that good.

I tried calling a few mates, but with no signal, I couldn't, and with a flat camera battery, I went and got Mike Bowers,



a proper gentleman who I'd met earlier in the day and someone who I've built a great relationship with, to do some photos. I just wasn't prepared to sack the old girl, so we took a few night time photos and let her return to make another angler happy. If I'm honest, I couldn't believe what had just happened, and I decided I couldn't be bothered to do my rods until the morning.

I was up at first light, did the rods, and finding a bar of signal, I texted my mate who told me about the fish, just saying, "Roid". Within half hour, he was soon slurping a brew and we were giggling like two kids - just how fishing should be, absolutely priceless. After adding more bait with the locals in disbelief and completely shocked, I ended up with four fish: a 45lb-



plus, two 30lb-pluses and a small 20lb. I ended up running out of bait and decided to cut the session short, but I wouldn't make this mistake again! Anyway, I can't grumble at my result – not bad for a water that didn't respond to bait...

I was gagging to get down to the lake the following week, and when I did, it was empty – completely different to the previous week. I couldn't work these Norfolk lads out. During the day all I did was chase them around – something that didn't really work – but with a new wind getting up, I decided to settle in a swim for the night. I had seen a few photos of the A-team, and after Roid, I really wanted a fish called Crinkle Tail. It's an old leathery mirror, donkey years old, and as its name says, it has a wrinkly tail – a proper character, just how I like them.

Just as the light was fading, I started cooking my chicken



and received a steady take. The fight really went to plan until I saw which fish it was, when my knees went and my heart was racing faster than the flying Scotsman. She went into the net, and I turned around to see my chicken was now in flames and burnt. Let's just say the charcoal chicken repeated on me all night, but it's a photo I look at and just burst into laughter – Crinkle Tail at 35lb-plus – absolutely brilliant!

After two nights, I'd had two targets... Norfolk was definitely being kind to me. Like I say, I've never fished a water with so many worthy A-team fish in, and another fish I really wanted was the Split Tail Linear, but this was a tricky customer. A few rumours had people saying it was dead. One roasting hot day, after catching a few fish, I was climbing a tree when I saw this fish swimming past under me with its tail waving. It definitely



Dan Stacey



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had a split in it, and it was definitely not dead, so game on. I spent all day in this bay, setting little traps on the bottom and even fishing on the surface, pulling my hookbait from smaller fish, trying not to destroy my opportunity.

I had actually given up and felt sick from getting sunburnt with the rods on the deck when another member, Paul, who looked like the young Terry Hearn of 1999, said I looked burnt and laughed... I certainly didn't. I told him I'd seen Split Tail, and he said he thought it was dead. With that the old Basia started spinning, and the rod was getting pulled along the ground. With my head thumping and seeing shooting stars when running to the rod, I tripped over my other rod along the way – complete nightmare. Those five or six minutes playing that fish really hurt, with the sun hitting my badly burnt skin – a proper Englishman, I suppose.

After doing the photos, I had a shower in the cabin, and holding my head in my hands, I just wanted to go home, even throwing up on the A47 on the way home... I just want to say thanks to my girlfriend for doing absolutely nothing and showing no sympathy – I love you too!

It's all about the photos we carp anglers have, and looking back on them, they all have a meaning. Another photo I look at was a fish rightly named Diesel. It was a jet black leathery warrior with a top lip like Rio Ferdinand. Again on a hot, late summer's day, I caught a couple of mid-20s from the swim I'd fished the night, but walking along the snaggy, tree-lined swim, I saw two decent fish, maybe scraper 30s, so I packed up and headed towards the nearest swim. Watching two other members running towards the swim I left was almost like watching the kid's programme, Tom and Jerry.



Anyway, after baiting from up the tree and watching these two fish smash the bait up, the little branch I was standing on decided that it didn't like my weight on it and thought I needed a swim right above the spot – bloody brilliant. So after having a shower and giving up a going swim, I had a walk around and stumbled across Diesel under my feet in completely the opposite corner. I'd walked past the bloke who ran to my vacated swim with him asking about my spots! Really? Please!

I grabbed a rod and all the essentials, and I got to the tall reeds where I could see the fish were still present, so I lowered a bait over the reeds and dropped seven baits around it. Two minutes later the rod rattled off, and a healthy battle was had. Luckily, I won the battle, and I asked the "swim runner" to do the photos, watching him sulking and blanking in a going swim.

My time in Norfolk was coming to the end, and late November was my last really enjoyable experience with eight fish in 48 hours and a stupid amount of bait before I slipped my disc in my back. I actually had a double take from two 35lb-plus commons called The Box and Not Off The Mark, two old character fish with a lot of history. I ended up with 88 fish, catching all the known fish, I couldn't have asked for a better year, making a lot of good mates. I've learnt a lot from this mad year in deepest, darkest Norfolk. It definitely pays to be different and try your hardest every minute you're next to the water... and obviously enjoy your own journey – it's a hobby.

Best of luck in 2025!

Dan Stacey





TAKE ME TO THE CHURCH

It was late spring, the beginning of May, and the time had arrived for Paul and I to start our four-hour journey to the Church from Manchester. All the way down there I was buzzing and dreaming about all the big carp that the Church holds. We arrived at Nash's headquarters around 9am Monday morning where we met Les Webster, the bailiff. Les gave us the lowdown on the lake as we walked around it. He showed us the Copse Lake just before the Church Lake, and I was just thinking, wow, what a beautiful place it is.

Then as we carried on walking a little further up the hill, there it was, the mighty Church Lake. As I stood there looking, a real lump rolled in front of me off the corner island that got me very excited! We ended up having a walk round with Les showing us swims. As we got around to the Pylon swims, another fish boshed out in the corner, heavily in the weed, so that made my mind up that was where I wanted to be.

We went back to the van to get our kit and loaded up the quad bike and trailer. Les dropped me in the Pylon swim, and Paul took the Lodge swim, so we had a side of the lake each. As I was setting up, I could see fish sheeting up the bottom of the lake. As the sun started coming out, even more fish were cruising about this weedbed in the corner, so I had a little walk up the bank and got up a tree, watching them from above and seeing which way they were swimming around the island. I was looking for some clear spots to put some bait in. I found a nice spot on the far side of the weedbed right in the corner of the bay and one in front of me in the middle of the island about the length of a rod. I got some bait in, catapulting a couple of kilos of Urban Baits Nutcracker and the Tuna and Garlic mixture in 12mm and 15mm. There was nothing to report for the first 24 hours apart from listening to carp crashing through the night.

It was now Wednesday afternoon, and it was going to be a very warm day. Late morning, and I started to see loads of tadpoles around the margins, so I was thinking about getting the zig rigs out. I started making some up, and then I saw a carp under my rod tips around this group of tadpoles. It was a lovely carp; it looked around 30lb-plus. Then it started moving up the margins to my right in next door's swim, so I

crept up and saw three carp eating up the tadpoles.

Soon I had one on, and it felt really strong, pulling me through weedbed to weedbed, but I eventually got the net under it! The pressure was off with my first fish netted, and I was proper buzzing! The fish was one known as the Beauty Queen at 39lb 8oz, and I was really made up with my catch. Later on that day, Kevin Nash had a walk around to see us, congratulate me on my capture and fill me in on other areas.

It was now early evening, and my left hand rod peeled off. As I pulled into it, it was heading straight for the main weed bed around the bay. I was trying to slow it down, but before I knew



Dave Coward

it, I could feel the mainline grating through the weed. All I could do was to jump into the boat and get over the top of it. It started to pull free from the weed, and I had a bit of a battle with it for a further five minutes or so. I got my net and started trying to land the big lump of weed with a lovely scaly mirror just behind the clump of the weed. In it went – happy days and fish number two! It weighed in at 27lb 2oz – that will do!

There was going to be a weather change through the night, and it went very overcast with fine rain. They were bang-on conditions, and as it got to near midnight the bloody bullfrogs started making it hard to sleep with their horrid croaking! Then the heavy rain came, and the carp started crashing about – real lumps like flying pigs. It was unreal to hear, so I ended up getting in my sleeping bag for some kip. I was lying awake





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for a while thinking this looked bang-on for it, and before I knew it, my middle rod was in meltdown. I jumped out straight onto my rod with no shoes on, playing the carp. Again, it was a proper arm puller, but about 15 minutes later, I nailed it – a really nice brute of a fish weighing in at 37lb 4oz. I was made up! This trip was getting even better!

I got my head back down, and before I knew it, I was back



up again to the sound of my alarm – the middle rod again. I grabbed the rod, which was pulling me to my left right towards the large weedbed. I eventually stopped it going that far, and the fish turned towards the island and then hit a clump of weed where it locked me up. I just held on the pressure for a further ten minutes with no give. My mate could see that I had a problem, so he came around with the boat and jacket for me. I got in, pulling myself to the fish. It was just turning light at this point around 6am, and with steady pulling, I was over the top of it. The fish started moving, but I still had problems with all that weed clinging to the line, so I started pulling bits off, but it wasn't easy, as it was really horrible clingy stuff. I eventually got the fish moving and started to see it under the



weed. The fish started to pull again, and it looked to be a real lump of around 40lb easily. At this point, my adrenaline was going, the carp was pulling harder, and I was still trying to break the weed off my line and my clip. Then the carp went for it, pulling so hard the hook pulled – gutted!! It was barbless hook rules on there, so you half expected it to happen. Head in my hands, I rowed back to my swim. I could not stop thinking about the size of the fish that could have been. I caught nothing else that trip, but I was so pleased with what I did catch, I couldn't wait to go back, so we booked again to go back in September, and I was counting the days.

September came around slowly... Les met us at the gates. The lake had been fishing pretty slowly for a few weeks. We headed up to the Church Lake for a look around. We stood on the pylon bank and saw a few fish crash out around the No Carp Corner just as the wind was picking up, so that made up my mind where I wanted to be, and I got set up in the right hand side Pylon swim. Paul set up to my left in the left Pylon, as there were fish bubbling and sheeting up in the bay to his left.

I had a little lead about, finding spots that were clean. I found a lovely bit off the corner of the island off a gravely slope. I put the left hand rod on the bottom then two rods on a larger spot to the right hand side island where there was a large overhanging willow tree, a really nice area where it looked liked the fish had been cleaning that spot. It had a really hard clay bottom, so I got the Spomb out and made up a nice mix up of hemp and groats, tigers and 12mm and 15mm of Urban Baits Tuna and Garlic boilies and Nutcracker with plenty of Urban Nut Juice and a little hemp oil. I started off putting about 4kg in just off the side off the willow tree with the

two rods, and then the third rod with a couple of kilos on the gravelly slope to the left hand side of the island.

Around late dinnertime, I was all sorted, having a brew, sitting back, taking it all in and loving life! Three hours passed, then out of the blue my right hand rod pulled around slightly and then slowly tipped back. I jumped off my bedchair, looking at my rod and thinking it must have been a savage liner, but then all of a sudden the rod pulled around. I was into my first carp of my trip, and I landed a lovely common at 27lb 4oz. The rest of the night passed with no more fish, but I was listening to the odd one crashing about in the night.

On Tuesday, it was a slow morning. Not much was showing, and then around late morning, the sun started to break through



Dave Coward

the clouds. It had been clear and chilly throughout the night, dropping to six degrees, and it had been that way the last couple of weeks. Out came the sun, and the carp seemed to get more active, so I baited up some more around 12pm, putting 5kg on the willow spot where I had the last fish from. At around 6pm, the right hand rod again was away, ripping the line off the reel. I grabbed the rod, and I knew straight away this was a big fish. It took 30 yards then slowed down, but still felt very heavy and slow. I could feel it pulling through all the weed that was knocking about. It was away again, but I started gaining line back, and then the fish locked up in a clump of weed.

I was steadily holding on the pressure, thinking I might have to



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.

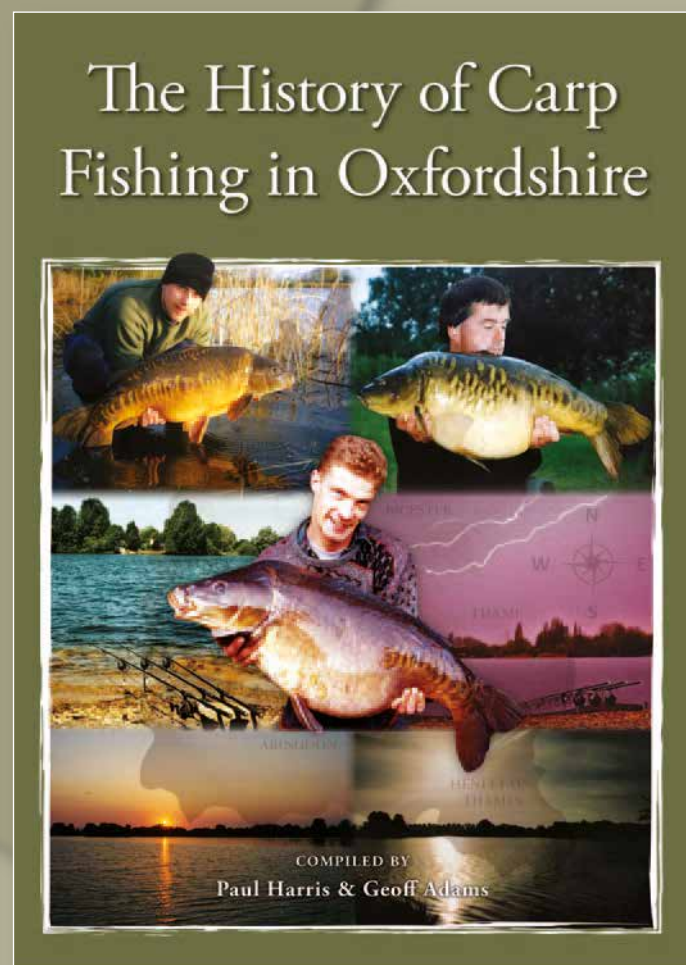
Nick Stansfield is a brilliant young Oxford carper who doesn't shout about his catches. We have two incredible chapters from him from two of the county's most iconic lakes, The Leisure Park and The Big S! Josh Chatfield has written a fantastic chapter which really gives you an insight into how fishing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

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

get the boat out, but then all of a sudden, the fish started moving. Eventually after 20 minutes of fighting, the fish popped up. I was thinking this was a real chunk! Adrenaline was pumping like mad! I steadily pulled the fish over the net, and Paul lifted it up for me – the relief! I was buzzing, jumping about like a little kid! YES YES YES!!!! I got it on the scales and it weighed 47lb 11oz – what an epic fish, so wide... a proper unit!! It was also my new personal English best, so I was made up!

Another night passed without much showing. On Wednesday morning, I started seeing the odd show across a reedy far margin, so I had a walk around. A bit later on that afternoon with a rod, I had a little lead about the margin and found a lovely clear hole right in the margins on the reed line, so I drop some boilies on the spot, 2kg of mixed sizes. I had the idea of keeping on topping the spot up with little and often to see if the carp showed up on the bait. That evening I saw a couple more shows near where I put the bait, so just on dark, I went back around to drop some more boilies on a clear patch.

Another quiet night passed with no action from the willows, so I reeled in one of my two rods that I had out on that area, went to the reedy margin spot and put another couple of kilos out. I went back and put a rod on it. I took a couple of casts to get it bang-on at 19 wraps on the sticks. Around early afternoon, the wind really picked up, blowing right in on the reed line area. I sat there waiting and thinking that it was looking really good for it, and the sun was out.

One hour later, my rod pulled right around. I was fishing locked up, so I was straight onto my rod and playing what felt like another big fish. After 10-15 minutes, another heavy



battle was played out, and I landed a stunning golden common of 41lb 6oz. Yet again, I was a very happy man!!

Nothing happened in the last 24 hours - no action anywhere. It had been a tricky week's fishing. I used 20kg of Urban Bait over the week, and was very happy with the result. Even though it had been a tough week, I still caught two big fish, and that was all that was out. The previous week's fishing very slow as well, which must be down to the cold nights starting to draw in. Then I was on my way back home with a smile on my face, looking forward to my next trip.

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A CHANGE OF SCENARIO

At the beginning of the year, I was fishing around a bit and had a few waters on the go but couldn't really settle into my fishing. With the waters being rammed and not being able to get on the fish, I found myself just going through the motions really... I think we've all been there! Around this time I was offered a syndicate ticket for a local water that I'd had my eye on for a while and thought it would be a nice change of scenery. The lake itself had a stock of around 60 to 70 fish with a good head of 20s, then a fish that fluctuated between low to mid 30s called Twin Belly and one going over 40lb that had been out at over 45lb in the spring called Starburst. My ticket would start at the beginning of July, but with one thing or another it was a few weeks before I could get down there to fish. Though I made sure I went and had a good look around to try and get a feel for the place.

It was the first week in August that I made my first trip. Pulling up in the car park on Sunday morning there were still a few anglers on from the weekend, so I grabbed a bucket out of the van and set off round the lake to see if I could find any fish and see where the other anglers were. On my way around, I stood in a peg where I could view a lot of the lake from for a little while, but didn't see anything. By this time, the last few anglers were starting to pack up, and I chatted to one of them who turned out to be on his first trip to the lake, having recently got his ticket. It turned out nothing had been out over the weekend, so with nothing to go on after a few laps of the lake, I decided to set up in a swim that I could see a lot of the lake from. I was soon set up with three rods out to likely looking areas all in open water with just a handful of bait around each rod.

The day soon passed without seeing anything. That night my mate Tom, who also was on the syndicate, turned up to fish an overnighter in between work. He dropped into the next peg down, and we sat up chatting about the lake and the stamp of fish that were swimming around in it, pretty impressive... especially being a Midlands pit! Around 11 o'clock we both turned in for the night and the alarm was set for first light. It wasn't long before my phone alarm was going off, and with nothing materialising through the night, I sat there looking out and watching the mist coming up from over the lake. About 30 minutes had passed by when one just popped its head out around 30 yards out in front of a peg along the Trent bank. That morning I saw two more shows in the same area... enough to warrant a move! Just as I was packing up to move, Tom popped his head around to say he was off to work and that he hadn't

had anything in the night. All the tackle on the barrow and I was soon around there!

I had a few casts with just a lead and it was all very much the same; the bottom was covered in old black smelly weed which wasn't the best, but with nothing else to go on I put three pop-ups out on the cleanest areas I could find. All three rods were spread out at 30 yards with a handful of bait around each one, just like the night before. Nothing happened through the day and having not seen anything at all, it was a good sign just as the light was beginning to fade for one to pop its head out over my left hand rod. Confidence was sky high for the night ahead now, and I was soon turning in, as I wanted to be up at first light again to see if I could spot anything. Just before first light, I had a bleep on my left hand rod and looking out from under my brolly all blurry eyed, I could see the left hand rod pulled up tight. Before I knew it I was bent in to my first fish from the lake... Before long it was in front of the swim and I soon had him in the net. Looking at it in the water, I could see it was a nice common so secured him whilst I got things sorted. It wasn't long before he was on the mat, and with a few photos and a quick weigh he was back home... a 22lb common was a lovely way to start. The morning went by with no more activity, and soon I was packed up and heading home, my first session over.

The next time I could get down was the following Sunday for two nights, and as I pulled up to the gate that afternoon I could see there was only one car in the car park. I parked the van up and got a drink out the back and set off for a lap around the lake. I noticed the angler that was on was in a peg called Sleepers down the bottom corner of the lake, which is

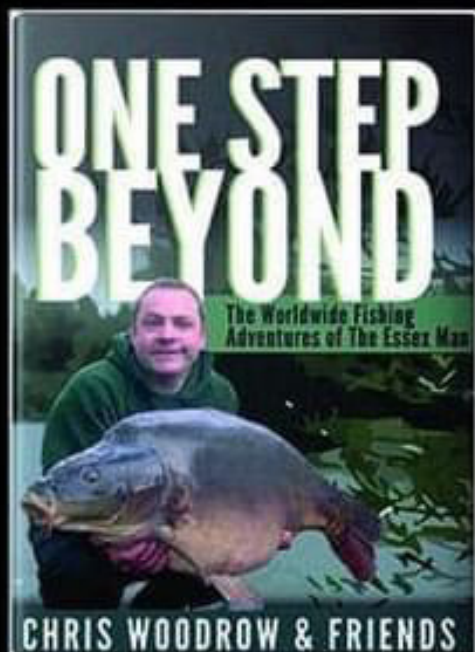
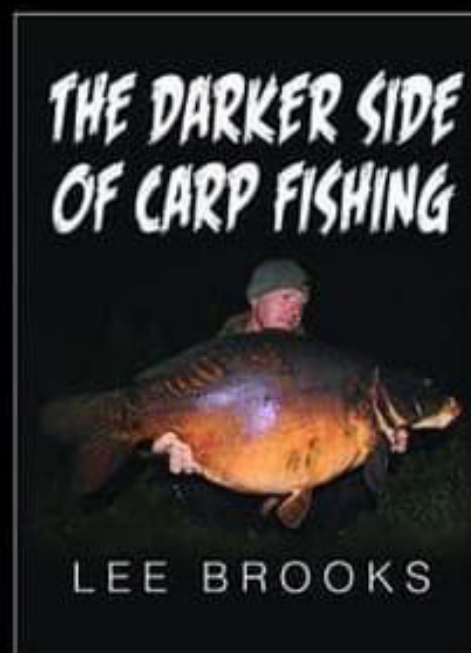
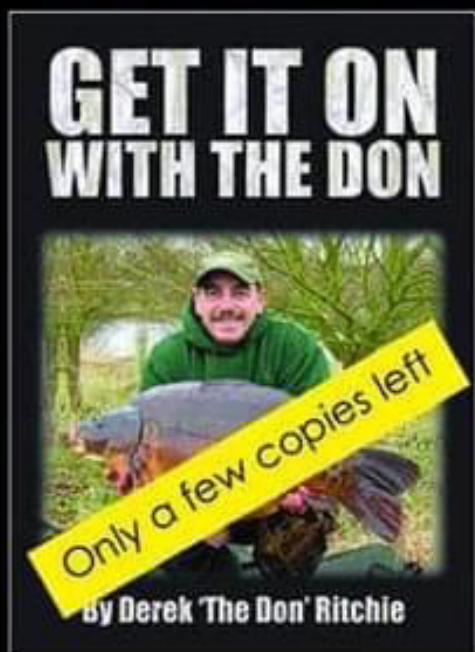
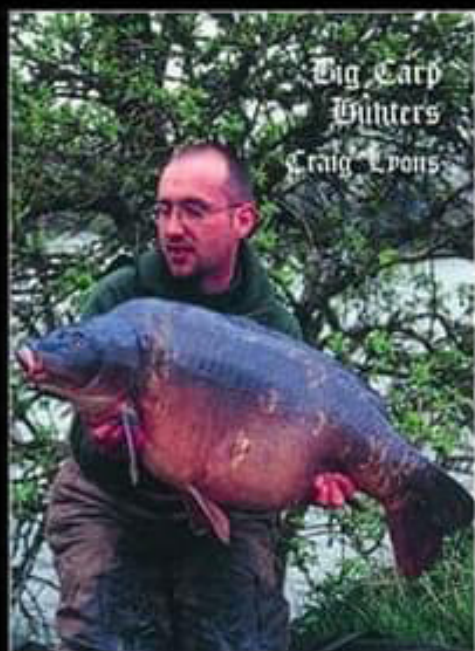
the opposite corner to where I had the fish from the week before. The wind was blowing down that end of the lake, but after standing down there for while I saw nothing; in fact after a few hours I had seen nothing anywhere, so I ended up fishing the middle area of the lake that night opposite to where I did the first night the week before, just putting pop-ups out and a scattering of bait over the top very much like the previous week.

I set my alarm for first light the following morning to see if they showed themselves. The night passed by, as did the



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following morning without seeing anything, so around midday I wound the rods in and went for a look about. I spoke to the lad in Sleepers and he said he'd seen nothing and was just hoping they would turn up on the end of the wind. After a few more hours looking with nothing to show for it, I made my way back to my peg well and truly with my tail between my legs... and nothing to go on for my last night! I decided to just put singles back out for the night on the spots from the night before. At least I could see a lot of water from here and if anything showed itself I would see it and could then move on to it. Great plan, I thought, until I saw nothing for the rest of the day or the following morning... It was moody to say the least on that trip, but I would be back the following week for another go... and you just never know what's around the corner!

That next week was a trip again on the Sunday for two nights. As I got there around about midday, there were a few people on but they were all down one bank and were just setting up. It turned out to be a few of the members having a social trip, so I decided I would leave them to it and go for look around the other side where nobody was! I walked around looking under the trees and bushes as I went... As I got to the last peg on the Trent bank I stood at the front of the swim just looking out across the lake when I saw something out of the corner of my eye. I looked down and a common and a mirror swam by just feet from the bank in about 5ft of water. The water was like tap water! The fish had come from under a bush to the right of the peg. To the other side of the bush was a small bay that not many people fished. I went for a look in the bay and I couldn't believe it! Sat under the trees were Twin Belly and Starburst and around six or seven other fish! I sat down on the bank for

a while just watching these fish come in and out of the trees. I needed a plan! The fish were coming in from the right and then going out the on the left under the bush into open water from what I could make out. I went to the van and got the kit and dropped it in the first peg along the Trent bank thinking that I could target them on the way out of the bay and not spook them by fishing in the bay. I got three rigs sorted and dropped one under the tree to my right, my middle rod central to the bay and my left hand rod cast to the reed line on the far bank, thinking no matter which way they came out of the bay they would hopefully come across one of my hook baits. I put out a handful of bait over each rod and sat back wondering what would happen, all the time knowing what was just the other side of the bush in the little bay!

My rods had only been in the water a few hours when the right hand rod pulled up tight and the tip bent right round. I was on it in a flash as I was fishing locked up and after just a short fight in front of the swim I soon had a scaly mirror in the net. It was a lovely old scaly mirror that went just over 24lb on the scales, and after a few snaps on the camera, he was soon slipped back. It wasn't long before it was due to start getting dark so I got the rod back on the spot just before dark. That night went by without a bleep on the old Nevilles. I sat there wondering if they would come back into the bay that day as the weatherman had said it was going to be a sunny day, when the left hand rod burst into life! I was soon bent in to a fish and it was kiting left out into open water and I was soon gaining line on it. After a few minutes it was in the net and looked like a scraper 20lb common, which turned out to be just over 21lb.



After that fish I wound the rods in to rest the swim for a while thinking if the fish were drifting into the bay for the day I could hopefully catch them on the way out. That day I kept looking into the bay waiting for the fish to turn up but I didn't see another fish in there for the rest of that trip. I did have a good look at the swim in the bay though, and found a few good spots... clean spots I could present baits on. The last night passed by without any more action, but on the last morning after packing up I put the rest of my bait over the two spots I found the day before in the bay, around a kilo of boilies on each spot knowing they would be back at some point, and when they did there would be food there waiting for them.

The next week I was due down on the Sunday, but I decided I would leave it until the Monday afternoon what with it being bank holiday weekend. As I pulled up to the gate I couldn't

believe there were eight cars in the car park. I'd never seen so many on here and thought that most would have pulled off from the weekend! I grabbed a bucket out of the van and made my way around. There were a few anglers down the toilet bank and three anglers on the Trent bank, then one in Bent Tree and one on Second Point... It was busy compared to what I was used to on here that's for sure and after speaking to a few of the lads it was obvious I had been seen the week before having the mirror and the common. I needed to be a little less obvious from now on and keep things under my hat, but looking around it was also obvious that the fish weren't in the little corner bay as there was a lot of pressure around that area and no fish were holding up under the trees. I ended



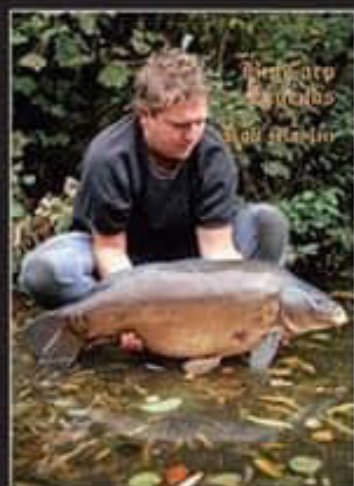
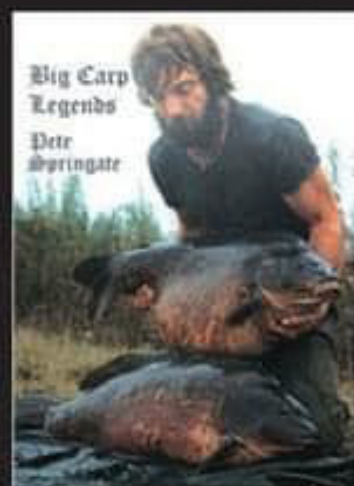
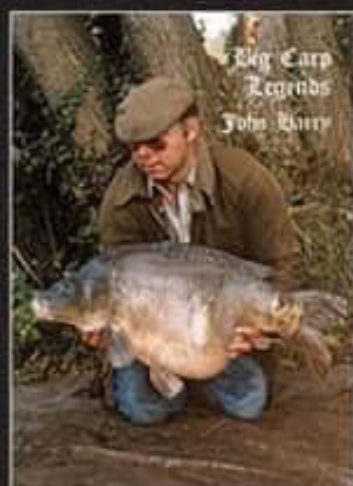
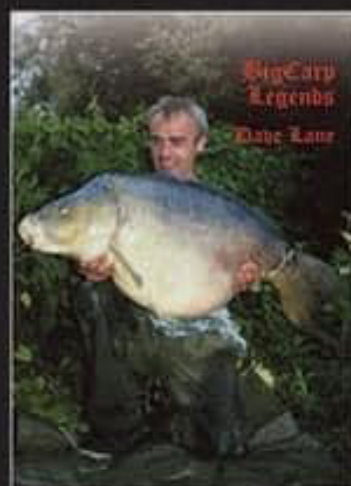
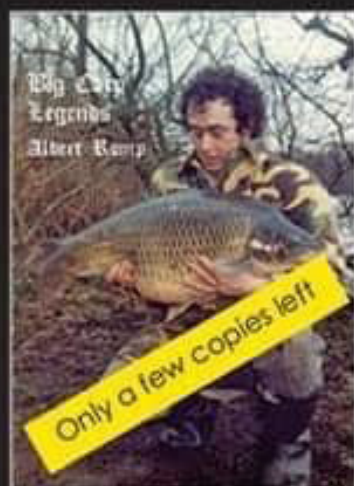
up fishing in a swim known as Big Gravs for two nights and saw just the one fish pop its head out in the central area of the lake at first light on the second morning. Nothing materialised that trip so I was already thinking about the next trip down the following Sunday and hoped there would be fewer anglers on. On the way out I did put a bit of bait on the spots in the bay just in case they pushed back in there in the time I was away from the lake.

The week passed by with me thinking about Twin and Star and where they would be... It was soon Sunday, and all of the way to the lake I was thinking "Please don't be many on!" As I pulled up in the car park I saw there was only one car in there - lovely, and at least this way it was just me against the fish and not against the anglers as well. I parked up and my first port of call was to have a look in the corner bay. I made my way along the toilet bank and crept down the bank to have a look under the trees... and to my amazement under the trees I could see three fish just sitting there, one of these being Twin, and another mirror and common. These fish were sitting right in the corner about ten yards away from a spot I had been baiting, so I went back to the van, got the kit and dropped in the Little Bay peg. I soon had the rods ready to go, one to my left on the baited spot and the right hand rod just down my right hand margin, with the middle rod just on the end of the tree about 20 yards out, all with just a handful of bait over each one. I set the broolly well back that night and kept really quiet just sitting back, knowing they would move out at some point.

As the light turned to dark that night I was sitting on my bedchair when my left hand rod was away. I was on it like a

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flash as again I was fishing locked up and didn't want it to get under the trees. As I picked the rod up I dropped the tip under the water as fast as I could... and after a few moments the fish was just out in front of me and then in the net. I dropped the rod and secured the net, grabbing my head torch to see which fish it was. Having watched the fish under the trees that day and being under the trees that night you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. As I turned the head torch on and looked in the net I could see it was a scaly mirror, which looked a mid 20. After a closer look it turned out to be the same mirror from a few weeks ago so I just popped him back and went about getting the rod ready to get back on the spot.

After sorting the rod out and getting it back out on the spot I got back into the sleeping bag and just lay there thinking about the fish and wondering if they would come back after having that mirror. I dropped off to sleep soon after that and woke in the morning with nothing else happening in the night. I had a look at the rod under the trees and I could see that everything was presented well and the bait was still there, so nothing had been back during the night, and if it had, it had not feed on the spot from what I could see.

It was due to be a warm day so I was confident that they would come back at some point, but it was around 11 o'clock when I saw the first fish in the bay, a common of around 20lb. That morning I decided I was going to leave the rods out and not rebait, as I didn't want to disturb anything. After seeing that common it wasn't long before a few more fish came in and sat under the trees just up from the spot of my left hand rod. I just sat down the bank watching these fish come in and out, when out of the corner of my eye I spotted a much bigger

fish come in. It was a mirror and judging by its frame it was only going to be one of two fish, Twin or Star. I just froze as it went by and as it got closer I could see which one it was – it was Twin. She just came and sat under the tree with the few other fish that were already present. I moved down the bank a bit to where I could see my rig in the water, only 3ft of water and 3ft from the bank. I just stood behind a tree and watched for a while.

A few fish came by just behind the spot, but went by and never looked like stopping and dropping down on the bait, but then a short time after a mirror came along the bank really slowly from the left. I could see it was Twin and she just came



and dropped down on the spot and started troughing on the bait. My heart was in my mouth and as I looked at her eating away on the spot without a care in the world she just froze on the spot for a second and started backing off the spot shaking her head. It was at that point I realised she was hooked.

I shot around the tree and grabbed the rod. The line had just pulled up tight as I picked up the rod and as with the mirror the night before I dropped the tip down in the water and kept the pressure on. After a few moments I could feel her kicking and she swam out from under the trees into open water. She just stayed out there going from left to right, right to left and after what seemed like only a few minutes she was in front of the net with her head up, and at the first time of asking she went in the waiting landing net. I was so happy at this moment



as I knew I had got one of the ones I was after. I made sure she was secured in the net and I just sat on my bedchair for five minutes to take it all in.

I made a few phone calls to see if I could get someone to come down and do the photos for me. I knew Tom was popping down later in the day so called him to see if he would come and do the photos. "I'll be there in 20 minutes, mate" was the answer I got. I just sat there taking it all in waiting for Tom and it wasn't long before he came walking down the track and into my swim. I got the mat and scales sorted and on the scales she went 35lb 10oz but the weight was truly irrelevant.

After the photos were done and I'd taken her back to the water's edge, returned her and watched her swim out of the sling and back into her home, to say I was buzzing would be an understatement! After putting her back we just sat chatting for a while. Following the capture, I didn't see anything else in the bay at all. The next morning I was off home still on cloud 9 about that capture and from that moment I knew there was one more prize to be had... Starburst!!!

I planned to get down the following week for two nights as the weather was looking bang on for it with low pressure and rain. I planned to get down for first light that morning but before my alarm was due to go off my phone was ringing. It was Tom, and knowing that he was fishing the night before I knew at that moment he was calling because he had something special. "I've got her, mate! I've got Star! Can you do me some photos?" I was soon in the van and on my way to the lake.

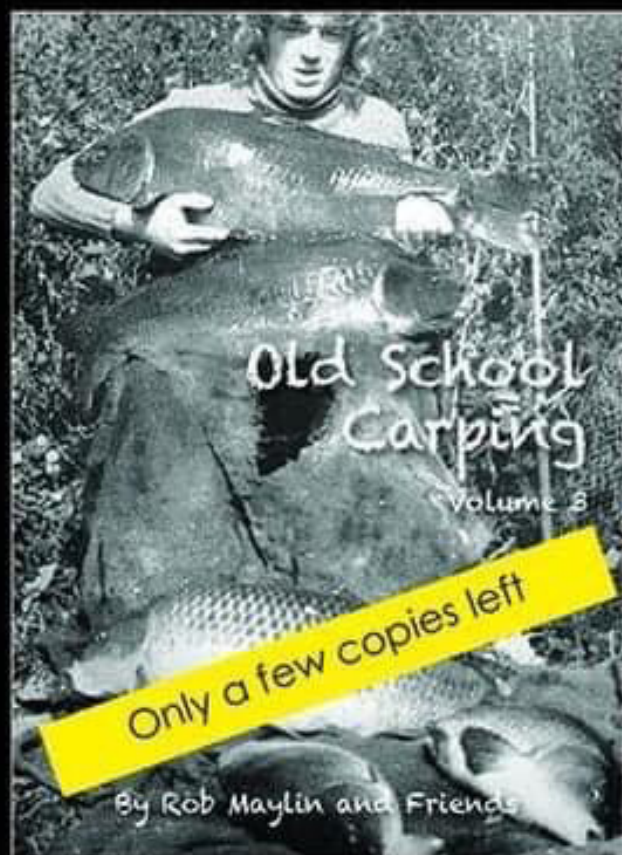
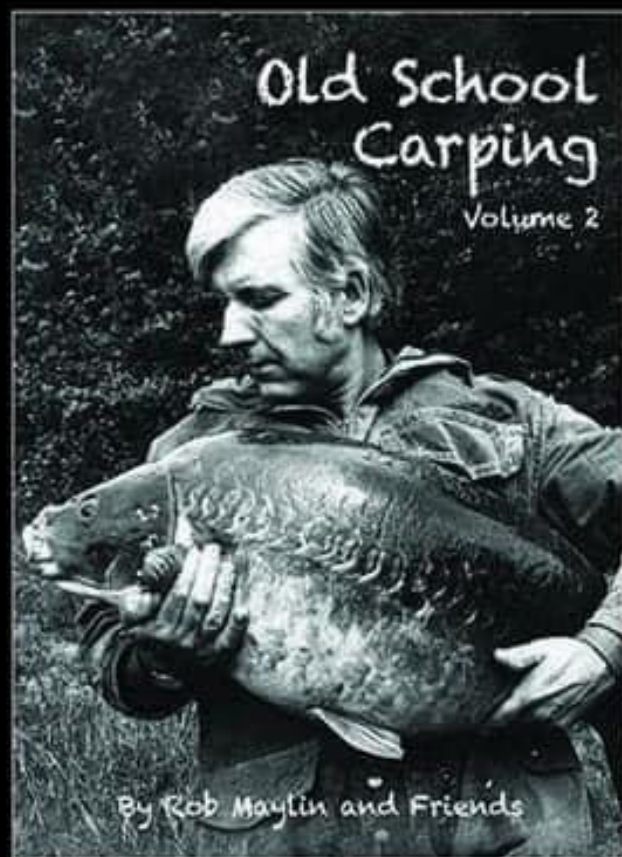
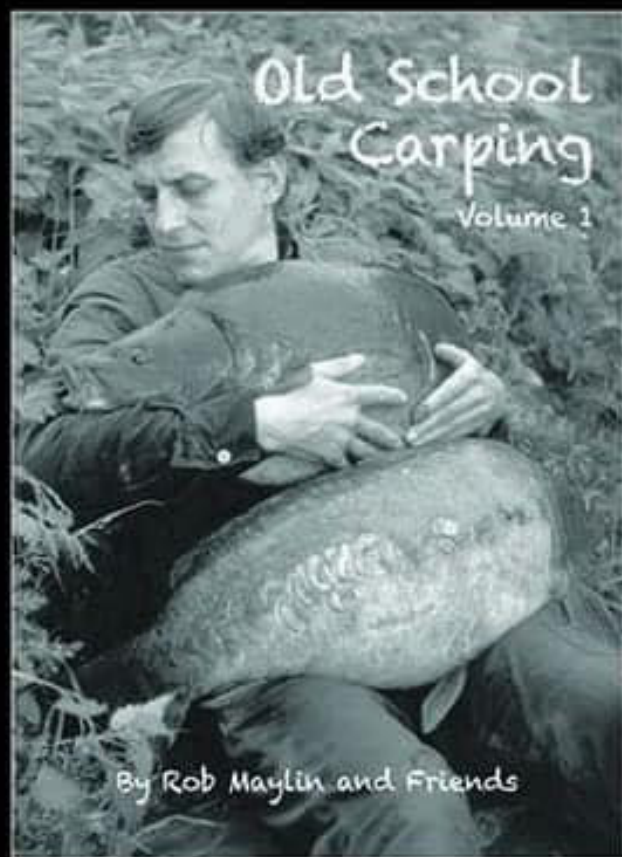
As I walked in to the swim he was buzzing and rightly so. She went 41lb 4oz and was a new PB for Tom. We got the photos done and put her back in the pond. I was blown away by her on

the bank as I've only seen her in the water before and I hoped it would be my turn to share that moment with this special fish soon. I decided I would leave it and not fish that week and return in a few weeks. It was now mid September and I knew there was every chance that Star may make another appearance before the end of the year, but in those two weeks I didn't want to lose touch with the lake, so I decided I would walk the lake at first light before work as much as I could to try and find where they were - as like most lakes this is when they like to show themselves.

It was on my second early morning walk around the lake that I found them showing in front of the Trent bank and I must have seen ten shows that morning. I went back a few days later at first light again, and it wasn't long before I saw another few shows in the same area I had seen them in just a few days before. I decided I would come back after work and have a look with the marker rod and put some bait in the area if nobody was fishing that night, so after work I shot home to grab the marker rod and 5kg of bait and made my way to the lake. As I pulled up in the car park there was nobody on! Happy days! So I parked the van up and headed around to the Trent bank and to the area that they had been showing at first light. I just sat in the swim for ten minutes but I didn't see anything so I had a few casts with the marker rod to see why they were showing here...

After a good few casts I found a spot that was cleaner than the surrounding area. I put all the 5kg of bait on that spot thinking I would leave it for a few days over the weekend and come back on the Monday before work to bait up again if nobody was fishing, and then again on the Thursday night,

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then fish on the Sunday and Monday night. I just hoped they would have a feed on the spot whilst I was away. All the baiting trips went to plan with nobody there when I turned up to put the bait in, as from what I could make out most members were fishing the Friday or Saturday nights, which worked out good for me fishing mostly in the week!

I pulled up in the car park on that Sunday afternoon full of anticipation and to my delight there wasn't another car in there. I soon had my barrow loaded and was on my way around to the baited spot. By this point that one spot had seen a lot of bait and I was hopeful the fish would have had a good feed on it and would know there was bait there if they wanted to get their heads down – that was the plan anyway. I had a good few casts with just a lead on my marker rod as I got into the swim before getting the rods out and the spot did feel cleaner than the first time, so I was confident that something had been feeding on the spot. That night I put all three rods on the spot tight, all with pop-ups on and a kilo of bait over the top to just see how it would unfold.

At first light the following morning one of the rods was away, which turned out to be a common of 19lb. As I was sorting the rod out one of the other rods burst in to life, and that turned out to be a mirror of 22lb. I was very happy having those two fish that morning as I knew they were on my spot and the hard work of all the baiting up was looking like it was starting to pay off. The second morning after repeating the same process as the night before (all three rods on the spot and a kilo of bait over the top), I had another fish – a mirror of 20lb before I had to be packed up and back to work. I put the rest of my bait on the spot before leaving that morning and planned to



return in a few days to bait up again, and then fish the Sunday night again.

The week soon passed by and it wasn't long before I was loading my barrow up in the car park that Sunday afternoon with the baiting having gone to plan just a few days before. There was one other angler on when I got there and he was packing up, so it looked like I had the lake to myself again. After a quick chat with him, he said there had been eight anglers on over the weekend and the lake hadn't done a fish. I went around to the baited up area (all the time wondering if they had been on the free bait whilst I was away) and got the rods sorted and on the spot same as the last trip with a bit of bait over the top. I only had the Sunday night that week due to



work and family commitments but I could fish three nights at the weekend if I thought it was right, so I planned to put the rest of my bait on the spot in the morning before leaving for work, then come back on the Wednesday to bait up before my three nights started on the Friday. The next morning at first light I had two fish within 15 minutes of each other a 24lb mirror and a 20lb common. After a few photos of each fish were done, I baited up and off to work I went knowing that my baiting up plan was working and coming together nicely.

I went down to bait up on the Wednesday morning but there was someone fishing on the Second Point so I decided to leave the baiting up for now and pop in on the way back from work to have a look about, and if the angler had gone I would I

would bait up then. I didn't want to be seen baiting up, as I didn't want anyone jumping in on the back of my baiting up if I could help it and I had kept the fish captures to myself up to this point. I popped in after work and the bloke on Second Point had gone home so I went straight around and put a good hit of bait on the spot knowing I would be back on the Friday for three nights.

Friday came and as I pulled up to the gate and into the car park I noticed there were a few on, but nobody on the Trent bank. I loaded the barrow and got round there, as I knew there was a good chance of a few more coming on as it was a Friday. I got the rods sorted, put the bivvy up and put a bit of bait over the spot then just sat back taking it all in and wondering what



might happen when two members came around the corner and stopped off for a chat. Now, I had kept the fish captures quiet and they told me they had heard that someone had been baiting up around this area and having a few fish out of these pegs. Did I know anything? "No, mate, not heard anything" was my reply! Were they just testing the water, or had I been seen baiting up or putting a fish back?? I don't know, but I certainly played my cards close to my chest and it wasn't long before they were on their way, but that got me thinking... because as far as I knew I was the only one fishing around this part of the lake. The next morning at first light I had three within an hour of each other - a 21lb mirror, 23lb mirror and a 22lb common.

I was buzzing and I knew they were well and truly on the bait. I couldn't be far away from Starburst now; it was just a case of playing the numbers game really, but I was willing to do whatever it took to get Star in the bottom of my net. That morning I got soaked to the skin as it was throwing down with rain when I had those three fish, so around midday I popped home to get some more bait and a spare set of clothes. Back in the swim I soon put some more bait out and got the rods back out on the spot. My mate Doc turned up that afternoon and dropped in the swim to my right. We were going to have a bit of a social and a curry that night. The rain had stopped by now and he managed to get sorted just before dark. We just sat in my swim chatting about all sorts really when my Neville let out a couple of beeps and the middle rod pulled up tight.

I picked up the rod and it was just a solid resistance. The fish was moving slowly and just plodding to the right away from the spot. The first thing that came in to my mind was "Starburst". It was around ten or so minutes more of heavy



plodding and she was just out in front on the right, and at the first time of asking Doc got her in the net. We both looked in the net and we could see it was a big mirror. I rolled the net over and it was Twin. We soon had her unhooked and sorted out, then returned to her home. I went about getting the rod sorted and back out on the spot and then we ordered a curry and sat up talking. It was sometime in the early hours of the morning before we both turned in for bed.

First light came and I had three more fish off the spot that morning, a 24lb common, a 19lb mirror and a 20lb mirror. It all went quiet after that, so I took the opportunity to redo the rods early that afternoon for my last night of the trip, as I'd had Twin early in the evening before, having put 2kg of bait over

the spot. That evening passed by quietly and it was around four o'clock in the morning when I was woken by my left hand rod in meltdown. Before long I had a common in the net, which turned out to be the biggest common in the lake at 28lb.

That was the last bit of action that trip. Eight fish in three nights was good by anyone's standards on here and I was happy with how things were going. I couldn't get back down to the lake until the following Monday when again I had three nights planned, as I'd booked the week off work and aimed to come down on the Thursday to bait up after work and give it another big hit of bait ready for my return on the following Tuesday. I put the rest of my bait out before I left that Monday, then all went to plan on the Thursday baiting up as nobody was on, so I gave it 10kg of bait on the spot thinking it had four nights before I would be back down, not wanting to risk baiting up at the weekend as people would more than likely be fishing.

The weekend soon went by after spending some quality time with my missus and kids. I had a few things to sort out on the Tuesday morning before loading the van and heading off to the lake. As I pulled up in the car park there were two cars belonging to the members that I had spoken to the week before, the two that said "Someone's having some fish out these pegs." I grabbed a drink out of the back of my van and went for a look about. I had a feeling where they might be, and as I turned the corner onto the Trent bank, I could see two bivvies, one in the peg I had been baiting heavily and one in the peg Doc had fished the week before.

As I walked up they were both stood chatting. I stopped for a chat to see when they were leaving (needless to say I was keen

Secrets of The Thames



By Rob Maylin and friends



to get back on the baited area after the last few weeks and the captures I'd had... and I did feel close to catching Star at this point), and as I walked in to the swim the first words were, "How many did you have last week then?" As it turned out I had been seen on the second morning when I had the three fish in succession. They had also been told that the bloke over the other side of the lake was watching me with his binoculars that morning and word had got out, so they decided they would come around for a go! I was gutted they were in there to be honest, as I had put a lot of effort and money on bait into that swim... but they had as much right to be in there as anyone else.

The one thing that they didn't know was that I was fishing left of the peg, more or less in between two pegs. I knew if someone was going to jump in there they would more than

likely fish straight out in front of them... well, I hoped anyway. They told me they were off in the morning, so I planned to move in there after they packed up and get the rods back on the baited area after doing the first night somewhere else. After a few walks around there wasn't anything to go on so I just dropped in Taxman's peg for the night and put singles out. Nothing happened that night and it was about ten o'clock the next morning when the two members went by with their barrows. As it turned out they never had anything or saw anything and they were soon on their way. I wound my rods in and went and sat in the peg where I had been prebaiting for an hour. I never saw anything and from here I could see most of the lake, yet I didn't see anything anywhere. So with nothing else to go on (and with the prebaiting in mind), I moved down and got the rods out on that spot, then put 100 baits over the three rods.

The night and the following morning passed by without a bleep... let alone me seeing anything. The lake looked lifeless... I decided I would redo the rods and get them sorted with fresh baits on for the last night. I was just sorting the rods out and putting fresh pop-ups on the rigs when I heard a fish come out the water. It was like someone had just dropped a cow in the water and as I looked out it was just to the left of my heavily baited-up spot. It had to be one of two fish - Twin or Starburst. I left it half an hour and got two rods bang on the spot, then I put the left hand rod just off the spot where that fish had showed itself. The rest of the day passed and the day soon turned into night without seeing anything else. I turned in early that night wondering what might happen in the night or the early morning when I'd had most of the bites out of this area.

At five o'clock the next morning I was woken by the left hand rod in absolute meltdown, line stripping from the reel. As I picked up the rod it was just a solid resistance very much like when I had Twin. The fish just slowly moved off to the right on a tight line. I couldn't do much with her for a while but after steady pressure she was about 20 yards out on the top and I could see a big set of shoulders in the moonlight. For a while she kept coming towards me and then she tried her best to get around a bush to the right of the swim. Again steady pressure to the left bought her more or less just out in front of the swim. After a moment I saw the big set of shoulders again in the moonlight, and into the net she went first time of asking. I secured the net and grabbed my head torch. I looked into the bottom of the net and there she was, Starburst! The effort, time and bait had all paid off, as in the bottom of the net was the one I really wanted. I couldn't believe it! I called Tom and Doc and they both said they would come down and help with the photos and weighing. Within 30 minutes they were both there, and on the scales she went 42lb 4oz.

The weight was irrelevant, but I was blown away by this capture and it was a special moment and a special fish indeed. After the photos and the weighing Tom and Doc had to go to work, so they were both soon on their way. I just sat on my bedchair for a while to take it all in and text a few mates about the capture, as they knew how hard I had worked for this one. The chase was over and I packed up and headed off home. That was the end of the road on this special lake for me.

Till next time.





FROM SCOUSE BANKS TO STEEL BANKS!

So the time has finally come when I have been privileged enough to be asked by Mr. Maylin to get involved with the Off The Beaten Track annual. To be fair, he has been asking me a while now, but as most of you know, I am always out and about on a bish bash bosh mission, but I have finally managed to get pen to paper so to speak. This being my first ever written article, I was unsure where to start, but it only makes sense to start at the beginning. I am just going to tell you guys about my angling ventures from one big city to another, taking a dramatic change in location and waters but not in concept.

I have always lived in the big city surroundings. From a very young age, tackling the local parks and canals in Liverpool as a junior match fisherman, and then as I got older and had permission to venture a bit further afield, that's where the real angling ventures began and the carpy clock starting ticking. I never had the privilege of having a car at a young age to get to my desired destinations, but that never stopped me. By foot, bike, bus, train, tram, or if I was lucky enough to get a lift, I would always find a way to get to where I wanted. Travelling in this way has always been a part of my angling, and it hasn't really changed much over the years, as I don't own a driving licence still to this day, but that as never stopped me with my carping campaigns. I have always aimed to get the best of what I can from what's on offer.

As I said, I grew up in Liverpool, tackling the local park lakes and a bit further afield, dabbling with a few club waters as well, testing our angling skills so to speak, with my good angling friend, Mr. Smith. We spent many years learning our trade on the concrete banks of Liverpool, catching some lovely urban warriors along the way, with some nice club water carp as well. My personal best carp is still from one of those club waters to this day - lovely 24lb common carp, the biggest resident of the water at the time, I am led to believe, and a great achievement on such a short campaign. "24lbs? Is that all?" I hear you ask... and that was over a decade ago! I had a few more lbs myself back then too.

For me and my own angling goals, as I said, I have always aimed to make the most of what I have had available. Yes, everyone loves a big carp, but for me, honestly, size really doesn't always matter. It's more about the history of the carp



for me, the water it swims in, the character it has, how old it is and has it always been there? These are things I have always thought about my captures. Character carp – I appreciate them more for what they are, not just what they weigh! You can easily get caught up chasing that one big carp when there could be many more memorable captures at your disposal.

That brings me to my change of location when it came to my angling a few years back, moving from the heart of Liverpool to the steel city of Sheffield. It took me a few years to get back into the carping campaigns after a move of cities and meeting my best capture ever, and now my carping partner in crime as well, Laura. My angling wouldn't be the same without her

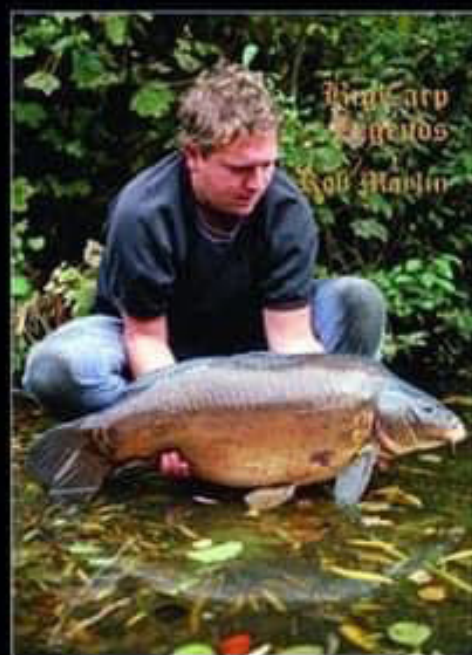
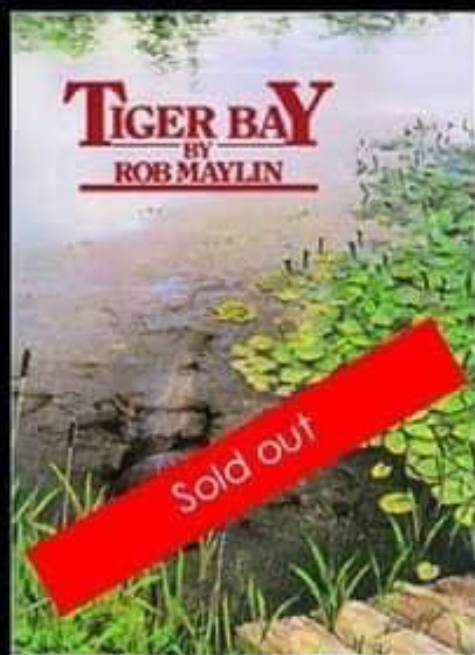
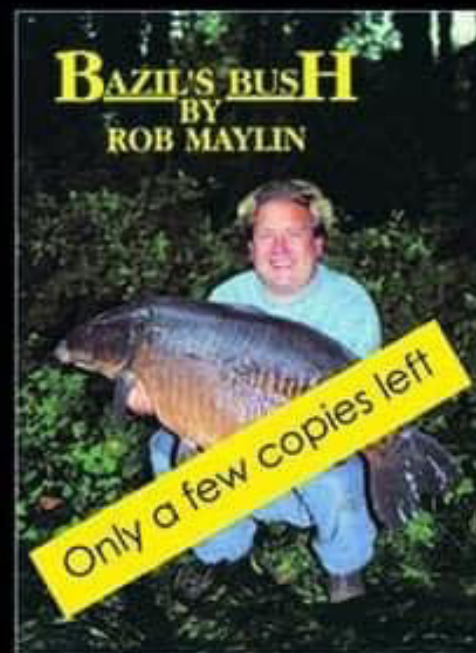
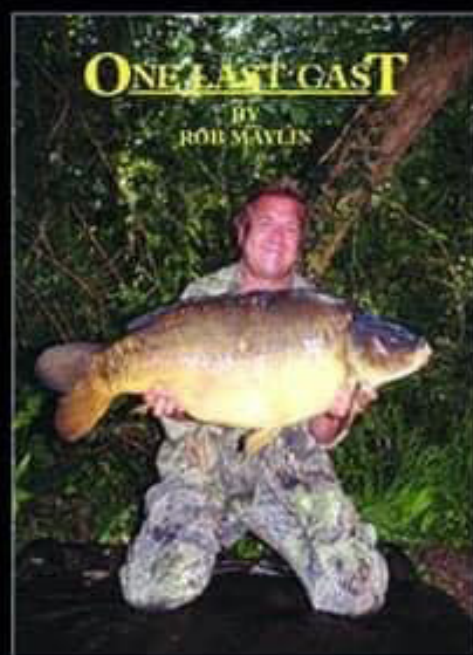
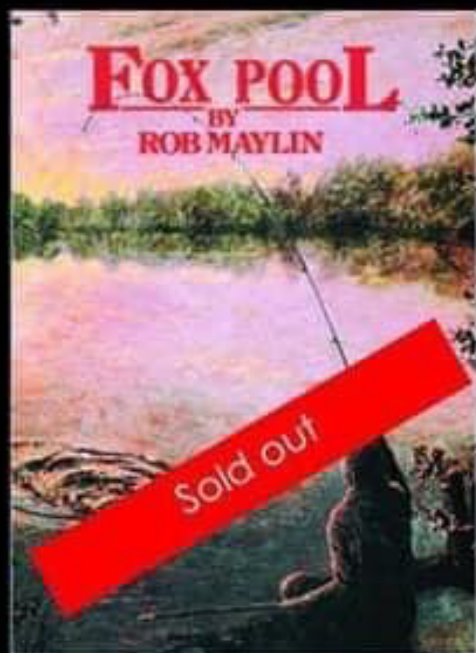
support. The first hurdle I stumbled across when beginning to tackle the steel banks of Sheffield was I had left my carpy circle behind, something which is a brilliant tool for your angling adventures. Having friends that also share the same passion as you do who you can collaborate with about waters, targets or even campaigns together is very valuable. I was starting from scratch. The carp hunting head was well and truly on, and I started to think about where I could target them.

My campaigns were going to be limited, basically due to the fact I still don't drive, which meant I never set any unrealistic targets... a Yorkshire twenty - that would suffice. Considering I was just getting back into the swing of things, I didn't think travelling too far from home would be the best idea, as this wouldn't be the best situation for any real plans of prebaiting



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or any proper time at the locations I was targeting. It was going to be more of an instant bite approach I was looking for, especially on the canal.

So, it was pretty fresh in the mind, and after a bit of research, I basically found there actually wasn't really that much in the area in the way of parks or park lakes that had anything in the way of carp, considering the landscape. I thought I would be in for a winner. I didn't really know anything about the carp situation in the area, even really what waters there were to fish or what they held, but I was going to give it a go.

When I was back in Liverpool, I had had a lot of experience already fishing many urban waters for carp, so I was let's say, curious to see what I could find. With the locations I had to choose from and not really knowing any of the stamp of fish that were in them, I decided to do two separate campaigns:



one being on one of the shortest canals in the country, and the other being an old park lake, which I had rarely seen people target carp on in the time I had been here.

Park Lake: This lake I had pleasure fished before, caught some roach, perch and the odd tench, but I hadn't seen anybody carp fishing or knew of any carp being caught when I first started. I had seen a few though. With the lake being so fresh in my mind, I knew that getting any information from local anglers, dog walkers or even joggers would be of great help; I was after any info that would help the cause.

After over two years of campaigning this park lake water, I have been fortunate enough to grace my net with just a select number of carp, the biggest being a beautiful common of 24lb 8oz, which I caught last year in the month of May on a Nash Bait Citruz pop-up. The reason I say just a select number of



carp is because over the past few years that is what I have come to find about the water. It's a lake of just 11 acres but a volume of 21 million gallons and depths of up to 40ft with just a handful of carp, but every single one of them is worth waiting for. I had set myself a task that I still haven't completed to this day. Some of the carp I still haven't had the pleasure to capture, but the missus has... Check out her stunning mirror caught on a single Nashbait Key Cray 15mm hookbait. In all the years that I have fished, so far this campaign has had to be the most mentally draining, but I won't give up on it! They will come!

As I said, I hadn't seen many anglers fishing for them anyway, as the park lake is known to be a bit rough and ready, but isn't all urban carping? I find on most urban park lakes or waters that you can fish, certainly ones I have fished, is first of all they are free. Spend your money on tackle and travel instead - bish bash bosh. There is also a lot of the general public to deal with, whether it be joggers, walkers, dog walkers, cyclists or just general people using the same location as you do for your carping as they do for their own activities. In my campaigns, I have always found it important to be extremely aware of your surroundings and people around you, whether it be stopping a jogger running into your rods, a dog off the lead wanting to cock its leg all over your brand new reels, people throwing things into the area of the lake you're fishing, or even some scumbag eyeing up your tackle. Always be aware and alert to your situation and others around you, as this can have a positive or negative effect if your angling outcome, depending on how you deal with it.

My first carp capture from here came in the cold month of November 2015 with a lovely old 18lb common. Unfortunately, I didn't manage to get a good enough image of the fish that portrayed the sheer satisfaction of getting off the mark on there. Both Laura and I were so taken aback and probably a bit cold. We're a bit overwhelmed and just wanted the fish back after appreciating its presence on the bank.

I have also had the pleasure of reaching my original goal of a Yorkshire 20lb carp in the shape of a 20lb 10oz common carp, caught on bank holiday Sunday of 2016. I went to the park the night before and put some bait in one of my chosen swims, not knowing that the pub that overlooks the lake was going to be having a full-blown rave on the following day. Oblivious to this, I returned the following morning just after first light and got myself set up. No sooner had I got the traps in place than



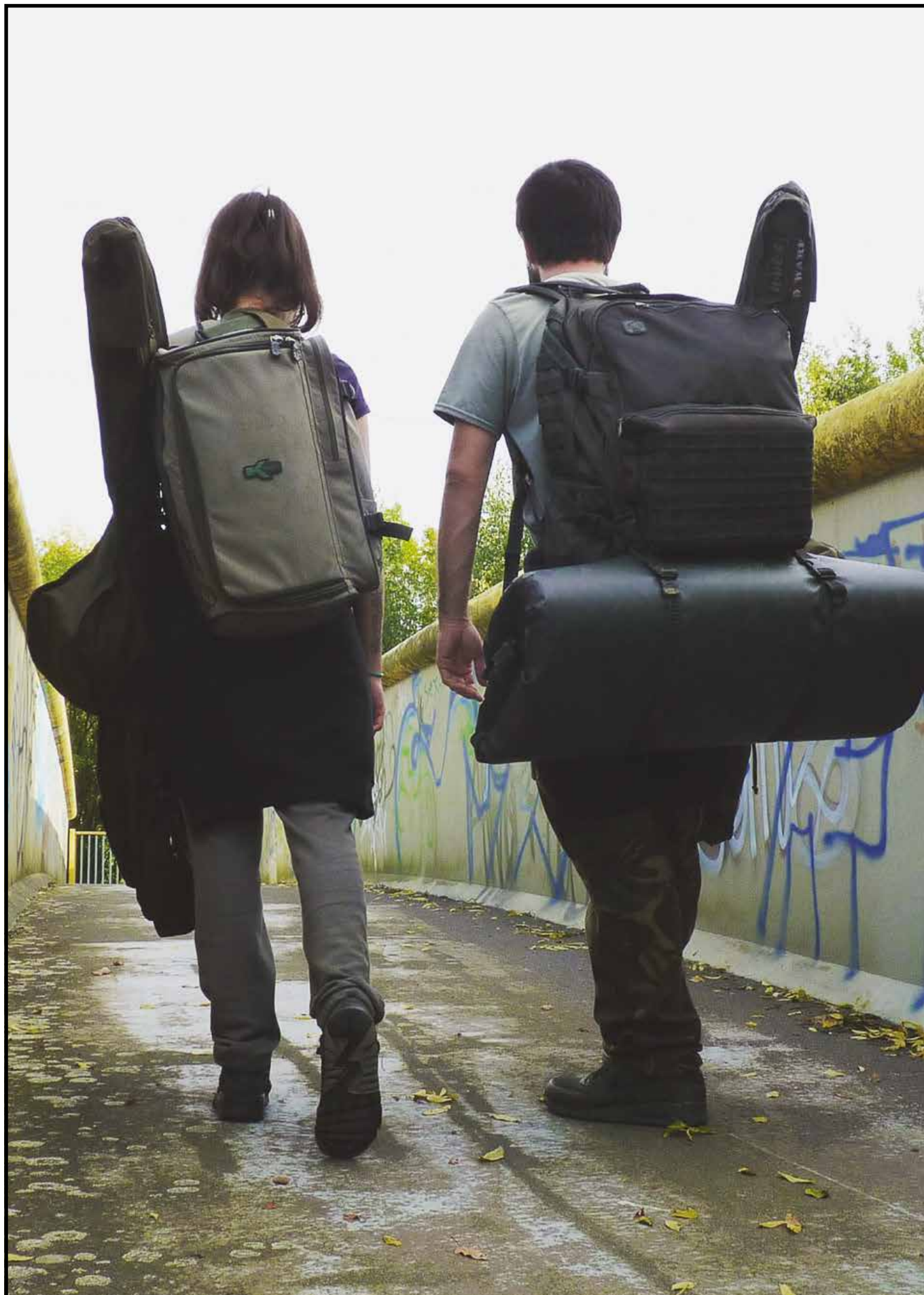


I could hear Renegade Master on full blast coming from over the lake! My heart sank, and all my confidence was gone. I sat it out for an hour or so and was about to go home when the right hand rod screamed off, and I landed my initial target! It taught me a valuable lesson that day. That the carp that reside in these kinds of waters don't always get spooked as much as you think by lakeside activities, as they have been there for so long, they have seen and heard it all before. It's part of their norm really, so don't be put off. There are plenty more goings-on in park life that I could talk about, and I could go into a lot more detail, but I'll save that for another time, as I still have unfinished business on the water in question so there's plenty more to come.

The Canal: When I first decided to start my campaign on the canal, I was literally fresh footed on there; I hadn't even looked at it properly. My first port of call was my bike. I waited



John Lam



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for the warmer months and spent a few days riding along the towpath in search of any signs of carp. I decided that I wasn't going to even wet a line on the canal before I'd seen a good sign of carp. I went down the same line as when I started on the park lake as well, speaking to people I seen on the canal, whether they be match anglers or even the odd carp angler. I have always found that if you are genuine in your approach to people about what you're doing and what your goals are, most



John Lam

are pretty genuine back. You don't have to quiz people about their angling for information – just a general approach about the location in question can sometimes be more than enough guidance about where you want to be heading. A strange Scouser on the banks of Sheffield – I can't bear to imagine what some people's first impressions of me were!

Anyway back to the carp... After a few days of riding in the sun, I managed to find a few carp shoaled up in one of the stretches that I now know is the more popular area for carp anglers than the rest of the canal. I got down there with the rods and managed a few carp, the first one being a low double



mirror. I went back to my roots with the canal approach at first, flying the ever faithful chod rig to the far wall of the canal, mainly with single baits, maybe a few scatterings of boilies and getting some results with some real characters but nothing of any size. After a short campaign there both Laura and I decided to venture to the more unfished of late stretches of the canal, to our knowledge anyway, to see what we could find. With the move, we also decided to change our approach, as the stretch we had now begun to target was a lot longer than the previous one, so we needed to set out our stall more so to speak.

We did a fair bit of moving about for a week or two trying to figure out a good plan of attack and had a few ideas when just by luck, one day we saw one of the local carp anglers who worked at one of the local tackle shops bag a beautiful mirror carp off the surface. It sort of sealed the deal for me really,



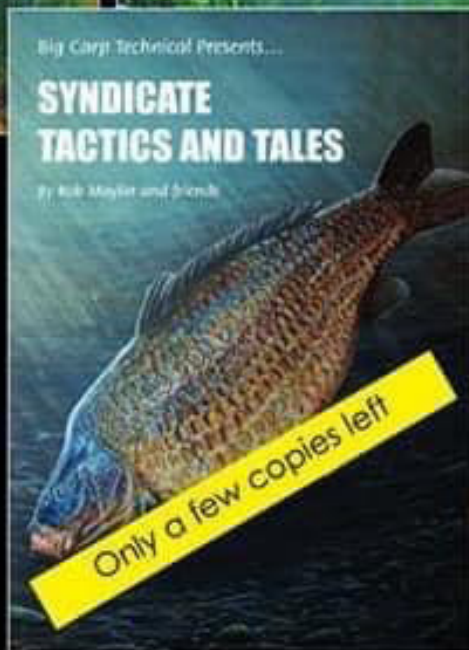
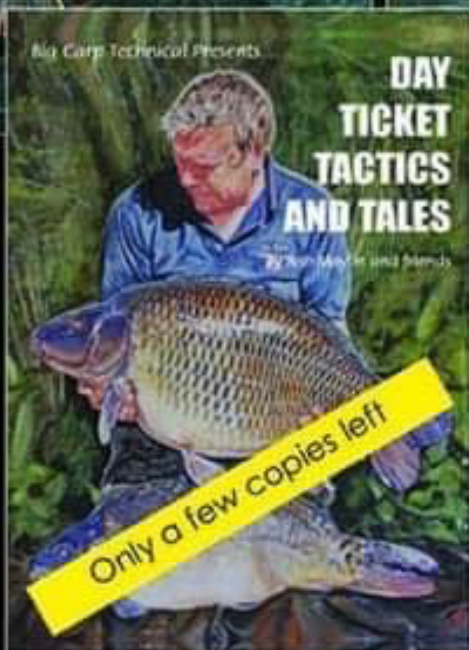
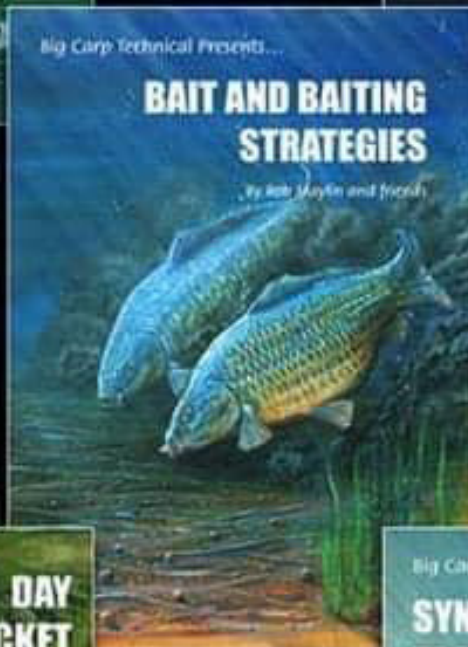
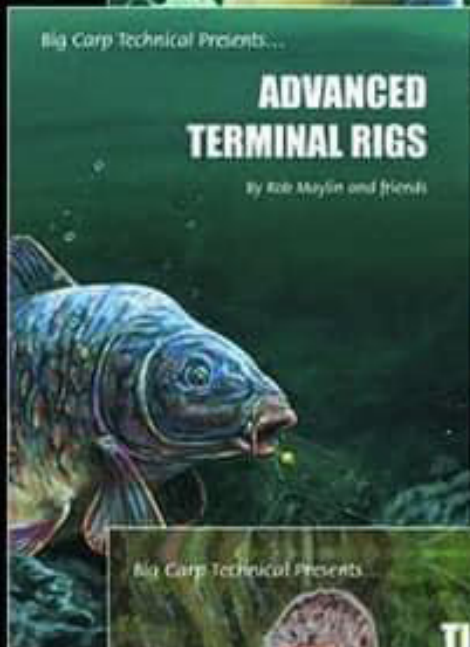
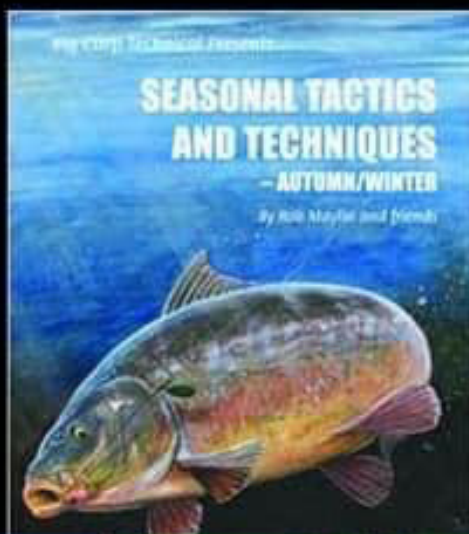
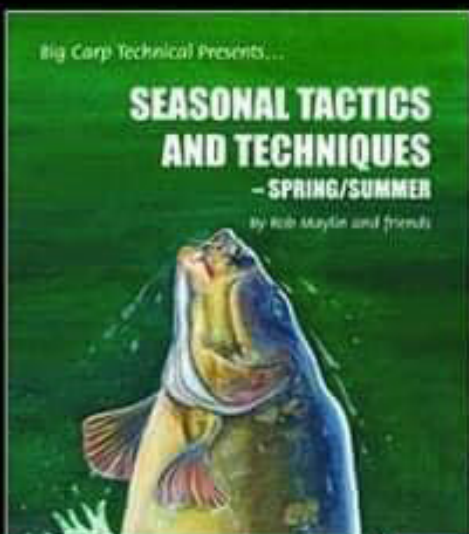
John Lam

as I already had good thoughts about the area anyway, but it's always nice to get a confidence boost seeing another angler with their rewards. We decided on a couple of swims from this stretch and persisted with our campaign throughout our first summer on there, having some mega results, catching different characters of all sizes, but nothing ever reached the 20lb mark. As I said before, it's not always about the size of the fish. I have certainly had some of my most memorable captures from these sessions, and they were certainly not the biggest specimens but certainly some of the oldest.



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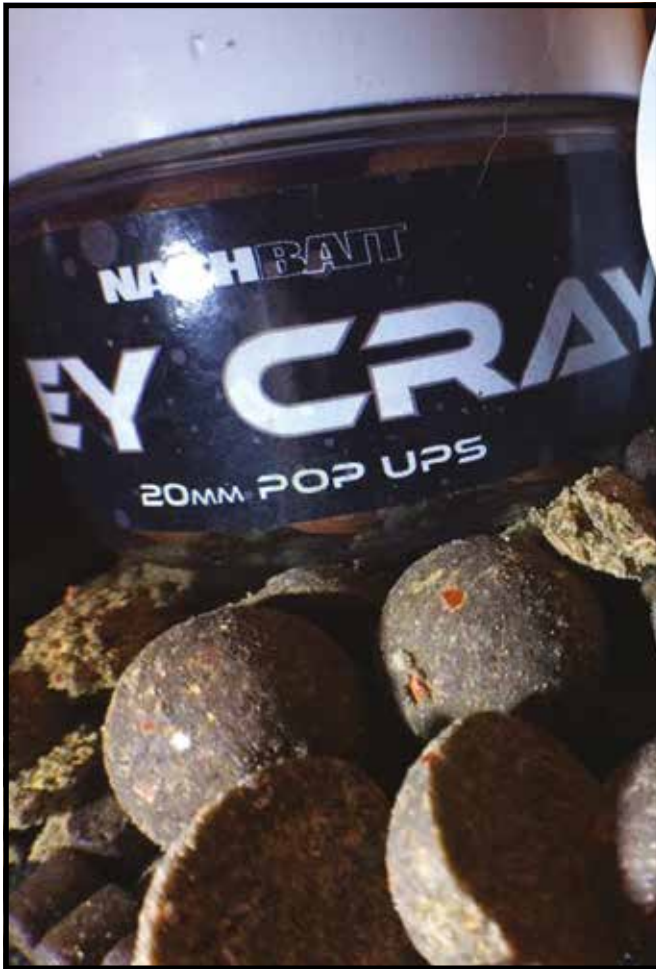
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Our approach for that campaign that summer was prebaiting with particles and hemp, and like I said, I went back to what I knew, using CC Moore Ns1 hookbaits on both chod rig and multi-rig setups. (I must say it was Laura who first started putting confidence in using the multi-rig approach in these situations, using it to great effect for both the canal and the park lake, which turned my attentions to it). The first winter on the canal was a hard one. I found it extremely difficult to pin the carp down, and I have to say there weren't that many results. Regardless, I used my time on the cut to my advantage by learning more about the water and where I would plan my attack for the following season to find the 20lber.

In the early months of the following year, I was lucky enough to bump into the Nash Tackle sales manager, Matt Downing, doing a bit of drop-shotting on the canal one day. We spent some time chatting, and he was kind enough to offer me a bait tester's position to test their new up and coming Key Cray bait. Obviously I was over the moon and quickly found myself going into the new season with a new bait and part of a new testing team in search of new targets - hyped.

After the first real season on the canal and park lake, I quickly got to know a lot of the local anglers from the area who also share the same passion for carping and just angling in general. It was hard going at first if I am honest; I was being judged by a lot of people at first who just thought I was this crazy Scouse carper, but I would like to think nowadays people just understand my drive and passion for the sport we all love. I continued to fish the canal through the colder months, leaving the park lake alone due its vast depths.



I had set myself some new targets for the upcoming year, one of them being a canal 20lb'er. Like I said previously, between Laura and me, both on the canal, we had a lot of results, but none of them breaking the 20lb mark. Little was I to know that with my new approach with the Nash Key Cray I was to be rewarded with my target so early on in the year with a 21lb mirror carp taken on a chod rig using a Nash Key Cray 15mm pop-up. With hitting my target for the canal so early, I turned my attention for the rest of the campaign on there to catching a common carp, as the majority of the carp we had caught on there had been mirror carp.

Throughout the rest of the 2017 season on the canal, I managed some more lovely characters and commons as well off the cut, switching to a hinge stiff rig approach with Nash

Bait Coconut Creme pop-ups and finished off the year with a bit of breadbomb madness. I just didn't manage to get that ornamental I am still after on there, maybe an unknown fish, before as I take my urban adventures further afield, but you never know!

What now? Well, as a lot of you know, I love my urban fishing, and I try to do as much as I can. Unfortunately, due to illness last year, I found myself with a lot of time on my hands, and with this I decided to put an idea into practice to create a new urban carping community called Urban Carp Collective over social media platforms by using my own urban carpy content and other people's content who want to get Involved and share their images, broadcasting my own and other people's urban carp experiences to others over all social media platforms and other lines of reach, to help inspire others to join the





urban carp community and get involved making everyone feel a part of a big team/community with no bitterness and no politics involved, just urban carpy content shared by all. It was something I created a few months back, and the support from not only anglers but some companies involved in the fishing industry from all around the world has helped Urban Carp Collective grow a lot faster than I initially thought.

I hope that everyone is enjoying the concept of what I am trying to create, and long may it continue. I have currently had a few products made for the branding of the community and have many more ideas in the pipeline to bring to the urban angler along the way, such as articles of their own, videos, blogs, and much, much more. As for my angling this year, I have many waters that I would like to target, but I intend to keep my targets realistic and not spread myself too thin whilst

John Lam





managing help Urban Carp Collective grow. I have already managed to kick the year off with a stunning dark winter canal warrior taken on a Candy Nut Crush pop-up on a multi-rig!

But most importantly, go fishing and have fun! That's what really matters.

Bish bash bosh – I hope you have enjoyed the read. Thanks for your time, and I would like to thank Laura and all my angling friends and companies around me for all the support – it's much appreciated!

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