

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

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Steve Yule - Red Letter Session  
Pete Dunnell - A Trick Up His Sleeve  
Perry Alabaster - Awesome Session  
Danny Whybrow - Taking on The Ocean



Pete Hall - Elstow 1  
Matt Parry - Lessons Learned  
Kurtis Burton - Private Waters  
Jerry Hammond - Vinnie's Lin

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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 MAR 2025**

## PECK'S PRIZE

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WHYBROW**

**DUNNELL  
ALABASTER**

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# CARP TACKLE ONLINE

## NEW PRODUCTS, BEST SELLERS AND DEALS

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Team member Grant Walters getting amongst the autumn biggins: "After heavily baiting an area with Infusion, hemp, pellet, corn and liquid food. This 35.8 stunner, tripped up. #carponline size 4 Scorpion Curve, as always (never fail me)"



Team member Paul Gill had a little trip away with family to Tattershall lakes for 3 nights. The rods were out for the full holiday with nothing till this morning. Another angler on the opposite side of the lake had the biggest in the lake at 36lb. Paul was very happy with how this fished looked, what a stunner. Using my favourite stiff hinge size 6 Scorpion Chod hook tied 3inch high with a foot and half long boom section fished over heavy weed and dropped by the boat with 5kg of bait. This has done Paul very well this year.



Team member Will Cottrell caught this cracking mirror last weekend using our Size 10 Scorpion Zig hooks with the eye slightly bent in. We'll done Will.



Owner Mark Russell visited Stanwick Lakes for an overnighter. The session looked like it was going to be a blank until his right hand rod ripped off whilst he was under the broly while packing up! A 10mm pop up and double fake corn was with a blowback style rig made totally from carptackleonline items, size 4 Scorpion Wide Gape hook, 2mm green Shrink Tubing, CTO Pro hook link, 54mm anti tangle sleeve, quick change swivel, and our composite safety lead clip.



Team member Scott Johnson bagged this stunning mirror over a recent session. Scott used our size 6 Scorpion hooks in a slip D style rig in solid bags.



"Using Carp Tackle Online - 20lb Fluorocarbon hook link, Tungsten sinkers, Scorpion Wide Gape size 6, 0.5mm Krimps on Helicopter Safe zone setup I caught a 23lb mirror, 34lb 3oz and a low double. Well done Brett, great angling!

# CARP TACKLE ONLINE

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Swivels



Scorpion Chod Hook



Scorpion Crank Hook



Scorpion Snag Hook



Tungsten Putty



Shrink Tube



Hair Stops



Scorpion Ronnie Rigs



Composite Leadclip



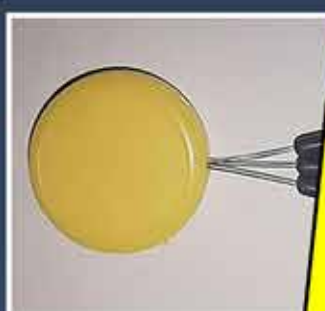
Choddy Crank Hook



Aligner



Swivel Deal



Tungsten Hooklink Sink

**COMING SOON!!**

The NEW Longcrank has the same offset point as our most popular hook, the Crank, but has the added advantage of having a longer shank. Our competition team has been using these to devastating effect.

**WATCH THIS SPACE**



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March 2025

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Publications 2025



Front Cover:  
Darrell Peck with a  
Grenvilles 40.



As I write this introduction the weather has taken a turn for the better with temperatures in the low teens already. Hopefully we've seen the last of those bitter NE winds. The carp are definitely waking up and those that have braved the weather have been rewarded - well some have. The days are getting longer which is a big plus. Those long winter nights are a grueller!! We've got some great articles this month to get you motivated to get out on the bank. We're always on the look out for more features. It's a great way to get noticed and the tackle companies do pay attention to who's in the mag. So if you're looking to get sponsored getting writing and take a big step closer to your dream of getting paid to go fishing!!

## 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?

## 22. CATCH REPORTS

Check out some of the biggest carp to be caught in the UK, the last few weeks. It's been tough out there but there have already been some awesome fish caught this year!!

## 32. PERRY ALABASTER

What a start to the year Perry has had. His first session of the year turned into a red letter session. Find out what he put on the bank.

## 42. PETE DUNNELL

Pete's been trying a new tactic with small PVA bags of salt and his results have been proving very positive. Find out more about Pete's approach now!!



## 50. THOMAS MARTINALI

Another angler with a cracking start to the year at Embryo's Cawcutts Lake. He broke his PB twice. Check out what he caught.

## 60. DARRELL PECK

Who wouldn't want an insight into how Darrell peck approaches his carp fishing. Darrell breaks down his fundamentals for you.

## 66. SAMUI FISHING

Fancy some arm aching action in the beautiful paradise of Thailand? Check what Samui Fishing Resort has on offer for a trip of a life time.

## 80. DANNY WHYBROW

Taking on The Ocean is a massive task, but the rewards can be immense. Danny Whybrow's taken up the challenge.

## 20. STEVE YULE

Steve takes us back to warmer times and recalls a special trip last May where everything went right and he banked some awesome carp along the way.

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## KEITH JENKINS RIP



Dave Lane brought as the sad news of Keith Jenkins passing. “Over 40 years on and I have to say farewell to my longest standing friend. You go through a lot of life together, not just fishing time, when you have a friend for that long. Living just up the road from each other for many of those years meant parties, pub bands, late night drinking and Pink Floyd sessions. And, of course, night after night rolling bait. Most of these were at Jenks house not mine, as it was better stocked. I have no idea how Linda actually put up with me back then.

We had a ball though, and we breezed through the next 40 plus years without so much as a single argument. Gonna miss the sight of him thrashing his air guitar at the front of the room in defiance of the guy who was actually playing the notes, it always cracked me up. You will be sadly missed my old friend.”





## JACK HOLDEN SADLY PASSES

We were saddened to read via Lee Jackson of the passing of respected angler Jack Holden at such a young age. Lee said, "I still feel a bit numb about this, but RIP Jack Holden. A superb angler, a nice man and a good friend to most people that knew him. Sleep peacefully young man, save a few swims for us when we get there, God bless "



## CRAIG MITCHELL AKA C4RPYCRAIG JOINS URBAN

With his unmatched passion for carp fishing, Craig needs no introduction to the fishing community.

His dedication to the craft, ability to adapt, and incredible catches speak for themselves, and we couldn't be more excited to have him representing Urban. Expect some epic content, solid tips, and, of course, some unforgettable catches.

# FESTIVAL OF CARP 2025 SATURDAY 12TH JULY HORSESHOE LAKE, LECHLADE, GL7 3QQ

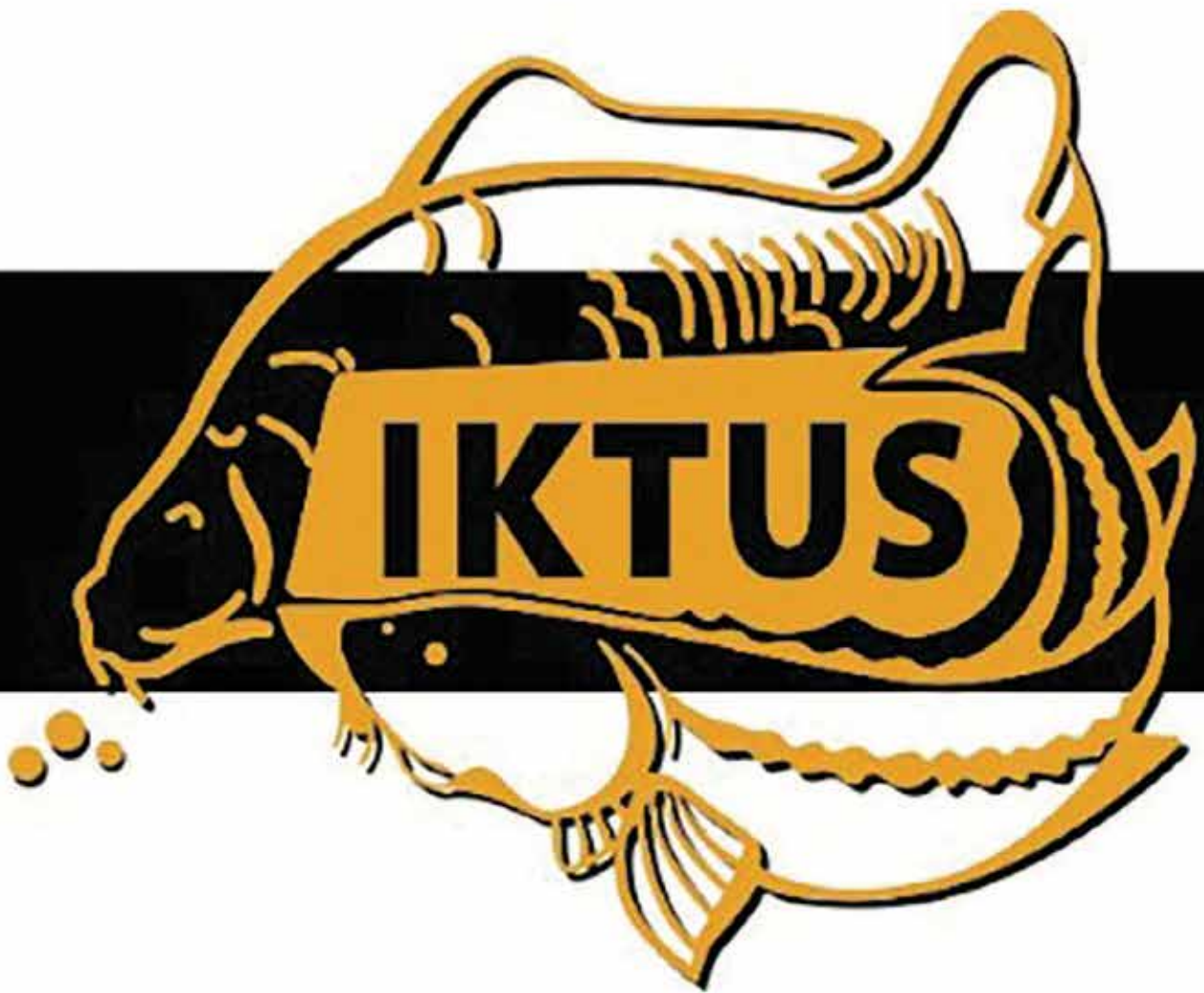
Save the date for this year's 'Festival of Carp.' The event will be at Horseshoe Lake in Lechlade on Saturday 12th July, it's always a good social event with something for everyone, we hope to see you there!

This year there will be:

- Talks
- Angling companies demonstrating their products around the lake
- Angling Trust coaches

helping youngsters to catch their first fish

- Casting demo's and tuition
- Vintage tackle displays including a range of 'Carp Catchers Club' items
- Vintage tackle and book sales
- Raffles
- An auction including many of the late Chris Ball's books plus other significant items
- Delicious food and drink and much more ...

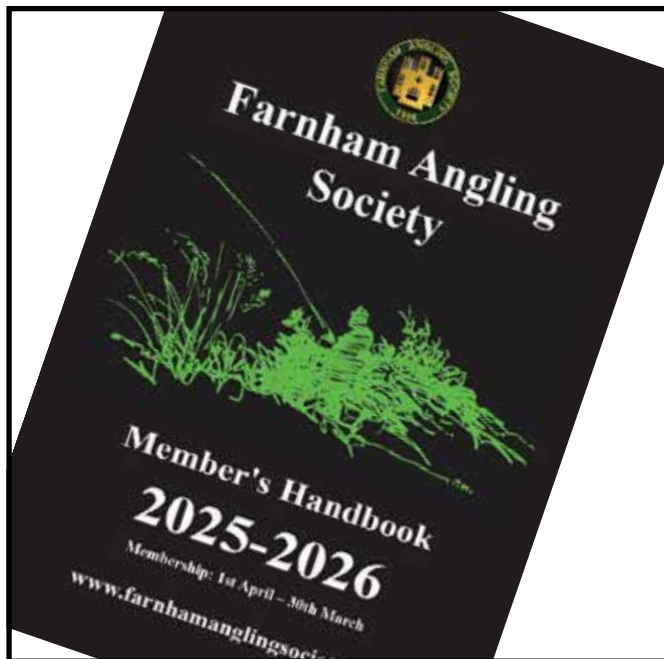


# FISHING RESORT



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# FARNHAM RENEWALS



2025 - 2026 MEMBERSHIP FEES					
Membership Category	Annual Subscription	Joining Fee*	Total for First Year	Renewing Members: Add Late Fee (from 1st May)	Renewing Members: Add Re-Joining Fee (from 1st June)
SENIOR (over 18 to state pension)	£175.00	£55.00	£230.00	£10.00	£55.00
DISABLED (blue badge or proof of entitlement)	£87.00	£28.00	£115.00	£5.00	£28.00
JUNIOR (under 16)	£43.00	£14.00	£57.00	£3.00	£14.00
STUDENT (under 21, student id required)	£87.00	£28.00	£115.00	£5.00	£28.00
INTERMEDIATE (18 to 17)	£87.00	£28.00	£115.00	£5.00	£28.00
ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE STATE PENSION	£122.00	£55.00	£177.00	£10.00	£55.00

Existing members wishing to renew and those interested in joining Farnham Angling Society may now apply for the 2025-2026 season via our website. Please remember that you will need an up to date passport style photo, a photo of your wife/partner if you wish to include them, plus a photo of your Pike Stamp when applying. The Membership Office at Gold Valley will next be open between 10:00 - 14:00 on Saturday 1st March 2025. Please note that it will not be open on Friday 28th February 2025. Opening times for the season ahead are as shown

below: 1st March – 30th April: Friday & Saturday: 10:00am-4:00pm 1st May – 30th June: Saturdays only: 10:00am-4:00pm 1st – 31st July: First Saturday of the month: 10:00am-4.00pm 1st August – 31st December: Online or postal applications only 1st January 2026 – 28th February 2026: Postal applications only Postal applications may be made using the Renewal Form on Page 93 of your 2024-2025 handbook or by downloading an Application Form from our website. Ian Gray, Honorary Secretary on behalf of The Executive Committee

# ANGLING TRUST GOES MULTILINGUAL TO BATTLE THE ISSUE OF POACHING



Are you doing all you can to the latest recipients of the prevent poaching and fish service, and are working to theft? The Building Bridges protect their waters and fish multi-lingual signs are from harm. Our enforcement provided free of charge, and work is funded by fishing the team even turn up in person licence income and delivered to advise on sign placement in partnership with the and best practices in general. Environment Agency. Find out Ely Beet Sports & Social Club more about our multi-lingual Angling Section are one of signs service via the website.

# DISCOUNT DAY TICKETS VIA THE ANGLING TRUST



Saves £££s with your membership - 10% discount on day tickets to over 90 fisheries up and down the UK are just one of the great benefits of Angling Trust and Fish Legal membership and includes venues such as Birkwood Farm Fisheries. A family run business, Birkwood Farm Fisheries in Altofts near Wakefield, aims to offer anglers a great fishing experience which is safe, clean, tidy and welcoming. The complex currently has 5 lakes: Main Lake, Frog Hall Lake, Molly's Lake, Oscar's Lake and Emily's Lake

with the total number of pegs in excess of 100. Carp in the Main Lake and Frog Hall are getting up to almost 30lbs in size, and in Emily's, Oscar's and Molly's Lakes the biggest Carp are now in the region of 20lbs. They also have plenty of other specie in the lakes, including: Roach, Rudd, Tench, Perch and Bream and have recently stocked F1 Carp in both Emily's and Oscar's Lakes. Find out more about Birkwood and all of our other 10% discount venues at <https://anglingtrust.net/membership/discounts-day-season-tickets/>





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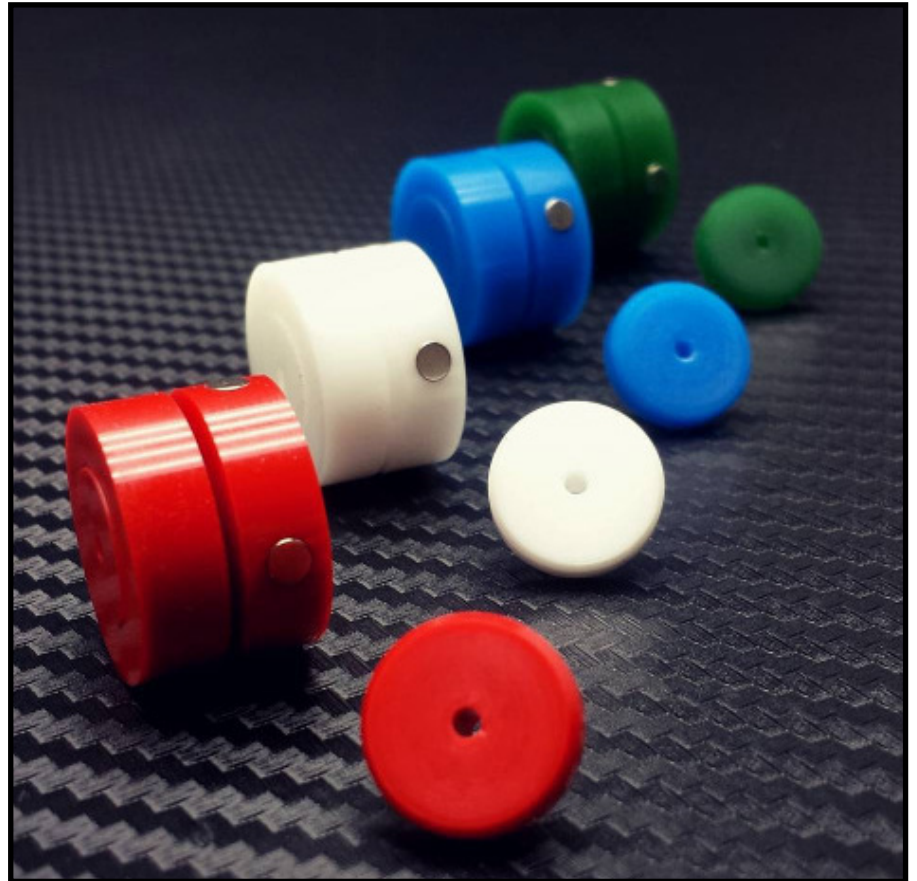
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# LIFESAVER CUBE CLEAN WATER SYSTEM



The Cube is perfectly proportioned around, allowing anglers to enjoy to fit neatly in the car, giving you a warming cuppa or stay hydrated plenty of room for the rest of your safely on demand.

equipment. Despite its compact Made in Britain, this technology is size, it has a 5 litre capacity and is backed by over 10 years of experience capable of delivering 5,000 litres of working in the humanitarian industry clean water before the filter needs and it has been subjected to the replacing. The integrated tap makes highest possible tests for complete it easy to adjust the amount of treated peace of mind.

water being released from the Cube, Find out more about LifeSaver® and and its fast flow-rate of 1.25 litres view its complete range, please visit per minute means there's no waiting <https://iconlifesaver.com>

# PREVENT TREE POLLEN GETTING UP YOUR NOSE THIS SPRING



Hay fever or seasonal allergic rhinitis is an allergic reaction to pollen. Many anglers who suffer from hay fever (around 1 in 4) are allergic to tree pollen, which is in peak season from March until May. Hay fever is a result of our immune system's overreaction to innocuous particles such as pollen. HayMax is an organic drug-free allergen barrier balm – celebrating its 20th anniversary this year – that helps prevent pollen getting up your nose. It is ideal for anglers as it is 100% natural, drug-free and there are no drowsy side effects, so it won't stop you going out fishing or affect your concentration.

Common hay fever symptoms include sneezing, a runny nose, a stuffed up nose, itchy and watery or streaming eyes, nasal congestion and a general stuffed up feeling in the nose and throat. Some people also experience itching around the face and mouth including an itchy mouth, itchy roof of mouth, and a burning sensation in the throat. Headaches and wheezing can also occur.

Symptoms may also include an overall achy feeling, or build-up of pressure in the entire face area. The sinus area is often the most painful. Constant nose rubbing and blowing can also leave sufferers with skin irritation and sensitivity. All of this can lead to tiredness, fatigue and exhaustion. Hay fever can also affect how you sleep and cause sleep disturbance and difficulty getting to sleep. These symptoms can in turn zap your energy levels leaving you feeling low and sluggish. Chronic hay fever sufferers may experience more severe or prolonged symptoms.

HayMax is a 100% natural, organic drug-free allergen barrier balm which was developed by hay fever sufferer Max Wiseberg in his own kitchen over 20 years ago. Having suffered with hay fever since a child and unable to find anything that relieved the symptoms for long, Max decided to try to make his own. When he perfected something that worked for him, he found some willing volunteers to try out his balm. When all respondents who had



the opportunity to try it during their allergic season reported that it worked, and gave it a mark of 3 or better out of 5, Max decided to launch it as HayMax in 2005.

HayMax has been trapping allergens for 20 years, helping prevent the symptoms of hay fever for many happy sufferers. 80% of hay fever sufferers say HayMax works, according to an independent survey by Allergy UK, the leading national charity providing support, advice and information for those living with allergic disease [1]. And 94% of people find HayMax quick to be effective; 44% say that it works immediately and a further 35% say that it works within an hour or two [1].

HayMax works on the prevention principle. This is different from most other hay fever treatments and remedies, and seeks to stop pollen getting into the body before it can cause a reaction, rather than attempting to treat the symptoms or the effects of the pollen once they occur.

Everyone can tolerate a certain amount of pollen in their body





without reaction – known as the ‘trigger level’. When the amount of pollen rises above the ‘trigger level’, hay fever symptoms start. When the allergen barrier balm traps enough pollen that the trigger level is not reached, symptoms don’t start.

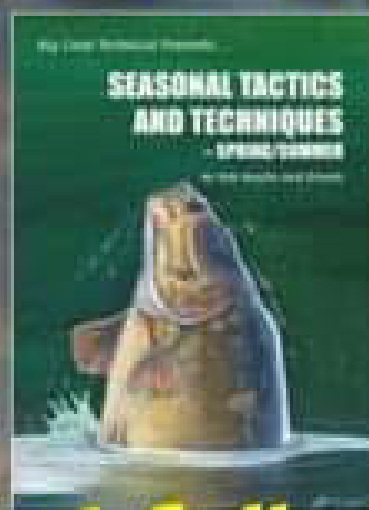
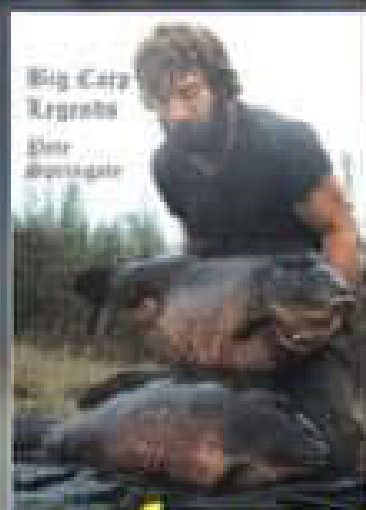
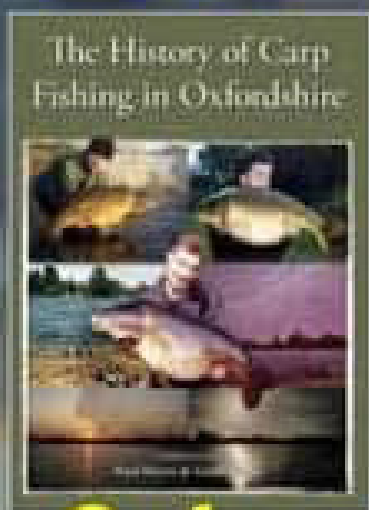
HayMax is not invasive, is incredibly

easy to use and can be applied as often as necessary throughout the day and at bedtime. It is applied topically with a finger (or cotton swab), to the rim of the nostrils and bones of the eyes. The small pot fits easily in a pocket or small bag, so is ideal to take with you when you go out fishing.

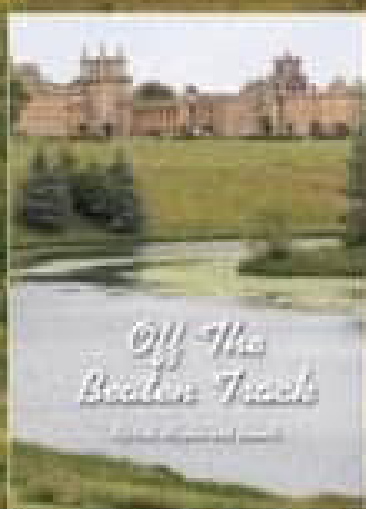
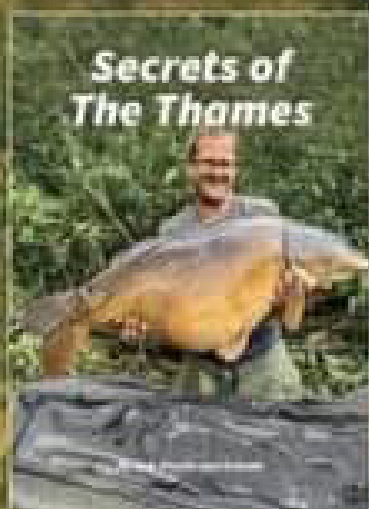
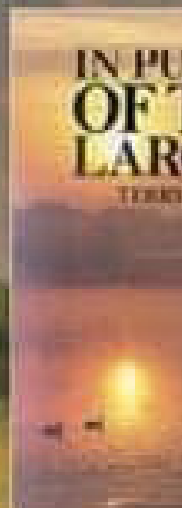
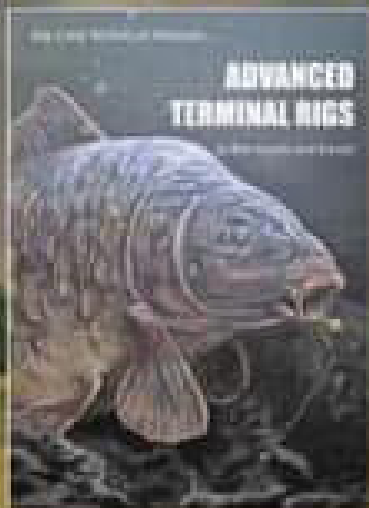
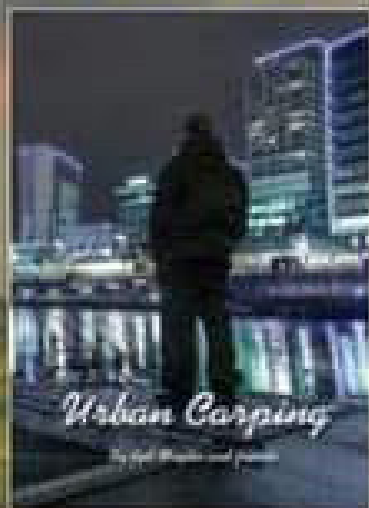
Independent university studies show that HayMax traps all types of grass and tree pollen [2] and that HayMax traps over a third of pollen before it enters the body, in addition to dust mite allergens and pet dander [3]. As HayMax is natural, organic and drug-free and there are no drowsy side effects, it is ideal for anglers as it won’t stop you going out fishing or affect your concentration levels.

HayMax organic drug-free allergen barrier balm has an rrp of £8.49 per pot and is available from independent chemists, pharmacists and health stores, Holland & Barrett, Ocado, selected Superdrug and Boots, on 01525 406600 and [www.haymax.biz](http://www.haymax.biz).

# SPRING INTO

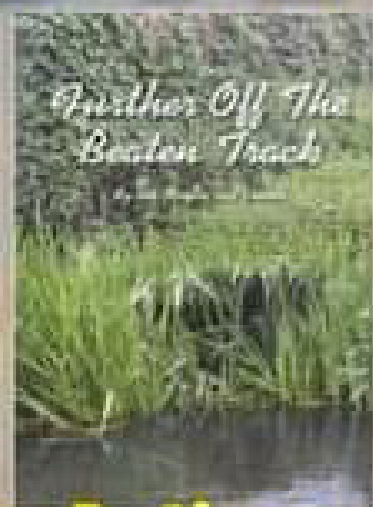
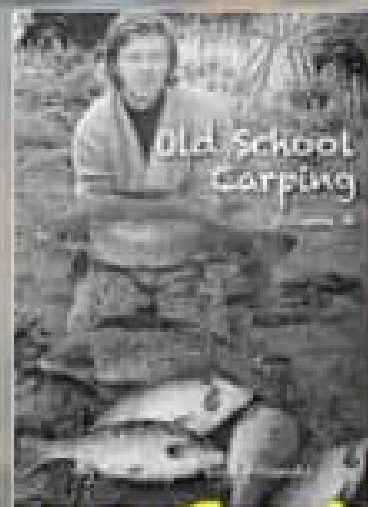
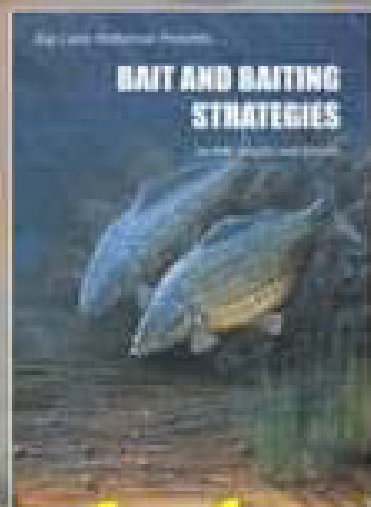


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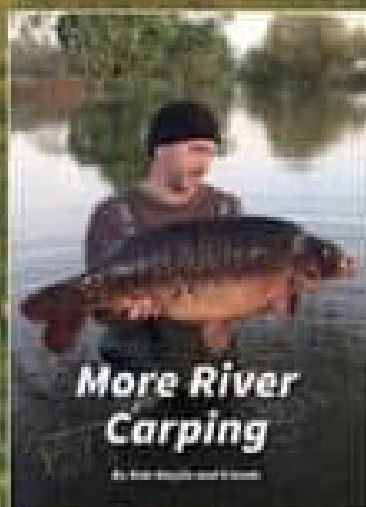
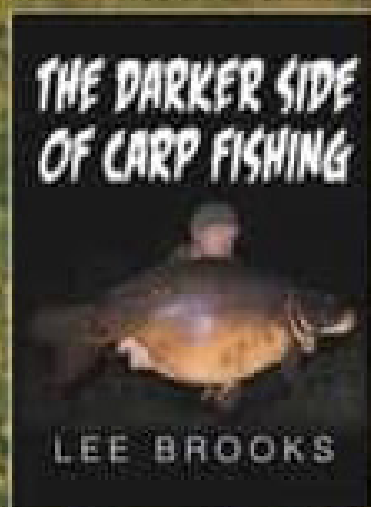
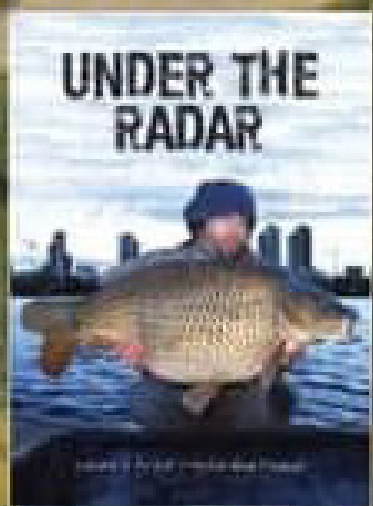
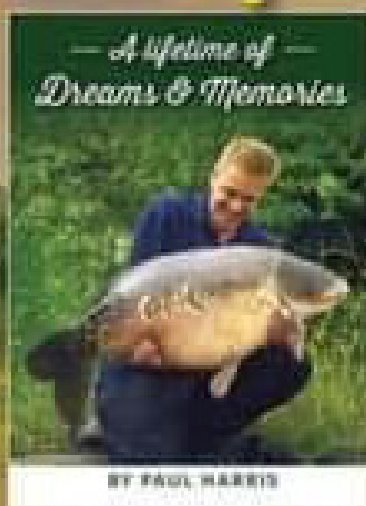
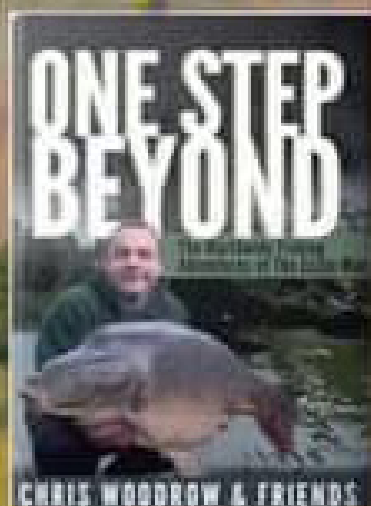


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# FOUR TO 41



Mitch Attwood hit the jackpot before the lake iced over and had another fantastic session. This time round he managed 8 fish, including 4 over 30lb, with the biggest going 41lb





# DOUBLE TOP



Jason Colenso finished off his local syndicate in fine style landing this 44lb mirror that's been on the missing list for quite sometime, and to make it even sweeter proving his tactics are spot on, Jason had it twice in the 8 nights angling!

# MERRY TERRY



Terry Hearn doing his thing in deepest darkest January.

# LINEAR HAULING



Fishing on B1 last week, Hannah and Paul landed an impressive 11 carp. Hannah caught 2 20's to 27lb, 35lb 12oz, 2 40's of 40lb 4oz and new PB of 44lb!! Paul had 4 20's to a 29lb common, 2 30's of 34lb 12oz and 36lb 8oz. All fell to solid bags over a little scattering of bait

# CATCH REPORTS



# GRENVILLES GOLD



Stephen White was absolutely blown away.....

After getting 2 rods taken out by tufties at stupid o'clock , I only had 1 rod in play at first light. A small drop-back had this on the end. My 40th UK fish over the magical 40lb , which isn't bad for a northern Noddy. 49lb 6 oz of Grenvilles gold

# RUSSIAN RESULT



The Cossack at 40lb+ from Horton church lake for Michael Bromfield

Aidan Powell with a Coking Farm Fishery monster called Lewie at 42lb

# COKING CLONKER



# KINGSMEAD ROYALTY



John Crittenden fished Kingsmead 1 landing a fish called 'Chemo's' at 43lb 7oz!

Matt Eaton with a 42.8lbs Coking Farm brute, kicking off his year in style. >>>>>>



**WOW!!  
JUST  
WOW!!**

Ryan Richardson hit the jackpot with this absolute stunner



**COKING  
BANGER**



# CORNISH 50

Aaron Bunning caught the fish from the Oaks Syndicate at an enormous 51lb 1oz. The fish he dearly wanted fell to his efforts just 34 nights into his ticket, after not being seen for almost a year!





# WAYNE 'SHREDS' WOODLANDS

Wayne Ingram banked "Shredz" at 41lb this becomes the lakes 3rd 40



**PERRY ALABASTER**

# BRACE OF WINTER FORTIES

The majority of anglers might have been looking at the weather this week and thinking, “no thanks,” but as Perry Alabaster has proved, they can still be caught!

Returning to Monks Pit for the first time in a month, Perry wasn't feeling especially hopeful with the poor conditions in store, but the fish had other ideas, and over the space of three nights, Perry picked off seven fish, including two forties, the aptly named Snowy at 41lb 14oz, and Triple A at 42lb 4oz. “Having not had the chance to fish since the beginning of December, I felt a little more

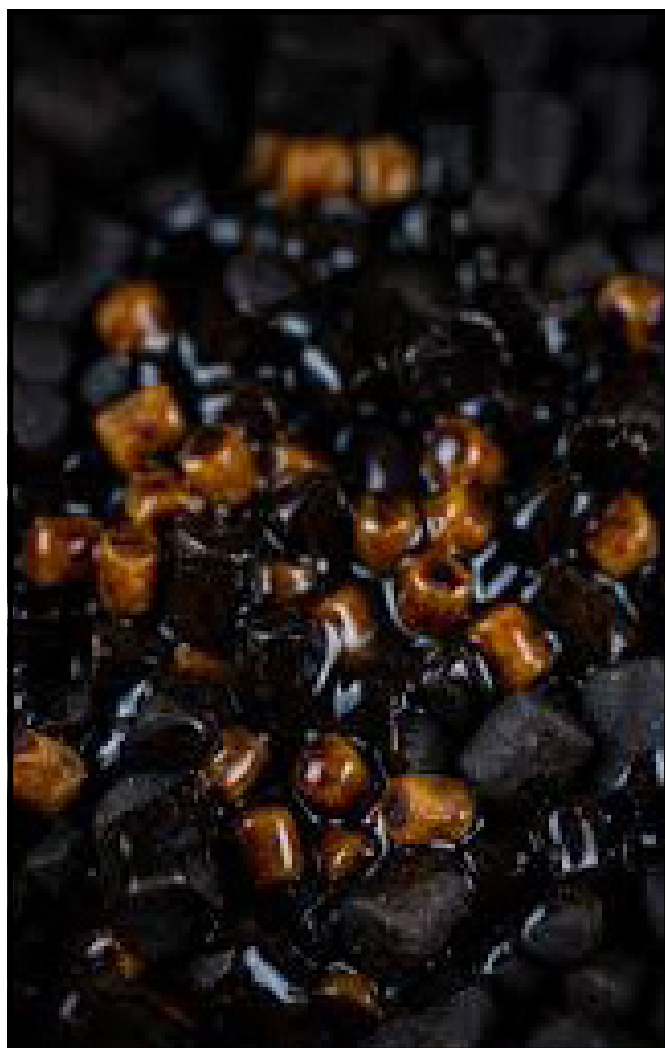
out of touch with Monks Pit than usual when I returned this week,” admitted Perry.

“After the recent snowfall, persistent rain forecast and with night-time temperatures dropping to -3 and a daytime windchill factor of -6, needless to say, confidence levels weren’t as high as they’d normally be!

“Just before dark, the rain finally eased off and I was

able to get some solid bags containing S7 wafers on to my spots. I injected the bags with a squirt of S7 Amino Smoke to create some additional attraction and pulling power in the deep water. I baited up with a mix of S7 chops, S7 crumb and Crayfish Maxi Mix pellets, then sat back in hope rather than expectation.

“At just gone midnight, I was awoken by my first



carp of the year, a 32lb 14oz mirror on the right-hand rod. I'd only managed to get one self-take of it on my phone in the drizzling rain when my left-hand rod burst into life. How or why does that even happen? No action for hours on end, then two rods, miles apart from each other, produce bites within a few minutes – crazy! So, back went the 32-pounder and I went on to

land fish number two, a 25lb mirror. I was so grateful that I'd set up two nets, something I always do in the event of moments like this. A few more rushed self-takes and I was quickly fishing with all the rods out again. Fifteen minutes or so later, I'd barely got back into bed when I was into another mid-twenty. It was a very satisfying night's fishing in the end, with three





**Big Carp** *Promotions*

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



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fish coming during a hectic half-hour feeding spell.

“The weather on the second night of the session turned noticeably colder and the action appeared to dry up, but as the sun started coming up, one of those little golden windows of winter opportunity opened up again and the bites came thick and fast once more!

“The first carp of the morning was a pretty 18lb 8oz stockie with some big scales on its

flanks. I was really happy to land that one, especially as I had struggled to rip my landing net from the wooden platform it had welded itself to in the icy conditions. About an hour later, I was in again, and this time whatever I was attached to felt much bigger. The fish kept taking line way out in the distance and it must have been at least five minutes before I even got my elastic line marker back on to my spool, which meant I still had





80-plus yards left to retrieve. This fight reminded me of the scrap my last forty had given me back in October when a fish called Snowy beat me up for ages before I managed to net it. Lo and behold, after landing the carp and photographing it, I realised it was Snowy again. Apt really, considering how bloody freezing the weather was! Weighing in at 41lb 14oz, I wasn't too disappointed that it was a repeat capture; after all, it was my first session of

the year and playing it was still a buzz.

“Less than half an hour later, I was into my sixth carp of the session and this one felt good, too. A much slower, heavier, plodding-type feeling this time. The sort of fight that normally means you've either foul-hooked a sandbag or you're into something huge! After the customary, deep-water margin battle, another big fish rolled into the net. It weighed in at 42lb 4oz and I



didn't recognise this one. I pinged a couple of pics over to the bailiff and he informed me that it was a fish called Triple A. I definitely hadn't caught this fish before, so it was another forty crossed off my Monks Pit most-wanted list. I was delighted with that one!

"With work relatively quiet at this time of the year, I decided to stay on and fish one more night. Typically, the additional night was a quiet

one, but just as I was looking at the cat ice in the margins and thinking about packing down my frost-covered broly, I got one final take, resulting in a lovely, chestnut-brown 28lb 8oz mirror.

"What I thought could potentially have been a difficult session turned out to be a dream start to my 2025 campaign and the bonus fish right at the end was the icing (pardon the pun) on the cake."



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*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](http://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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**PETER HUDSON**

# RUNNING OVER THE SAME OLD GROUND

Like most of us in the angling World I like my comfort zone, I'm a bugger for it I can sometimes fall into the trap of fishing the same old places with same old faces, in reality this is the kiss of death for any angler who wants to be successful, yes you will be successful on the venues you keep on visiting but you will never learn that much, all the learning has been done and now you're just going through the motions of that venue. 2023 was no different to me, yes I had finally caught a carp out gull farm, but I soon

found myself back at Lovell's, part of it was the fact my personal life had been busy for most of the year, the other part was I wasn't prepared to move on there was still some unfinished business on the old lake in the shape of a 20lb target, although I had a good start in the January and was catching decent fish along the way I was starting to think the 20lb target was never going to happen and with this sort of thinking I fell into a trap.

Even with making plans to fish elsewhere I still found myself walking the banks of the Old Lake, sometimes the targets we set over take your life in a way, they can certainly mess up your angling plans. Yes I was enjoying the fishing on the place and I was catching new fish from the place I did feel like I was in prison from it, it wouldn't let me go, it's strange to say that about a venue but it does happen from time to time it is down to you

in you pull away or not. With success coming from all over the lake with the tactics I was applying I did feel a change was to come, I started using small pva mesh bags of salt around the hook, now salt has taken the carp world by storm in the last few years, you have to be careful with it though so I was making my bags around the size of a 10 pence coin up to a 50 pence coin depending on the range I was fishing. The first few sessions went well with the salty bags catching fish most trips which isn't hard on Lovell's old lake, however when you're out catching the other anglers on the venue you do have to start to think I'm on to something, little did I know I had found a little edge on the place.

After a successful spring I was more determined to catch a 20lb carp from the venue, I had seen that others were catching them but I wasn't, I'd been in this situation before at



a place called Monks Cavein, Peterborough. The best piece of advice I can give, is never to give up, keep going and going and your time will come. You just have to keep working at it. With this advice in my mind set I was keeping a close eye on a corner of the lake in the deeper end, most times I'd be fishing the lake I'd see a few fish topping including the odd bigger fish, now people would quickly say "Oh you should drop in there and fish it" however I wasn't fishing it any time soon, I wanted to see if anyone else was fishing it, to my surprise no one was even entertaining the area, instead most people were jumping into the areas I was fishing the minute I left, although I didn't know that at the time.

So with the summer in full swing I decided it was time to finally fish the corner, it was a strange old day me and my partner Hannah were just

setting off from our home to which I said "would love to catch a 20 today and have a good days fishing" upon arrival I noticed no one on the deeper area, brilliant that's what I wanted. In fact not many people were on, although for midweek I wasn't surprised about that.

Barrowing the tackle around to the swim was fairly easy and I felt confident of a bite or two, as I looked out the amount of bubbling in the area was a site to see, I suspect they were feeding on bloodworm and hitting the patches hard, if that was the case a perfect place for your baits. With two rigs quickly placed and a few handfuls of scopex squid out there surely it wouldn't be long, unfortunately for me I kept getting dropped runs on my right hand rod I was started to get annoyed at it. I soon brought the rod in and changed my rig over to a multirig, made sure the hook was



# 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.

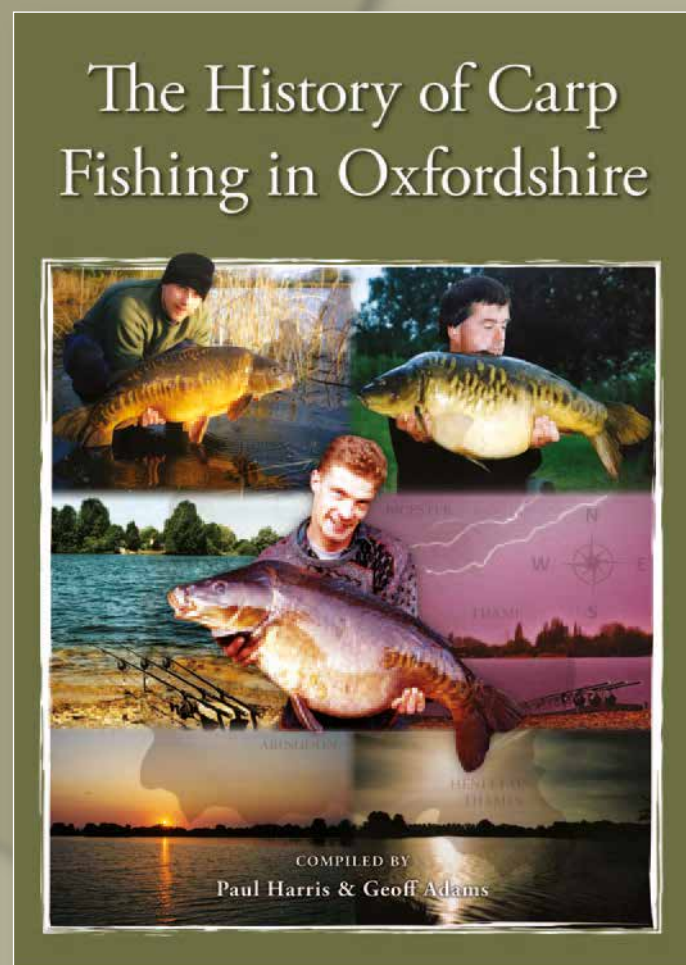
Nick Stansfield is a brilliant young Oxford carper who doesn't shout about his catches. We have two incredible chapters from him from two of the county's most iconic lakes, The Leisure Park and The Big S! Josh Chatfield has written a fantastic chapter which really gives you an insight into how fishing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



sharp and all was good with the rig.

After being out there for 10 minutes I received a few bleeps, surely a take but then nothing for a another minute but then just a screaming run, from the second I picked up the rod into it I knew it was a big fish, just powering away from me, the rod bent over and me back winding how fun. Hannah brought the other rod in as this fish was powerful, at first I thought

I hooked into the myth of Lovell's, no one knows what it is but there is something in there that once hooked goes bloody mental. Although that thought quickly left my mind as I had hooked into that before and know how it goes, this was different after 10 minutes I caught sight of what I was fighting a lovely common carp with a fairly broad back. I said to Hannah "this is a 20lber, just by looking at it in the water I

know it's a 20" soon she was in the net, a size 5 twister hook slap bang in the middle of the bottom lip around an inch back it was meant to be.

Shaking with the emotions I was feeling, Hannah bless her calmed me down, a quick drink and breathe the carp was soon hoisted on to the unhooking mat, to which I had only brought a few weeks before hand what a way to

christen it. Weighing in at 23lb 4oz I was the biggest fish I had from the lake, a few snaps and a call to my mate Wayne was soon being done after slipping back the old girl, I went on to have a good day, even catching another cracking common at 15lb, somethings all happen for a reason.

Now where else should I take the salty bags.....





**THOMAS MARTINALI**

# NEW YEAR'S RESULT

In the annals of carp-fishing history, there can't have been many New Year sessions quite like the one Thomas Martinali experienced when he brought in 2025 on Embryo Angling's Cawcutts Lake in Cambridgeshire.

In just a few short hours

either side of New Year, Thomas broke his personal best twice with 40lb-plus mirrors known as the Wonky Lin and Miss May, as well as four other fish in an incredible six-fish hit.

"I'm not sure many people would have experienced a

New Year like mine,” said Tom.

“I had initially attempted to get some good time on the bank before Christmas, but due to circumstances out of my control, I was unable to get the rods out and enjoy some much-needed downtime.

“Christmas came and went and with my fiancée off work, she asked if I wanted to go fishing. This was what I had been waiting for!

“I told my family I was going fishing and my gobby older brother said it was more like camping; it would only be fishing once I’d banked a fish. Well, bank a fish I did, six of them in total, including two PBs!

“Arriving in the dark on New Year’s Eve, I set up with excitement both for what the session may hold and the New Year itself.

“While emptying my bladder, one of my rods came to life while I was in full flow! All went quite briefly, I shuck

the snake and reached for a headtorch to check my rod. As I did this, the left-hand rod ripped off again and I was in! Weighing in at 25lb 8oz, I was buzzing and would have been happy even if I hadn’t caught anything else.

“At around 8pm, with low pressure and 40mph winds, it was time for my right-hand rod to get in on the action. I could feel this fish had some weight to it, even though it came in with relative ease. I placed the fish in the sling and due to the hook point being damaged, I proceeded to tie a new rig before getting the rod back on the spot.

“At 8:30pm, I was in again, on the middle rod this time. As I lifted into the fish, I was buzzing, recognising all three rods had now had action and I could be in for quite a session. I placed the fish in the sling, got the rod back out and proceeded to weigh the fish, coming in at 21lb 4oz.



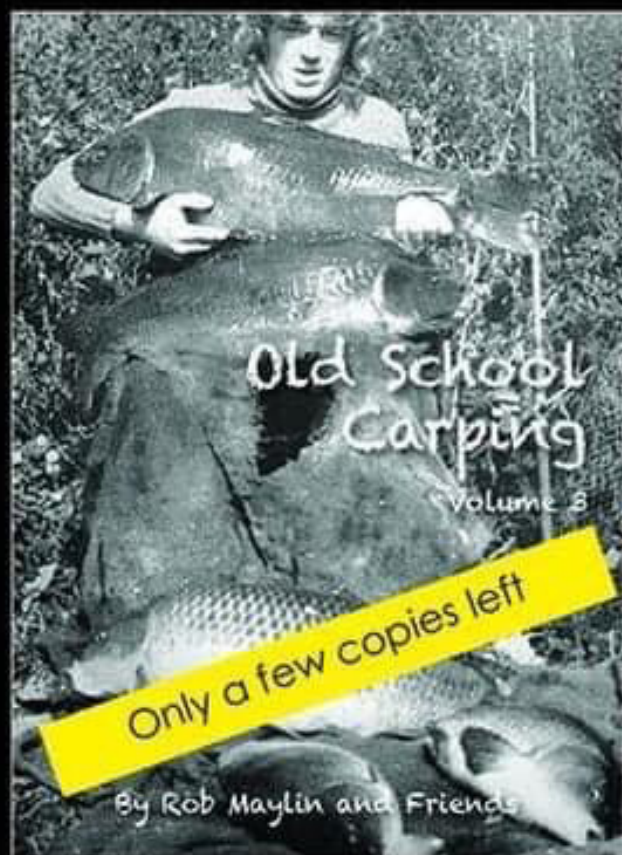
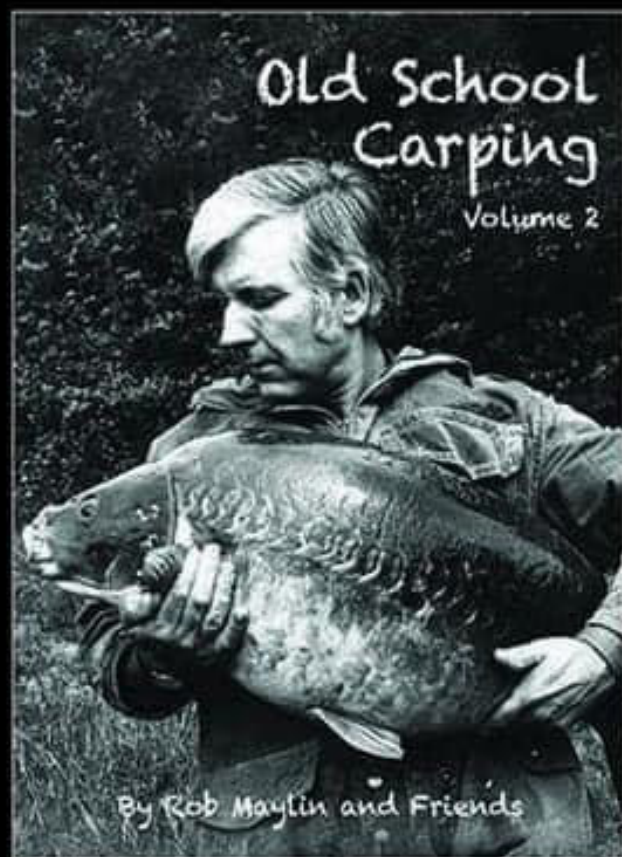
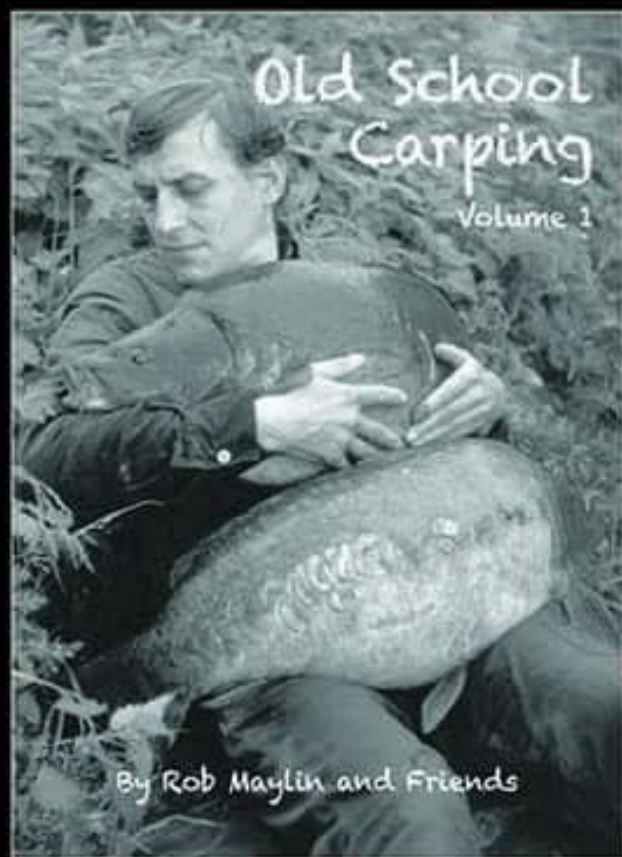
“Being a bore, I sent my ‘Happy New Year; messages just after 10pm and tried to get my head down – but this was when the magic happened! At 11:30pm, I woke up to my right-hand rod ripping off. Reacting quicker than I needed to, I ran out in joggers, T-shirt and hoody, leaving my nice thermals behind. The 40mph chilly winds hit my bones fast – it wasn’t pleasant. As soon as I lifted into this fish, I knew it was decent. The scrap was pretty intense, with the fish attempting to take out my other rods, taking line at will. I had no headtorch and couldn’t see a thing. After a long old scrap, I slid the net under the fish and immediately took a video. I was pretty happy, thinking I had a thirty in the sling. However, as I lifted the fish out of the water, I was stunned at its weight. It’s worth mentioning at this point that each fish I’d

landed during the session was unhooked in the water and transferred to the sling, so at this point I’d not seen the fish properly. As I placed the fish on the mat and finally had my headtorch on, my excitement grew. The fish was a proper lump. Known as the Wonky Lin, it came in at a new top weight for the lake at 41lb 10oz and was a new PB for me – buzzing!

“As I tried to take photos, the fish was having none of it, and when it started to play ball, my camera pod would blow over! The frustration of capturing these photos all disappeared as suddenly fireworks started going off everywhere at the same time. This could only mean one thing – it was now 2025! At that moment I recognised the last thing I did in 2024 was bank a new PB and the first thing I did in 2025 was take photos of it with fireworks going off behind my camera.



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“I got awoken again just after 3am when my middle rod rattled off, a mid-double giving me my fifth fish of the session. At this point I was debating if I should put the rod back out, as I really needed some sleep and needed to tie another rig, as I was no longer happy with the hook point. I’m glad I put the effort in, let me tell you!

“At 8am the middle rod that I nearly left out of the water was off again! This beauty held the bottom, felt heavy and took line at will, putting up a cracking fight. Thankful to be experiencing this during daylight, as it made navigating the lines of my other two rods a lot easier, I noticed the lead hadn’t dropped. I got a bit nervous as the fish proceeded to head shake. After what felt like an hour, I was able to slip the net under what appeared to be another lump that I guessed to be a thirty. Reasonably calm, I unhooked the fish in the water and

transferred it to the sling.

“This fish was heavy! I applied treatment to her mouth and went to weigh her. I was so ecstatic, I can’t put into words how I felt as I watched the dial spin round to mid-forties. This couldn’t be happening, another forty and another personal best in a matter of hours. Surely not! I reweighed the fish for confirmation and immediately knew I needed someone to take some proper photos now

that it was daylight and still 40mph winds, making self-take photos almost impossible. Thankfully, someone around the other side was happy to come round and help weigh the fish. We proceeded to get her out of the water, weigh her and take photos. A fish known as Miss May, she weighed a monstrous 45lb 12oz!

“I was very thankful to Chris for his effort, helping me capture the best photos available.



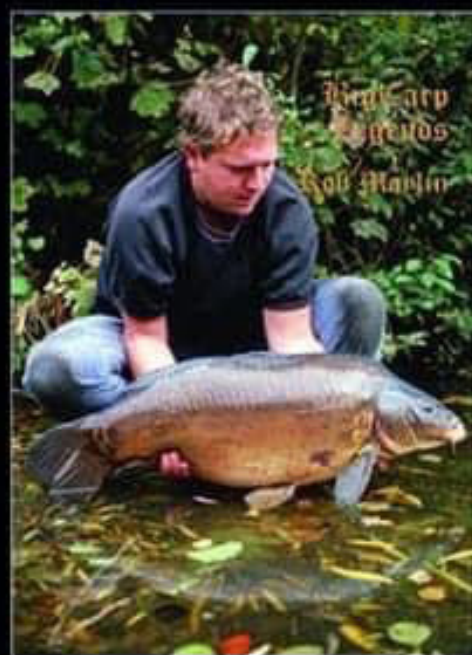
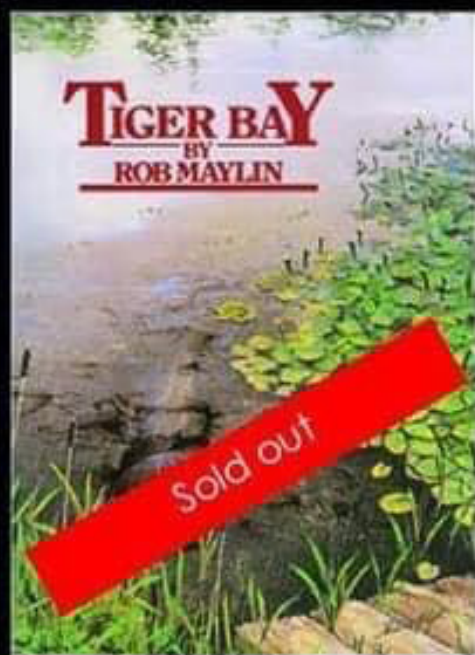
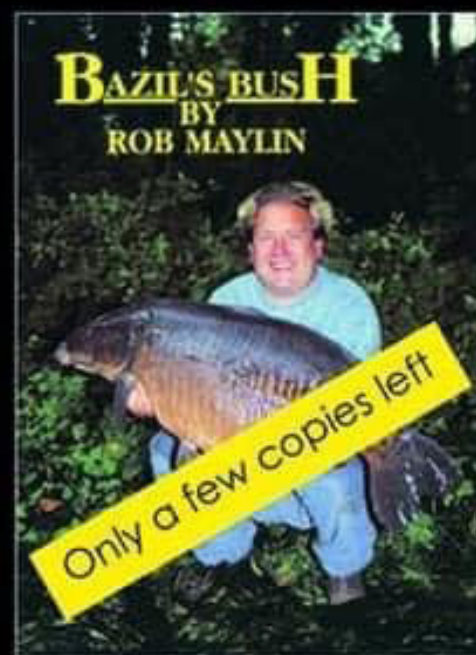
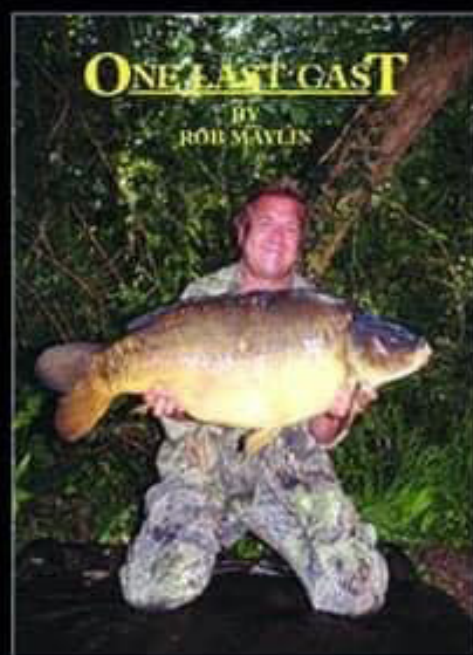
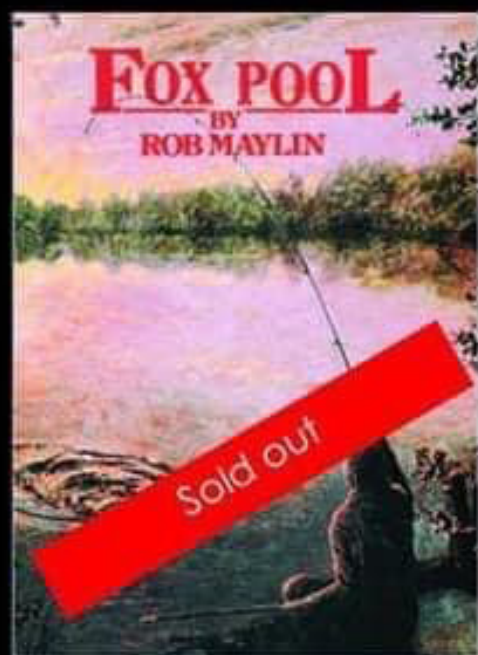
“It’s fair to say that I shut my brother up good. I definitely went fishing and I definitely started off the year as I mean to go. I don’t know how I’ll top this session during my lifetime!”

Tom spread his rods out between 10 and 14 wraps, fishing trimmed-down Bug bottom baits tipped with trimmed Bug wafers to create snowman presentations. He fished them amongst chopped Bug boilies and 8mm pellets.



# THE ROB MAYLIN SERIES

*50 years on the bank with Rob and Friends*



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**DARRELL PECK**

# COMPLICATED FISHING - SIMPLIFIED

Carp fishing can seem complicated from the outside looking in, but it really doesn't need to be. Focus on aligning the 5 key fundamentals, and apply a bit of common sense / logic to the rest.

**No1. Location** - locating fish and finding the spot they want to feed on will always be KING. Spend your time looking for fish, and plumbing for potential spots. When I see fish and can find the 'right' spot close by my

confidence soars. This is pole position.

## **No2. Casting And Baiting**

**Precisely** - If you can't cast and bait to the same spot twice your results will reflect that. On many well stocked lakes, being able to cast and bait accurately close to the middle is almost everything - you're literally 90% of the way there. The best anglers are great 'spot' locators and are extremely precise with both rigs and baiting.





**No3. Bait Choice** - Having what the carp REALLY want is important. Most venues are pressured and they can easily see your bait and choose to ignore it; especially if the bait has been over used.

**No4. Presentation** - is key. Understanding what you're fishing over and how best to present your hook bait is far more important than the latest wonder rig. I have been out fished plenty of times over the years, but



NEVER because someone's fish swim. Try to imagine rigs were better than mine. that it's a game; a moving Gain confidence in just 2-4 puzzle, with missing pieces. rigs that suit different types Carp really don't want to be of lake beds. caught, and a lot of the time

**No5. Hook Sharpness** - are doing their upmost to The hook point is the trigger avoid you. It's no coincidence to the trap. A hair triggered fish regularly mass in areas mouse trap catch's more mice of sanctuary, and often turn - I think of my hook point the up in front of empty swims. same way. You should to. Use this knowledge to your

**No6. Bonus Tip.** Once advantage, and don't be you've aligned the top 5 afraid to move when the you're fishing, but be aware situation calls for it.







# SAMUI FISHING CLUB AND RESORT

Samui Fishing Club & Resort is a hidden gem located in the southern part of the stunning island of Koh Samui. Established in 2018, it struggled to gain a strong foothold in the crowded Thai fishery market due to closures during COVID-19. However, under new management since November 2023, the resort is now going from strength to strength.

The lake spans approximately 1.5 acres and accommodates a maximum of eight anglers at a time. Depths range from around 4 feet in the margins to 10 meters in the deepest section at the centre. There are no snags in the water, and all fishing spots offer equal

opportunities, though the corner swims tend to yield better results for predatory species.

We have an on-site bar and restaurant serving food, ice-cold beer, and cocktails from 07:00 to 22:00. Additionally, we serve barista coffee all day for those who may have enjoyed the cocktails a little too much the night before. A swim-up bar in the swimming pool is open from 13:00 to 18:00 daily, and the pool also features a swim spa for guests who wish to exercise during their stay.

With stunning white sandy beaches just a four-minute scooter ride away in one direction and breathtaking waterfalls five minutes in the other, non-fishing guests will find plenty to do as well. We also arrange trips to elephant sanctuaries.

### **Fishing Experience**

Visitors will tell you that the fishing here is truly unique.

Few places on earth allow you to catch over 30 fish a day (with the lake record being 60 in a single day), all weighing over 40 lbs. Regular catches of specimens exceeding 100 lbs are common, and some true monsters lurk beneath the surface.

Our lake hosts a large population of Siamese carp ranging from 30 lbs to an incredible 150 lbs, with an average weight of around 50 lbs. One guest recently landed three carp over 100 lbs in just a three-day session.

Carp are found throughout the lake and can be caught by stalking in the margins using handfuls of floating pellets with a single pellet on the hook. Alternatively, anglers can build up a bait bed in the deep parts of the lake and fish method balls of pellets covering our on-site made boilies or pop-ups, leading to frantic action. These carp are incredibly strong and will



provide a fight unlike anything experienced in European carping. For float fishing enthusiasts, we offer some of the best conditions, with a few pellets on a bait band around a ball of floating pellet proving deadly on a sunny day (and we have plenty of them here).

In addition to Siamese carp, we also have Julienes carp, Rohu, Catla, Chinese bighead, and black shark carp. Over the next few months, we plan to introduce large koi, common, including:

- Mekong catfish (up to 300 lbs)
- Chao Phraya catfish (up to 200 lbs)
- Arapaima (over 200 lbs)
- Leopard catfish
- Ripsaw catfish
- Atlantic tarpon
- Wallago leeri
- Wels catfish
- Tambaqui
- Albino pacu
- Black pacu
- Asian redbtail
- Amazonian redbtail

and grass carp to offer even more variety.

With our ongoing breeding and restocking program, we aim to increase the number of species in our lake, keeping customers guessing every time their rod screams off.

A guide will be with you at all times while fishing to ensure both your safety and the well-being of the fish.

### Other Fish Species

Aside from carp, we have several other species,





**Equipment & Bait**

We use Lemax Grand Tournament Pro 88 rods, which were discovered after a customer introduced them to our lake. They offer excellent casting performance and provide an enjoyable fight whether you hook a 40 lb or a 300 lb fish.

For reels, we use either:

- Shimano 10,000 OC
- Shimano 12,000 DC
- Okuma Aventas

These are all bait runner reels with extremely high drag ratings, built to withstand the constant action at our resort.

For tackle, we use:

- Pallatrax Stonze
- Pallatrax Monster Cats

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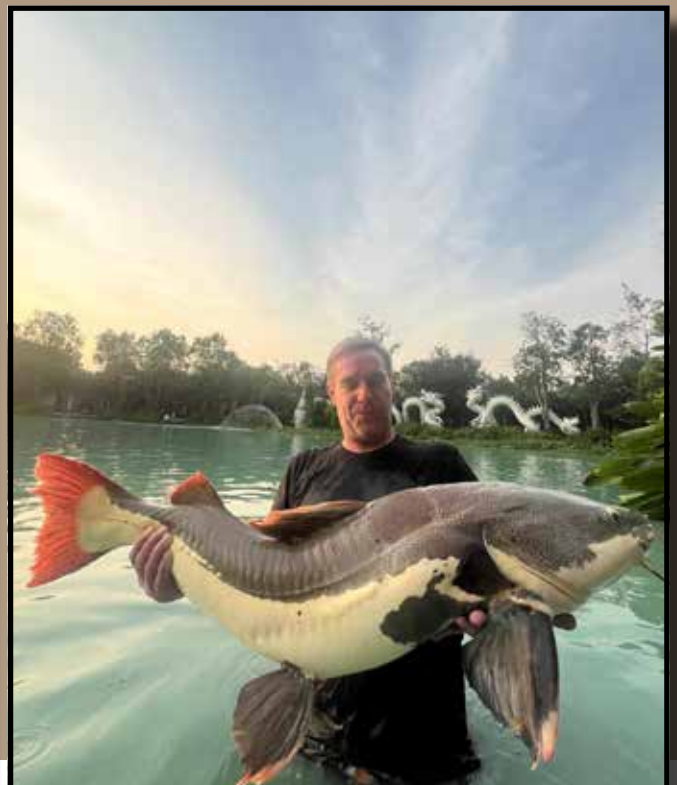
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Greg Nash recently returned from a trip to Thailand having spent a day at Samui Fishing Club and Resort. "The whole day was an amazing experience. We were so well looked after by the resort staff and the guides worked their socks off all day for us. By the end of the day I was shattered with all the rod bending action. It was almost non-stop carnage. I'd definitely go back. If you get the chance to go - do it - you won't regret it and will remember the trip forever!!



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**DANNY WHYBROW**

# TAKING ON THE OCEAN

Nestled within the tranquil Laybourne Lakes Country Park in Larkfield, the Ocean Lake offers a serene yet formidable setting for the carp angler. Spanning approximately 50 acres, it blends seamlessly into the surrounding parkland - a peaceful refuge for walkers, nature enthusiasts, and those looking to escape the noise of everyday life. The lake is frequented by dog walkers, who enjoy the peaceful surroundings as their dogs explore the water's edge, constantly jumping in or swimming through the shallow areas. The lake itself is split into

two distinct sections, each with its own character and history. The older part, dug in the 1950s, presents a unique and raw fishing environment. This section is defined by its thick underwater weed, which grows up from the lakebed and rises to the surface, creating an almost impenetrable barrier. There are no reed beds or soft edges here, just dense overhanging vegetation and a savage sandy gravel bar that stretches across the water at one end. This bar, wide enough to drive a bus down and steep enough resembling the side of a 2 story house forms a ridge that divides the lake's depths and adds a layer of challenge for those trying to find their way through. The older section also serves as a training ground for local diving clubs, who take advantage of the lake's clarity and varied depths to practice



and explore its submerged features. Divers can often be seen moving through the dense weeds, exploring the deeper parts of the lake, adding an extra layer of intrigue to this already challenging water.

In contrast, the larger section, created in the early 1970s, opens up into an expansive, windswept body of water that feels both daunting and beautiful. This section is also home to a local water

sports company that operates swimming and paddleboarding activities. On any given day throughout the summer the water comes alive with people enjoying these sports, adding to the dynamic environment.

This area also hosts scout and boys' groups who use the space for various activities, from water-based challenges to outdoor adventures, making the larger section a lively and multi-purpose space.



Both sections of the lake are also home to a huge population of tench and eels, which thrive in its deep weedy waters. The tench, in particular, have reached impressive sizes, drawing anglers from far and wide in hopes of landing a big catch. The eels weave through the lake's waters, adding a sense of mystery to the environment.

The lake is home to around 30 carp in total I believe with approximately 22 of them being smaller common carp, ranging between 16lb to 24lb. These fish, though smaller in size, are still prized catches for those seeking a challenge. The remaining carp are fewer in number but are known to be old larger specimens some dating back to the 1970s, then there's the mythical ones and the ultimate goal with some of these fish not being caught for many years even decades dare I say.

Fishing at the lake can

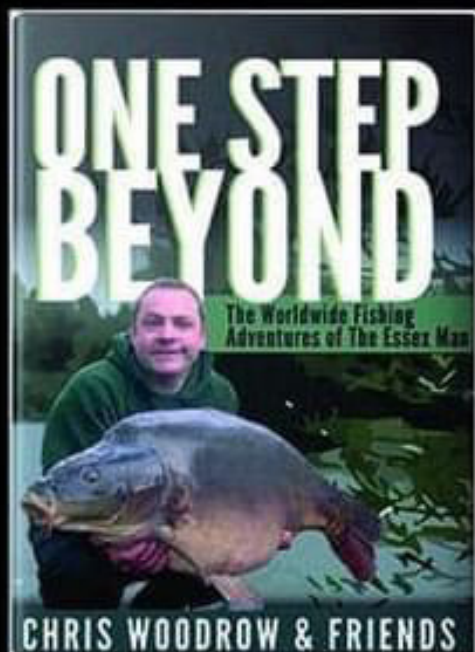
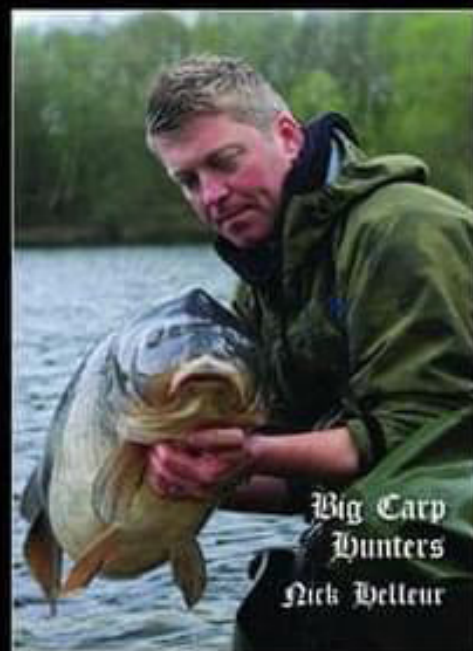
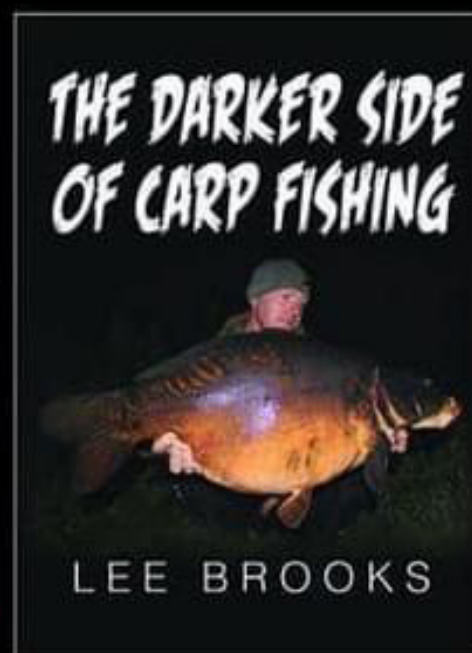
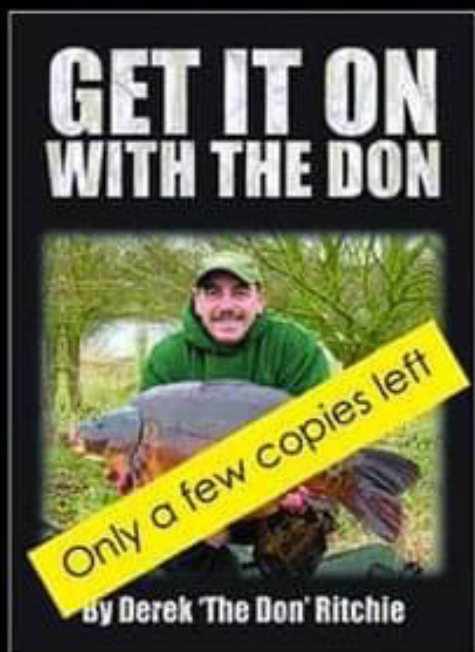
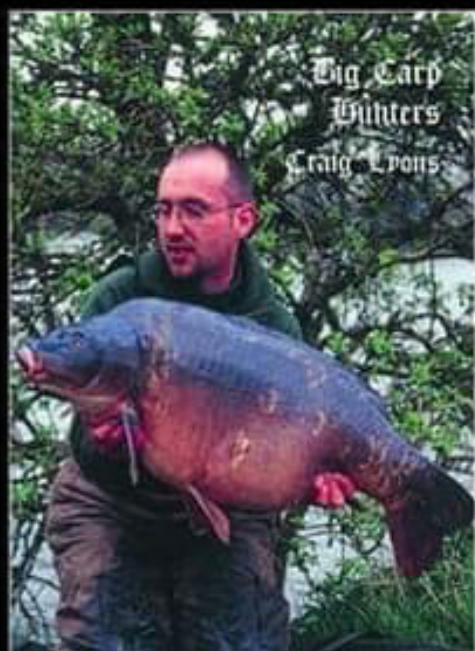
be particularly challenging, with 20 to 40 night blanks occasionally longer being the norm for the most part even in the summer. Anglers often spend long hours in pursuit of a bite, with success being rare but deeply rewarding when it comes. The sparse stock and demanding conditions only add to the reputation of the lake as a granite type venue.

I was lead to believe that 1 or 2 fish was going to be a good year, with many anglers pulling off beforehand due to underestimating the challenge and hitting the wall.

So why did I decide to start my UK carp fishing journey here? Simply I had been living abroad for the last 20 years and I wanted a challenge to find out where I stood. I was looking for something beyond the ordinary, something that would push me to my limits. Fishing today in many places seems to have become almost too easy. So much of it is set up

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for the anglers now, it's hard to fail really with many lakes running overstocked fisheries, It won't be much longer, and it will simply be called catching, not fishing anymore. I wanted to keep it honest and real, not glory hunting on an overstocked lake, you can only win in something If you can loose something, if you get my drift. Catching carp on average is not difficult if we're honest, that's why to me the challenge of overcoming

becomes everything. It has to be worth while, it has to mean something, otherwise what's the point of being average, anyone can do that.

The Ocean Lake, with its dwindling fish stock, dense weeds, and difficult conditions, offered exactly what I was looking for: a real test with just over half a fish per acre. The unpredictability, the long nights of blanks, the struggle for even a single bite—these were the elements that made



the challenge worth it. It's a place where only those truly dedicated to the craft will succeed, and that's what drew me in. It's not just about catching fish; it's about the journey, the persistence, and the respect for the water. For me, the Ocean was the perfect place to start my fishing journey now back in the UK.

The two sections of the lake are connected by two narrow channels on either side of a reasonable-sized island, which serves as a natural divide. These channels create a unique link between the quiet, secluded waters of the old section and the more exposed, wide-open spaces of the new, making the lake's layout even more intriguing.

**The First Year:** When I set out on my journey on the Ocean, I had no illusions about how difficult it would be. From the very start, I knew this was not going to be a quick or easy journey. My goal was simple:

to immerse myself fully in the challenge. So, I committed to the first year with a relentless focus, determined to fish two or three nights every week.

Each session brought its own set of obstacles and rewards, but mostly, it was about facing the unknown. The lake had a way of humbling you, reminding you that patience and perseverance were the only tools you had available and could rely on. There were nights when the stillness was almost deafening, with nothing but the distant call of birds and the occasional splash of a fish somewhere far beyond reach. On those nights, the frustration would creep in, but I reminded myself that this was all part of the challenge.

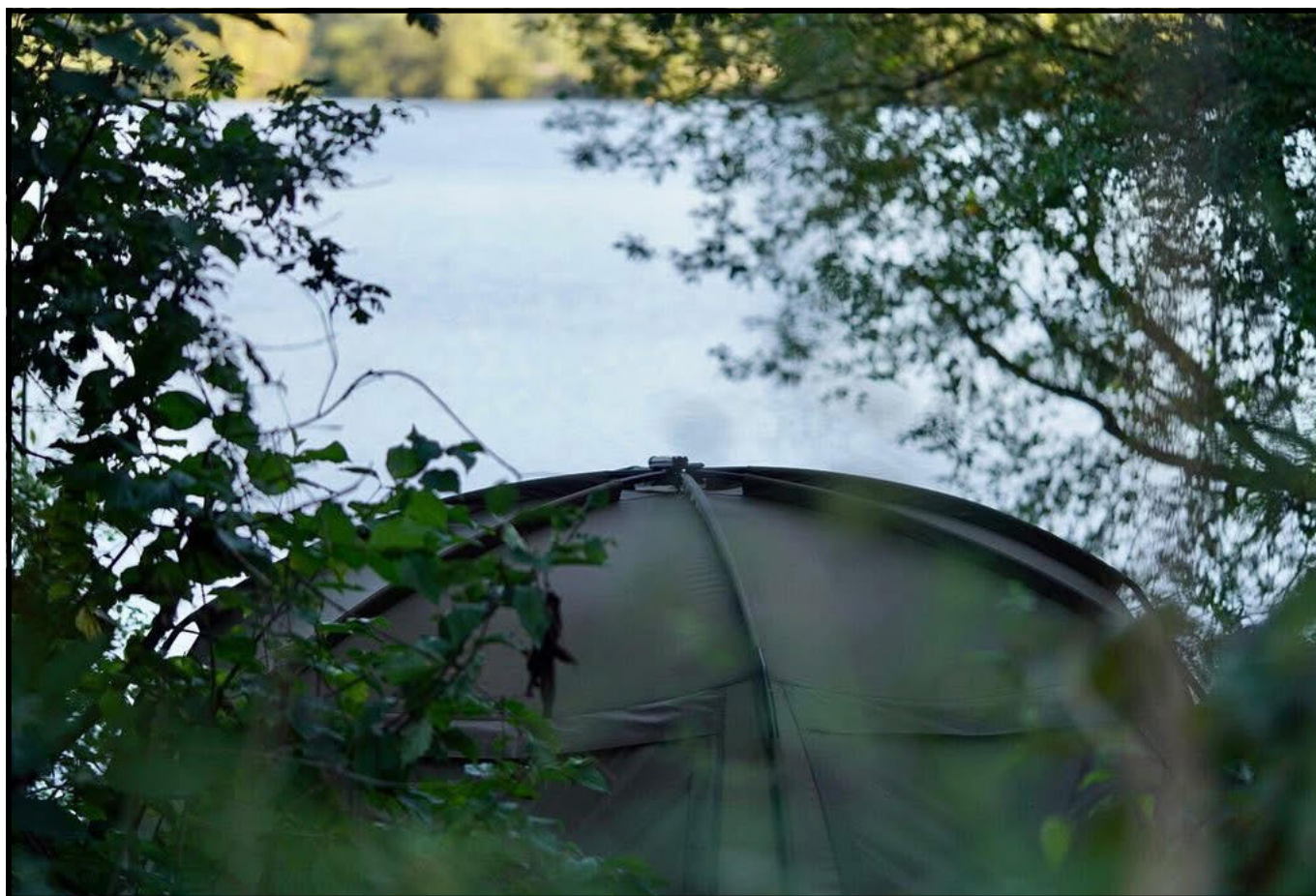
Of course, there were plenty of blank sessions after setting the traps and waiting in vain. It wasn't uncommon for me to return after a 3 night session with nothing to show for it.

But the occasional liner or the far-off sound of a carp moving in the distance was enough to keep me going. It was those small signs, the whispers of activity beneath the surface, that fueled my desire to keep coming back.

The weather played its role, too. Some nights were eerily calm, the water flat as glass, while others brought gusty winds that whipped across the lake's surface, making everything feel unpredictable.

I had to learn quickly how to adapt—what rigs worked best, where the fish were most likely to be, and how to adjust my tactics as conditions changed. But there were no guarantees, no magic formula that would ensure success.

What I didn't expect was how much I would learn about myself during those long nights. It wasn't just about the fishing anymore. It became a test of my own mental endurance and



resilience. Every night spent alone by the water was a chance to reflect and grow—not just as an angler, but as someone learning to embrace the challenge, even when the odds felt stacked against me.

And then, against all odds, success came in the form of four small very old common carp. They ranged from 15lb to 20lb, and although they would be considered very small by today's standards, each capture was an achievement in itself. I was so happy, so incredibly grateful, to catch these fish. They were the results of countless nights spent waiting, adapting, and learning. In a time when many anglers focus on chasing bigger and bigger fish, catching these "small" carp felt deeply rewarding and humbling. It reminded me that fishing wasn't always about landing the biguns—it was about the journey and the experience. Each fish was truly

earned here, each capture felt like a personal victory and a mountain climbed.

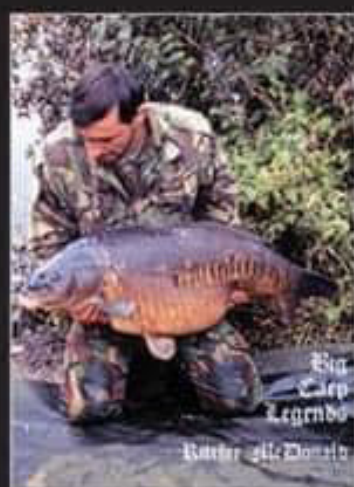
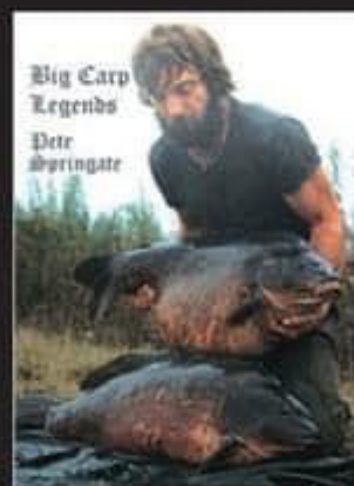
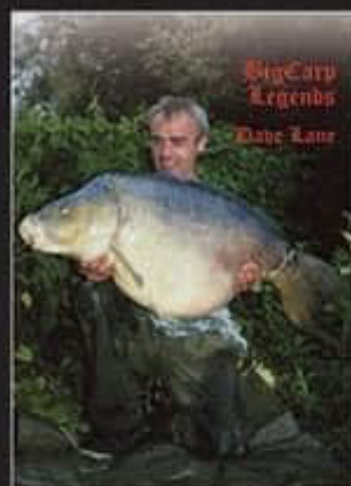
By the end of that first full year, I had done over 100 nights fishing the Ocean. Some nights were cold, some were lonely, and many were frustrating, but each was a step forward. I hadn't caught the big old carp I'd hoped for, nor had I pulled in the number of fish others might have expected. But I had learned so much more about the lake, about fishing, and about my own personal strengths and weaknesses.

The first year wasn't just about the catches—it was about the journey also. And with 100 nights now under my belt, I was already starting to understand that true carp fishing wasn't just about constantly catching fish. It was about the commitment to the challenge, the realistic understanding that failure was part of the process, and



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the belief that success could come in time. The Ocean Lake had tested me, but not broken me yet, it was also shaping me into the angler I aspired to be.

**The Second Year:** By the time I entered my second year, I had learned a lot from the many nights of fishing in year one, this had given me the foundation to what the lake was capable of, what I was up against, and what I truly wanted to achieve. But the second year was different. I had become more attuned to the rhythms of the lake, more prepared for the long, quiet nights. I approached my fishing with a deeper understanding, knowing that each session could bring something new, but that it would always demand the best from me.

A key change in my second year was that I began using a boat for all of my fishing. The vast size of the lake and its dense underwater features

had made fishing from the bank limited, so I decided to embrace the boat as a tool to reach more precise spots and search the lake further, I spent hours learning how to use the boat in the winds, fine-tuning my technique holding position when windy. It gave me a new level of control and allowed me to position my rigs more effectively in areas that had previously been unreachable.

Along with the boat, I started using an echo sounder to get a clearer understanding of the lake's structure. The echo sounder allowed me to see beneath the surface, revealing underwater features I hadn't been able to detect before. It helped me locate drop-offs, submerged bars and high point areas where the fish might pass through and feed. The sounder gave me the ability to be more precise in my fishing, ensuring I was placing my rigs in the best possible spots. I could now



assess the depth, identify the types of structures, and avoid wasting time on areas that didn't show potential. It was like gaining a whole new perspective on the lake, and it changed the way I approached each session dramatically.

The boat and echo also allowed me to focus on specific areas more efficiently. Instead of randomly fishing large portions of the lake, I narrowed my attention to a

handful of key spots that I had identified as being the most promising. These areas had shown signs of activity in the past, or they aligned with features I discovered through the echo sounder. I stopped trying to fish everywhere and began focusing on these spots with more precision. The boat made it easier to move between them, checking for signs of fish.

Patience remained the



central lesson at the lake. The bites were still rare, but with my refined approach, I began to see more signs of activity. I started to feel more in tune with the lake's natural rhythms and knew when to wait and when to act. The quiet nights where nothing seemed to happen still occurred, but they weren't as discouraging anymore. I had learned that time on the water wasn't just about catching fish—it was about being present, observing, and adapting.

One of the most significant changes in my second year was my approach to baiting and placing the rigs. The lake was a place where you couldn't afford to think that's near enough, you had to be on the money. I began to experiment with different rigs adjusting them to the lake's conditions. I tried many new rigs, tested different presentations, and paid attention to the smallest details that might





make a difference. Every drop, every adjustment, felt like an experiment. I started to feel more in tune with the water, more connected to the challenges it offered.

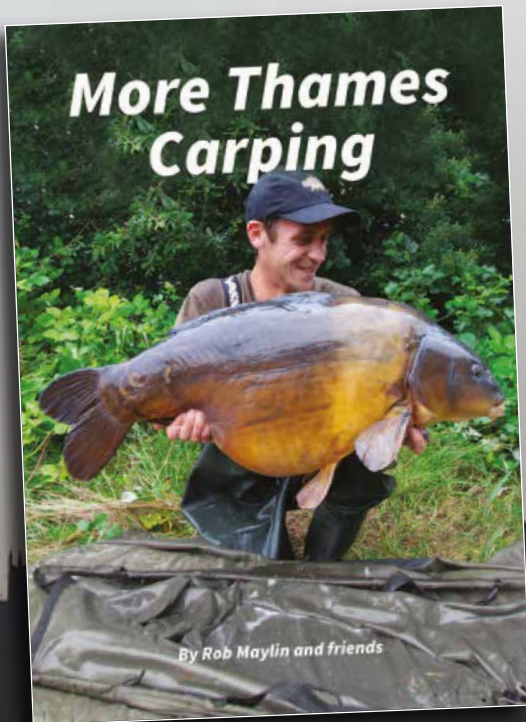
Despite all the adjustments, the fish remained elusive, but I had made some progress. I managed to catch another five fish during my second summer,

bringing my total to nine over the two years. Each of these captures, while not huge, felt like personal victories, proof that my refined approach was starting to work. But it meant more than just the fish; it was about refining my craft and learning to fish the lake in the way it demanded. Each session in the boat, using the

AVAILABLE THIS AUTUMN

# More Thames Carping

By Rob Maylin and friends



Thames Carping was our best-selling book of 2019 and for a good reason. The Thames has everything a carp angler could possibly want, plenty of water, it's the biggest carp water in the country, unknown stock, a stock which increases every time we have a flood, an element of the unknown (getting more known), very rare in today's carp scene where every carp is flogged, logged, blogged and caught by an endless stream of bounty hunters.

Yes, the Thames really is the last frontier to be fully exploited. Thames carp anglers have many attributes of old school carping, stealthy, secretive and not bothered at all by the size of what they catch, although, like the old school, still hoping it's the fish of a life time when the buzzer shrieks out!

For Thames carpers the build-up too is very old school, they still have the close season, so this time is not wasted, as it was not years ago, recce's, baiting up, getting baits established, building up swims, while always being conscious that to be discovered would be the end of their hard work, so coming and going discreetly, under cover of darkness, a covert operation. Their cards held tightly to their chests. And this is why of course that books on Thames carping are so rare and so readable.

You see within these pages are their secrets revealed for all to see. Not blatant, no map grids in longitude and latitude to the latest hot spots but within the lines, read only by anglers who know what to look for. A clue here, a landmark there. All part of the ultimate jigsaw. So why do these secretive anglers choose to write, well simply because I ask them.

Sometimes over several years. Most eventually agree, I am persuasive, arguing at their catches need to be documented and be part of the history books for years to come. Which is true, and why they do it. Not for money, to promote something or even self-gratification but to be part of our great angling heritage. So that their kids and grandkids can look back and say "look! there's grandad with a beautiful Thames Carp. He would spend hundreds, even thousands of hours fishing for them.

So, here's what we have, and may I say you will not be disappointed. Some truly amazing Thames carp, from different stretches, some urban some rural, some well in land and some tidal, but all from the amazing 'Old Father Thames'.

Let's start with Ash Geden, who takes the cover positions again. His 2018-19 season made riveting reading in book one. In this volume he is back for his 2019-2020 season with equally incredible results. Many huge carp, several over forty, the front cover leviathan being totally new. He is a great river angler with a gift for writing, you will love his next instalment. Simon Rumsey has been on a journey while fishing the Thames, like many I suppose, in search of a thirty, or even bigger!

Andrew Sadler has discovered some Thames secrets during his many years on the Thames, for you the reader, he divulges all. Graham Stevens is a Thames stalwart, having written several articles in Big Carp and a couple of chapters in the first Thames book he is back in this volume to tell you how he does it. A technical A-Z for all to learn from, novice or expert Graham has some edges for you all.

The Teddington Tank by Vince Humphreys is a chapter about a huge common, that fish of a life time that he freely admits was totally unexpected, but that's the beauty of the Thames.

Thames common by Mark Cook, yes, there's a theme developing here, A huge Thames common, one never to be forgotten. River Thames, Same swim, Same carp ... 6 months apart by Christopher Stockley is a great account which proves how territorial even Thames carp can be. My Love for the Tidal Thames a Brief History, By Roger Baker. Is a trip down memory lane for all those who like the history chapters? Thirty years on the Tidal, some huge carp too. One of my favourite Thames stories yet.

A Thames Monster featuring Pete The Pirate, is pretty self-explanatory, while prolific Thames carp catcher Danny Boy Hill, shows us just what's possible with a breath-taking gallery of Thames specimens. Add to these life history articles on the Thames by Jason Townsend, Ben Frewin, Mark Anthony, Vince Humphreys, Tom James and constantan Thames carp catch 'The Thames Warrior' it's obvious that this book is another must read for not only river anglers but all carp anglers interested in something a bit different from the norm. A book you will read over and over again. History in the making, our UK heritage of Thames carp.

*Rob Maylin*



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echo sounder to fine-tune my location, focusing on specific areas, felt like another step forward.

Then, in November after my second summer of fishing, the lake was stocked with 100 small mirror carp, each between 6lb and 7lb. This new development gave me a lot to think about. My personal thoughts were conflicted. Part of me didn't want this to happen—these new fish might disrupt the challenge and the purity of fishing for the older, more elusive stock. But on the other hand, for the future of the lake, it was totally necessary. The lake's long-term viability relied on maintaining a healthy population, and this restocking could bring balance. After some thought, I made the decision to fish on for a third summer, hoping that the new, younger fish might loosen up the older original stock. Perhaps with the new fish in the lake, the older carp would

become less wary, offering up more opportunities for any anglers like myself.

By the end of my second year, I had begun to realize that the true value of the journey wasn't in the fish at all. It was in the process—the slow, deliberate pursuit of something more than just the catch. I had grown as an angler, yes, but also as a person. The lake had a way of stripping away distractions, forcing you to be present in the moment, to live with the uncertainty and the quiet. The boat and echo had become essential tools that allowed me to engage with the water in a way I never could have from the bank.

Looking back, the second year was about refining what I had learned and deepening my connection to the lake. The fish, though always elusive, had become less of an obsession and more of a part of the landscape. I knew that the challenge would

only continue to grow, but I was ready for it. The lake had become more than just a fishing venue it had become a journey, and I had just begun to scratch the surface.

**The Third Year:** As April arrived and my third year at the lake began, I found myself reflecting deeply on my approach. The past two years had taught me that success here required more than just persistence—it demanded a strategic, calculated mindset. With that in mind, I devised a three-part plan, tailored to the changing seasons, the lake's unique features, and everything I had learned so far.

Mentally, I broke the year into 3 distinct phases, each tied to specific areas of the lake and the conditions I expected during those times. Spring, with its promise of awakening fish, would be the first phase. I decided to focus on a particular swim until the end of June. This was a swim

I had observed carefully over the previous years, noting its depth, features, and how it seemed to come alive during the warming months. The shallow gravel bar nearby, along with the cover of submerged weed beds, seemed to draw fish as they transitioned into springtime patterns.

As summer approached and the days grew longer, I planned my next move. For July, August, and September, I would shift along the bank to another swim I had identified. This area offered slightly deeper water with more open features, perfect for the warmer months when the fish often roamed wider areas of the lake. I believed this section would give me the best chance of intercepting the carp as they moved through their summer routes.

Finally, as autumn began to set in and the water cooled, I planned a third and final move further along the bank. This

area was known for its deeper water and sheltered silty bottom, providing an ideal place for carp as they prepared for the colder months. I had seen subtle signs of activity in this swim during the past autumn and believed it could be a key spot during the later part of the year.

Each move in this three-part plan was carefully calculated, not just based on seasonal changes but also on what I had learned about the lake's features and the fish's behavior over the past two years. The depths, the contours of the lakebed, the natural food sources, and even the weather patterns all played into my decision-making process. This wasn't guesswork no more—it was a strategy built on observation, patience, and experience.

I knew that even with this plan, the Lake would continue to test me. But that's what I had come to love about it. It wasn't

about following a formula or hoping for luck—it was about engaging with the lake on its own terms, adapting to its challenges, and embracing the journey it offered.

The second session of the spring marked a pivotal moment in my third year at the lake. On this session, I managed to catch my first original carp of the year—a fish that became a turning point for me and one of the most calculated captures of my entire journey so far.

I had spent hours mapping out a specific area using the boat and echo, identifying a very small underwater mound about 120 yards into the lake. The mound was tiny, no larger than the roof of a car, and rose sharply to exactly 6.8 feet of water before dropping steeply back to 13 feet on all sides. It was the kind of spot you might overlook without the right tools and attention to detail, but I knew it had the



potential to get a bite.

The challenge was to place a rig perfectly on top of this feature, a task that demanded precision and patience when the winds were up. Using the boat, I carefully hand-placed

my rig and baited lightly around the mound, confident that this subtle approach would give me the edge. It was one of those moments where preparation, knowledge, and

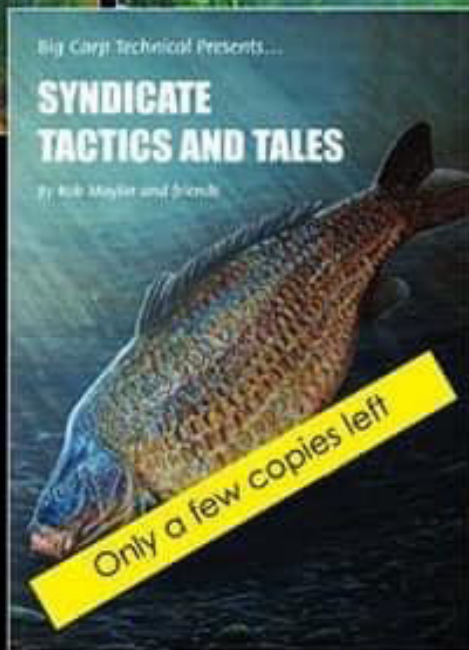
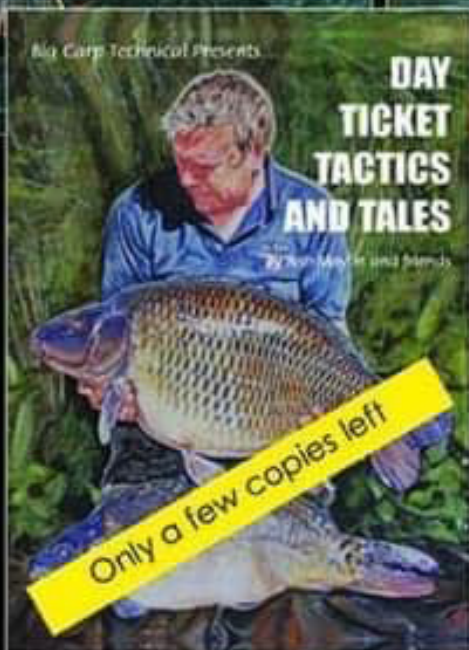
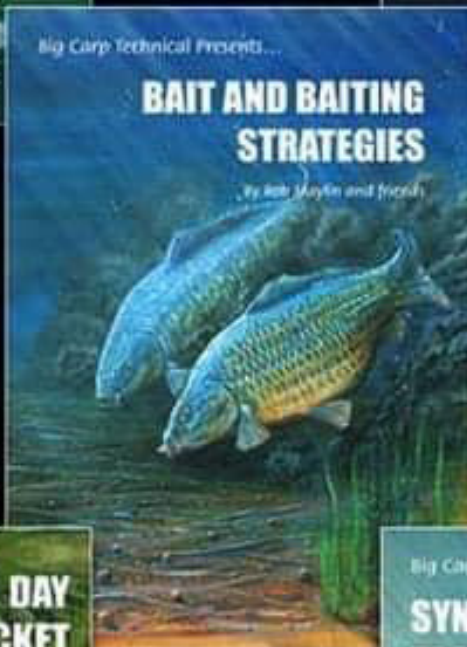
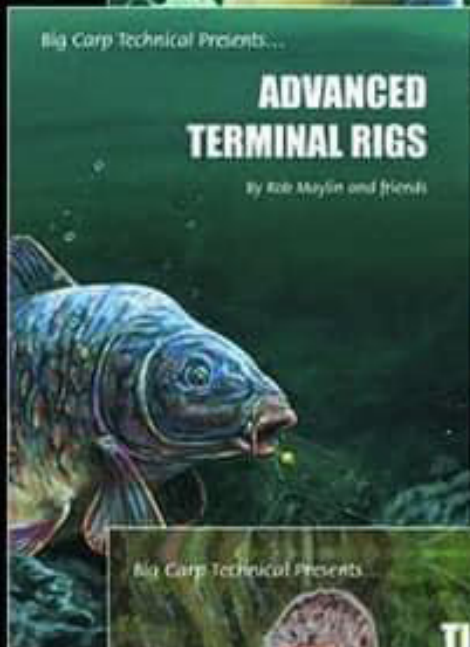
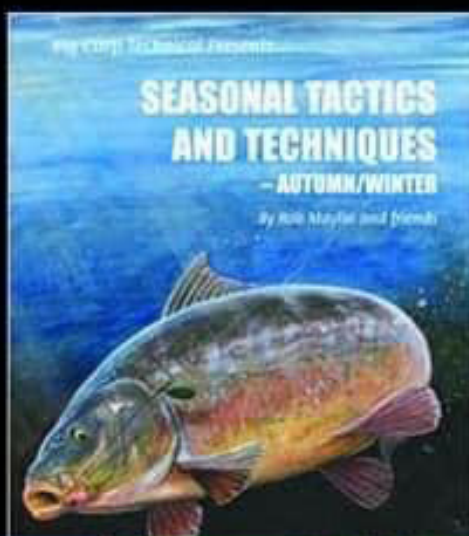
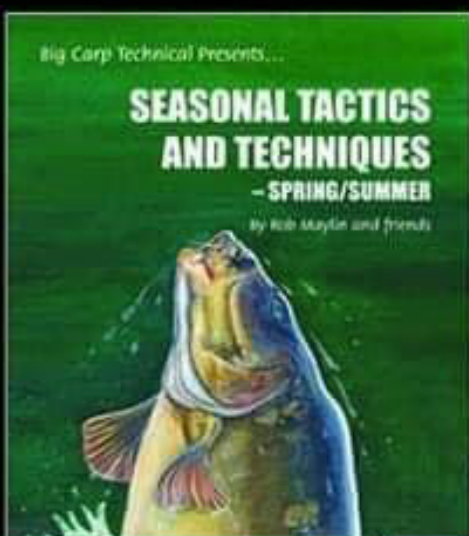
instinct all came together.

When the bite came the following morning it was a feeling like no other. Not only was it my first fish of the year, but it was also my earliest capture on the lake to date, coming in the first week of May. Up until that point, all my other captures had been in July or August, making this a significant milestone. The fish wasn't just a reward for



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my effort—it was proof that my understanding of the lake was evolving.

The capture gave my confidence a huge boost. For the first time, I felt like I was starting to truly crack the code of this challenging water. The meticulous planning, the detailed observation, the patience—it had all paid off.

But as is often the case with fishing, the lake wasn't about to let me get too comfortable. Just when I thought I was beginning to understand its patterns, it took another 18 nights before I had my next bite. This is one of the great things about fishing: it keeps you humble, always reminding you that there's so much more to learn.

By late June, I decided it was time to move on with part two of my three-part plan. The new position, located further up the bank, offered a completely different dynamic. It was situated in the middle area of the lake,

where a massive plateau stretched out approximately 100 yards from the bank. This plateau was one of the lake's most prominent underwater features, and its unique structure presented both a challenge and an opportunity.

Running along the plateau was a slightly higher ridge, made up of scattered boulders and firm sandy patches. These features created a natural focal point for fish movement, and I was convinced that if I could position my rigs correctly, I might be able to intercept some of the lake's elusive carp.

Using the boat and echo, I carefully mapped out the ridge, identifying the flat sandy areas between the boulders as the prime spots to target. These were small, precise areas that required pinpoint accuracy when placing the rigs. Once again, the use of the boat proved invaluable, allowing me to place each rig

with the care and precision these spots demanded.

This move marked a new chapter in my approach. The plateau was an area I had fished and caught over in the past two years but now I had a timeframe and felt confident that the combination of structure, depth, and location would work in my favor during the warm summer months.

Baiting was increased to 8 kilos of bait per night over the 4 rods, focusing on drawing the fish's attention to these specific areas. I knew the boulders and sandy patches would naturally concentrate any fish passing through, so it was all about giving them a reason to stop and investigate.

This move felt good and the right decision. The plateau was a vast feature, and narrowing down the exact areas to fish was no easy task. But hopefully the potential rewards were too good to ignore, and as I settled into this new position,

I couldn't help but feel a sense of anticipation for what might come next.

It was the third night of a particular session, and conditions were beginning to change dramatically. The winds had steadily increased throughout the evening, and by first light, the lake was under the grip of a strong, consistent wind. The surface churned with energy, and to my excitement, a few fish began to show themselves over the plateau.

I only had a few hours left before I needed to pack up, and while the activity on the lake was promising, time was against me. Then, without any warning, the middle rod tore off. For a moment, I was in disbelief—it had been a long, tense wait, and now I was finally connected to something.

Grabbing the rod, I quickly found myself in the boat, battling not only the fish



but also the relentless wind and waves. The middle of the pit was chaotic, with the wind smashing me about as I struggled to maintain control of both the boat and the fish. The adrenaline was pumping, but through it all, I kept my focus. As the fish surfaced and rolled near the boat, I recognized it immediately: the Snag Lake Mirror. This was a fish I had long admired, one of the originals, and seeing it on the end of my line filled me with a mixture of awe and determination. The battle wasn't over yet, though. The fish fought hard, testing both my resolve and my gear, but eventually, I guided it safely into the net.

As I peered down at the fish, I was absolutely chuffed to bits. This wasn't just my 11th original carp from the Ocean Lake—it was my first mirror from these waters. It felt like a milestone moment, a reward for the countless hours, the

blanks, and the effort I had poured into this journey.

The Snag Lake Mirror was more than just a fish to me. It represented the spirit of the lake and everything I had been striving for: the challenge, the unpredictability, and the sheer joy of success when it finally comes. As I held the fish for a quick photo before slipping it back, I couldn't help but feel a renewed sense of motivation. The journey wasn't over yet, but this capture was a moment I would cherish forever.

I was genuinely pleased with the results so far. Eleven originals, including my first mirror, felt like a significant achievement, especially considering the challenges the lake had thrown at me. And with the main part of the summer still ahead, I was filled with anticipation for what might come next.

Yet, something started to nag at me, a persistent question that I couldn't shake. What

were the odds of catching two originals back-to-back, especially without one of the newly stocked fish making an appearance? With 100 small mirrors added to the lake the previous November, it seemed almost inevitable that they'd start showing up in catches sooner rather than later.

There was already plenty of speculation among other anglers about how many of the stockies had survived their first winter. Some believed the lake's sheer size and its many predators might have taken a toll on their numbers. Others thought that the stockies were simply too young and inexperienced to fully adapt to the challenging environment of the Ocean Lake. Either way, their absence from the rods so far was intriguing—and a little concerning.

Part of me couldn't help but wonder if their eventual presence might change the dynamic of the fishing. Would

they alter the behavior of the originals? Would they compete for bait in key areas? For now, though, I was focused on enjoying the success I had earned and remaining optimistic about what the summer would bring.

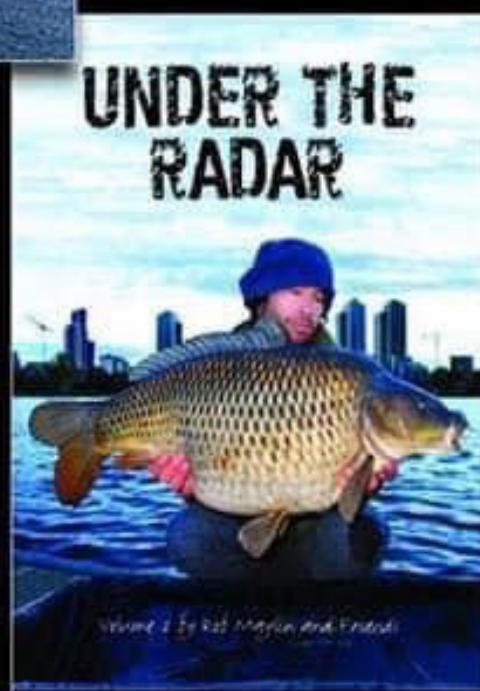
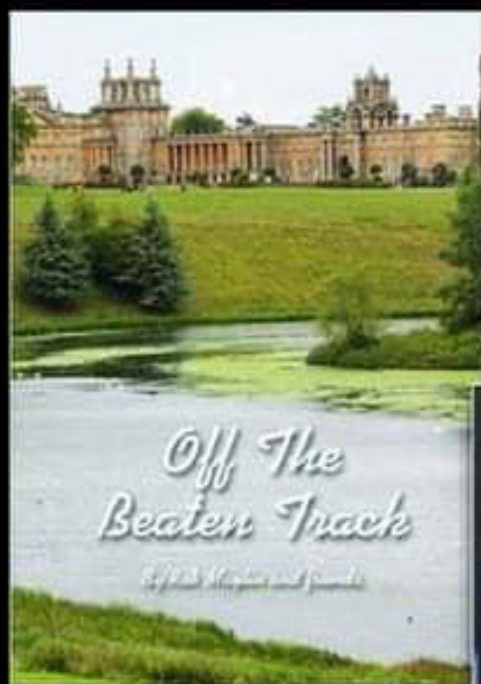
As it turned out, I needn't have worried about the stockies. On my very next trip, they made their presence known in no uncertain terms. Over the course of three nights, I managed to catch three of them—one each night.

These weren't the small 6lb-7lb fish they'd been when first stocked the previous winter. Instead, they had already grown well, each one now over 10lb. Their immaculate scales and pristine condition reflected their youth, but their growth rate was impressive and gave a glimpse of their potential in the coming years.

Even so, I kept my focus. The stockies were part of the

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lake's future, but my sights remained firmly on the past—the wary, weathered originals that had evaded anglers for long periods. While the stockies were an exciting addition to the lake, I knew the true challenge still lay ahead.

Another week later, I was back at the lake, following my usual routine. The swimmers and paddleboarders typically finished up around 8 p.m., so I waited until they were done before sorting out my rods. This timing had become second nature to me throughout my time on the lake. By the time darkness was falling, my four rigs were carefully placed in a line along the ridge on the plateau. With everything set, I poured myself a cup of tea and got into bed, ready for the early start I knew was coming.

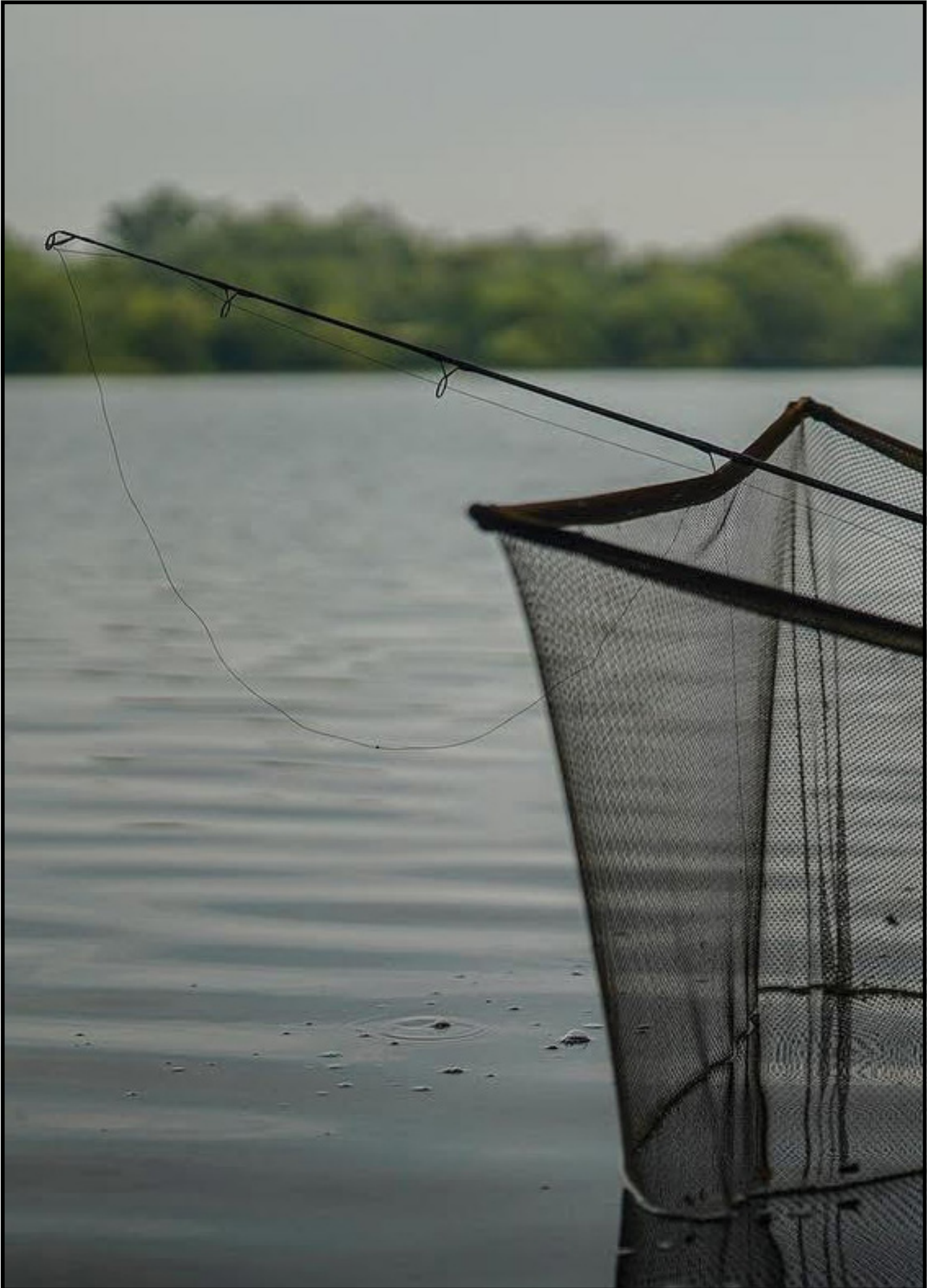
This time of year, first light would arrive around 5 a.m., so I was always up early to watch the water for any signs

or shows. At about 6 a.m., one of the rods burst into life. Straightaway, I could tell it was a stockie—it had that frantic, headstrong energy that was becoming easy to recognize. Over the next few hours, the action was relentless, with five stockies making their way into the net. Each fish was swiftly unhooked and released, and the rods were boated and replaced back onto their spots with a top up of bait.

By 11 a.m., the flurry of activity had subsided. With everything quiet, I took the chance to enjoy a few cups of tea and even snuck in a little afternoon nap. The peace didn't last long, though, because by mid-afternoon, one of the middle rods ripped off.

This time, it was different. The power behind this fish was like nothing I'd ever experienced on the lake. As soon as I picked up the rod, I knew I wasn't dealing with a





stockie. This was a fish with real weight and determination—it was unstoppable. In one blistering run, it went from the plateau to a point nearly 80 yards from the far bank. My reel was screaming, and all I could do was hang on and hope to regain control.

Eventually, the fish buried itself deep in a weed bed, bringing the run to a halt. That gave me my chance. I jumped into the boat and made my way towards the fish, my heart pounding. By the time I reached the weed bed, the line was solid, but I began to work slowly and carefully, inching the line back until I felt contact again.

Suddenly, the angle of the line shifted, and the fish broke free from the weed. Now we were back in open water, and I quickly caught up with it. What followed was an unforgettable few minutes. The fish stayed close, just swimming left and right beneath the boat. Even

in the low light, I could see it was a common of immense size - easily nearly twice as big as anything I'd caught from the lake before.

My heart was in my mouth, and my thoughts were racing. This was it. This was the moment I'd been waiting for, two and half years to get this bite, the fish that would redefine everything. Despite the chaos in my mind, I stayed in control, steadily gaining the upper hand. As the fish began to tire, I worked it closer to the boat.

It was now just a rod length away, its head coming up, horizontal with the surface. The net was ready, perfectly placed for the final moment. Then, out of nowhere, disaster struck. The rod jerked violently back toward my shoulder. The line went slack. It was gone.

I sat there in stunned silence, the realisation hitting me like a wall at 100 mph. I was sick - physically sick - with

disbelief and shock. My mind replayed the fight over and over, searching for an answer, a reason why it had all gone wrong. But there was nothing. The fish, the opportunity, the moment - it was all gone in an instant.

I stayed in the boat, my head in my hands, overwhelmed by the sheer weight of the loss. The pain was immense, a gut-wrenching reminder of how cruel fishing can be at times.

I still had two nights ahead of me, but after that devastating loss, my tank was completely empty. There was no shaking it off. It wasn't just a lost fish - it was the fish, the very reason I had dedicated myself to this lake. I had been seconds away from what could have been the ultimate pinnacle of my journey, only to have it snatched from my fingers in the cruelest way imaginable.

Two and a half years of relentless effort, endless nights, and unwavering focus

- all of it seemed to unravel in a single moment. I was absolutely gutted to my core, a wounded soldier on the battlefield of carp fishing.

As I sat there, the weight of the loss pressing down on me, I knew I had to find a way to make peace with it. If I didn't, it would drive me mad. Slowly, I began to shift my perspective, focusing on the positives of the situation.

For one, I had achieved something monumental: I had managed to entice a bite from one of the old guards. That fact alone was huge. It proved that my approach - my choice of area, my baiting, my rigs - was all on point. The loss hadn't been due to a failure of preparation or execution. Instead, it had come down to something as simple and unavoidable as a broken swivel, weakened by fatigue.

It wasn't easy, but these small reassurances began to chip away at the crushing

disappointment. There was hope, I told myself. It could still happen again. The chance wasn't lost forever.

Despite the blow, I pressed on. Amazingly, over the next two nights, I managed to catch another 6 stockies giving me 11 stockies in total for this session. They were a small consolation, sure, but they were something. Each fish served as a reminder that the lake wasn't done with me yet.

And so, I carried on, battered but not beaten. The loss still stung, and I doubted it ever would truly leave me, but there was one undeniable truth: I was still in the game, and the next chapter was waiting to be written.

A week after that crushing loss, I found myself back at the lake, determined to push forward. I deliberately tried to give myself hope, convincing myself that a second opportunity might come my way before the end

of October. It was hopeful thinking for the most part, but there was only one way to find out.

By this point, I had already secured a new ticket for the following year - a chance to fish a lake that was simply impossible to turn down. Knowing this, I realized that this was it: my last real chance to make something special happen on the Ocean. I had about ten weeks left, and it was time to put my best foot forward.

For the next stretch, I stayed in the middle area of the lake, continuing to target the plateau and its features. Over the course of around 20 more nights, my perseverance was rewarded with three more original commons. Each capture felt like a step toward redemption, a reminder of why I'd taken on this challenge in the first place.

But as the weeks ticked by, it was time to execute

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the final part of my plan. I packed up and made the move to the deeper, silty area of the lake. This spot, rich with potential and mystery, would be my home for the remaining weeks. It was here that I hoped to close out my journey on the Ocean with the capture I'd been dreaming of since day one.

Moving further down the lake to the third position, my first session in the new swim got off to a promising start. I caught a fish I'd landed back in the first year - a recapture. While some might feel disappointed, I chose to take it as a positive sign. Catching on the first outing in a new swim was always a good start, and it gave me hope for what lay ahead.

The following session also proved fruitful, with a few more stockies coming my way. It felt like I was rolling the dice with every trip now, and just maybe, there was one

last chance waiting for me in the weeks ahead.

On my next visit, a storm was forecast to arrive in the middle of the session, aligning with a new moon period - a prime time. My hopes were higher than ever, and my mind couldn't help but wander into the realm of imagination. Could this be the moment? Was it all part of some greater plan to bring me right to the wire for a storybook ending?

I arrived early, eager to get the rods out before the storm set in. As the nights were drawing in, everything was settled well before dark. Around 10 p.m., the winds and rain began to build. I sat in the bivvy, straining to listen for any signs of fish movement over the relentless drumming of the rain. Eventually, I gave up and retreated to bed, letting the weather run its course.

I was jolted awake sometime later by the unmistakable sound of an alarm in full

meltdown. In a heartbeat, I was pulling on my boots and rushing down the slope to my rods. With the rod in hand, I could feel a steady pull as line peeled off the clutch. The rod was bent into a decent curve, and I knew I had something solid on the other end.

Suddenly, everything stopped. Experience told me this likely meant the fish had buried itself in one of the lake's many weed beds. Grabbing the boat, I set off to follow the line, prepared for what was becoming a

familiar routine.

I navigated from one weed bed to another and then onto a third. All of this played out in the darkness, though thankfully the rain had eased. Despite the weight of weed on the line, I could still feel the telltale movements of the fish. Slowly, I worked to bring the line up, pulling it hand over hand until a massive ball of weed broke the surface. Along with it came the fish - now tangled and hidden beneath the vegetation.

Piece by piece, I stripped



away the weed until the fish came into view. As the last of the weed fell away, my heart sank. There it was - the snag lake mirror.

For a moment, I was gutted. After all the anticipation, all the build-up, I had let my mind dream of the perfect ending. Yet here I was, staring at a fish I'd already caught earlier in the summer. The fairy tale

ending I'd imagined wasn't meant to be, not this time.

I rowed back to shore, quietly unhooking the fish to confirm what I already knew. The snag lake mirror slipped back into the darkness, leaving me alone to reflect on what had just happened. It wasn't the ending I'd hoped for, but the journey wasn't over yet. There were still a few nights left,





and hope wasn't entirely lost.

I fished on for the rest of that session, managing to catch a few more stockies the next afternoon. However, the last two sessions brought nothing but more stockies - no more originals. That was it. The journey had come to an end, and though I felt a tinge of disappointment, I also felt a deep sense of pride.

Over three years, I had committed myself wholeheartedly to this lake, totaling exactly 190 nights of fishing. From those, I'd achieved 18 bites from the original fish, landing 17 of them. Three of those were recaptures, and the one that slipped through my fingers was the fish I had wanted the most - the ultimate prize.

On top of the originals, I'd landed 31 stockies in the third year. It had been an incredible journey, full of challenges, lessons, and moments that tested

my resolve. The lake's difficulties made every success sweeter, and the journey as a whole gave me a new level of appreciation for the art of angling.

Through it all, I almost touched the pinnacle moment. That's how close it can be.

Conclusion: I hope the Ocean retains some of its mysteries in the years to come. Its difficulties, its hardness - these are what make it special. With the addition of the new fish, I have no doubt that the giants will return one day.

I'd love to come back in the future and, perhaps, land a fish over 40 pounds. But for now, it's time to move on, explore new waters, and embrace the challenges that lie elsewhere.

I'll be keeping a close eye on the Ocean, though. It's a place that will always hold a special part of me - a place of memories, lessons, and dreams that came so very close to coming true.



**STEVE YULE**

# RED LETTER DAY

In May last year (2024) my pal Simon and myself met up for a weekend social, Friday till Sunday, on our local club lake (Silver End Back Pit). The lake had been fishing OK but the carp had started grouping up pre-spawning. There was a warm south westerly blowing diagonally towards us so we felt confident but at the same time not really bothered as long as we caught something as we don't get a lot of time to fish together. That night around 11 while we were having a beer and putting the world to rights the sky went red, then green, (we later found out it was the northern lights) just then Simon had a lovely 26lb mirror which made an awesome picture with the multicoloured sky in the background, I was almost jealous. We spent the rest of the night watching the sky change colour, feeling quite privileged to be there and witness it. 12 hours later, midday Saturday and I still hadn't had a bite so it was time for a change. Luckily the sun

came out and I started seeing groups of fish coming towards us on the wind just below the surface, now these fish are notoriously tricky on the surface but I had to try, they were too far out for a controller or catapult so I decided to put a couple of spombs of mixers beyond them and let it drift over their heads to see if they reacted. Within minutes one came up, followed by another then another. A zig seemed the best line of attack at this range so I hastily tied up an 8ft hooklink (knowing it was 8ft deep) with a whittled down pale brown pop up to imitate a swollen mixer and lobbed it out, followed by another 2 spombs of mixers. Within a few minutes I had a few enquiries but as the mixers disappeared it became obvious the fish were suspicious of the hookbait because it stayed still while the freebies swirled around in



their wake so I tied up a 9ft zig and put that out, 2 more spombs and I think I was still retrieving the spod when the surface erupted and the reel went into meltdown. First fish of the session was landed, a bang on 20lb mirror. Job done, both caught one, I would have been happy with that but they were still there so I pressed repeat. What happened next was a bit of a blur but by the end of the day I'd had another two, a stunning little 18lb fully scaled and a dark bruiser of a 31lb common and lost one in weed. Simon also had another one, another cracking mirror of 23lb. All this time I still had one rod out on the bottom and I'd put a bit of bait over it at the start so I persisted with it and I was glad I did because just at first light the next morning it tore off resulting in my 2nd 30 of the trip in the shape of a 32lb mirror that looked older



than me, a true original. I was on cloud 9. We celebrated with bacon sarnies and coffee and by mid morning it had got warm again. The dark shapes had returned but I was low on mixer having used almost 3kg so far so a quick trip to the cop and pretty soon I was back on the spomb. It took a bit longer to get them going this time but eventually they grew confident and before long the surface erupted again as a big black pair of lips engulfed the pop up and bolted, this was a different beast altogether, angry and heavy from the off, taking line at will, It then kited into my other line which pulled into a weed bed and went solid, my heart sank, it was starting to look like one of those losses that really hurt, but with a bit of help from Simon (and a lot of luck), both up to the top of our waders we somehow managed to handline a huge ball of weed into the net. We then both frantically pulled the weed away to see if there was anything there only to reveal yet another of the old originals, a lovely dark, well proportioned mirror that pulled the scales round to 32lb 8oz. I was speechless, I've had days like that in France but never in England in 30 odd years of carp fishing. This lake really has been kind to me over the last couple of seasons and I can honestly say I've never enjoyed my angling as much as I have lately and this session topped it off. A slow pack down was the plan with the hope of one last bite although not looking likely as the earlier battle had spooked most of the group plus it's a working method, I can't spod while I'm putting a bivvy away etc. But with my luck being in that weekend it did go off again and a scale perfect 23lb common finished off the best weekends carp fishing I've ever had.

Tight lines









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Team member Grant Walters getting amongst the autumn bigguns: "After heavily baiting an area with Infusion, hemp, pellet, corn and liquid food. This 35.8 stunner, tripped up. #carponline size 4 Scorpion Curve, as always (never fail me)"



Team member Paul Gill had a little trip away with family to Tattershall lakes for 3 nights. The rods were out for the full holiday with nothing till this morning. Another angler on the opposite side of the lake had the biggest in the lake at 36lb. Paul was very happy with how this fished looked, what a stunner. Using my favourite stiff hinge size 6 Scorpion Chod hook tied 3inch high with a foot and half long boom section fished over heavy weed and dropped by the boat with 5kg of bait. This has done Paul very well this year.



Team member Will Cottrell caught this cracking mirror last weekend using our Size 10 Scorpion Zig hooks with the eye slightly bent in. We'll done Will.



Owner Mark Russell visited Stanwick Lakes for an overnighter. The session looked like it was going to be a blank until his right hand rod ripped off whilst he was under the broly while packing up! A 10mm pop up and double fake corn was with a blowback style rig made totally from carptackleonline items, size 4 Scorpion Wide Gape hook, 2mm green Shrink Tubing, CTO Pro hook link, 54mm anti tangle sleeve, quick change swivel, and our composite safety lead clip.



Team member Scott Johnson bagged this stunning mirror over a recent session. Scott used our size 6 Scorpion hooks in a slip D style rig in solid bags.



"Using Carp Tackle Online - 20lb Fluorocarbon hook link, Tungsten sinkers, Scorpion Wide Gape size 6, 0.5mm Krimps on Helicopter Safe zone setup I caught a 23lb mirror, 34lb 3oz and a low double. Well done Brett, great angling!

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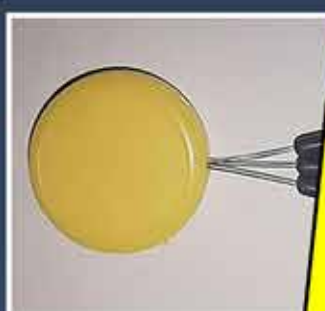
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**6. CARP CHAT**

**16. CARP SCENE**

**20. KURTIS BURTON**

**36. PETE HALL**

**52. JERRY HAMMOND**

**78. MATT PARRY**



# 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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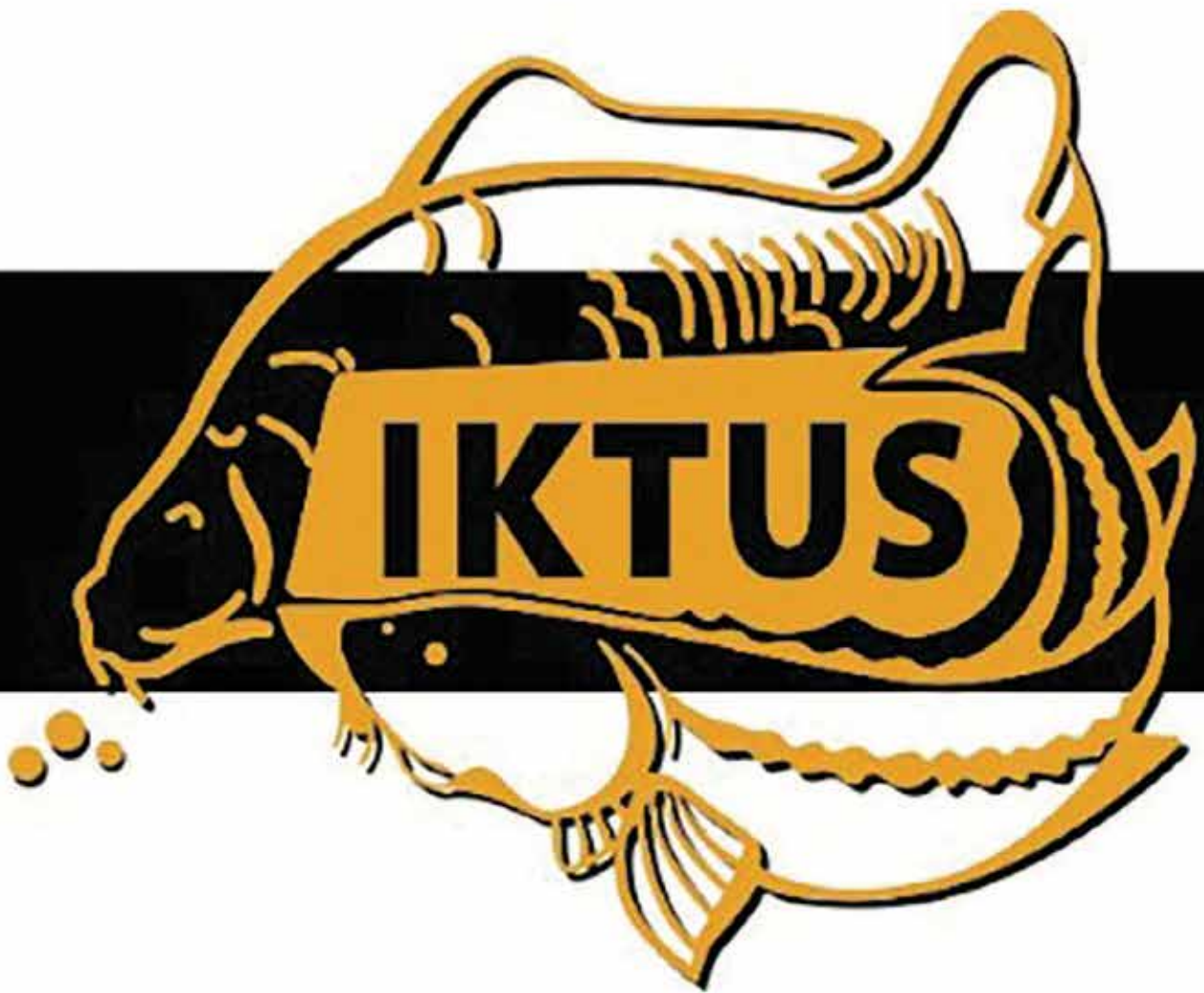
# DANNY TAYLOR JOINS KENT PARTICLES



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



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# HAYMAX HAY FEVER PRODUCTS



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



## Carp Scene

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.”

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# ICONLIFESAVER WATER BOTTLE



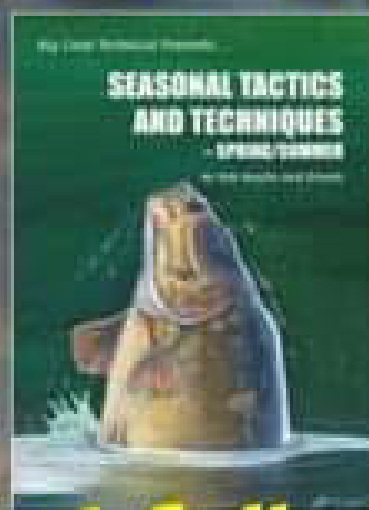
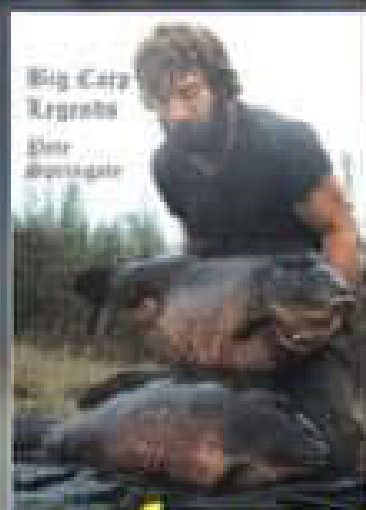
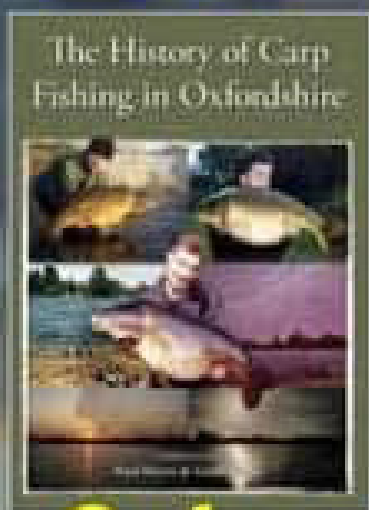
- A** Water-tight snap-fit lid
- B** Activated carbon filter
- C** Ultra filtration cartridge
- D** Removable pump base
- E** Anti slip base
- F** Drinking nozzle
- G** Pump tube
- H** Bottle shell
- I** Carry strap
- J** Twist lock pump handle



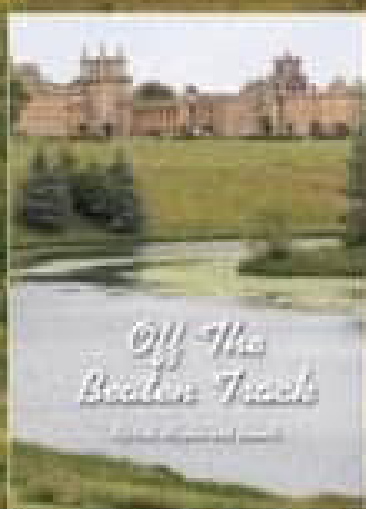
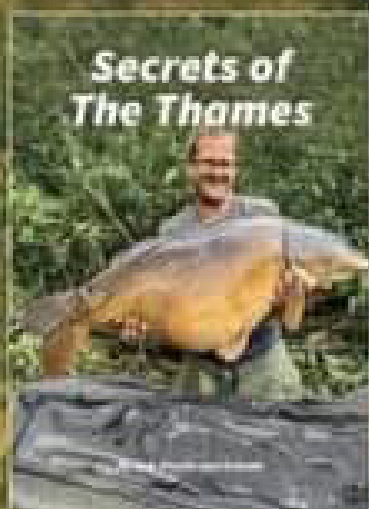
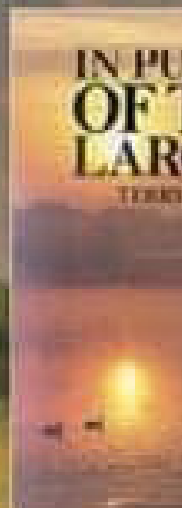
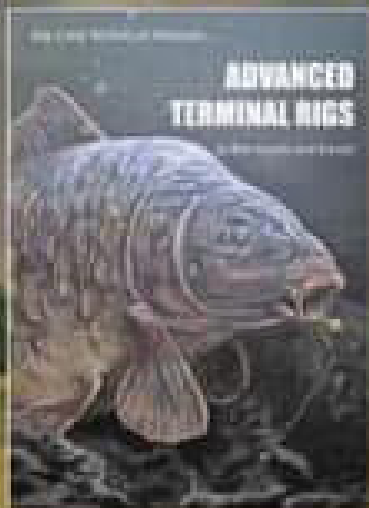
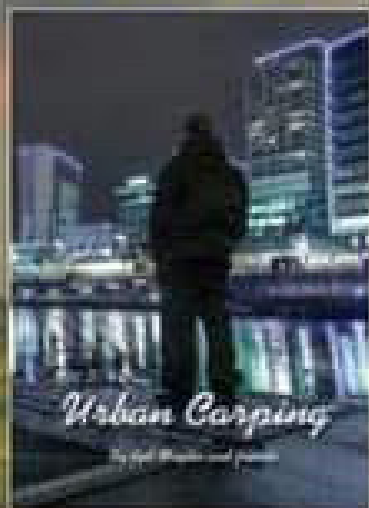
When disconnected from a reliable source of clean water, the LifeSaver Bottle allows you to use water from natural sources such as ponds, lakes and rivers, to stay hydrated, whilst protecting you from waterborne viruses, bacteria or cysts. From camping or travelling to emergency preparation, you can survive and thrive in the toughest of environments with the LifeSaver Bottle. The replaceable cartridge can purify up to 6,000 litres of water.

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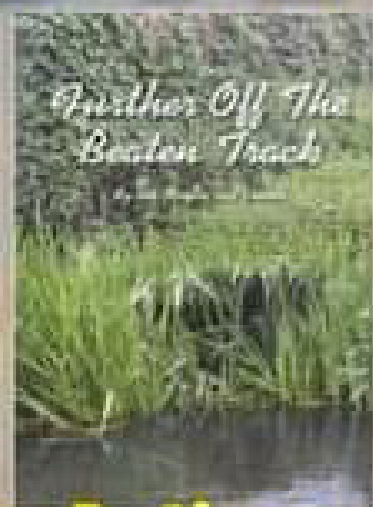
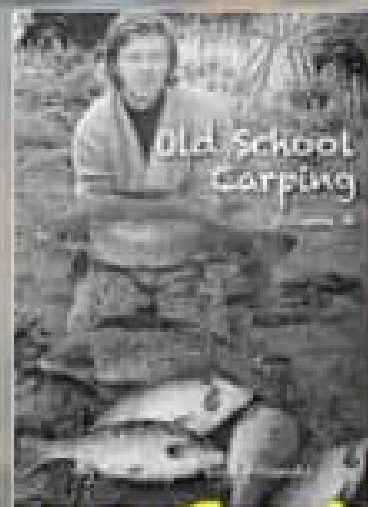
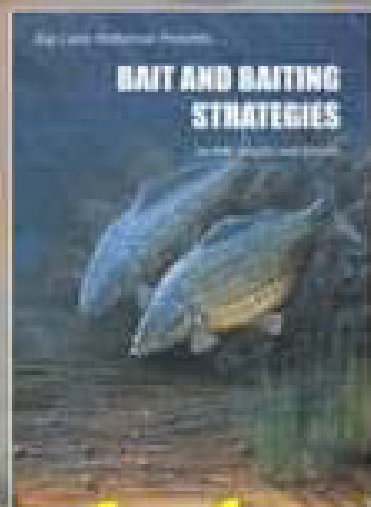


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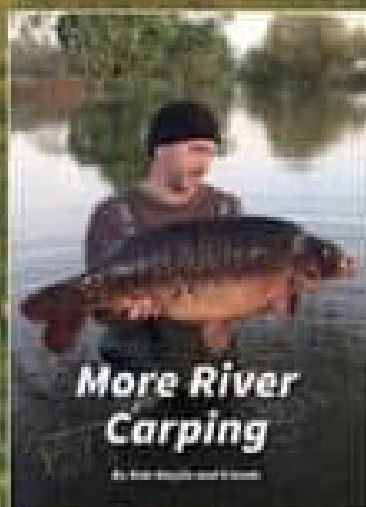
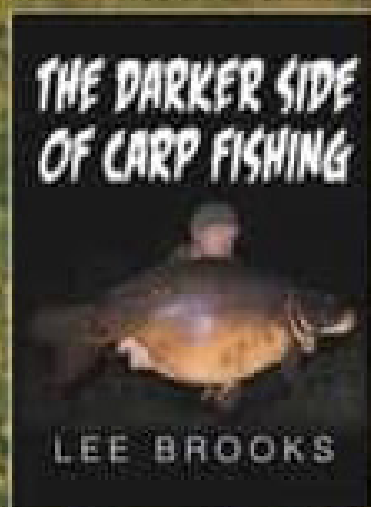
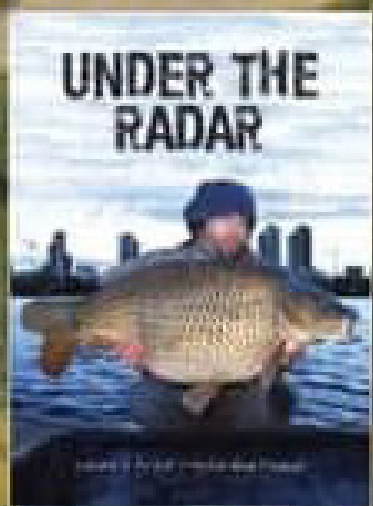
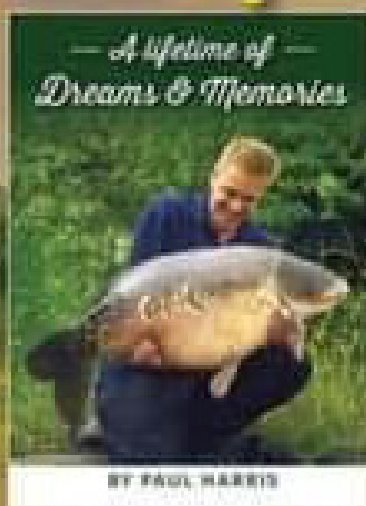
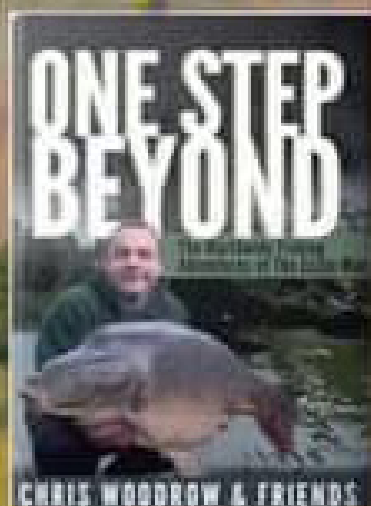


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# PRIVATE WATERS

**D**uring a hot summer's day I strolled down to a local private estate lake. I walked around and found the fish in a shallow, snaggy and very weedy part of the lake. I could see two clear spots amongst the weed. These were my chosen spots, and I was fishing a long hooklength just in case it wasn't bang on the money. Fifteen minutes after the rods went out I had a few bleeps, and the tip bent around. After a short but hairy fight the fish was in the net, a stunning little mirror around the average size of fish I'd had out of this lake. As the day went on the alarms stayed silent. That day I'd been given some new bait to try from a good friend, Dave Gash at Vale Baits. This bait was dark in colour but strong, smelling of garlic and orange.

It got to around 3pm, and the right hand rod was off. I was taking my time with this one, as it felt a better fish. Just as she went over the net cord, the left hand rod bent over. I couldn't believe it; I'd waited hours for a run and then they came within

minutes of each other. I had two mirrors on the mat, one very lean and well muscled. I thought that would have been it for the day, as on this place three fish is a great day, but minutes after getting the right hand rod back in it was off again. This time it as a very fat common just over 20lb. This was the biggest fish I'd had out of here and a real character.

Half an hour later I was in again, and I couldn't believe it! As the fish got close in I could see it was another one of the bigger fish in the lake, another perfect common just over 19lb. I was over the moon with this success, but little did I know the next hour was going to be amazing. I'd seen a few fish in the margins during the day, so I'd been trickling bait in and watching the fish go down on it. I moved my left rod just inches from the bank. Whilst watching a fish come into the margin spot and getting excited, my other rod ripped off. This fish broke the water as soon as I hooked into it. It looked very dark. Playing it easily through the weed, I eventually got it free of any weedbeds and she came in slowly. When it was close enough to see I backed the clutch off a little, not wanting to lose this one to a hook pull. All the hard work was paying off.

As she slipped over the net cord I was so relieved, and I had a massive smile on my face as I lifted her onto the mat. I had to get some mat shots of her because my camera didn't have a self-timer, so I had to do a video then screen shot, and I knew the quality would be poor. After texting my mate Dave telling him how I'd got on with the new bait, the margin erupted. I was in shock. Never before had I been so successful. A stunning fully scaled was the last victim. Was it the new bait or was it my red-letter day?





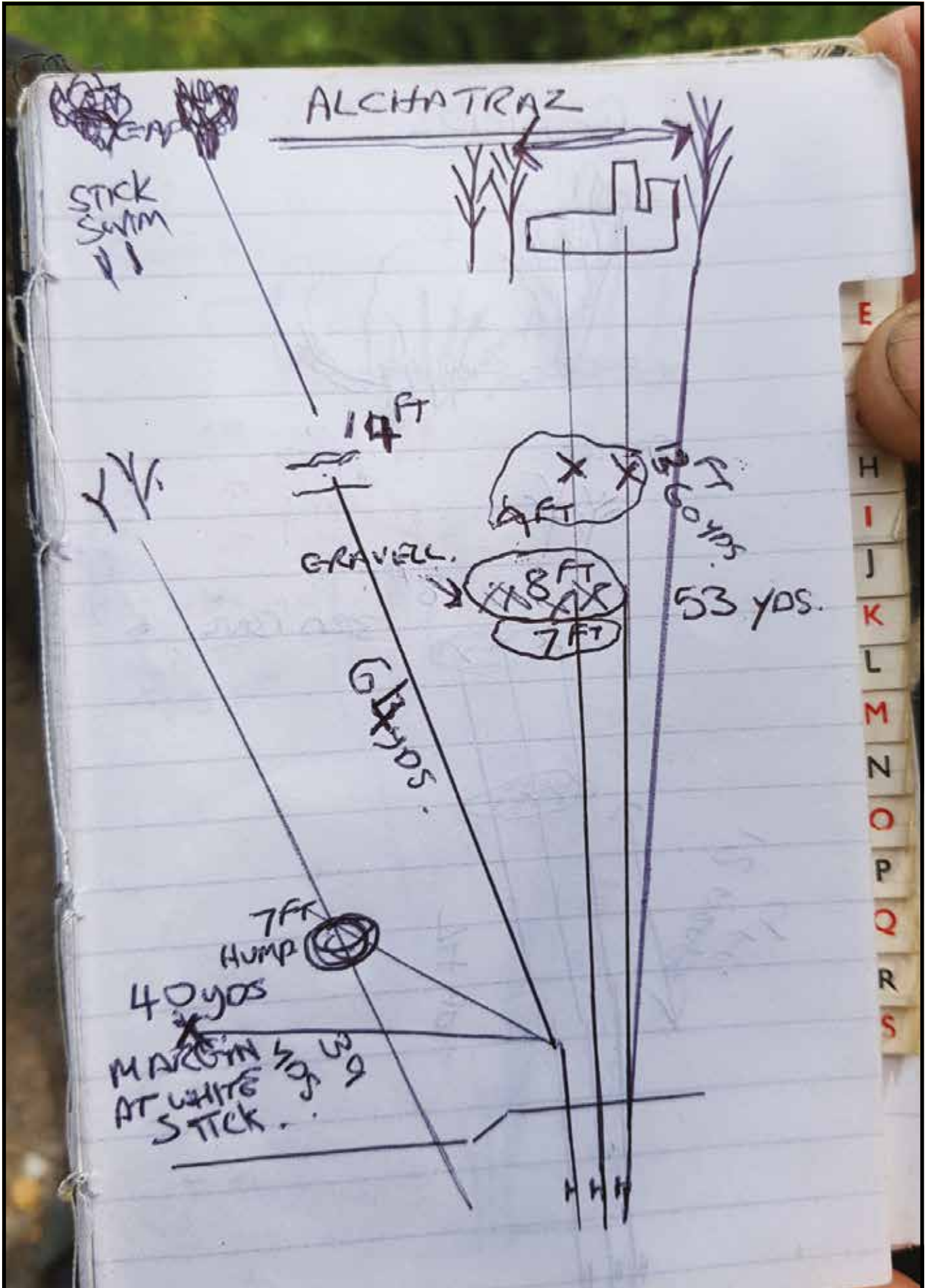
# ELSTOW PIT 1

**I**t was late November as the adrenaline started to calm down after my recent luck on Pit 2. I sat on my bedchair in the Decoy swim knowing my time on this pit was drawing to a close, and it dawned on me, where next? That evening, Rob the bailiff popped down for the usual carp fat chewin' and Elstow update report and said, "Don't you fancy a go on pit 1?" I hadn't even given it a thought, as it was

all about Pit 2 until now, but after looking at some Pit 1 fish pics, it was like throwing petrol on embers – BOOM! Oh yes – more scaly old beasts to have a go at. It was full of more names and pics than I could remember – I’ll have some of that... if invited, of course. You see, Elstow is invite only; you have to keep a clean slate on Pit 2 to get offered a Pit 1 ticket. That way it creates a pleasant angling environment, as the guys who run it can pick and chose who gets on there. After Rob had a word with me, Steve “the Apache” Cliff, the head bailiff, popped round for a chat, and I was offered a ticket! Happy days! All sorted – thanks, guys.

After a tough winter with chronic fatigue, it was mid-June before I was able to get down to start. I went down for a recce first, and after a couple of casts, it was evident that Pit 1’s topography was totally different to Pit 2’s. Pit 2 is 30-ish acres, square with a couple of bays and bowl-like with a few ledges that extend into the lake with the odd feature that is 10ft in height or so with depths to 30-odd feet. Pit 1 is also 30-ish acres but longer with a bay at one end with features everywhere and steep, weed-covered gnarly bars, 20ft high in some places. An underwater motocross track with big ass jumps is what I thought it resembled.

Another way the two pits differ is Pit 1 swims have their own features to fish to. A couple of examples: the Corner Knuckle swim has hippos and football bars, the Stick swim has traffic lights and the plateau, and you don’t really stray far from these features, as the fish just get caught from these areas, I was told. It’s not unusual to find 30ft then having the marker rod lock up and pull up what feels like a wall and then get 12ft two rod lengths closer in, steep and gnarly with what feels



## Pete Hall

like large boulders on the faces. Hmmmm, I thought... I wasn't expecting that after the quite featureless, tame Pit 2 bottom. Now I am still memorising which bars run where, as it's a lot to take on board, but I do know enough to know that if you take them lightly it will bite you in the ass, as I learnt quickly.

Another thing about Pit 1 is the fish in here have seen it all. It's been fished by a lot of the top names, so I would be having a laugh thinking I was going to bring something they hadn't seen, and so would the carp. So although I knew I would enjoy the challenge, I was a bit intimidated as well. I have to admit, as I neared the gate with the rods in the boot for the first







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time, I had butterflies and a sense of being lost. I hadn't had that since my skydive instructor said, "Go!" on my first solo jump. It must be the realisation that after all the talk, shit's about to get real.

After leg wobbling my way along the car park bank, I got myself together and spotted a couple of fish show in front of a swim called Monks. The swim was already taken, so I had go opposite but down a couple of swims so as not to spoil the lad in Monks' or my chances. Huffing and puffing my way down the narrow leafy track, I arrived at the Stick swim. After 30 minutes sitting watching, the fish started to show again. I am sure they know bank movement, and 30 minutes was what they needed to get back to showing again. Like I mentioned previously, the Stick has two features: the traffic light bar, so called because you aim at the traffic lights on the other side of the hedge behind it, and the plateau, a biggish flat-top bar. I decided to put one rod on each, leaving the third in the bag - that just felt the right thing to do.

Elstow is well known for the hemp and corn approach, but for me it's boilies through and through. Don't get me wrong; if I wasn't catching, I would change to the veg side, but they were having boilies for starters, so 1kg of 18mm were Spombed to each spot, and the kettle was on. The water hadn't even boiled when the left hand rod on the traffic lights bar was away. Surely not... already? As I picked up the rod, the fish plain just yanked the rod flat then cut me off. My first Pit 1 fish was gone, and a good'un as well by the feel of it. These fish knew the score big time, and when they slipped up and made the mistake of getting hooked, it was plan B to shed the hook or get behind a bar and pull and twist as fast as they could. I found this to

be the norm with all the old originals. They didn't panic as a rule, but the stockies weren't as clued-up, and they ran up the lake, making getting them in easier.

After drinking my tea and sulking a bit, I wound the remaining rod in and replaced the .35 line with .40 for starters, and the rods were going to have to be fished locked-up with leads that dropped on the take. That should help – don't give 'em an inch! Line changed, I recast the rods back on the spots, rebaited the rod that had the take and settled down for the evening, which turned out to be uneventful, maybe due to the lost fish. Darkness fell, and the lorries started rolling up and down the road to the tarmac factory, which makes it really hard to hear fish crash out, so all you can do is watch, but after not seeing anything, I turned in at about 11pm.

4am saw me playing my second Pit 1 carp, although this one didn't flat-rod me. It felt like a stockie and turned out to be a pretty scraper 20lb mirror. Back to bed for a few hours, I thought, until I was awoken at 5am by another angler, all excited and telling me the carp were going mad two swims down from me. I said, "Crack on, mate. I'm staying put." After all, setting up on them, it was 50/50 they would either do one on your first cast or you hook one then they do one. I watched as he chased them around to no avail – lesson learned.

At about 8.30, one showed on the right hand spot, and by 9am, I was into another powerful fish. This time the clutch was tight and the lead dropped on the take, which bought me a few seconds to get to the rod. Picking up the rod, I walked backwards, hand over the spool, to get the fish this side of the plateau, which worked, but then it wedged itself

# Pete Hall



on the marginal slope that is 20-odd feet deep. After slow, steady pressure and few hairy moments at the net, I'd got what looked like my first Pit 1 thirty.

An old, gnarly 34lb mirror was my prize - a great start! I recognised it from pictures Rob Gooch had sent me. He had caught most if not all the Pit 1 residents and had been kind enough to send me a large selection of his photo album, so thanks, mate. That's another good thing about Elstow - most people are more than happy to help you out. This made life a lot easier, as I knew which fish I was looking at in the net or as they swam past me. Photos sorted and kettle on, I was thinking that made up for the lost one. That was the last of the action that first session. I did another 24 hours just to see if they would come back but knew deep down they wouldn't.

Back on the M1 north, I analysed the last 48 hours as you do and thought that on the plus side, they like the boilies already, but I had to do more about trying not to lose fish. I don't like the thought of them trailing hooklengths about; it's bad angling. I'd only been cut off once in Pit 2 and had to keep this to a minimum.

The next trip down, I got it all wrong. I plotted up in a swim called Alcatraz opposite me old mate, the Punisher. On good advice, they were in there, and on seeing a few shows, they were, but I'd gone and set up on them! Oh dear - game over! On top of that, the weather turned tropical, and I didn't see a thing. The Punisher had a long, lean scraper 30 on his last morning, and it was good to chew the fat and drink coffee with him - happy days and good angling, mate. I did sit and hatch a plan that caused carnage, but I'll leave that for part two.



# LIN AND JERRY

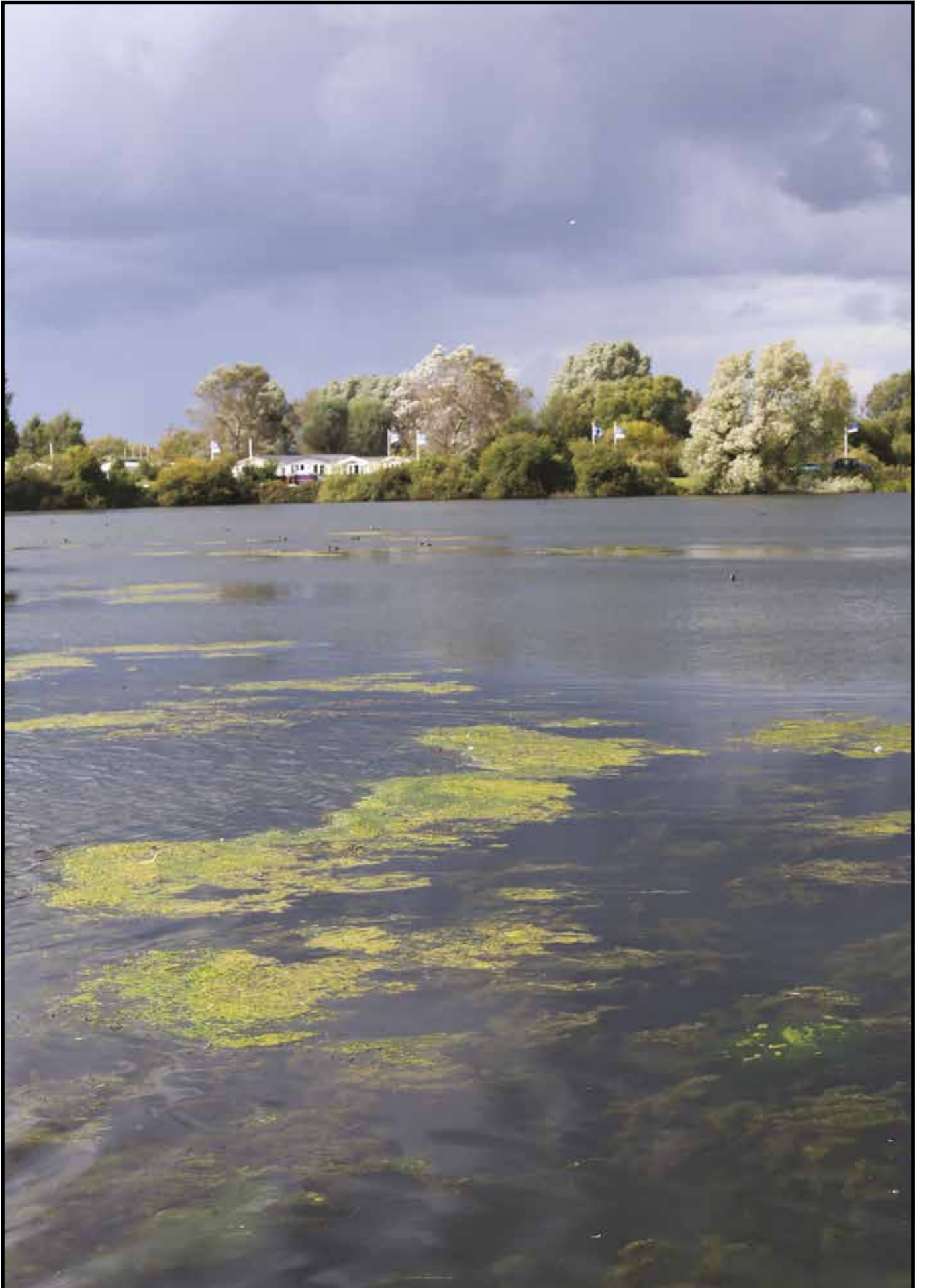
**F**or a good few years, I always fancied a crack at Vinnetrow Lake, and for me, the main attraction was a huge mirror known as the Half Lin that was regularly reaching 50-plus. All I really knew about the water was that it was weedy, low stocked and shallow. I do love a challenge, so when my ticket was offered, I instantly snapped it up. My first trip was April 2016 last year, and what I never really thought about was how far it was from my home. Vinnetrow is in Chichester, not too far from Portsmouth, and easily a two-hour drive if I leave early hours, but on my way back home it would be any where from two to three hours depending on the good old M25. From everyone I have spoken to, Vinny is rated as rock hard, and during the spring and summer months we are allowed 72 hours on the lake, so what with the long drive down, I decided to try and do those hours every week.

The lake is around ten acres in size, a rectangle shape. The south end of the lake is the shallowest, mostly around 5ft and under, and the north end is the deepest, averaging 6ft, so it's a very shallow water. This in itself does create a few problems, one being the weed as I later found out, and the birds that are many and regularly have picnics feasting on your spots. Another slight problem was the lake has lots of eels that will be pulling your rigs to pieces after dark, oh and tons of tench!

Right, now I've got all the negatives out of the way, there were way more positives. Every lake has its obstacles, and that's the way I looked at it. I learnt that the stock consisted of around 25 original fish and a few handfuls of recent stock fish over the past few years. Amongst the originals were some absolute stunners that to be honest I never really new about. The A-team, as I will call it, consisted of a beautiful carp named Scaly that goes 43-44, an incredible common named Arnie at 43-44, one named 8-10, another stunning mirror creeping over 40, Black Spot at 40, and one or two more that were creeping up over the 40lb mark, and then The Half Lin. With some great backup fish to catch, I was buzzing to get started on this new water.

Unfortunately I was involved in some work that would hinder my full concentration on the pit. I was gutted to say the least, having to miss the best time of the year, the spring, so I ended up doing a couple of trips just before they spawned, and at that time I had more or less decided to try and get all the work out the way and get back on towards early autumn. Just before they spawned, a mate, Matt Eaton, had the Lin at 56lb 14oz – a massive carp. She would be huge again later



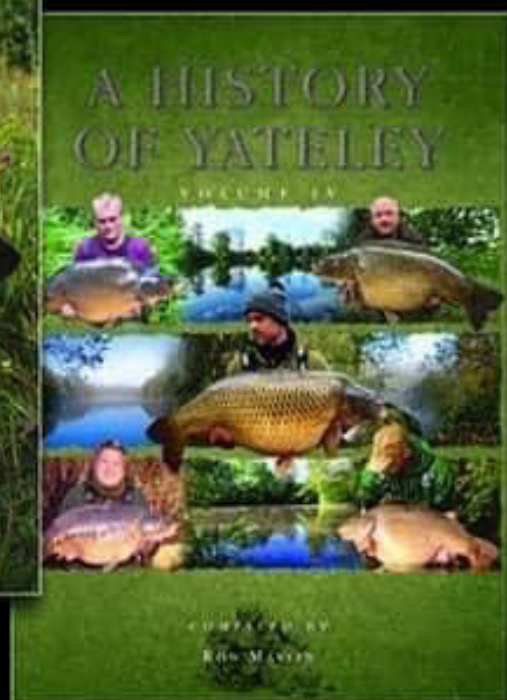
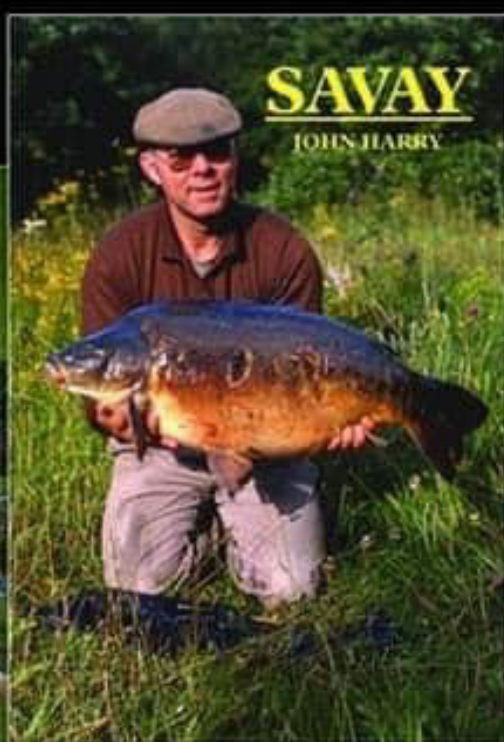
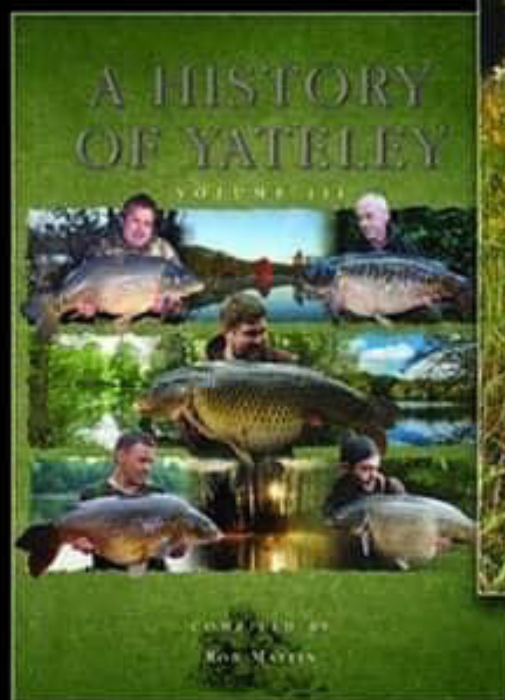
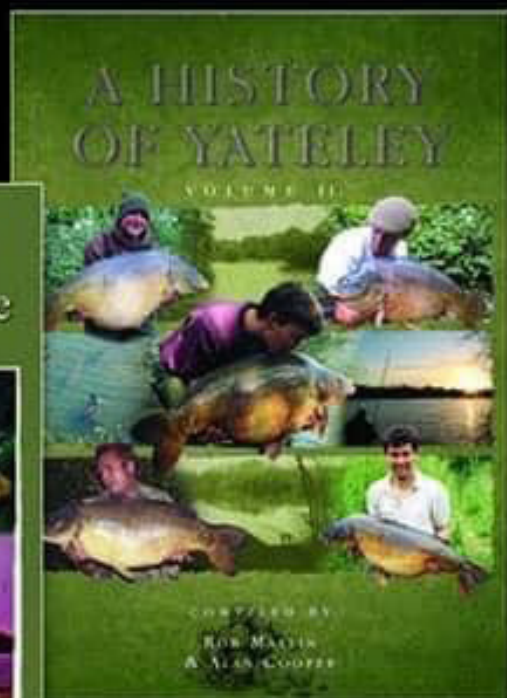
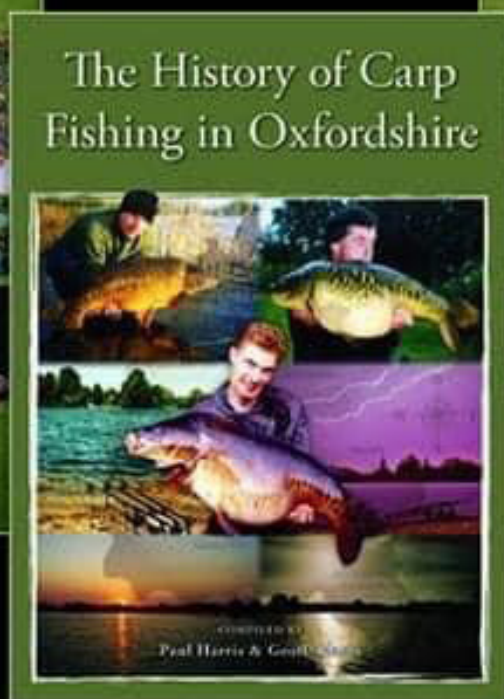
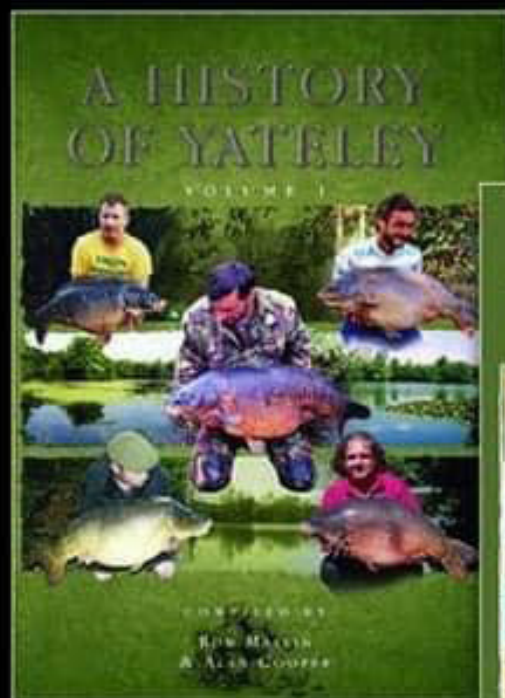


in the year that was for sure. I did have one or two little visits during the middle of the summer and to say the lake was weedy was an understatement. I managed to hook one, fishing in a hole in the weed bed, and obviously lost it, so I packed up. It just was not fair hooking them with no chance of ever landing them, so I left to return later.

When I returned in September, the weed had near enough gone from the surface, making line lay a lot better. There was one big lump of weed still on the surface out to the left of a swim named Bumpy Track, and after a few casts, I found a nice clean strip right next to the weed bed. This would be a good starting point, and an area I decided to give a fair bit of bait. Although the eels are right nuisance, I decided to still fish boilies. I was using a new bait named CTS (Crab Salmon and Tuna) as well 14mm boilies, I decided to bulk it out with halibut pellets, and at Mad Baits they do a 6mm boilies so lots of these were included. I hoped to keep the tench and eels occupied, and when the carp moved in there would still be some bait left.

That afternoon I was lying in the bivvy just chilling and watching the lake when something landed on the roof that was much heavier than a bird. I instantly got out to investigate, and the culprit turned out to be a little black and white kitten that must have jumped out of the tree above. He hung around for a little while; he was a nice little fellow, but his claws were doing my Tempest no good at all. The next day at 1.30pm the little kitten wandered back into my swim. He went and sat right next to my bobbins, and just as he did one of them moved and the alarm sounded. I thought to myself this little chap might become a bit of a nuisance, thinking he

# THE HISTORY SERIES



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# Jerry Hammond



must have leant against the bobbins, but in a split second the bobbin pulled tight to the top, and the cat legged it.

My heart was pounding! I was indeed into my first carp. My swim had a steep bank behind it, so I made good use of the extra height getting the rod up high, keeping the fish moving all the time trying to keep it from getting in any weed. As it neared the bank, it made a charge to my left, and in the shallow crystal clear water, I was able to see a reasonable looking mirror bidding for freedom.

The feeling you get when they go in the net is always special, but when it's your first one from a very tough water, it's next to none. I had caught my first Vinny big'un, and what a carp it was – Black Spot at 39lb! I was so pleased, and she looked awesome with really nice dark brown colours. It was great to catch such a lovely carp, and I was off the mark. The rods had been out since the evening before with apparently no trouble from eels, so another big helping of bait was added to the spot and the rods went back again.

What I am about to say is true: the rods remained silent all night and the next morning, then more or less at the same time the next day my little mate Lucky the cat turned up, and I kid you not – as he was walking back to the same position again to sit next to my bobbins, that same rod was off again. This time the fish weeded me up big style, and I was sure I was losing this one. I persevered for what seemed ages then luckily a chunk of the weed bed pulled away, and I was then able to coax the fish back bit by bit, in the margins I saw a nice common break out of the weed, and after a little charge about I was able to land her. A top result – a nice 32 common, and I was well happy. Thinking I could do the same the next



day, I must have got done by the eels early in the evening as I was receiving liners that I thought were carp. I stayed till 3pm the next day on the strength of the 1.30 take, only to reel in with no bait, and strangely my little mate Lucky the cat never showed up... Erm...

It seemed to get harder as autumn arrived with not too much going on. We all new the big'un was due and would be a right old size. I had a personal confirmation of that, as I was lucky enough to be there when a mate Dave Olli landed the Half Lin at 58lb - a truly a huge old unit and one I was gonna catch... I'd already decided I was in it till the end.

I started early the following March, as I did not want to not miss a single thing. I wanted to be there when everything happened, when everything woke up. The previous year, although I never fished it much, I still paid attention and

learned enough to know what I wanted to do the following spring. One part of the lake that I wanted to pay attention to was the Right Hand Point swim, which was right next to a big set of snags that the fish did spend time in, and I wanted to get an area going on the route they took when they headed off to the lily pad area on the other bank, but this would have to be a little later in the year.

It was still cold when I got started back. A few fish had been caught during the winter months, so I was hopeful that the carp would now well be mooching about the lake. An important part of my kit is my climbing pegs, which are great and can be wound into the trees to either get you started or to get you higher. Basically you can get where no one else can. With the lake being shallow and clear the information



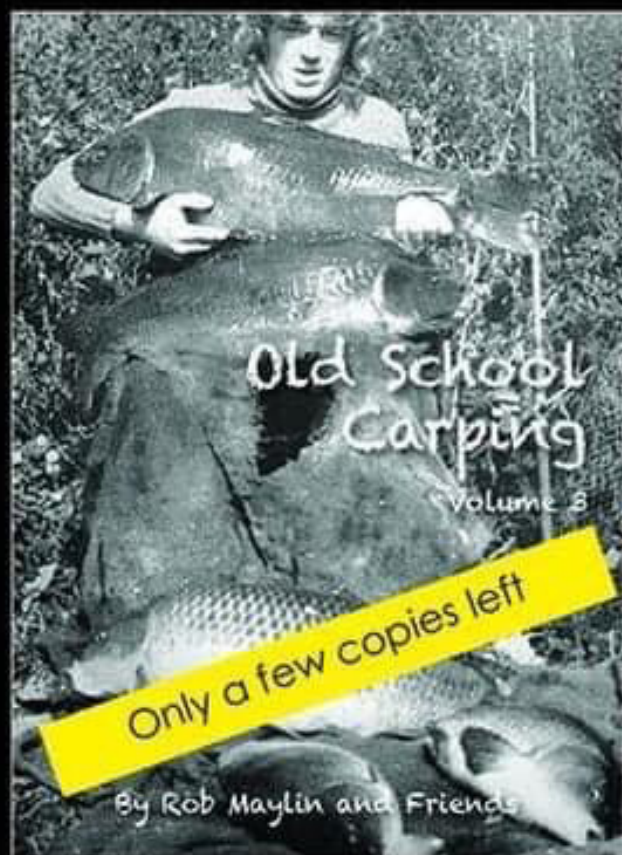
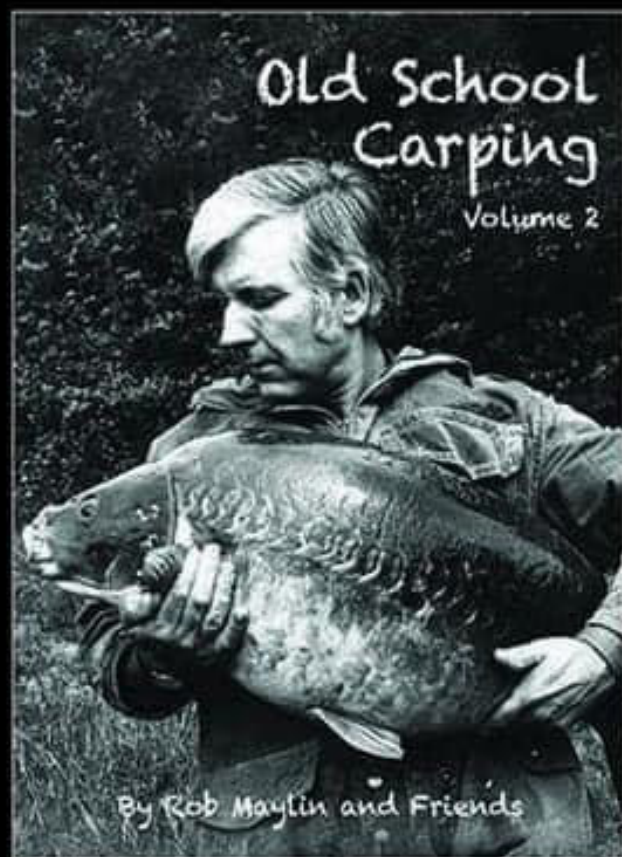
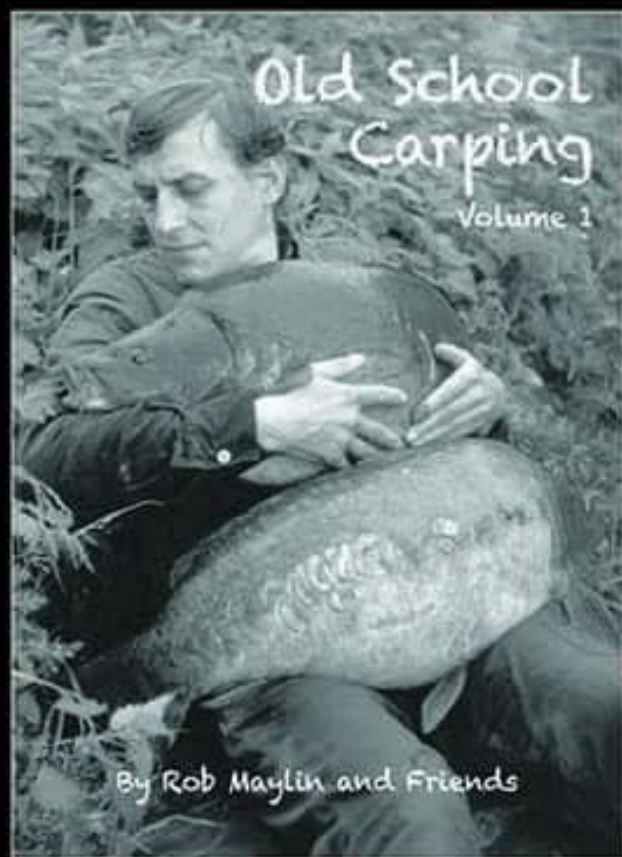
you get up from them is your best asset.

In the weedy corner where Matt Eaton had caught her the year before was an area I knew she liked. I had been up one of the trees on the causeway bank where I was able to see a fair bit of water, and unless they were somehow hiding on the bottom I could not see a fish. I then moved round to the Weedy Corner swim, shinned up the tree straight away, and I noticed not 20 yards out that the bottom was clouded up. As I watched and my eyes focused, I was able to see at least three to four fish, heads down and feeding. I was down in a shot to fetch my tackle, buzzing at the prospect of maybe catching one.

Back up the tree, I saw them moving away and drifting back, and then one of them moved out into the clear water and there she was – the Half Lin – and she looked massive. Talk about creature of habit! I was one swim down the same time the year before and she had shown in front of me a few times, and from up the tree I had seen her coming from the weedy corner. The problem with the swim was that to get a bait out, you had to get in the water to cast, which was not ideal, and as I found out, the silt was deep. The area where they were was just out past the canopy of the tree I had been up, so with a low, awkward side cast, I eventually managed to get a little choddy hook bait some where near where they were. Back up the tree, I noticed the big girl had left the area, and was slowly making her way off towards the causeway bank. Although I still thought I had a chance of one of the others or her return, I decided to stay put and get the rods out properly. Sadly they never came back on that trip, but to have put a rod to where she was feeding filled me with confidence.



# OLD SCHOOL CARPING SERIES



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I was getting down every week, and before I knew it, the spring was flying by. Spring was rock hard to say the least; right up until they spawned, there were only two fish caught. The day before they spawned I was in the Left Side Point swim. I had fish all over me in and around a massive weed bed some 30-40 yards out to my left. I had been trying to position a bait right on top of the weed bed itself, and the way they were cruising about, surely one had to pick up? In the end, I drilled out a nut and inserted some cork, fishing it naked chod style. I moved the top bead right up to about 8-9ft, and with the tiniest amount of putty, the hook bait ever so slowly sank down, and when I checked it in the margins, it looked perfect.

I cast a nice high lob, and I saw the hook bait right at the top bead as it hit the water, so with only 5ft depths, I knew I had to be up on the top of the weed bed. It landed perfectly right in the path of the route they had been following. I left a little bow in the line to a tight clutch, and as I set the bobbin, I was glancing at a huge set of shoulders breaking the surface not too far from my hook bait. I took a few steps away from my rods just to do something when I heard a couple of bleeps, and as I looked round, I saw the rod tip completely bend round to the left while simultaneously a huge fish broke the surface I got a very good view indeed. With that, the fish just completely took off with me giving line. It was brutal the way it went, leaving masses of bubbles as it charged through untold weed beds. There was no question about it – the boat was summoned, and I went off in pursuit. Following the line out, at one stage it had made a complete left turn and was buried well deep. Sadly, I just retrieved my rig. I saw which



## Jerry Hammond

it was, and it was the Half Lin. She would have been huge – maybe even over 60lb – but as they say that's fishing.

The fish were definitely gathering for spawning, and after I lost that fish, the weather dramatically changed. The wind picked up, the sky went black, and the carp followed the wind further down the lake, leaving the weed beds for where my mate Ricky was plotted up. Ricky had a great little hit landing a 40 mirror and a 38 common, then as soon as the sun came back out, they headed back to the weed and spawned. Rightly so, the lakes were shut for about five weeks for them to recover.

My thoughts were to come back in the autumn when they would have all put their weight back on. I did not want to be anywhere else to be honest, and the time would soon go, that's for sure. As I said earlier, I knew from the previous year



that the carp did like this set of snags to the right of a swim called Right Point, and they would leave the snags and travel to the road bank to where all the lily pads were. I found a nice clean area that was on the back of a big bank of weed, an area I thought they might come across during their travels. I gave this area a really good baiting, mainly particle - hemp, tigers, mixed particle and boilies. I always kept the boilies going in. I really did get this area going, and each trip the spot was getting more and more clean, and from up the trees it was glowing. To begin with, I was fishing pop-ups from my own Compulsive Angler range over the spod mix. The bites started coming, and I landed two commons of 18 and 22lb, then a little stockie of 12lb. I was starting to wonder if I was ever going to catch any of the big fish from here.

Then one morning, a rod fished with an Esta Blend pop-



up on ripped off. With lots of weed to contend with, I fairly quickly landed a big old mirror. I never recognised the fish as it sat there in the net, but a mate came round, we weighed her up at just over 40lb, and it turned out to be one named the 8-10. I was made up – such a lovely carp and a proper A-team fish. I hooked another fish from the spot but sadly lost it. I was now on six bites, so things were going well. A few more fish were caught from the swim by other anglers and obviously I would never be able to guarantee to always get back in there, so I decided to move to the other end of the lake where it really was weedy, I was sure that's where they were and where they were happy to be.

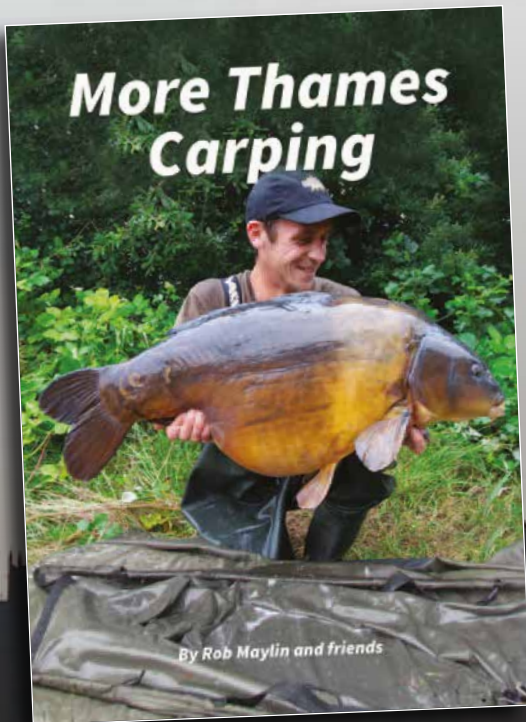
The whole end of the shallower end averaged 5ft and was weed choked, but as time went on, these weed beds started to lift up and move about, leaving some lovely yellow glowing spots. I chose a swim called the Patio, which was central on the causeway bank, and there were lots of signs of carp from up the trees. I really felt good about this end of the lake. I chose one of the glowing spots and gave it a real good bit of bait, That afternoon I saw a fish show on the spot, and not long after I had a take. Walking to the front of the swim and pumping back, not wanting to give the fish too much of a chance to get its head into the weed beds, I slipped the net under a dark looking mirror. This fish turned out to be Single Scale, one my mate Jim had caught a few weeks back, and when I took the photos, I remember thinking I'd love that old character, and there she was – fantastic. Single Scale went just under 34lb, and my approach was working.

That night at around 1am the spot gave me another bite, and I did exactly the same walking forward and pumping

AVAILABLE THIS AUTUMN

# More Thames Carping

By Rob Maylin and friends



Thames Carping was our best-selling book of 2019 and for a good reason. The Thames has everything a carp angler could possibly want, plenty of water, it's the biggest carp water in the country, unknown stock, a stock which increases every time we have a flood, an element of the unknown (getting more known), very rare in today's carp scene where every carp is flogged, logged, blogged and caught by an endless stream of bounty hunters.

Yes, the Thames really is the last frontier to be fully exploited. Thames carp anglers have many attributes of old school carping, stealthy, secretive and not bothered at all by the size of what they catch, although, like the old school, still hoping it's the fish of a life time when the buzzer shrieks out!

For Thames carpers the build-up too is very old school, they still have the close season, so this time is not wasted, as it was not years ago, recce's, baiting up, getting baits established, building up swims, while always being conscious that to be discovered would be the end of their hard work, so coming and going discreetly, under cover of darkness, a covert operation. Their cards held tightly to their chests. And this is why of course that books on Thames carping are so rare and so readable.

You see within these pages are their secrets revealed for all to see. Not blatant, no map grids in longitude and latitude to the latest hot spots but within the lines, read only by anglers who know what to look for. A clue here, a landmark there. All part of the ultimate jigsaw. So why do these secretive anglers choose to write, well simply because I ask them.

Sometimes over several years. Most eventually agree, I am persuasive, arguing at their catches need to be documented and be part of the history books for years to come. Which is true, and why they do it. Not for money, to promote something or even self-gratification but to be part of our great angling heritage. So that their kids and grandkids can look back and say "look! there's grandad with a beautiful Thames Carp. He would spend hundreds, even thousands of hours fishing for them.

So, here's what we have, and may I say you will not be disappointed. Some truly amazing Thames carp, from different stretches, some urban some rural, some well in land and some tidal, but all from the amazing 'Old Father Thames'.

Let's start with Ash Geden, who takes the cover positions again. His 2018-19 season made riveting reading in book one. In this volume he is back for his 2019-2020 season with equally incredible results. Many huge carp, several over forty, the front cover leviathan being totally new. He is a great river angler with a gift for writing, you will love his next instalment. Simon Rumsey has been on a journey while fishing the Thames, like many I suppose, in search of a thirty, or even bigger!

Andrew Sadler has discovered some Thames secrets during his many years on the Thames, for you the reader, he divulges all. Graham Stevens is a Thames stalwart, having written several articles in Big Carp and a couple of chapters in the first Thames book he is back in this volume to tell you how he does it. A technical A-Z for all to learn from, novice or expert Graham has some edges for you all.

The Teddington Tank by Vince Humphreys is a chapter about a huge common, that fish of a life time that he freely admits was totally unexpected, but that's the beauty of the Thames.

Thames common by Mark Cook, yes, there's a theme developing here, A huge Thames common, one never to be forgotten. River Thames, Same swim, Same carp ... 6 months apart by Christopher Stockley is a great account which proves how territorial even Thames carp can be. My Love for the Tidal Thames a Brief History, By Roger Baker. Is a trip down memory lane for all those who like the history chapters? Thirty years on the Tidal, some huge carp too. One of my favourite Thames stories yet.

A Thames Monster featuring Pete The Pirate, is pretty self-explanatory, while prolific Thames carp catcher Danny Boy Hill, shows us just what's possible with a breath-taking gallery of Thames specimens. Add to these life history articles on the Thames by Jason Townsend, Ben Frewin, Mark Anthony, Vince Humphreys, Tom James and constantan Thames carp catch 'The Thames Warrior' it's obvious that this book is another must read for not only river anglers but all carp anglers interested in something a bit different from the norm. A book you will read over and over again. History in the making, our UK heritage of Thames carp.

*Rob Maylin*



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back. This worked well, and before I knew it, I shined the head torch at a nice sized common in the net that turned out to be the 38 common Ricky had had just caught before they spawned – the Dead Common. She weighed in at 35lb, and funnily enough, Ricky came and did the pics – thanks, mate. So, two bites... I could hardly sleep after that, wondering what else might come along.

The next morning, I had a take from hell, completely flat rodding me and ripping line. This one was not interested in my walking forward and pumping approach! She ended up diving in a big weed bed and then hit the surface a few times – something I hate. I was now locked up solid and very worried. After a while of trying, I decided the safest option

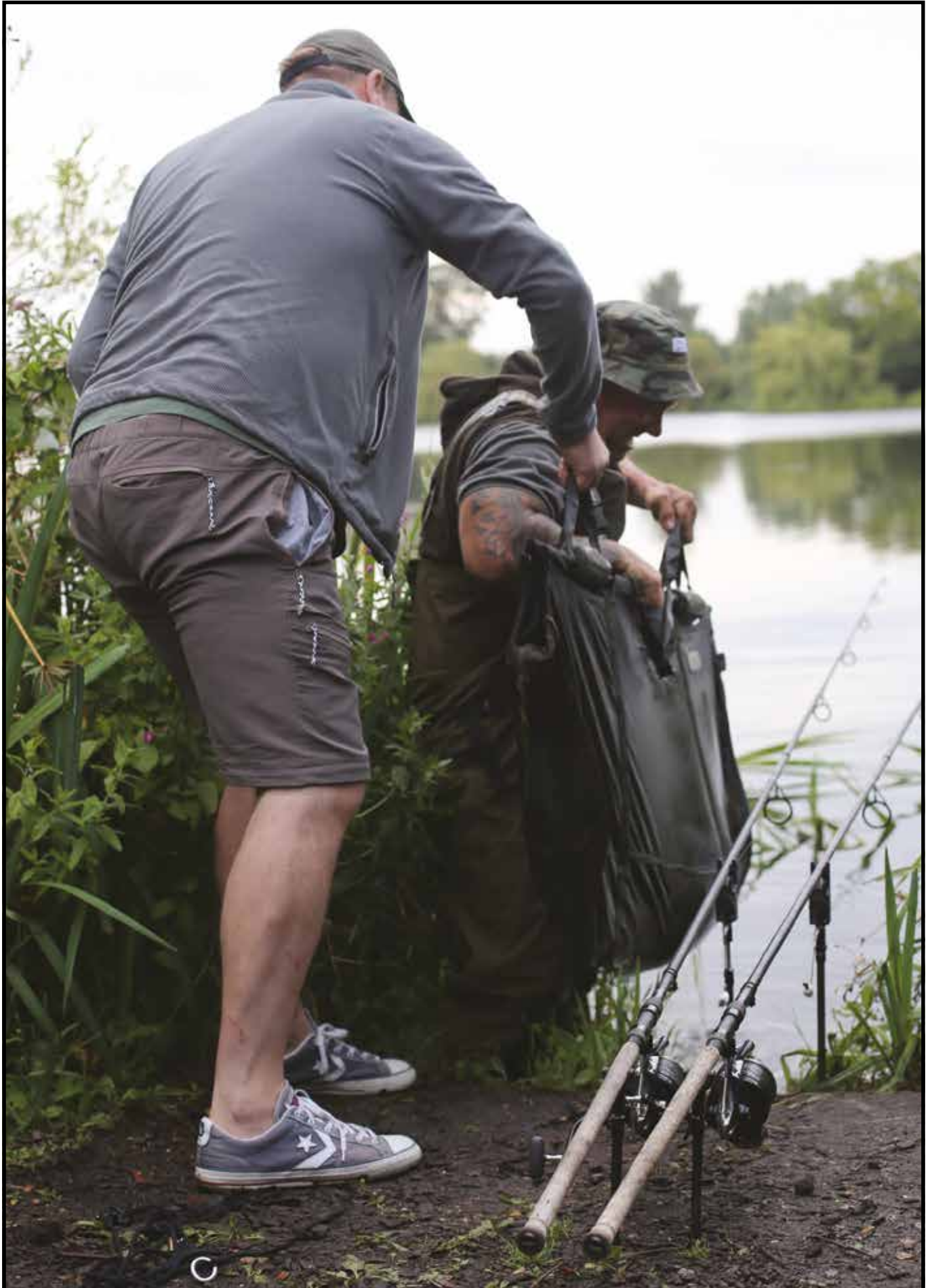


was to launch the boat. With my life jacket on, I slowly made my way out to where the line entered the weed bed. My heart was pounding – was it still on or had it slipped the hook as they normally do?

Picking the weed off the line, I could feel the end of my leadcore, and a big load of weed was around the line where it was spliced. I reached further down the leadcore, gently pulled, and away it went. Quickly grabbing the rod, it sped off through the weed bed and out the other side – it was game on. I was more or less dragged about from weed bed to weed bed by this powerful fish, and then I caught a glimpse. It was a huge common, and I had a feeling I knew which one. Thankfully for me, I managed to scoop it up the next time



# Jerry Hammond



it hit the surface, and there was no mistaking the huge shoulders of Arnie the common. As I paddled back, I could feel myself smiling from ear to ear I was so chuffed, and when Ricky called out to ask what I had, I was so pleased to shout back “Arnie!”

To have already had two fish this session was unreal, but then to cap it off with this one was amazing. This fish is so incredible. I have caught some stunning commons over the years, but this one just takes first place. Thanks to Ricky and Hampshire Graham for being there to do the shots – we got some absolute crackers. Arnie went 42lb 8oz, rounding off a fantastic session – one I will never forget.

Now without any question I decided to stay up that end of



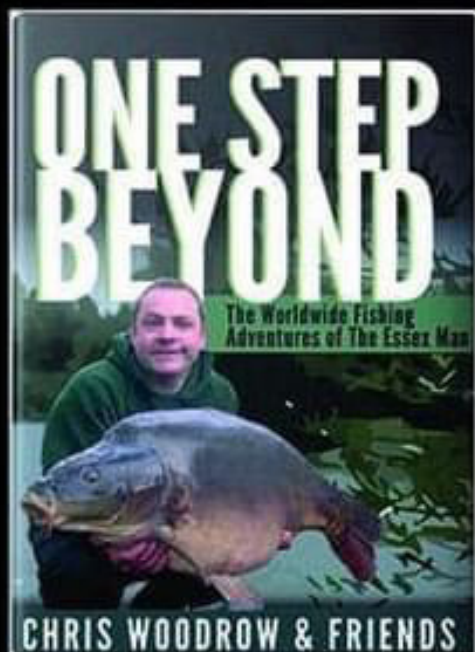
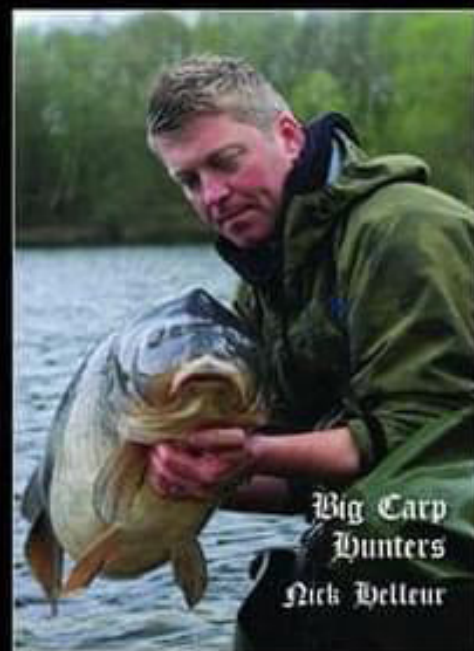
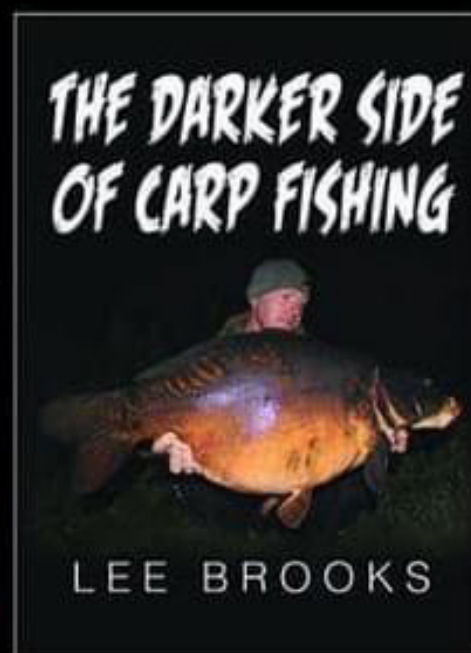
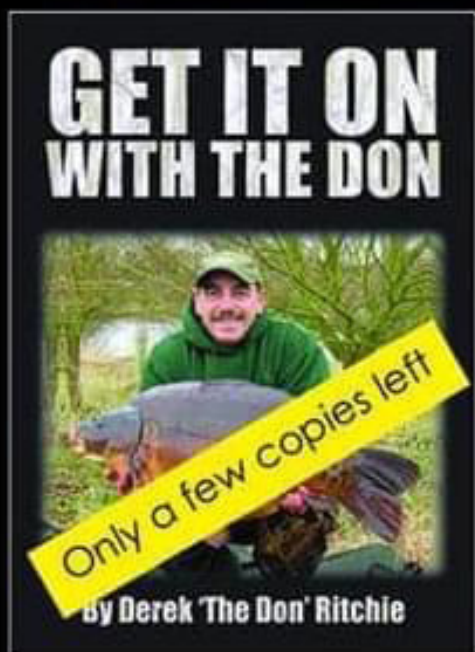
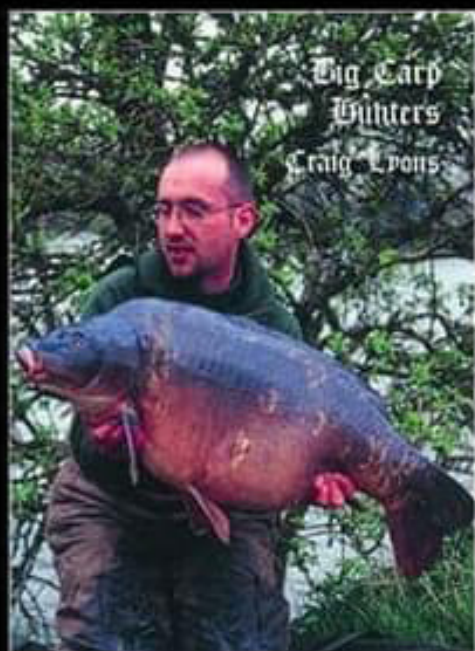


the lake where it was the weediest. I moved around a couple of the other swims in the area, lost a few more fish and had a repeat capture of Black Spot. I took no photos, and she was slipped back, but she looked around the same weight I'd had her before - around the 39lb mark. I also caught a really nice, scaly mirror of 20lb, one that will be most sought after when it gets a lot bigger.

The weed was now definitely on the decline; most of the lake was now clear of any surface weed apart from the few swims I had mainly been concentrating on. With a couple of the going areas taken, I decided to fish a swim I'd not yet been in, one of the remaining weediest swims. A big clump of this weed had lifted and moved off, revealing a nice smooth patch

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that I hoped the carp had been grazing on under the weed canopy. That spot and another were baited up as per normal, and I settled down for the evening and the night ahead. It was my wedding anniversary, and my wonderful wife Jo said it was fine for me to be angling on this day – she said I might get lucky. It was cold, and I got up around 3am and looked up to see it was a clear, starry night. I went back to bed thinking, come on you carp, let's be having you. I had a few bleeps on the right hand rod during the rest of the night, and at 5.30am it ripped off.

The fish immediately hit the surface and steamed towards the nearest weed bed. There was no way I was losing this. I kept the pressure on and kept it moving the whole time, not letting it gain any sanctuary in the many weed beds. It hit the surface a few times and powered off, a very weighty, strong fish. Closer in, she rolled on the surface and it was then I was sure I knew what I was playing. Once in the net, there was no mistaking the Half Lin was mine. There she lay, my target fish, and I let out a celebratory shout so my good mate Jim would know. When Jim came round, he was as happy as me. It was the perfect ending to my campaign, a new PB at 54lb 14oz, and I was absolutely made up to share it with some great angling buddies at the lake. Normally I would wrap up and head off home to celebrate, but not this time! We had booked a table in the pub down the road where we had a right old celebration – how it should be – proper old school.

A big thanks to all the lads at Vinny – Hampshire Graham, Jim Hepper, Bill Dawson, Jay Curry, Jacko, Oli, Chris, Matt, Ricky and Charlie.

And the missus was right – I did get lucky!



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# IDENTIFY, ADAPT, AMEND AND OVERCOME

**I**t's a job to know where to start when it's been well over a decade since I last put pen to paper, or finger to button (doesn't have the same ring), but certain things that have happened to me within my angling over the past few seasons have prompted me to make changes, and with these changes have come some quite remarkable results. Allow me to share these with you.

I've been in pursuit of our beloved carpy carps (one for Martin Clarke lovers) for over 30 years and have been lucky enough to share some of my thoughts and ideas with the readers of Big Carp back in the early 2000s. Back then I believed that I was at the top of 'my' game, fishing three nights a week and rubbing shoulders with some extremely talented anglers (you only get better by playing a better opponent), creating my own rigs by closely watching the carp in my syndicate water, using baits that I'd made or tweaked myself and having the opportunity to share findings and theories with those around me, all helped me put some beautiful fish on the bank, consistently, which is the true benchmark of success.

So, and many of you I'm sure are the same, I built up an armoury of rigs, baits and approaches that I was positive would stand me in good stead on any water and up against any carp that I chose to target. All this was done in a time when there was no internet to speak of, so knowledge could only be gleaned by trial and error or passed on mouth to mouth, hence the earlier reference to rubbing shoulders with talented anglers (I was privy to the now named 'chod' back in 1999 - thanks, T.H.).

Jumping forward a good few years, I joined the well renowned Woolpack fishery (Andy Stafford's, not the other one), as it was probably, in my opinion anyway, the best fishery available to me. Andy had owned it for five years and worked tirelessly to create a truly beautiful set of lakes, completely fenced (a must these days) and private. With fish going into the mid forties, not massive by today's standards but with many well over forty years old, I knew that they would prove worthy adversaries, as they had been fished for heavily and by some

very accomplished anglers, many of whom have also written for Rob in times past.

I've always said that the first year on any new water is the 'learning year', getting familiar with the lake and its inhabitants. Spending time walking, plumbing, watching and usually, blanking too. Well, my first year wasn't any different. Armed with my (so I thought), expansive knowledge and experience, a good bait (having worked in the bait industry in the past I had a decent knowledge of what the carp want) and rigs that have caught many times before, I managed just two fish!! Saying that, I didn't do an awful amount of time (family/work commitments) but I felt that I should have caught more.

It was at this point, during the winter of the first year, that I knew that despite the decades of previous knowledge I'd accrued, ideas on rigs, baits etc. and confidence in my angling abilities, I was falling well short of the mark, and some drastic changes were needed if I wanted to out-think and trip up these wily old fish (and the stockies that were beating me too!).

'Education is knowledge shared' and 'knowledge is power' are two of the sayings I'd installed into people I've taught throughout my time in positions that necessitated me to train others. Well, time to practise what I'd been preaching for so many years, and so from that winter, I have gone out of my way to ingest as much information as possible, which is so much easier these days with Facebook, YouTube, etc. I don't mind if I only take one small piece of information, or a tip about some rig mechanics, an idea on bait presentation or application from an hour's worth of research. If enough research is done, then an encyclopaedic platform is built and which I can draw from. I watched, and still do, everything

## Matt Parry

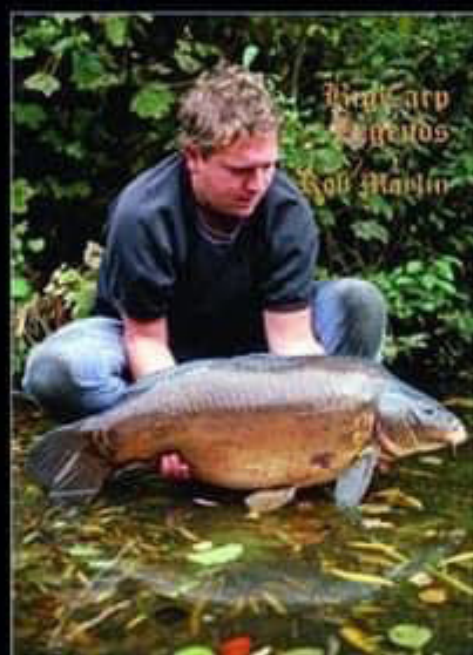
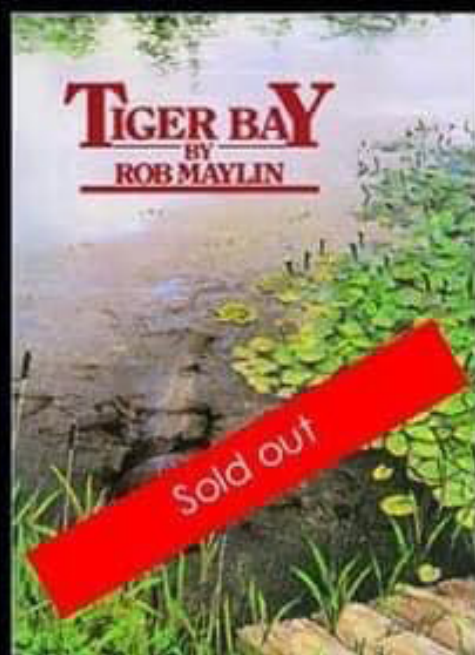
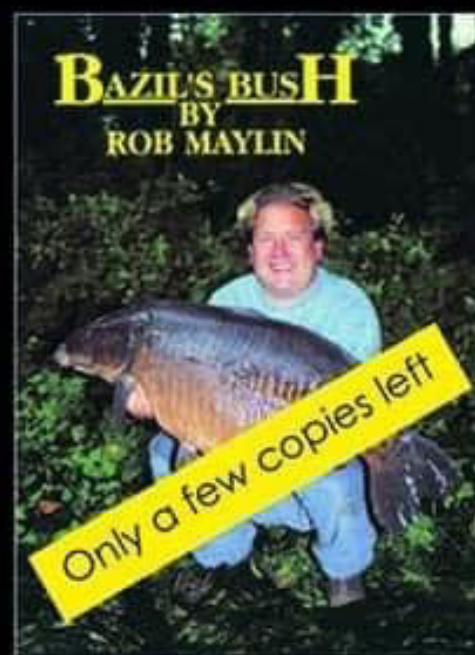
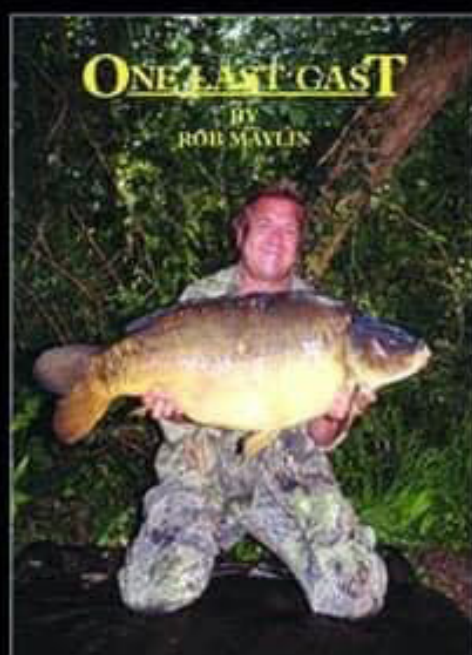
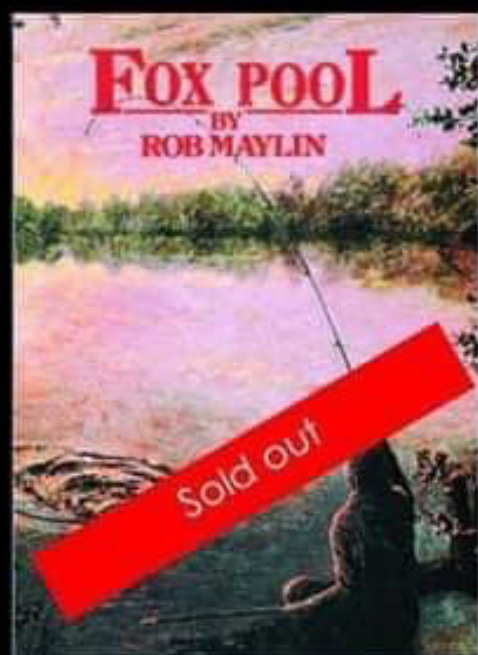
from the Korda underwater films (learnt loads), Trakker Bull-Cam Diaries, Blogs and vlogs and so on. I used to shun such things as just pure media hype and advertising, foolishly, as these are all there to make all of us potentially better anglers, as we all now have the opportunity to fish alongside some of the best anglers around (that adage again about smarter opponents!). Plus all this information is up-to-date, where as the knowledge I'd built up was now falling behind the times!

Needless to say, the next year on the Woolpack's Lake 7 started with renewed vigour (not fishing the winter, starting in late Feb/early March), the first success being a cracking 29lb



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common in April. This was caught using all new methods and using some of the information I had gleaned from my recent research. The rig, a snowman using a bottom bait and pop-up of the same size, sat 'cocked' with the pop-up just lifting itself up enough to be on top of the bottom bait, which in turn sat on top of the hook. The spot was tiny, really small, less than half a groundsheet at best, which at 20 yards (five wraps) is hard to find, but it was the only hard patch I could find on the left hand side of the swim. The rest of the bottom was uniform in depth and makeup - smooth silt, but soft on the drop. I was sure that I was fishing for patrolling rather than feeding fish, meaning that they would be travelling from one part of the lake to another rather than actively feeding. This meant that the bait had to be visible, which I thought would not be the case on the softer areas. The softer area is, I'm sure, covered in a thin layer of very fine silt, which lifts and settles continually with fish and water movement, covering any baits that may be lying on the lake bed (watch Rob Hughes and you will see this). Therefore, unless the fish are actively searching for food, which is usually portrayed on the surface as fizzing or bubbling, any baits will go unnoticed. So, first blood to one of my 'new' thought processes - snowman, hard spot, wraps (thanks, Del).

The next bite was again in April, a common of 26lb, slightly smaller than the last but a very, very long fish that used its length to great effect, giving me an excellent fight in open water. Again employing 'new' tactics and adapting my approach to the circumstances that I was presented with put this fish on the bank. Still being spring, with the banks still relatively quiet, I was targeting the more blatant spots





in the areas where I found fish to be. This is something I knew would change as the season progressed and the fish saw more pressure. I was feeding quite heavily with whole and crushed baits, mixing two different baits together, both 16mm, but a mixture of Essential Baits B5 and Black Snail, a combination that is widely known to be extremely effective. Incidentally, the practice of mixing totally different boilies

is also a new one to me, but as the year progressed (as you will read) definitely helped me put fish on the bank. The thinking behind this method has been well documented, so I'll not regurgitate others' writings, but I will say that we don't think twice about using a combination of particles in a mix!! Why? Well, the same principles apply here.

After a blank night in June, sheltered from a bitterly cold northerly wind (I'm often found on the end of a cold northerly as the year moves on), I noticed one or two shows at the extreme northerly end of the lake, so with a super fast pack down, I pushed the barrow around the lake to where I'd seen the activity. This area of the lake, up until this point, had not seen any angling pressure whatsoever, and as it was for all intents and purposes a bay, I knew that stealth and precision was going to be of paramount importance. Bearing in mind these fish have been fished for since the 1970s and had seen and 'heard' everything, a false move now was another blank for sure!

Ten long minutes passed without so much as a bubble, then to the extreme left of the swim, one came out, up to the wrist, falling back into the water on its side. Decision time... if I were to set up here, which was inside the confines of the bay, I might push the fish out. There was a swim opposite and slightly outside of the bay that I thought would not only give me a better angle on the area I'd just seen the show, but was sufficiently far out of the bay that if spooked, they might still hang around in the open water. Decision made, barrow pushed, nettles trampled, and within no time I was in the new swim. Waiting time again, but this time I was getting the rods ready, whilst watching the water (another tip I picked up from

Uncle Jim – set the barrow up so you can watch the water as you're tackling up. So many of us turn our backs to the water as we sort our gear out, add all the time this is done together and we are missing out on hours of potential spotting time), waiting for another show. As I said, this swim had not been fished at all this year, but I had plumbed it in the winter (good angling) and had a fairly good idea of the topography.

As the majority of the bottom in this area was soft silt and uniform in depth, with the fish obviously feeding and looking for food, I tied up two multi-rigs, one with a 16mm B5 pop-up and the other with a 16mm Black Snail pop-up. I didn't intend on introducing any bait other than the hookbaits, as disturbance had to be kept to a minimum. Besides, they were already feeding!

Sitting next to the rods that were 'armed and dangerous', leaning up against the barrow, a fish pushed itself out of the water, struggling to get much past its peccs, such was the size and shape of this fish. Now, I know the majority of the fish in here are relatively long in shape, with only a few what I call 'wrecking ball' shaped mirrors. Well this was one of the mirrors, 'instantly wide' as it came out of the water, a great sight indeed. With this, a single pop-up was dispatched into the dissipating rings left by said carp. To be honest, I nearly didn't bother with the other rod, as I didn't want to make too much noise (5oz leads – big but very effective), so the other rod was plopped into the margin under an overhang.

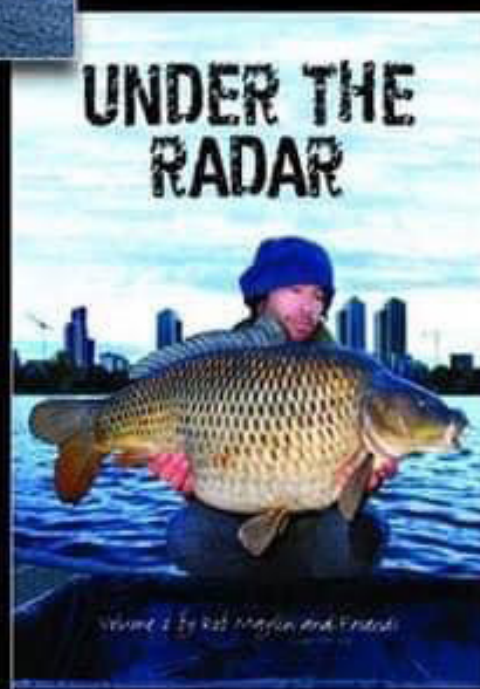
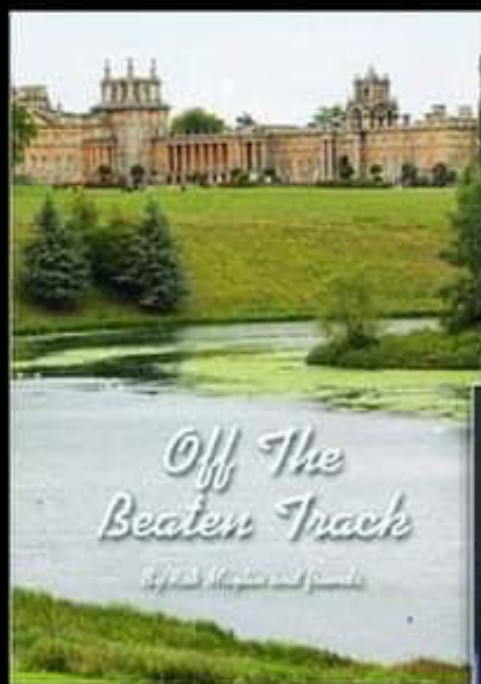
I'm not sure of the time, but within an hour, the rod the I cast to the 'wrecking ball' melted off and was moving away from the dangers of the bay, so my swim choice was correct. If I'd stayed in the original 'bay swim' I'd have been buggered now,



with a fish kiting out of the bay, and with eleven foot depths in the margins, no chance of jumping in! I soon had the battle going my way (braided mainline does that; I'm convinced they fight less on braid, as they cannot get a head of steam up) and soon had a really chunky mirror circling around in the deep, clear water. Netted, secured and photographer found, I was soon holding one of the really old original Dinks that were stocked in the 70s. At 32lb I was made up, and Billy the Dink was in the album! Incidentally, this fish is one of the odd'uns that do not come out very often. I wonder if my earlier thoughts on baits being buried are indeed the case and this was caught as it was actively looking for food in the silt.

# OFF THE BEATEN TRACK SERIES

For lovers of the unknown, unnamed and uncaught



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One thing is for sure, location, rig choice and bait application (single) were all spot-on.

Andy shuts the lakes every year as soon as the fish show signs of spawning, and this was to happen not long after my capture of Billy. It was closed for I think six weeks, but I did regularly visit the lake to walk and watch and try to keep in touch with the fish. Of course they behave totally differently when there is no pressure on the lake. They know that they are not being fished for! That said, I was watching a group of fish (four or five) from up a tree in the car park bay. The fish were just cruising on the surface about 20-25 yards out. I must have watched them for around fifteen minutes, trying to identify them, and one of them was definitely the Long, one of the originals and also one of the most sought after too! Anyway, as I watched, one of the other members walked along the path, stopped, and we chatted. Now, I was about fifteen feet up the tree, so only just above his head, so we were talking, not shouting, but within a minute or so of the conversation starting all of the fish moved away! They did not spook, but simply moved further out into the lake. Now I dare say that in an angling situation that would have cost me a bite. Food for thought indeed!

I was at work when the email was sent out announcing the opening of the lake, post-spawning. Mark Welsh came up on the scaffold to tell me the news, "Friday at noon." 11.30, and I was in the car park, just beating Mark as I turned into Cow Lane (you'll never beat me, mate!!). A lap of the lake, and I'd seen fish, as had Mark, so with that we made our own choices and went our separate ways. Now I knew the fish hadn't seen any pressure for over a month, so I was happy to exploit this

fact and chose to fish on one of the most blatant areas in the lake, a set of two gravel humps that were in the shallowest part of open water and incidentally close to where I'd seen fish. Within the hour, the rod on the right hand hump, baited with whole and crushed B5 and Black Snail was away. It was a repeat capture of the 26-pound common, but proof positive that the blatant area was the right choice, catching whilst their guard was still down. By Saturday morning, with the influx of anglers all keen to be back on the banks, the lake had become a totally different place, and their guard was well and truly up once more. Time to differ my approach again.

With very little being caught, anglers putting in a good deal of bait and the weed on the rise, I knew I had to do something different. If you do the same as everyone else, your results will also be the same. I thought about the particle approach, but the silvers in the lake are abundant, and I feared that the majority of particle feed would only go as food for the roach etc. So, I opted to stick with the boilies, but crushed, chopped and ground them up, so in effect I would still have the qualities and attraction of the B5 and Black Snail, but without a single whole bait in the swim. I was also hoping that the larger and heavier pieces of boilie would fare better against the attentions of the silvers. Well, carp caught - nil! I did, however, manage to catch some of the rare bream population, so I saw this as a victory in itself. The bream are few and far between in the lake and do not get caught regularly, so catching these meant that the baiting had worked, as had the rigs, which were simple bottom bait rigs with odd shaped hookbaits (bottom baits are very underused on this lake!).

As I mentioned, the weed was on the rise a result of Andy

liming the lake two years previously, and by late July there had appeared a huge weed bed that sat like an island in the middle of the lake. With the majority of the lakebed being uniform in depth and make up, this 'island' had to be a carp magnet. Arriving on a Friday lunchtime, I did my usual recce and stopped in a swim that controlled the aforementioned weed bed. I could make out dark shapes moving under the surface, but wanted to know more. I stood on top on a log that was in the swim, which gave me an extra two feet of height (making me average height to most). This extra elevation was like opening the window to the lake, and I could now clearly see the carp patrolling the weed bed even at fifty yards. Watching for about half an hour, maybe more, I noticed that the fish were coming around the nearside of the weed bed from the right but then passing through it where it thinned slightly to the far side before carrying on. This was confirmed to me as one fish, a mirror, followed this route and then, as if to make sure I'd seen it, head and shouldered three times as it passed through the gap! Bingo.

I was lucky enough to meet and work with Kevin Maddocks in the late 80s, and despite varying opinions of the man, he was a great and forward thinking angler, and as I stood watching these fish I remembered something he said years ago: "The carp often do the same things on the bottom as they do on the top." I was soon set up with rods in position. I had a little lead around, not much, and when I could not see fish in the area, I found a very slightly harder spot exactly below where I'd seen the fish pass through the weed bed. One rod was baited with a 16mm Black Snail pop-up on a multi-rig, and a 5oz lead was sent on its way. I very nearly didn't even bother with



any other rods, such was my confidence in this patch, but as we are all conditioned, I popped out one to the far left of the weed-island and one to the right in typical trap-setting style, checking to see if there was any weed growth between the main weed bed and my swim, as I wanted the heavy braided mainline to sit as low as possible.

The baiting strategy was something that I had never used before but felt it appropriate given the situation I was faced with. Once again it was a mixture of 16mm B5 and Black Snail, but whole this time, and I stuck out about two kilos along the nearside of the weed bed, making a concentration of baits around the pass-through. My thinking was that if they do graze on the odd bait as they travel along, they might slow down



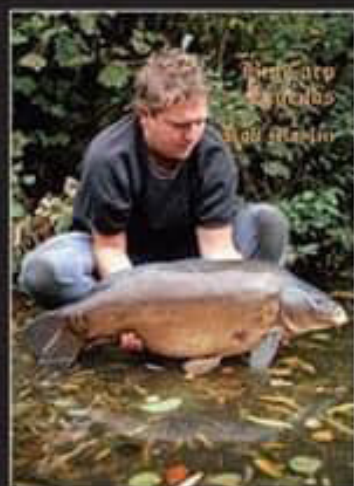
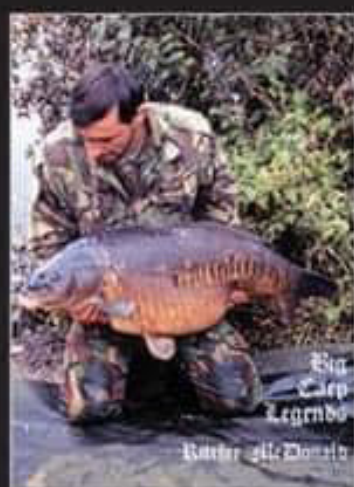
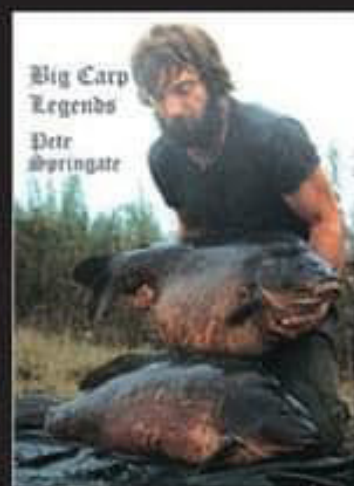
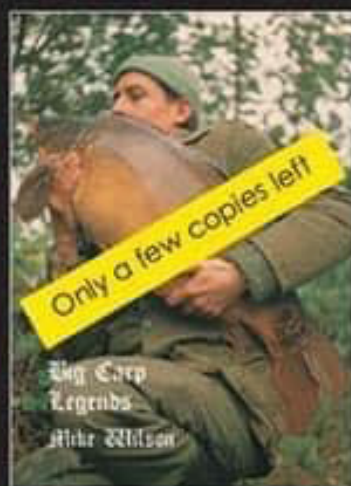
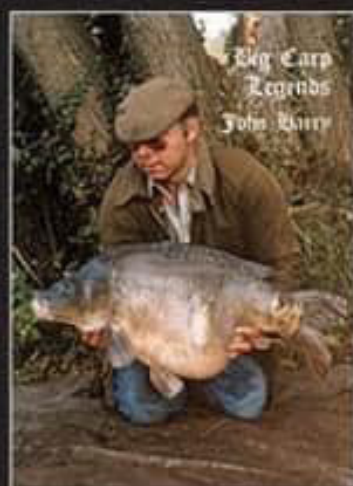
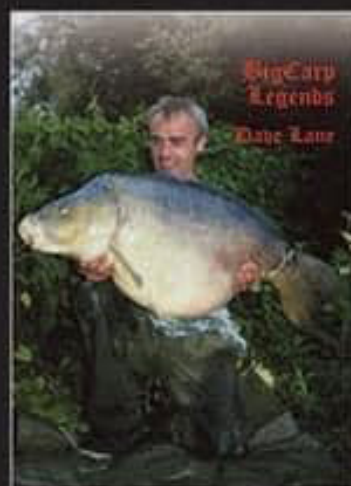
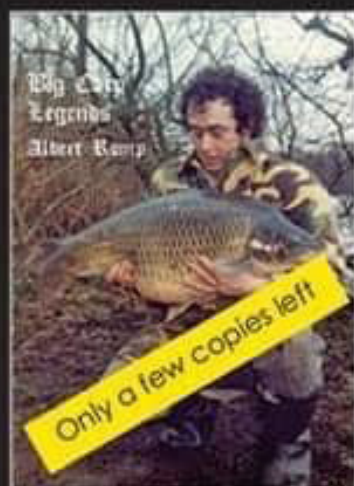
over the more concentrated area. As a little extra, and also something I'd not done before, I tipped off the pop-up with a cut-in-half 10mm pink pop-up (thanks Ali Hamidi, Korda Underwater) in the hope that with all the other baits on the lakebed, this would stand out and be taken.

In true carpy fashion, after a night of heavy and persistent rain, winds were strong enough to make me put the bobbins in front of the alarm, and not seeing a carp fart, the alarm on my phone woke me before first light, but being tired from an interrupted night, I just lay in bed and watched the blanket of night slowly draw back to reveal a bright and calm morning. At 05.30, the rod on the pass-through signaled a take. The clutch was tight to try and induce a fish to kite rather than run through the weed, and that is exactly what happened. The



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## Matt Parry

braid did its job, not allowing the fish to get up a head of steam, and I pulled into the kiting fish. After a short tussle and with the help of a little weed over the fish's head, it was soon in the net. I know it's a cliché, but I had to put the rod down (threw it in the lake), as I was already up to my waist, and then I pulled the weed away from my prize. I was so chuffed that all the things I'd not done before had worked for me. Then the fish began to grow and grow until I realized that it could only be one. I pulled on the mesh to roll the carp onto its side and then saw the row of linear scales, huge and pale, I had the Linear, named because although there are three or four linear mirrors in Lake Seven, there was only one that was so sought after, one of the, if not the biggest fish in the lake



and not a regular visitor to the bank (I think only twice the previous year).

I rang Mark Welsh, who was fishing Lake Eight with his two kids to tell him the news and ask for his help. Coincidentally, Mark had rejoined this year with the Linear as his target! But being a total gent, and in true carp fishing style (rare these days), he congratulated me, dragged his kids around the lake and helped out with everything that goes with recording a new personal best and also my first forty-pound carp!

This may seem a little odd to some, but I very rarely go back into the swim that I have caught from, preferring to find the fish and fish for them rather than camp in a swim and 'bore them out' as some people do. However the next trip, a week later, and with only visible signs of fish again being around the big weed bed (although it was evident that other weed beds were beginning to surface in different parts of the lake), I adopted the same approach and baiting tactics as previously used.

On the first morning, a take on the pass-through resulted in disaster. After a fast take, I felt the resistance and then... nothing... the hook had snapped! Now I've not had a hook snap on me for a very long time, and being a 'glass half full' type of chap, I popped a new hook on and punched the rig back out. At least I'd got everything right. Whilst standing next to the rods that afternoon, the same rod was away again, tip pointing down towards the lake as an angry fish tried to take line. Again the braid did its job, and this time, no hook dramas, and a 32lb common was soon hoisted up for the camera. The consistency had returned.

Jim Shelley wandered into my swim just after I'd returned



the fish (he was doing a tuition on Lake Eight) and proceeded to rip me for using the distance sticks etc, but you know what? I took it all with a pinch of salt (pink Himalayan), as I knew that all the little things that I had learnt, all the changes I had done and all the effort I had put in, had paid off. I also had my five minutes of fame on Jim's Facebook Live as I showed him how to wrap up (although I don't think he took the lesson on board!).

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