

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

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**DARRELL PECK - TOP SPRING TIPS**  
**JOE TURNBALL - THE FUNDAMENTALS**  
**CHARLIE FERRIS - EARLY SEASON ZIGGING**  
**SIMON SCOTT - MAXIMISE STALKING**

**DAVE WAKELIN - BLEASBY**  
**DEREK STRITTON - MEMORIES**  
**MARTIN STONE - ABU 55 AND 57**  
**PAUL WILKINSON - BRACKENS**



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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



A man with curly hair and a beard is holding a large, dark-colored carp. The fish is wet and has a small amount of water in its mouth. The background is a lush green environment, possibly a pond or a stream.

# BC

**BIG CARP: 345 APRIL '25**

## **SPRING INTO ACTION**

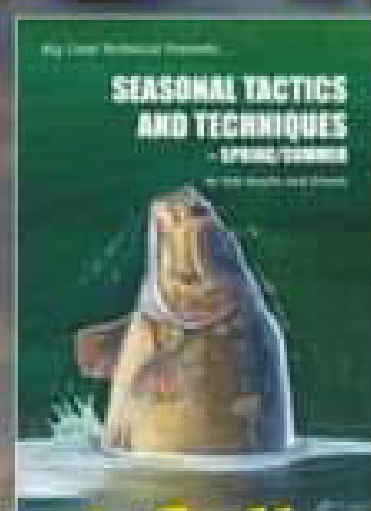
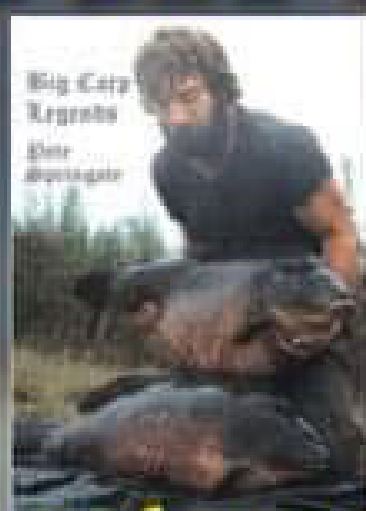
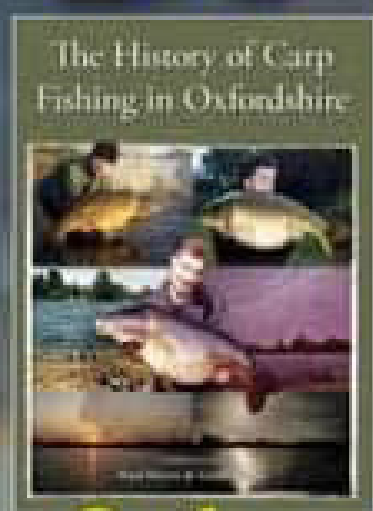
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FAREHAM**

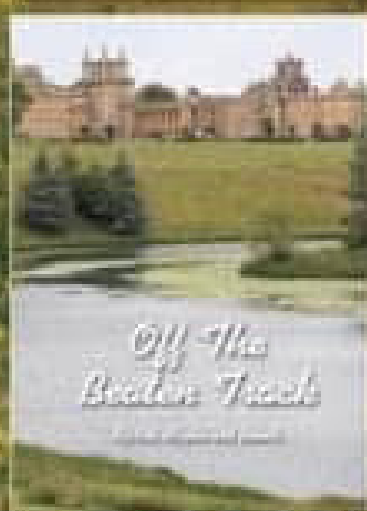
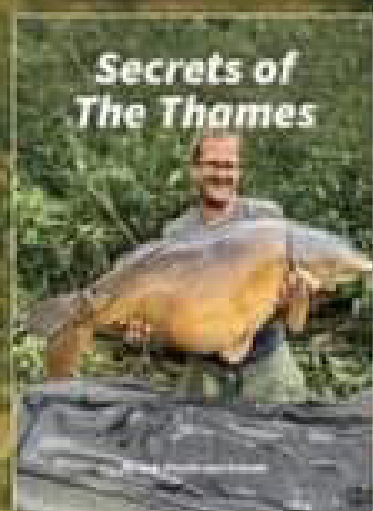
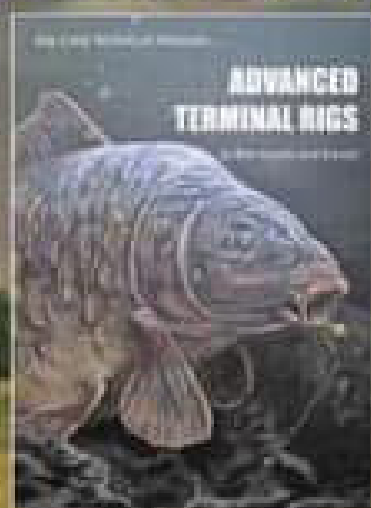
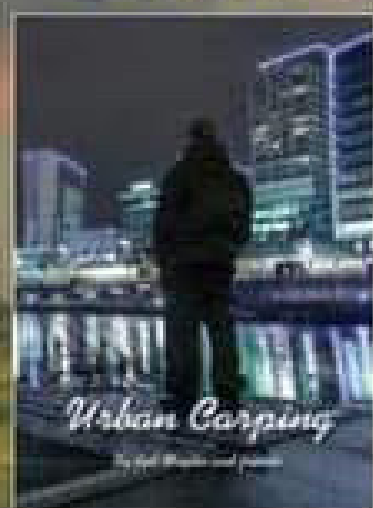
**FERRIS  
TURNBALL**

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# SPRING INTO



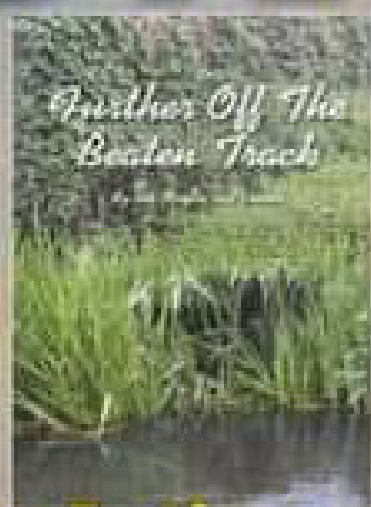
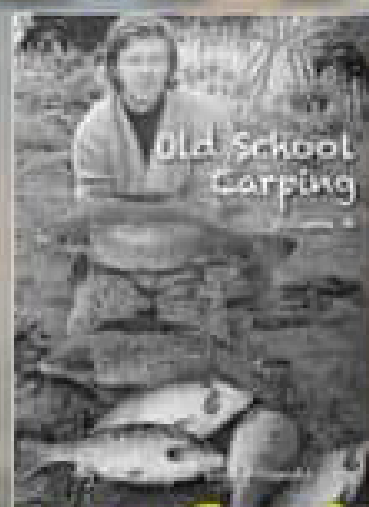
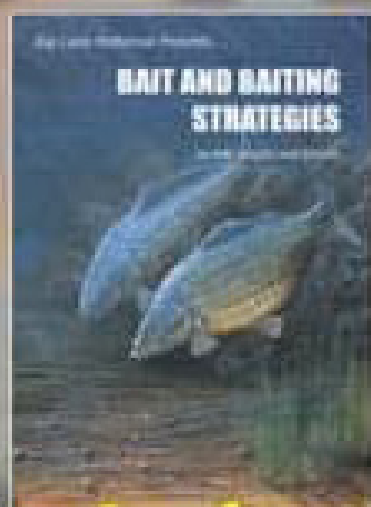
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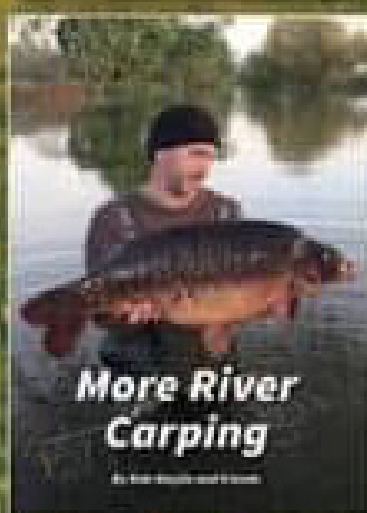
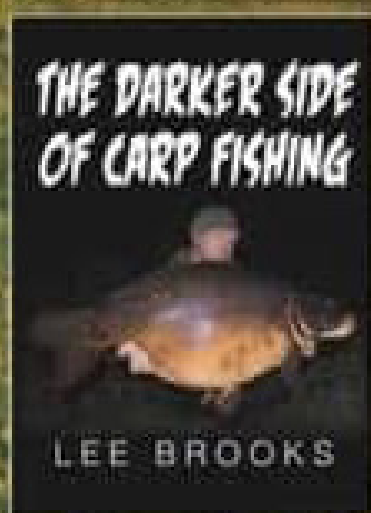
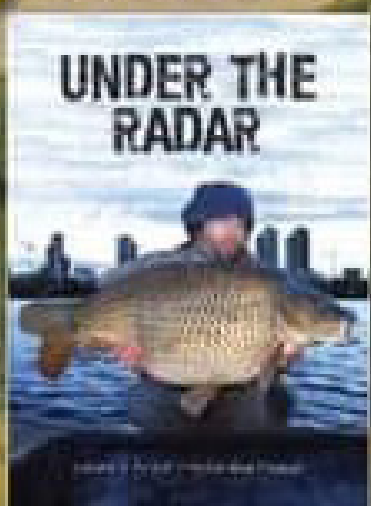
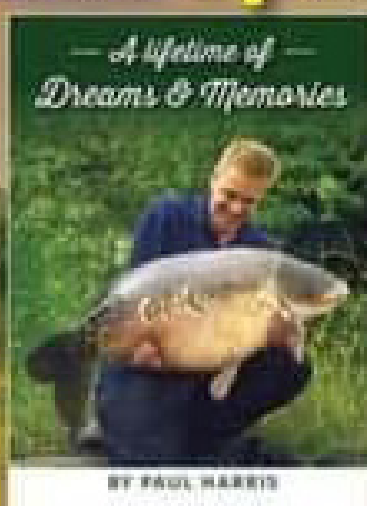
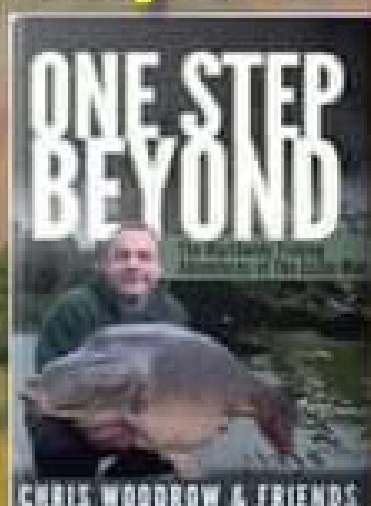
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# TO ACTION



get ready for some Spring Action



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# CONTENTS

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April 2025

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Publications 2025



Front Cover:  
Luke Stevenson cradles  
an early season whacker



Spring has finally sprung, but the carp seem to be a little behind this season. Catch reports are few and far between still, but there have already been some awesome carp banked.

This month brings you some of the biggest names in carp fishing offering you their best advice for spring carping. If it's zigs you feel you need to deploy, check out Charlie Ferris' advice on getting the most from them. Could you be in with a chance of stalking a few extra carp? See what Simon Scott has to say on sneaking them out the edge. There's the awesome Mike Willmott with some crucial baiting information and the ever-consistent Darrell Peck offers up his big tips for maximising your Spring action. Get out there and start catching!!



## 6. SHOCKLEADER

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

## 18. TAC-TEC

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

## 26. CATCH REPORTS

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!!

## 40. CHARLIE FERRIS

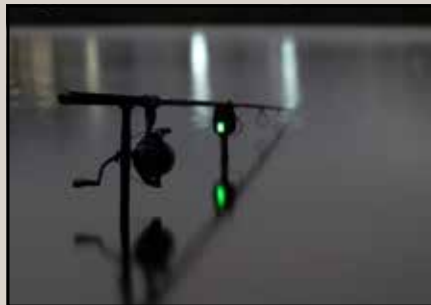
Zigs can be devastating during the cooler months. Check out Charlie's tips.

## 46. CHRIS HOLDER

Follow the story of tracking down a local legend and how Chris put it on the bank

## 66. DARREL PECK

You can't go too far wrong following Darrell's essential spring tips. Could he help kick your season off in style?



## 72. GAZ FAREHAM

Finding carp should become easier now, but they don't always show in the daylight.

## 76. JOE TURNBALL

Doing Joe's 5 fundamentals well will put you in good stead for a great season. Could you improve your weak points?

## 84. LUKE STEVENSON

What's in Luke's early season tackle box and how is he going about approaching those spring carp?

## 94. MIKE WILMOTT

One of the best bait brains in the game gives you his tips to maximise your baiting strategy.

## 100. SIMON SCOTT

Simon's well-known for his stalking prowess. It's an exciting way to fish and can be very rewarding or turn a session a round. Follow Simon's tips for greater success.

## 108. TAYLOR SHANNON

Taylor tells of his carp fishing journey on his water that got under his skin. How did he go about unlocking the secrets within?

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# GREAT AD DEALS



# SHOCKLEADER

## CARP TEAM ENGLAND UNDER 22 ANNOUNCED

Carp Team England

 U22 

World Championship Squad 2025



Alfie Rock • Ed Dyder • Ishaan Patel  
Finnley Newnham • James Floyd  
Max Whitehall • Brinley Ledger • Blaise Price





# RIP JIM WILSON

The moment you've been waiting for.... With the World Championships approaching in the summer we are proud to introduce to you the team members that will be heading out to Italy in July to represent Carp Team England U22. Keep up to date with all the news as we head to our 1st U22 Carp World Championships on our Facebook and Instagram <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=615734427563182025> Squad Alfie Rock, Ed Dyer, Ishaan Patel, Finnley Newnham, James Floyd, Max Whitehall, Brinley Ledger, Blaise Price. We are looking for Sponsors and you can help by donating on our GoFundMe page, or contact us directly for more information regarding team sponsorship. <https://gofund.me/95efbf7d> Angling Trust Competitions



Mark Walsingham said, "I'm shocked to hear that Jim Wilson has died... We met through mutual friend John Patterson on the banks of Ashmead in time when we ran the wetland as a syndicate. John and Jim were like brothers and I can't believe both of them have now gone.

Jim was just a lovely man; a great angler of course but more importantly he was one of life's good guys and time in his company always left me smiling.

This is how I always think of Jim, cradling the Caravan Park linear (2016 I think?) and grinning from ear to ear."

RIP Jim.



# **FESTIVAL OF CARP 2025 SATURDAY 12TH JULY**

**HORSESHOE LAKE, LECHLADE, GL7 3QQ**

Save the date for this years '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!

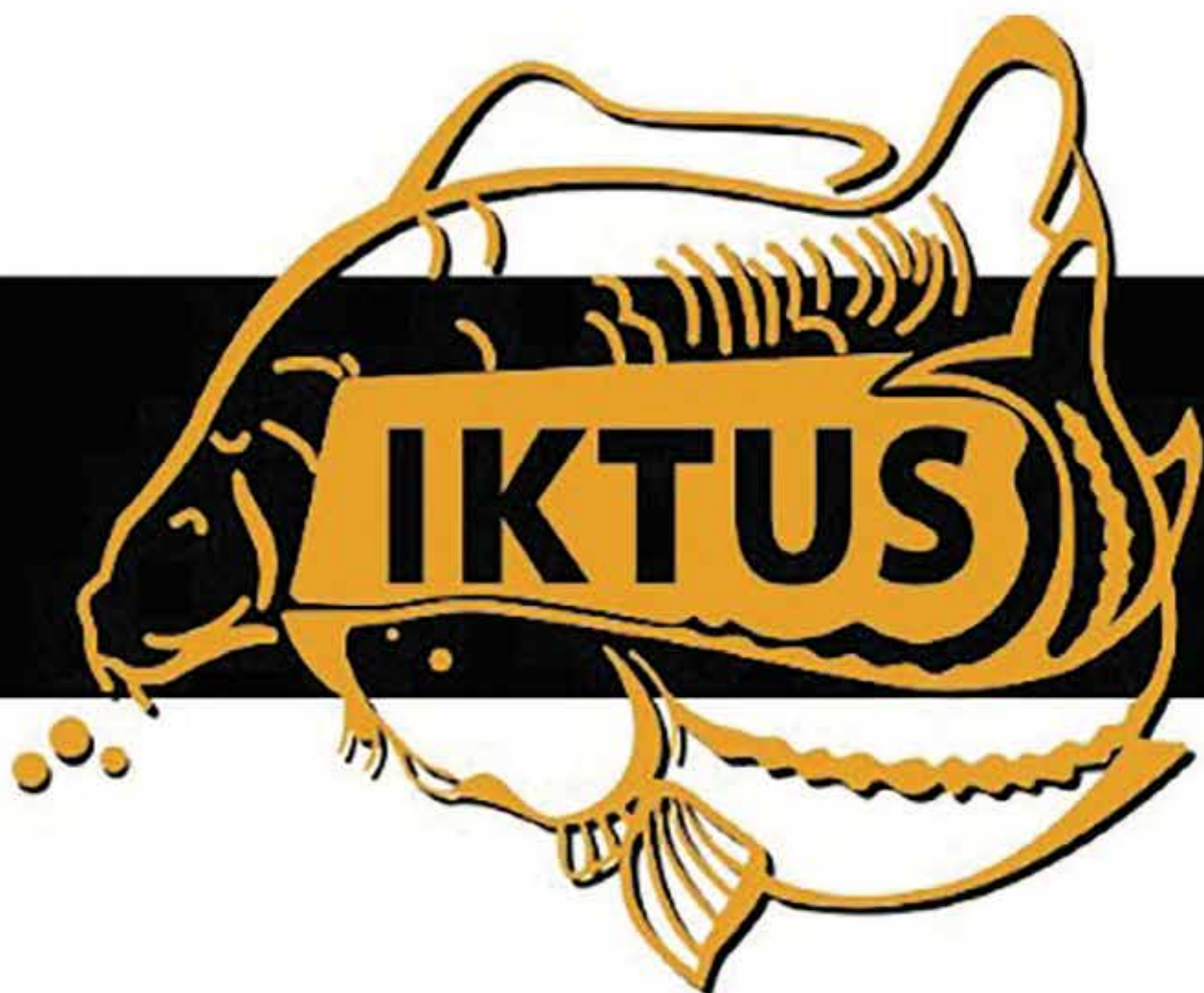
This year there will be:

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



# REGISTRATION IS OPEN FOR 2026 WORLD CARP CLASSIC ORELLANA, SPAIN



<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/worldcarpclassic/1620911/r/wcc26-28th-edition> with stunning bays and unique underwater features that provide the perfect challenge for elite anglers. The entire lake will be open for competition for the first time ever – a monumental moment in the history of the sport! Teeming with huge carp, ensuring intense action and the potential for record-breaking catches.



# ANGLING DIRECT ADD THEIR SUPPORT TO THE ANGLING TRUST'S WATER QUALITY



We're proud to announce that leading fishing tackle retailer Angling Direct will become a sponsor and provide comprehensive support for the Angling Trust's "Anglers Against Pollution" campaign. This partnership reflects Angling Direct's commitment to help the

angling community protect the UK's waterways for the future of angling and the benefit of the whole community who enjoy being by the waterside. Angling Direct will provide essential contributions and logistical support to the Angling Trust's rapidly expanding Water



Quality Monitoring Network (WQMN). This innovative citizen science project empowers anglers to monitor and report on water quality across England and Wales, gathering critical data to address the growing crisis of pollution.

Since its launch in May 2022, the WQMN has enrolled anglers

from 280 angling clubs who have conducted over 8,500 water quality tests on over 220 rivers across England and Wales, revealing the impact of pollution on freshwater ecosystems.

Stuart Singleton-White, Angling Trust Head of Campaigns, said: "The importance of the Water Quality Monitoring Network cannot be overstated, and we are delighted this ground-breaking angler-led citizen science initiative now has the support of Angling Direct.

"With only 14% of UK water bodies in good ecological condition, pollution is at a crisis point. In 2023 alone, there were over half a million recorded

sewage spills. Extremely high levels of phosphates and nitrates from sewage are fuelling algal blooms which cause oxygen levels to drop, damaging fish stocks and aquatic life. These conditions also allow for various e-coli strains to thrive, posing a health risk to all waterway users including anglers."

Steven Crowe, CEO of Angling Direct said: "Here at Angling Direct, we believe angling and clean water go hand in hand so are aiming to build a legacy of environmental responsibility.

In addition to supporting the Anglers Against Pollution campaign, we're going to continue our commitment to other vital environmental and community programmes. This includes ongoing support for the Angling Trust's Get Fishing campaign, which introduces newcomers to the joys of angling, and we have expanded our partnership with the Anglers National Line Recycling Scheme."





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# CARP SOCIETY NEWS



#CSPTA



#CSPTA



WIN A  
PLATINUM TICKET

## CARP ANGLER OF THE YEAR 2025

For your chance to win, post your captures from any Carp Society water between the 1st APRIL 2025 to 31st March 2026

To enter simply use: **#CSPTA** on posts or email [info@thecarpsociety.com](mailto:info@thecarpsociety.com)

Send as many Carp Society water caught fish for your chance to win a **PLATINUM TICKET** which includes a 12 month Farriers permit, 12 month Horseshoe permit, Ashmead Permit (weekday or weekend) and an exclusive midweek booking on Little Farriers.

See website for t&c's and full prize details





**HORSESHOE LAKE**  
**MIDWEEK FISHING TICKET SPECIAL**  
 ENJOY 4 NIGHTS FOR THE PRICE OF 3  
 MONDAY TO THURSDAY\*  
 THAT'S **96 HOURS** FOR JUST **£90**

Acquired by the Carp specimen tench weighing up to 12lb, as well as rudd, perch, is a picturesque 62-acre lake and pike.

situated in the Cotswolds. The beauty of Horseshoe Lake and its inhabitants are legendary, the lake is home to a wide variety of fish, with an estimated 100 carp over 30lb, with the largest exceeding 40lb! The average weight of carp is around 25lb. Additionally, you can find

The Horseshoe Lake is accessible to Carp Society members to enjoy either on a fishing ticket (pay-as you-go basis) or as a yearly weekday only permit for only £500 or a full permit for £650. Open to new and existing Carp Society members.



# PURE FISHING'S NEW CORPORATE LOCATION



The World's largest fishing tackle company has unveiled its brand-new showroom and corporate location at its headquarters in Charleston, South Carolina.

The group's Chief Brand and Product Manager, Jon Schlosser, said that the headquarters represented a significant investment and is part of why Pure Fishing made the decision not to attend ICAST this year.

A day after Angling International reported that Pure Fishing would not be attending this year's ICAST – the world's largest fishing tackle trade show – the group's Chief Brand and Product Manager, Jon Schlosser, said that the headquarters represented a significant investment and is part of why Pure Fishing made the decision not to attend ICAST this year.

# FISHERIES UPDATE: YATELEY SOUTH COMPLEX & DAIRY POND, MILL LANE.



Yateley South Complex: these have been removed, please  
Tree Lake, Pumphouse Lake be aware that there are still a  
and Horseshoe Lake are now number of smaller branches and  
open again to fishing. Aerators twigs in there.  
have been fitted within these We are unsure of the stock at  
three lakes lakes, which we the present time, but know that  
hope will ensure that dissolved some Tench are in the pond, so  
oxygen levels are maintained at your feedback would be both  
a healthy level, with all of the welcome and helpful.  
associated benefits that brings Please note:  
to the fish. Anyone found tampering with  
The pond was previously the aerator system in any way  
surrounded by, and had a lot of whatsoever will have their  
trees growing in it, whilst all of permit removed immediately.



# CARPFISHING TAC

## HS DESIGNS



The new hoodie Hardheaded features a special design where the lead has been emphasized to be the head of the angler using a skull, moreover our design team has effected a restyling of the Carpfishing Mania hoodie selecting an attractive green color fabric and using only the outlines of the big carp on the chest obtaining a softer effect but combined with further well evident details. large range of colours.

- [www.hotspotdesign.com](http://www.hotspotdesign.com)

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# **HELINOX ISSUES INVITATION TO ENJOY A NEW LEVEL OF SEATED COMFORT IN THE CHAIR ONE**



Helinox invented ultra-lightweight, packable camping furniture when it launched the original Chair One in 2012. Now the brand is set to re-energise the category in 2025, with today's launch of the [Chair One \(re\)](#) and [Chair One Highback \(re\)](#). Introducing new innovations and design techniques, the two chairs are spearheading Helinox's latest collection of products for creating welcoming spaces outdoors, across all cultures and terrains.

The new Helinox Chair One (re) introduces 'ReTension Design', adding a secondary tension line that better distributes weight around the frame to significantly improve comfort. The breathable seat is made out of durable bluesign® approved and recycled 600D polyester, with mesh panels for ventilation. Redesigned nylon resin hubs combine with the frame for greater stability. Helinox founder Jake Lah tapped into his vast experience in tent design to develop the new tension line and make this step change in lightweight camping chair comfort.







The chair's frame uses proprietary DAC aluminium technology, but with its latest 're-form' manufacturing process that reduces waste by 30% and sets a new standard for sustainable craftsmanship. It sits 30% higher off the ground, and is wider, more upright and more stable than the classic Chair One. These changes further enhance comfort and useability, without a noticeable increase in weight or bulk.

Other improvements include an integrated mesh side pocket and a bag that's quicker and easier to access and carry, with a full double zip, plus daisy chain and webbing handle. In use, the Helinox Chair One (re) has a load capacity of 145kg. When packed away in its bag, it weighs just 1kg and measures 39cm x 12cm x 13.5cm. The chair will retail at £109.95.

Helinox is also introducing the Chair One Highback (re), a high-back option that provides additional shoulder and upper back support. Weighing 1.2kg when packed into a bag measuring 46cm x 14.5cm x 11.5cm, it retails at £139.95.

The Helinox Chair One (re) is set to once again re-define the standard for comfort and performance in lightweight camping chairs. The Chair One (re) and Chair One Highback (re) is available now at [www.helinox.co.uk/collections/chair-one-re](http://www.helinox.co.uk/collections/chair-one-re) and from selected specialist outdoor retailers.





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# MAN OF STEELE

Ken Steele with the Pretty Sutton at 56lb , get in, what a first 50lb carp to have.



# NEW PB!!

A new PB for Chris Finney!, this 42lb unit!





# JIM'S GIANTS



Our man Jim Shelley's back at it again with two stunning mirrors at 43lbs and 48lbs





## CATCH REPORTS

### ALAMO SHOOT OUT

Mike Barton fishing Alamo gets to meet 46lb 10oz of Orchid lump called Big El



### GET IT OOOOON!!



Come onnnnnnnnn the Don is on New lake record at the blue lagoon first 40 at 40lb8oz a fish called Measles



# MISSING LINGS



Scott Stokes with an unreal fish known as Patches Mate from an undisclosed venue in Lincolnshire!

# FLASH ASH



Ash Turner was buzzing with this one, first carp of 2025 and a new Uk PB at 44.4



# STONKER FOR STOKER



Eddy Stoker  
58lb+ nuff said!

# 14 TO 40



Michael Bowman  
landed 14 fish including  
One Scale at 40lb over  
the space of a few trips.





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# KINGFISHER KRACKER

On a recent trip to Kingfisher lake on the Bluebell complex, Shane Hardy landed this awesome 43lber.



# NORFOLKING WAY

A carp of 48.6 lbs is an extremely big one for Norfolk! and Lee Griffin was the captor



# CAPTAIN NEMO



Adam fancied a water shot of Nemo on Thursday as it was a new pb at 48lb

# IT'S ALL WHITE



Stephen Whites last true winter carp before meteorological spring starts, a mega Grenville's zip linear at 40lb 1 oz



# 1 BITE WONDER



First bite of the year, and it's a new Club Lake record for Terry Chalke at 41LB.





# MARSH FANCIES A ZIGGY

This very impressive 42.14 common named .Marsh. after the late owner Marsh Pratley was caught on a zig this week by @archiecarpangling.



# SUPER SIMMO LIN



Rob Down-Dyke with a new PB of 47.02 The Simmo Lin from Roach Pit

Plummeting temperatures and a biting wind didn't deter Tom Maker from landing this beast recently.

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# CHRIST ALMIGHTY



These two incredible carp were caught from a massive 300-acre pit that holds only a handful of fish. Landed by Christian Gwinn during a strong southerly wind—proof that nothing is impossible when you put your heart into it.





# SMILES FOR MYLES



Miles Gibson landed this lovely 41.10 Dinton mirror from the end of February to start the year off. Typical late winter tactics. Black foam fished a few ft under the surface.

Mark Stubbles fished our Essex Manor syndicate today taking this 47lb 14oz mirror known as the Sub

# SUB FOR STUBBLES







**CHARLIE FERRIS**



# HUNTING DEPTH

‘Monitoring the weather, I saw an opportunity to take a few days annual leave to capitalise on the conditions which coincided with the full moon. Even though temperatures were set to plummet below zero, I knew an area they’d likely be held in and felt there would be a chance if I could get the depths write on the zigs. The lake hadn’t done a bite in six weeks, but this didn’t dishearten me. As far as I was concerned, they were all due and past winters have shown how effective zigs can be. I managed to get into the zone I wanted, fanning 3 zigs



in the area, spending the first 24 hours adjusting the depths until I got it right. After the first bite, all three rods were then fished at this depth and I knew it was game on. Over the next 36 hours, I managed 5 fish to 35lb – A perfect way to start the year’.

Charlie used size 8 Kamakura Wide Gapes, 11lb Zig Line and Hybrid Lead Clips with 4oz Heli Leads meaning instant contact and helping hook the fish. 15lb Tapered LongChuck in conjunction with Kaizen Greens in 12.6 foot the setup of choice.















"Walking into what seemed to be another small tackle shop, I was surprised to find it rammed to the roof with everything and anything I could ask for. Speaking to Bob the owner, I found that he had started as a match angler but recently moved over to carp - time permitting. He had extensive knowledge and loved to help anglers get the best of their time on the bank. Pineapple Bob was given his name at Hilton Valley Carp fishery for his food choices and not his bait.. haha

A busy Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/anglingessentials> and 2 websites [www.pineapplebobstackle.co.uk](http://www.pineapplebobstackle.co.uk) and [www.vipertackle.co.uk](http://www.vipertackle.co.uk) with many top brand baits filling the shelves, there are also house boilies and pellet mixes to save the pocket and a range of rods spanning budget to expert. Amazed to find that there are baitboats and sleep systems, chairs and bivies in stock too. Not bad for a small shop...not bad at all"



**Angling Essentials, 14 Church St, Witham CM8 2JL**  
**01376 512255**







**CHRIS HOLDER**



# THE BARNET THIRTY

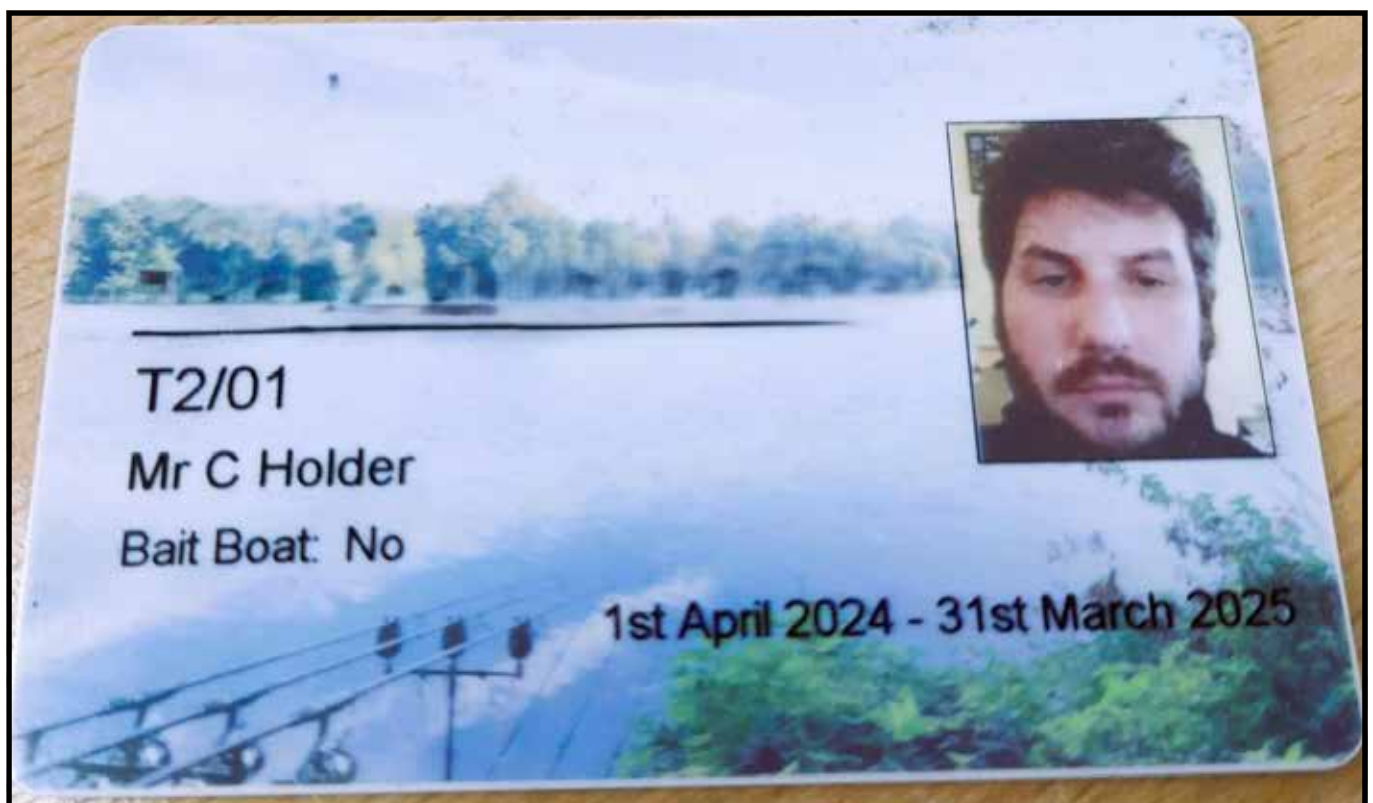
This story starts in the spring of 2020 when my name went down on the waiting list for a syndicate located in Berkshire. With an average waiting time to get on of four to five years my initial reason for joining was a UK thirty. The lake had a good head of fish on or above the magic three zero mark so on the list I went. This may seem a small target considering the size of carp that anglers regularly pit their wits against in many waters these days, but my PB sat at 21lb 5oz and I'm not ashamed to admit it, I wanted



a thirty. Well, plenty of Day ticket waters hold 30lb plus fish, go there I hear you cry. Your right and I did, with no success I might add. But truth be told I think what I really wanted is what syndicate fishing offers, campaign planning, dreams of target fish and how and when you will catch them and most of all the illusion this syndicate seemed to offer, one which is rare on day and indeed some syndicate tickets these days, a water that would feel like it's mine and mine alone.

A 29-acre gravel pit with mature tree lined banks, bays and snags, a 40-angler syndicate with 20 swims available and You would be lucky if there were any more than 4 anglers on at any one time (even at the weekends!!!!!!) mine alone it would surely feel.

At the time of putting my name down I remember thinking four to five years was an age away and would never come around, but time has way of gliding by unnoticed and after four short years of



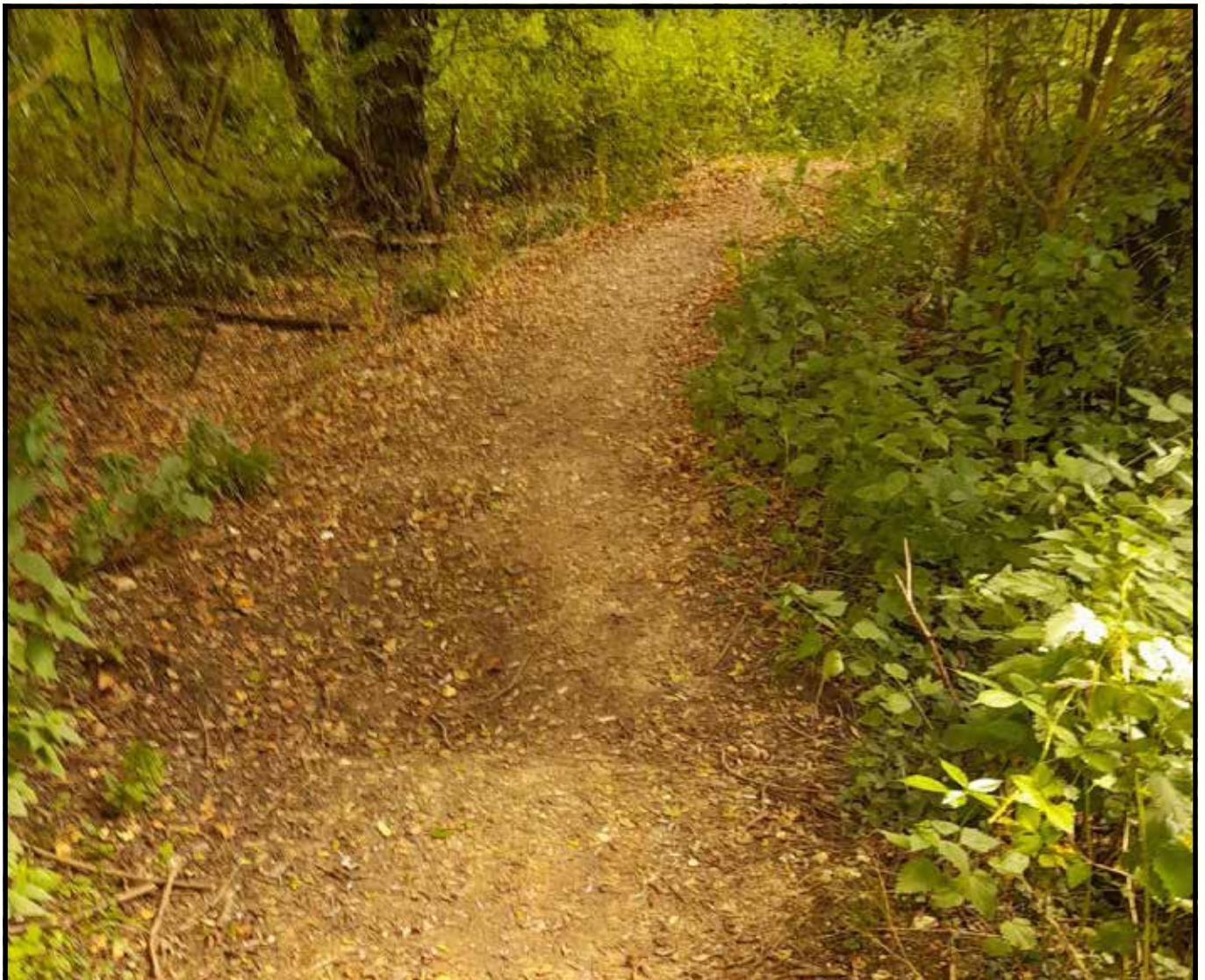


waiting, 2024 was to be the year. Magic!!

My good fortune was relayed to me via email on March the 1st and I paid up my subscription fee in double quick time. This was to be my first syndicate ticket and I was itching to get started.

Although I was notified in March the ticket didn't start until the 1st of April, that

month wait would feel longer than the 4 years I waited to get on. I could get up to the lake for a butchers in this time however. Most of the lake is gated and padlocked but a public foot path runs up a good portion of what I call the riverside bank (a tributary of the Avon runs alongside this bank, hence the name, you will hear more about the issue





this little river cause's later) and a few swims are actually accessible from this path. From one of these swims, 1st point, (every lake has a point swim, right? Its fishing law) you could see one half of the entire lake. The point swim looks out on a bank known as bottom lane where a good majority of the swims are, and two of the most popular. The beach and the lazy. Another swim accessible from the public path is the swim officially known as 2nd point, but known by the members as Shitty Bay, affectionately I might add. This is a cracker of a swim and on my regular visits in March I would often sit in there plotting and dreaming of the long summer days and warm nights ahead of me.

Finally, after many trips walking the riverside bank the 1st of April arrived. The 1st was a Monday, and I had the week booked off work with the Wednesday and Thursday

penciled in for my debut trip. The weather was looking spot on, with low pressure, rain and a warm south westerly winds forecast. It hacked it down pretty much non-stop leading up to the session so when I turned up the place was a quagmire, but this would not dampen my spirits. I parked the car up behind The Lazy and got out for a mooch along the bottom lane bank.

To the right of Lazy there are three swims located in an area that's known as the copse, a copse of trees on a spit. This spit crates a smashing back bay. The three swims are situated on the spit, two at the entrance of the back bay and one fishing directly into the bay. These swims are only accessible via one, (let's call it a path), but essentially a dirt track, this track and the swim directly in the bay on the right were totally under water. I wasn't getting in there and with more heavy rain forecast



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Oak 19lb



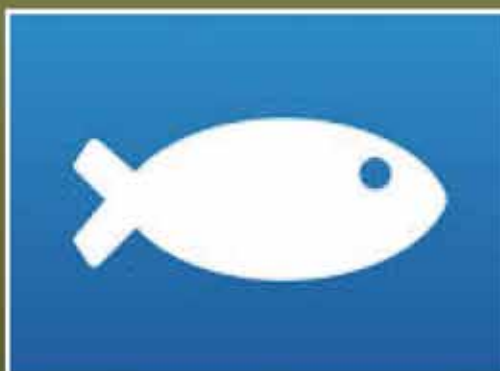
Oak 24lb 4oz



Oak 30 lbs 4oz ghostie



Another catch from weekend this one swim 12 on Oak lake



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Jensen's Sister landed at 29  
lbs 4 oz



Oak chunky common

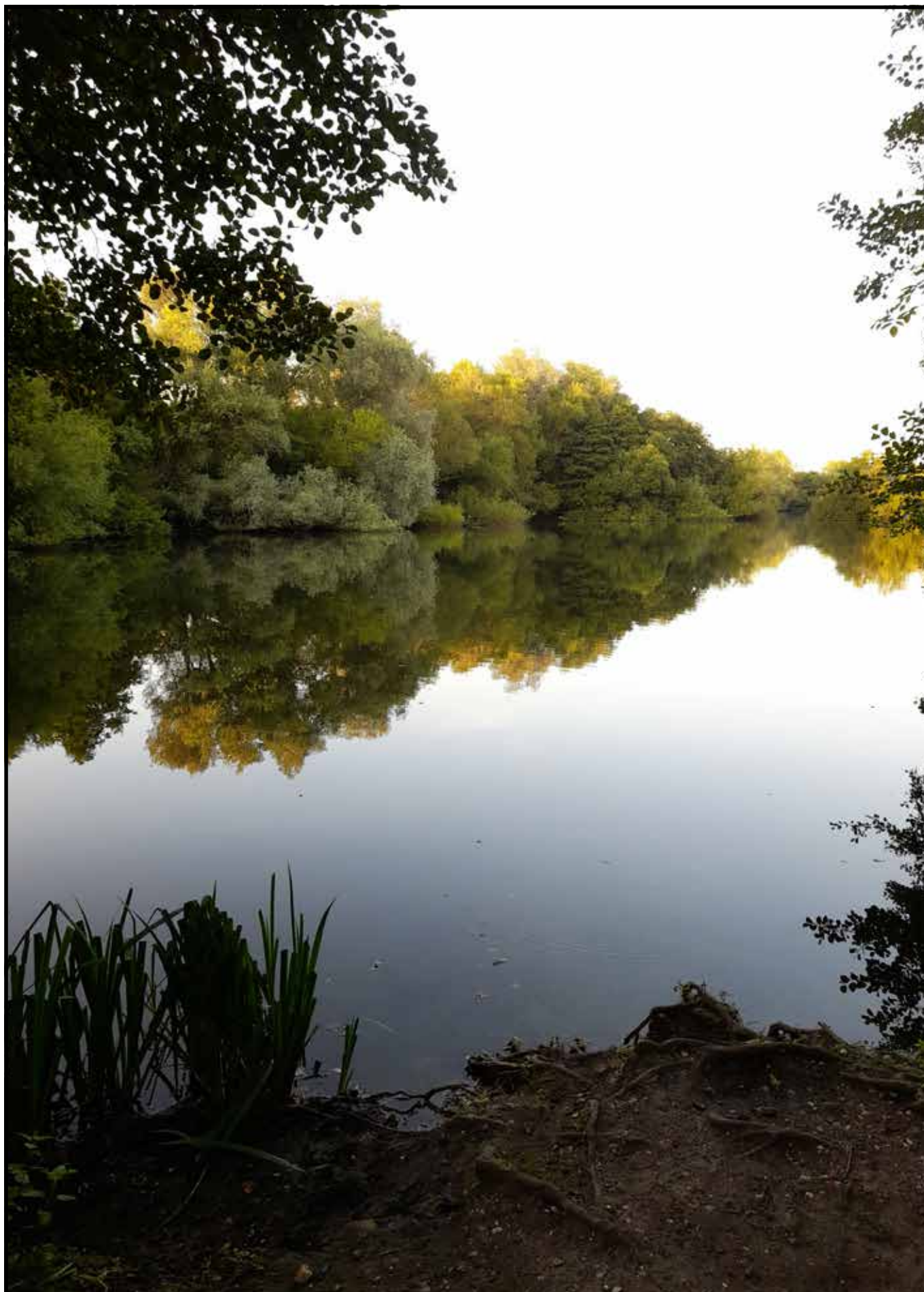


Oak cracking common



The saddle back at 29 lbs 8 oz







for that night was worried I wouldn't get back out even if I did. (believe it or not a gezzar fished the copse that night, how I don't know, but fair play, he's a braver man than me). I did want to know if there were fish in this area though and further down the bank is the END swim, this looks lengths ways up the bay giving you a decent view and fishing access to some lovely looking snags on the right-hand margin. I hung around for a while with my eyes peeled but saw nothing.

I strolled back down bottom lane bank past the Lazy and into a swim known as the beach, I didn't know it at the time but the beach is by far the most popular swim on the lake. It's a double swim on relatively flat ground, slap bang in the middle of the lake and you could park your car close, add to this a great view and access to the main body of water and you can see why

it was so popular. After about 10 minutes of watching the water, BOSH! a fish head and shouldered long at about 200 yards, 5 minutes later another at the same kind of range. Pukka, something to go on. Now I wasn't going to reach them from the beach and new that 1st point would get me closer, not on top of them but the closest I was going to get. 1ST point is on the riverside bank (uh-oh!! That little river), so like an excited kid before Christmas I jumped in the Honda Jazz and drove the short distance to the riverside bank parking area. I hoped out the car and I could instantly here what I can only imagine Victoria falls sounds like in the rainy season, yep you guessed it, water was cascading into the lake as the little river running alongside had burst its banks. The path was unpassable, gutted. I got back in the car slightly disappointed and weighed



up my options. All the swims on the riverside bank were unreachable and The Copse was a no go, so I decided on The Beach.

As described The Beach has a great view of the main body of the lake and enough room to get all my gear in, so I wasted no time in getting the bivvy up. I can hear your cries of disgust, bivvy up before rods out, an affront to the carping Gods themselves. But before you judge me, know the floor was an absolute bog, and I wanted a base camp with ground sheet sorted to stash all the gear and keep it dry. In all seriousness though it is important to remember, when you know you're in for a tough session weather wise comfort is key, it ensures you want to be and stay there meaning you will fish to your best ability. Everything feels ten times harder in the rain and mud, so wet dirty clothes, sleeping bags and beds would not have

kept me a happy camper.

Base camp established I went about the task of leading up, this is one of my favorite activities when carp fishing as I start to feel I'm putting some real work in and building up my knowledge. My aim was fish as long as I could towards where I'd seen the showing fish, I would still be a long way off but as close as I could get.

The lake bed out in front of the beach is like an egg box made up of gravel spots in amongst silt gullies. The gullies sit in around 6ft of water with the gravel spots rising up to 4ft. It was one of these gravel spots at 18 wraps I decided on for two of my rods, I put a 3rd out down to the right side of the swim in the silt at 12 wraps for no reason other than instinct. All three rods were on Ronnie rigs with bright yellow mainline pineapple pop ups. Once the hard work was done, I scattered a few



free offerings around the area (these consisted of my homemade bollies, chili con-carnage, Ruby Fish Murry's and Coconut Corn) and put the kettle on.

They rest of the day past without comment. Intermittent rain ensured the mud stayed muddy, but stashed in my Bivvy, coffees partnered with a Stephen King novel ensued the time past pleasantly. Although my eyes were not constantly on

the water, my ears were and going into dusk another fished showed slightly closer in. So, my confidence going into the night wasn't quite shouting loudly, but a quiet whisper ready to fuel my dreams.

At 4:00am those dreams were shattered by one of my Delkims on a one tone mission, before I knew where I was, I was standing bent into a carp wondering how I got there. The sleep fog soon cleared though and not long





after I had my 1st carp from the lake safely in the folds of my landing net. It was a mint scaly stocky of around 14lb, Pukka!!!!

As it had rained all night and the mud had not only stayed muddy but gotten muddier, this coupled with daylight still a couple of hours off I decided to unhook her in the net and let her go. The 1st one is always the hardest, so I was

absolutely buzzing with that fish. Ten minutes later the rod was wrapped, back on the spot with a few more freebies scattered around it, and I was back in the bag.

I drifted back into that semi sleep I often fall into while night fishing, lucid fishing dreams filling my head, you know when you've gone but not quite gone. I woke from this strange world at first





# 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.

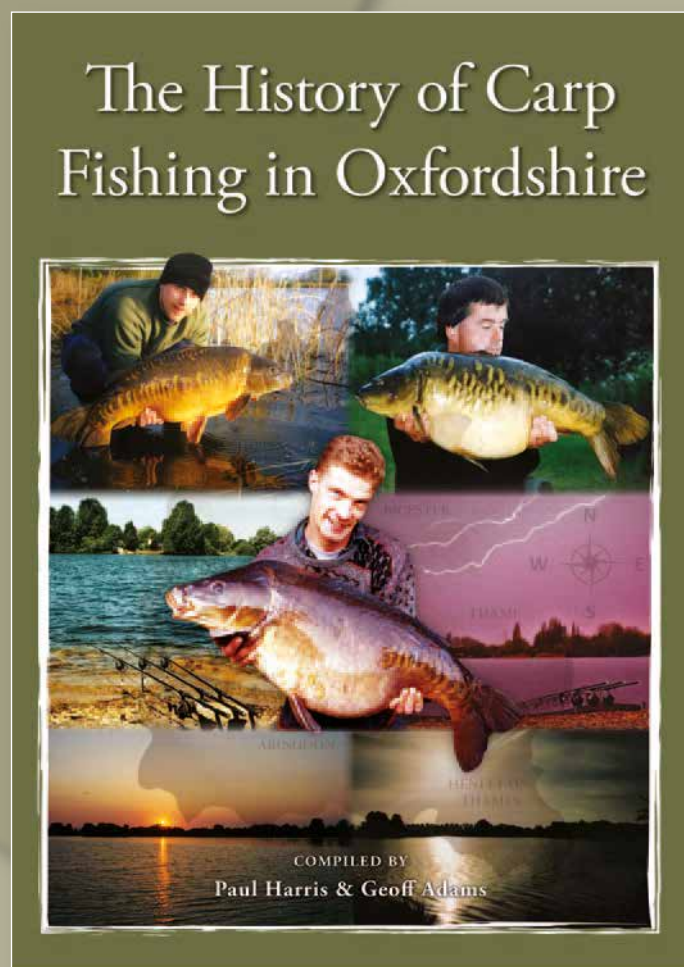
Nick Stansfield is a brilliant young Oxford carper who doesn't shout about his catches. We have two incredible chapters from him from two of the county's most iconic lakes, The Leisure Park and The Big S! Josh Chatfield has written a fantastic chapter which really gives you an insight into how fishing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



light, this time to the more disappointing sound of my phone alarm. With my bladder emptied and coffee made the Delkim suddenly raised all hell again informing me the same rod was racing off. I soon had another scaley stocky in the net, this one I photographed, and it weighed in at 13lb 6 ounces.

I went on to have another three bites that morning, losing one due to a hook pull and landing two. All the fish caught were new stockies of a similar size.

The rest of day, night and following morning trundled by without any more action. Before I knew it, I was getting covered in mud packing away my gear. Was I happy? You bet I was, three landed fish on my first trip, it was safe to say I was over the moon.

My next trip was a blank and brought me back down to earth with a bump. I thought I was cock on with location fishing

a lovely little swim on what's known as the Woolwich bank to an island margin. I had seen bubblers on the spots but had no luck. That's carp fishing though, and I didn't know it at the time, but my next trip was going to be very special indeed.

That trip was to begin on Friday the 3rd of May. I work half days on a Friday as was able to get to the lake at 3:00pm, my last visit had been the 12th of April so it had been a few weeks since I had wet a line. I hadn't been just sitting around kicking my heels though, I had been up the lake on regular pre-baiting trips with the aim of establishing some likely looking areas, and as the lake is rarely busy I was confident I would be able to fish the pre-baited swims.

I was still going to walk the lake though looking for fish and my first stop on arrival was the Beach. My mate was fishing the swim and had had



a couple of fish that morning. While chatting It was clear fish were still in the area, they were cursing and popping there heads out regularly. The fish were also showing in front of the Lazy, a swim perhaps 50 yards down the bank. It was looking good in this area, but it wasn't one of the swims I had pre-baited, and I wanted to check them out before settling on my choice of swim, I sneakily dropped my bucket in the Lazy though just in case. I made my way round to the first of my pre-baited spots, Shitty Bay, only to discover it was occupied with another angler, after chatting to him he informed me that all three swims on the Woolwich bank were taken. Wooly one and three were the another of my pre-baited spots (this was the busiest I had seen the lake,





best laid plans of mice and men and all that) so that was that. To be honest I wasn't disappointed, the fish were in front of the Lazy and pre-bait or no pre-bait I'm 100% always setting up where I've seen them.

The decision being made I was eager to get back to the Lazy and set up, so I made my good byes to the angler in shitty and got round there a bit lively. I wasted no time in getting the leading rod out to find some spots, and quickly found a gravel patch fit for two rods out in front of me at 11.5 wraps, smashing!! Two rods were quickly knocked up with the same spring tactics as before, mainline bright yellow pineapple pop up's soaked in pineapple GOO attached to Ronnie's, again a scattering of homemaker's accompanied the rigs and the traps were set. I also put out a third rod sneakily tucked away down to the right of the

swim under a likely looking bush, It would've been rude not to. Then the house went up, a beer was cracked, and I sat back to relax.

By the time all this was done it was getting on for half six and if I'm honest the fish activity had stopped. I wasn't concerned however, as morning bites seemed to be the rule so far on this lake and with my pal catching a few that very morning I went into the evening full of anticipation. By 10pm I was in the sack drifting off to the land of nod.

6 hours later I was woken by the beautiful sound of my Delkim informing me with an amount of urgency that one of my rods on the gravel spot was roaring off down the lake. I was out my bag in a flash but struggling to get my trainers on (the mud was less muddy, but still muddy), it felt like an eternity of me hopping on one leg with one trainer on





and the other in my fumbling hands while I watched my rod bounce as the fish powered off with the obvious hump, but in fact it could've only have been 5 seconds at most. I slid my way from the bivy to the rods like an ice skater with a drink problem and lifted the rod. I instantly felt a heavy resistance on the other end, no head banging or lunges of panic, the fish just slowly kited right on a tight line. This was

ok to a point, but in the initial bite the fish had stripped at least 50 yards of line and was heading for cover in a bay that is separated from the swim by a spit made up of bushes and underwater snags, if it made it, I would be bang in trouble. With my arm stretched out, the rod went low to my left with the tip in the water and I applied side strain, still I couldn't turn her. I wasn't panicking but I was getting close, the rod went lower, my arm somehow stretched further, more pressure was applied and just when I thought I was done for she turned a swam towards me, It took me by surprise though and I had to frantically reel the slack line onto the spool to get back in contact. By the time this was done, mere seconds only, she had made it to the bush down to the right of the swim, she lunged once quick but hard taking line of the clutch, I softened this by following the

lunge with my arm and then she surfaced with a splash, turned on her side and gave up, just like that, I guided her gently into the landing net and let out a huge sigh of relief. She was mine.

I looked down into the net and new instantly this was the biggest fish I had ever caught, to me she looked huge, so thick across the back, was she the thirty I came here for?

I unhooked her and let her languish in the net while I sorted the sling and matt, its quite a drop from the bank to the water in the lazy and the margin is deep so there was no chance of her doing the off. Once this was sorted, I moved her to the sling and got her on the scales, 31lb on the button, I stared in disbelief for a couple of seconds then got myself together and prepared to get some self takes. Then I remembered my mate was in the next swim, the fish went



in the retainer, and I went to rouse him, he was more than happy to capture this moment for me and it was great to share it.

Barnet 30 and I hope you've enjoyed it, I've certainly enjoyed telling it. If your fishing reading this then tight lines and all that, if you're

So that's the tale of the not fishing why NOT!!!





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**DARRELL PECK**



# SIGNS OF SPRING

The birds are tweeting and they're not. They'll simply for the first time this winter be stirring from their winter there are signs that spring is slumber, and just more likely just around the corner. Over to pick something up. Often the coming weeks it's easy to the best tactic is a single get a little over excited and pineapple pop up fished on think the fish will be feeding a rig that presents well over their heads off, but truth is light debris, and positioned

with stealth towards activity. Remember that lake beds on many venues will be quite bare, fish will be flighty, and fishing opportunistically with light leads can be a much better option than setting your stool out over bait. Especially so on low stock type venues... .

The Stiff Hinge is my preferred presentation for this style of fishing. I like to fish mine naked directly on the mainline, and especially so when the water is clear. I like a short 5" crimped Hybrid boom, and 1" Mouth Trap Section to a large size 4 Wide Gape X hook.















**GAZ FAREHAM**



# THE CUSP OF DARK

'Signs and shows on most far either. Big carp are venues are at a premium undoubtedly hard won in through the winter, but just the cold months, almost one show can sometimes everything is against you, but give away the bulk of the that just makes any captures stock and be the key to a run all the more precious and of captures or the winter of a memorable, and just the lifetime. thought that it could happen,

Once you've found them, is enough to keep the fires they'll often not go too burning and keep me at it

- 'it's not what you have caught, but what you could catch' as a good mate always reminds me.

With footfall and pressure from other anglers being cut to a bare minimum, it's the one time of year you can often capitalise on an opportunity as well. If I'm not seeing anything during daylight hours, chances are, they'll be showing after dark - The

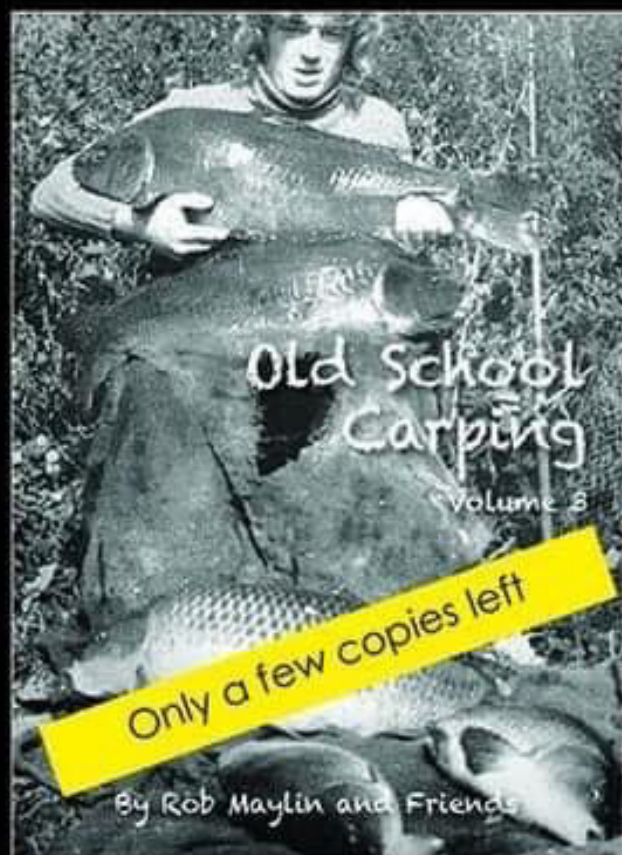
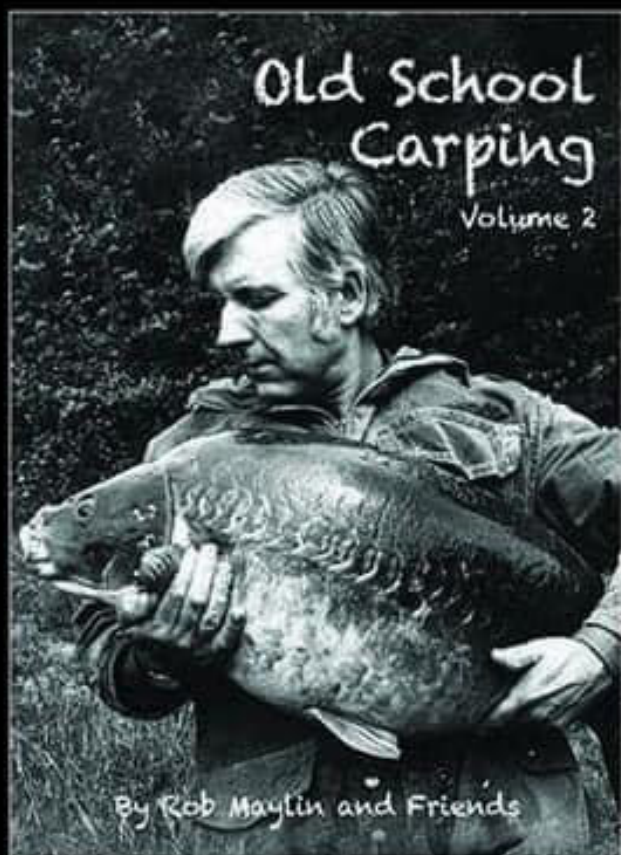
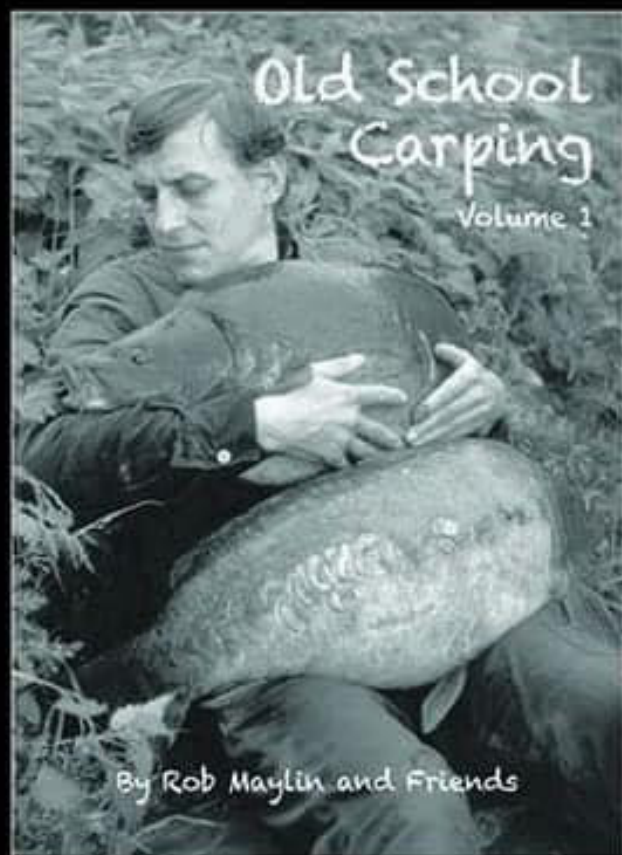
culsp of dusk can often be a great time to hear and see shows through the winter, or in the dead hours of 2-4am.

I tend to get my head down fairly early, set an alarm for 2am, fire up the kettle and get up and about for a listen - a few big deep sloshes out in the darkness, rings lit up by the moonlight is an exciting prospect, especially when you've got a pit to yourself'.





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**JOE TURNBALL**



# FUNDAMENTALS

Carp angling is very often about making sure you get a few main fundamentals in place to ensure that you give yourself the best possible chance of catching. These fundamentals are something that I always put in place when I can but maybe not necessarily in this order.

1. Location is always key which at times can be confusing for lots of anglers. A good start is by looking at wind direction and I try to explain it like this. December to March (the colder months) try fishing behind the wind and from April to November always have it in your face.

This is generally more prominent on long open waters with no islands. As always, snaggy areas, over hanging trees and reed beds are to never be overlooked.

2. Water depths much like winds are also very important and knowing the depths of your venue will help with location at 'certain' times of the season. Cold sunny days carp can often be found at shallower locations much

like when it's warm. So don't always discount shallow areas in cold weather.

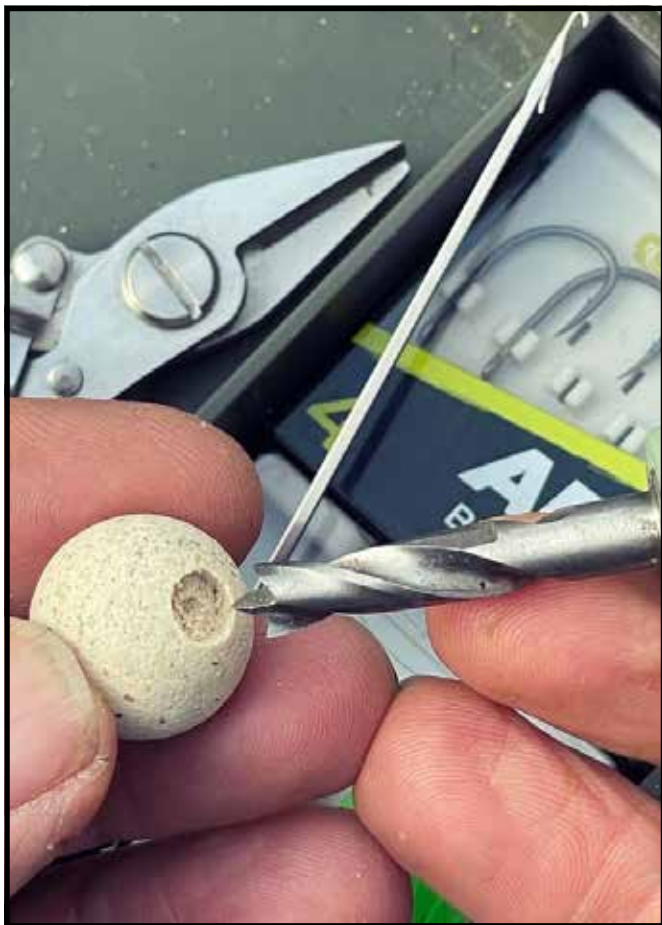
3. We have a huge amount of baits at our disposal and venue to venue will differ vastly as to what the carp may like. I like to keep things simple at the start and I use a lot of boilie in my angling. If you fish venues that you know hold big carp and relatively low stock, boilies can come into their own.







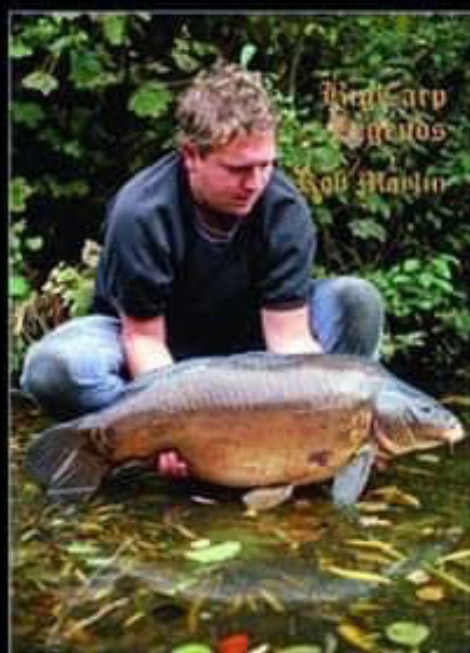
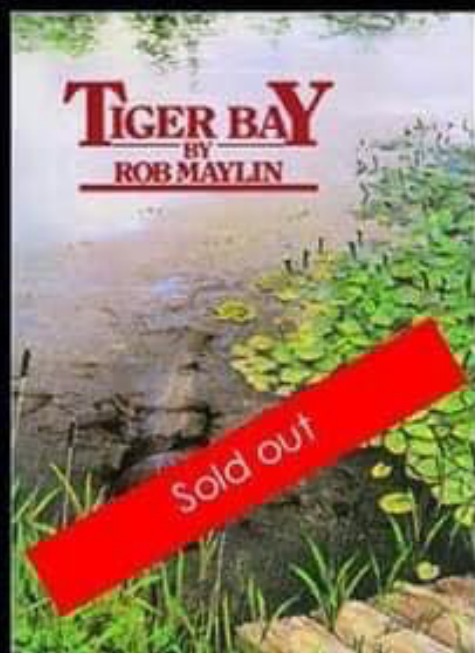
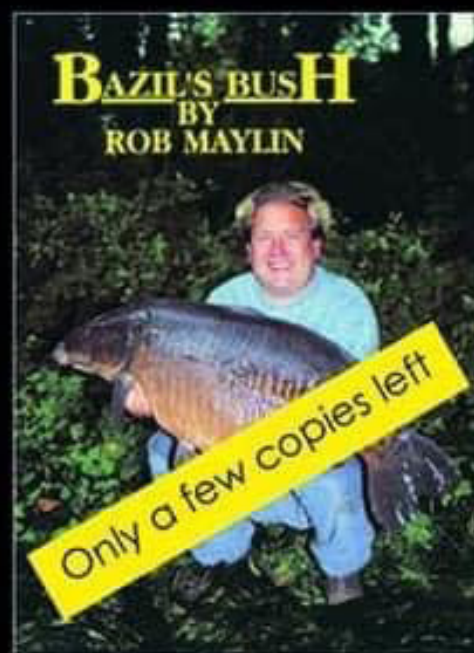
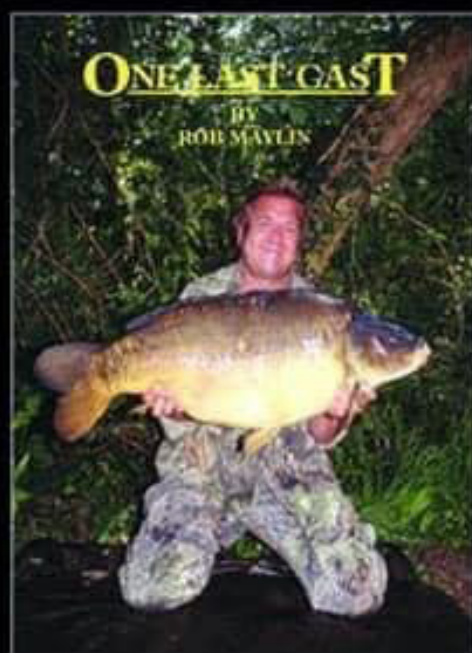
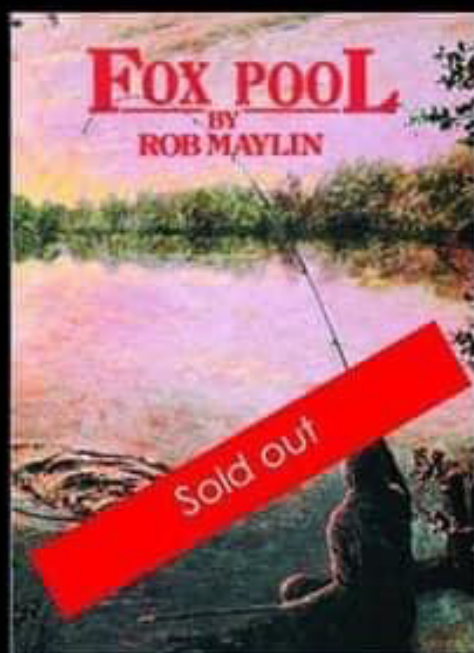






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Much like using particles I like to look at 10mm boilies as a particle and anything bigger as the main bait. I'll also crumb up boilie and add that to the mix which once again is marked as particle. Lots of liquids are always added to my boilie approach as only their own I class them as a static bait. Although they give off feed signals, they do so slowly and by using liquids, this speeds up that attraction process.

4. Rigs are again something that we all get caught up in (pardon the pun) and as much as you may see lots of variations online and in mags, the most simple of rigs will still catch you carp. The most common mistake is to use a rig that you don't understand as to why you're using it. 'Remember' that you are trying to present a bait to behave as close to a free offering as possible not just chucking a rig out for its catch rate properties.







That often comes after you've gained confidence in a rig whether it be a simple one or complicated.

5. Finally, once you've got used to this way of thinking you should eventually be able to 'tune in' to any venue that you step foot on. Being one step ahead of the carp is where you want your train of thought to be but this will come over time.

Find them, feed them, catch them.





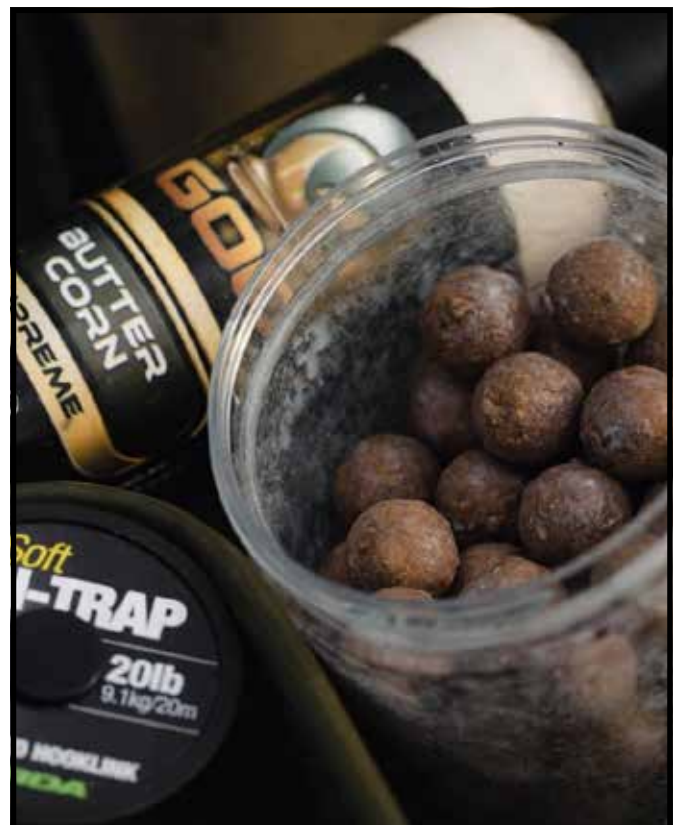
**LUKE STEVENSON**



# TACKLE BOX ESSENTIALS FOR SPRING

We had a quick look inside his rucksack and pulled out his tackle pouch (Compac 110) to see what end tackle he carries as we head into spring:

**POP UPS** – Freshly rolled cork balls, which I've boosted with Butter Corn Goo, a spring favourite of mine, giving the Krill hookbaits a washed out look to them. I favour a match the hatch



over a more conventional 'bright one in the spring' as I just feel it helps trick up those rarer carp who may be put off by something too blatant.

**HOOKS** – Kamakura Choddy's size 4. They've caught me so many carp, hands down my favourite pattern which are used on both my chod and hinge presentations.

**25LB MOUTHTRAP**– Used for all my pop-up work.

**20LB N TRAP SOFT** – I've been using the hinge rig mainly of late, which I fish with a soft hooklink no less than 8-inches but often exceeding 12-inches. I favour the silt colour, which I feel blends into the lakebed better as I'm often targeting the more neglected softer patches.

**TOOLS** – Razor blades, lighter, needles etc. Always bring spares of these as I'm bound to lose them!

**TUFTY TORCH** – Fairly new to this, but an absolute must.





## COMPARTMENT BOX –

In here I'll store my swivel, rig rings, lead clips, heli's etc. In the zip compartment of the tackle pouch I'll carry and spares, leaders, that sort of thing. All this can be stored neatly away and is enough to get me through the session. Any spares can be kept in the van, allowing me to fish super light and off the barrow.



In the modern day carp scene, there's lots written and talked about the great amount of products out there, but the hunting aspect of angling is often forgotten about. Looking really hard for often the smallest of signs and tapping into the primal hunting instinct which was instilled into us way back when.

It's a frequently overlooked and massively important side of carp fishing, I can't think of any significant captures of mine in 20 years that have been off the back of a hunch or a guess, everything good that I've ever done in carp angling has been in some form off the back of a sighting or a sound. It's all well and good having the most incredible technical aspects of carp angling but without the hunting thought process, you have nothing to go on.

With the hunting comes stealth, once you have found the carp, stripping everything

back to a really simplistic approach of casting to where you've seen them and getting bait in with minimal disturbance is the single most important thing in carp fishing. Getting the rods out to signs like a cluster of bubbles, a subtle show, birds spooking, coloured water in the margin quietly and being presented around a bed of small 12mm boilies applied with the catapult doesn't get more straightforward but also doesn't get more effective!"





# BIG CARP

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## WATERCOLOUR CARP PAINTINGS

*The Legendary Big Carp Series*



### **Burghfield Common**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*The A3 prints are very modestly priced at only £25 and are available now on the Big Carp website [www.bigcarpmagazine.co.uk](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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**EXCLUSIVE**















**MIKE WILLMOTT**



# MORE FOOD FOR THOUGHT

We're getting to that time of the year when bait choice for the coming spring months will be high on the list for many seasoned carp anglers. The buds are starting to appear on the trees, I've seen more than a few midges and I've seen the carp moving about more in the past fortnight, despite a succession of cold easterly winds.

Anyone that follows my column in Carpology will know that I believe the increased daylight hours

in February make a huge difference, possibly more so than the actual temperatures and once we hit March, well, we're virtually home and hosed aren't we?

In next month's issue I will be writing a few brief words about the correlation between bait and rigs. Are we over-thinking our rigs if the carp simply want to eat more of our bait? Will a good bait overcome their caution over certain rigs?

It's a debatable topic, simply

because there are so many ponderables, but in my mind, I have no doubt whatsoever that bait choice coupled with correct bait application goes a very long way to ensure a consistent level of success. Notwithstanding location of course, which should always be the number one priority ... add all of those three together and you WILL reap the benefits of a successful campaign without even thinking about rigs! Successful carp fishing really isn't that complex, despite some trying to make out otherwise.

Yes, I like my rigs relatively simple. A lovely sharp hook,

a little suppleness in the hooklink and a little bit of thinking behind the length of the hooklink, depending on the substrate I'm fishing over/in. It's a simple method that works well and empties my head of any doubts, providing I have 100% confidence in my bait choice - which I always do - simply because I developed these baits specifically for my own fishing, based upon a combination of nutrition and attraction ... plus a few other things thrown into the equation!

The images attached to this post tell their own story. A very big UK river carp caught on an extremely efficient and





effective food bait (Shellfish B5) of which the carp love to eat and often forage about looking for more. When the carp are in this type of feeding frenzy, they can often become completely oblivious to the dangers of being caught, because their quest to eat more of the bait overcomes their awareness of the danger ... now look at the rig ... a simple one I'm sure you'd agree, yet it was lodged several inches back in the throat! I even had to phone Lee to bring along our 12" pike disgorgers to remove it because it couldn't be reached! We cut the hook-link just behind my thumb and this was the point that it entered the carp's mouth!

Carp fishing eh, it really isn't that complex. Find 'em, feed 'em, catch 'em.





# SECRETS OF THE THAMES

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## Secrets of The Thames

By Rob Maylin and friends



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

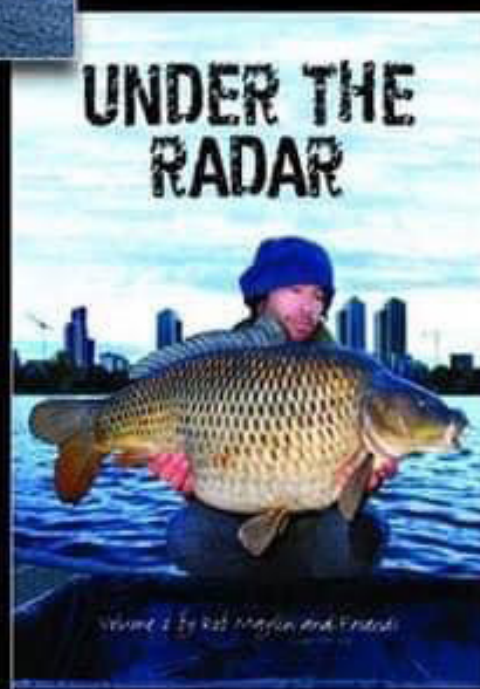
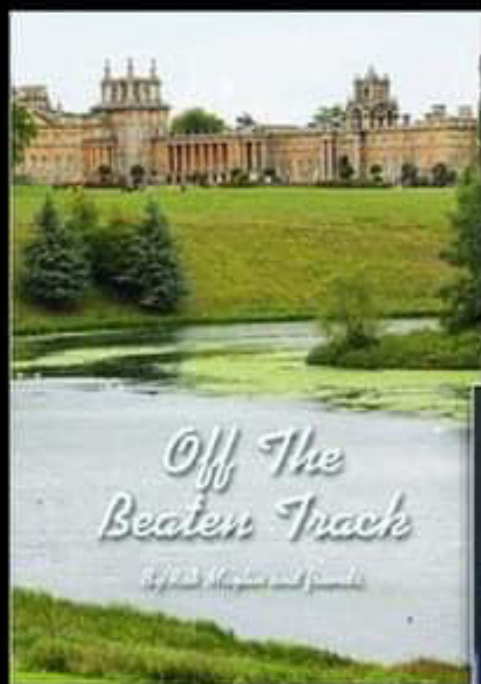
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**SIMON SCOTT**



# TACKLE BOX ESSENTIALS FOR SPRING

There's no more exciting way to catch them than within eyesight, right under the rod tips. Whenever I can, and a chance presents itself, I'll always try to catch them this way. Baiting likely areas at the start of my session and then monitoring these spots throughout the session, ready to lower a rod when a chance presents itself.



I keep baiting to a minimum, just looking to create an opportunity, so apply a few pellets, and a few boilies, both whole and chopped. Once I see fish feeding, I'll wait till the cost is clear and carefully lower a rig into position, often with a nice heavy inline lead and PVA bag of pellet to protect the hook.

Slackening right off and then sitting back in cover, ensuring not to make any noise and being mindful not to cast my shadow over the spot. Often, results can be instant and at this time of the year, you don't need to be fishing for nights on end to get results.









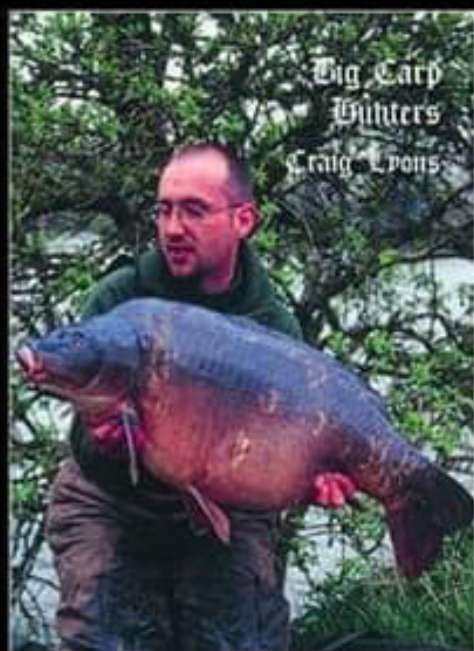




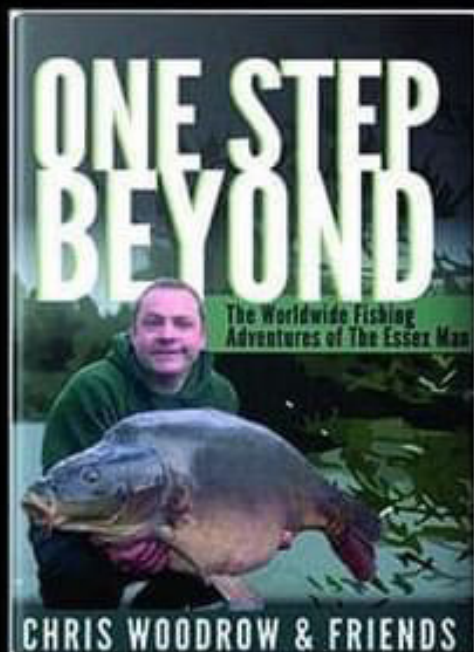
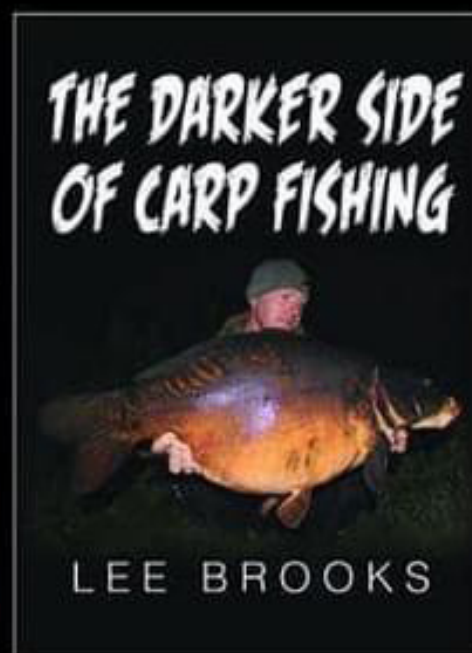




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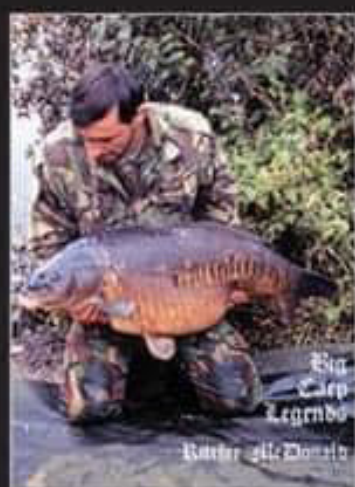
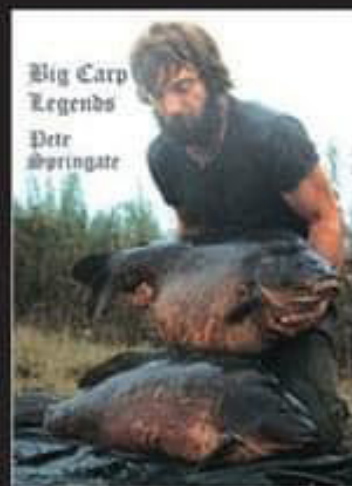
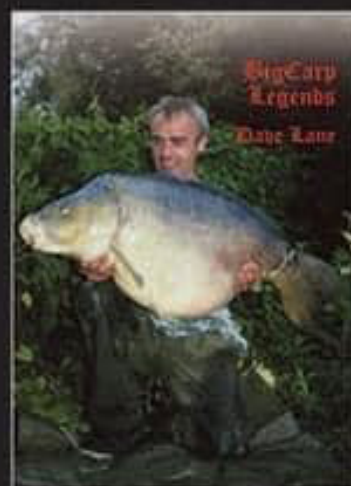
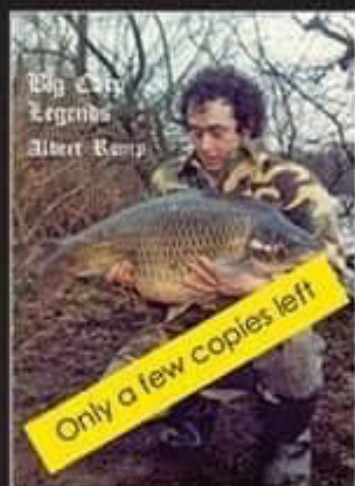


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**TAYLOR SHANNON**



# BUCKET HAT BUSINESS

Early January of 2024 is where I began my fishing on this lake seriously, as last year I had hopped onto the lake for the odd session every now and then on hot summer days when you could easily see dorsal fins poking out of the immense rafts of floating weed which drift around the lake in the spring and summer months. My drossing about in 2023 on the lake led me to catch two carp, my first being a 16lbs mirror which had a sloping head, a dark leathery torso and shark like dorsal. And the other being similar in appearance and weighing just over twenty pounds. These captures alone were enough to draw my attention back to the lake the following January. Going through the gates in

such a bleak time of year with no leaves in sight, thick mud that has been churned up from barrow loads of kit, made the lake look completely different. I pulled the barrow out of the car and walked to the first swim in the car park and looked at the glassy water that could have been passed off as glacier melt with its crystal-clear clarity. Rudd swirled as jack pike chased with no sense of direction; and swans upturned to feed on invertebrates in the edge. I walked down the muddy track poking my head into every single swim in hopes of finding some winter carp. Lap after lap after lap passed and no signs of fish, not a swirl, a roll, a jump, a patch of fizzers... nothing. So, I decided to put myself in a likely looking area, and also an area I had heard usually does a couple bites in the winter months. The swim was lined with tall Norfolk





reeds which have turned into a winterised beige colour and covered a patch of the deepest water in the lake, which was still only about seven foot deep, but is still relatively deep in comparison to the rest of the lake. Small bags of maggots and a small washed-out wafter hook bait was my tactic as it allowed me to fish over an attractive food source, while being able to move onto showing fish; as I had not invested any bait onto a spot, and what bag would cover the hook point from the sparse layer of silkweed I was to present over. The fish didn't seem interested in feeding, or even moving, the session remained dormant and so did the following couple of sessions until April.

**The Spark:** I had planned a day's Rudd fishing on the lake, so I carried some light gear; a tub of worms, a half pint of casters, some size 12 hooks I had scrabbled out

of an old tackle box, a light feeder rod paired with 3lbs maxima. Walking down to a swim called the 'iris' as I had seen some activity from Rudd the following weekend. I walked to the front of the swim where there are two islands, connected by a shallow gravel bar, and the water the swim controlled was only about three to four foot deep, so the expectation of carp in the still cold winds as we had a prolonged winter was very low. So, to my surprise when I looked over some bushes to the left and saw two fish headfirst on a blatant clear patch where swans had found an abundance of naturals and turned the area inside out, one of the carp was visibly larger than the other which made my legs wobbly upon spotting it. I quietly stepped back and grabbed some of the bait I had with me and put a handful of casters, some small pellets, and a couple chopped

worm onto the spot once the carp had drifted off. I used this opportunity to place a freelined worm onto the spot and lay the rod just to the side of the bush, but the tip flush with the bank as the spot was only about three of foot off the edge. Two of the longest minutes passes and the slack-lsh line slowly went tight and then the tip hurled round, a firm lift of the rod was all it took, and I was into my first carp of the season, the battle ensued with lots of head shakes, close calls with bushes and branches, but eventually it shuffled into the net. I jogged over to the next swim to ask for matey to take some pics for me. I had a couple pics taken and slipped it back, it was one of the stockys they put in January time and was about 15lbs, again quite a leathery fish. I let the swim rest for a couple hours, periodically peaking over the bush to see a carp or two and to slip them a bit of bait to keep them coming back. I eventually got the courage to get the rod back out as they were feeding confidently on the spot, a freeline worm was lowered in, the rod placed upside down on the floor, I had just took my hands off the rod and it darted across the front of the swim so viciously I had to open the bail arm otherwise the line would have snapped, I clicked the anti-reverse on and flipped the bail arm back over and regain contact with the fish, the fish had gone round the corner and under the out of bounds rope and had started battling on the surface. My line creaked as it was gently pulled through the underwater branches and weed beds, the battle after the initial run was quite bleak with a couple head shakes and I swooped the net underneath, but it didn't fit, in threw the rod onto the side, and curled the carp into the net. The net had ripped, and this carp was huge, I wrapped the carp in my



# BIG CARP

## *fine arts*

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

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coat and my mat and walked into mateys swim which was only a couple meters away in a panic asking to put it in his sling as I had only bought light match kit with me. With both of us flustered the carp laid in the sling. I was rosy in the cheeks and full of adrenaline.

We got the mat ready and walked the sling over and it was time to reveal my prize. The zip unveiled this Lin with the most orange belly and the blackest broadest shoulders. Before I could say anything matey blurted the words 'that's the scattered lin'. I turned



red in the face and could not believe this carp I could have only dreamed of. We zeroed the scales and lifted this carp up, the weight flickered around the mid thirty-two mark and settled on thirty-two pound twelve ounces. All I could do is awkwardly chuckle as I lifted her up for a couple pics and felt the weight of my first thirty-pound carp. I kneeled next to the edge with the sling wide open watching her

pump oxygen over her gills and slowly drift away. My face bright red and my mind racing, all I could think to do was pack up and go, not wanting to blow the spot.

**The Return:** I returned two days after the captures with similar tactics but with stronger but refined carp gear, just using an 8lbs mainline and a size 8 hook with a worm threaded over the eye of the hook and a caster slid round



the shank to just cover that visible hook shape. Using the same bait on the same spot the carp still seemed interested but a bit more wary as the spot had doubled in size within a day or two. I managed another fish that session, again another leathery stocky. But after a couple hours of seeing no fish on the spot I decided to look around the corner, a swim that controlled the shallower end of the lake and only a small patch of water next to the

out of bounds rope. I looked out with my polaroids and to my surprise about eight fish coming out of a bush to my right and again only a couple of feet out, so I went back into the iris and grabbed my kit and carried it to the back of a swim called 'policeman's'. I baited and waited until I saw signs of fish there again, plumes of Gunsmoke silt kicked up and sheets of bubbles simmered at the surface, and I knew it was time to fish. I casted out





a freelined worm and single caster, but I reeled in and I dragged in quite a bit of weed, I knew this would be an issue with presenting a bait even as light as a worm on, I had to think fast and all I could gather is to use a buoyant caster slid onto the hook but just to the hook point was just poking out so when I struck into a fish the caster would slide round the shank, and the buoyant caster would just lift the hook point above the weed. I casted back out and within a minute or two the un-sunken line started to pull under creating ripples on the surface, I struck firmly and found the fish swimming straight towards me then darting straight towards the rope in hopes of getting to safety. A back and forth fight eventually led to me catching another lin with potato peel scales, and the most perfect fan tail, and being just over 20lbs. I had another two stockys one being a 3lbs common which

had been poked by a heron, and a carp I would catch another 4 times in the next couple sessions, and the other carp being another small mirror.

### **A Different Approach:**

With joining a new bait company just after catching the scattered lin, I was wanting to test out some of the products and being able to start doing nights on the lake I would not be doing my usual stalking with freelined worms. I had two nights ahead of me and had two types of boilies with me (one fishy and one spicy) along with some small pellets called the edge pellet. In my baiting approach was also lots of corn and chopped worm as to keep with the natural approach that had been working for me. Finding a swim with a couple fish in a fed quite heavy and put about 3kg on each spot as the Rudd will clear most of the bait (corn and edge pellet) from the spots. I was using yellow pop ups as to match

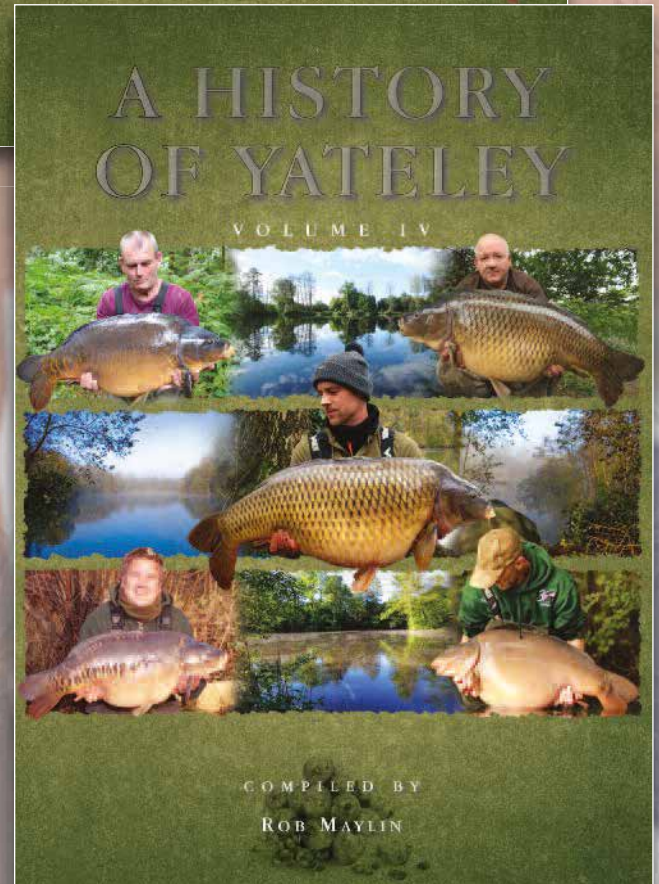
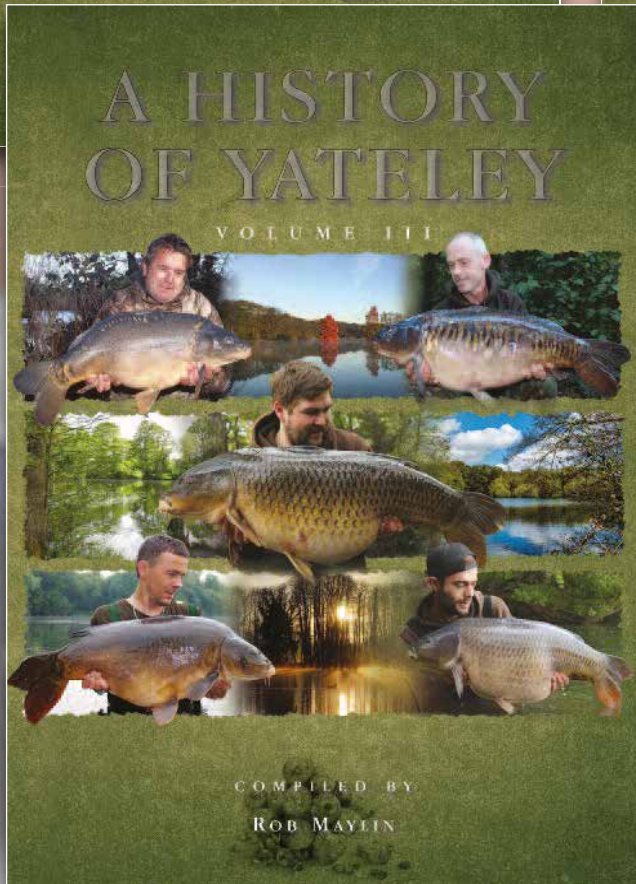
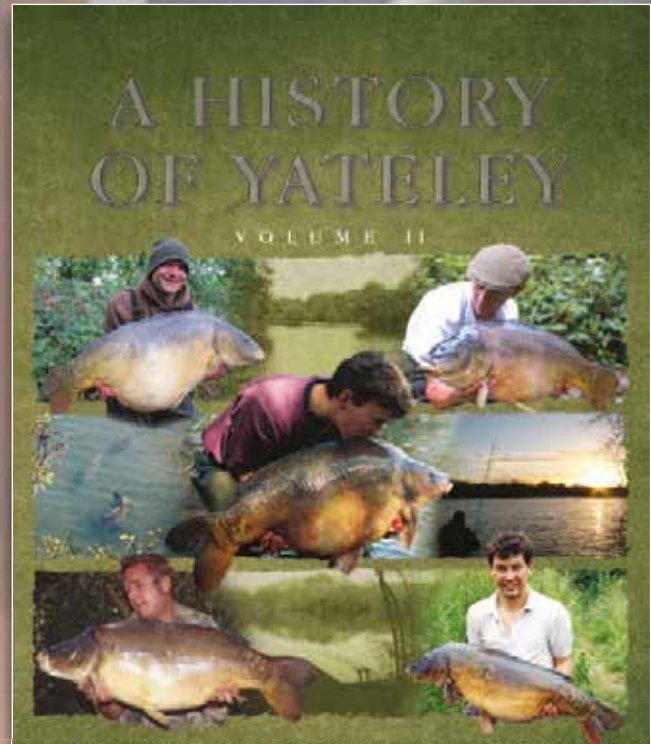
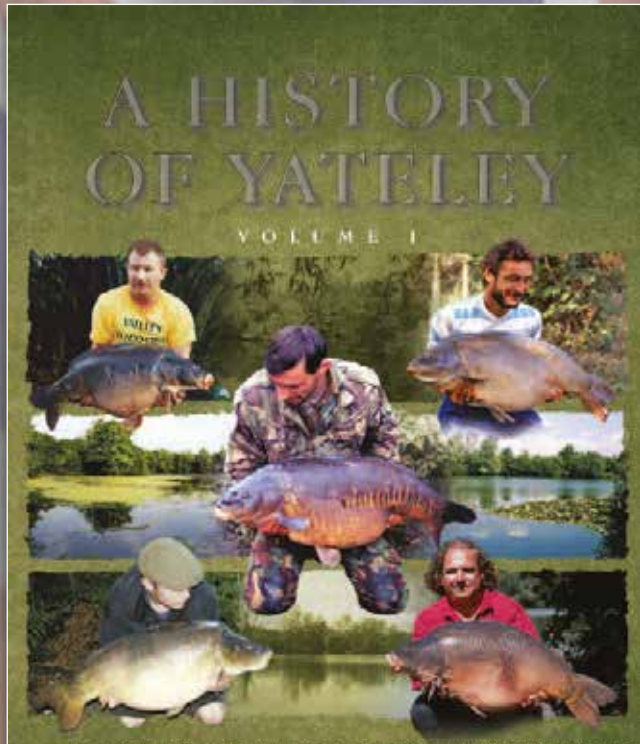
with the corn in the mix, and short hinge rigs to present over the silt and silkweed. The first night went past without a bite but was seeing fish jumping Infront of me in the morning. I waited until mid-day to put another couple kilos on both spots to make sure that there was definitely food there. The second night was interrupted by a Tench at about five in the morning, so I decided to stay awake, I put the kettle on, and my stove roared away as I watched fish after fish head and shoulders in the area, I was fishing. I had my first earl grey of the day and quickly after I put the kettle on again as the morning was quite cold. Not seconds after I placed the kettle down the left rod ripped off stripping line off the spool





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like I had hooked a train. Luckily, I had marker elastic on my line so I could send the rig back out without having to wrap up after checking the hook point and changing the hook bait. I got the rods back out and walked to my mate's bivvy to get some pics for me. I got some pics and sent them on their way. I had to pack up shortly after but was happy with my result that weekend.

I was busy now until June with exams so not much fishing got done in that time, except from the odd session after work. I



finally managed to get out on the 8th of June for another two nights, I loaded the barrow on the newly dry track and did a lap round. I found a swim with a bit of open water, a large gravel bar and a quiet section of the lake. I was a couple fish show in front and didn't wait to get two singles out there, minutes passed when I received a bite on the Ronnie I had left on my rod from a previous session, I gained contact with the fish but had a hook pull straight away. I put a short hinge on and quickly re-chucked the rod in the area the fish were showing. I set the brolly up and got everything ready for the night. I wrapped the rods up to where the fish were showing and I found a weeded over gravel bar, the fish were clearly feeding happily over it, so I wrapped the rods up and





cast them back out. I mixed up some bait which included the spicy boilie, edge pellet, corn, hemp, and chopped worm to keep a fairly natural mix which the fish had seemed to me homing in on. Before I could get the bait out, I had a take, slowly pulling tight and gently ticking off the spool. I lifted the rod, and the fish began to kite on a tight line down to my right, there were thick Norfolk reeds and fallen branches between them. I kept steady pressure and began to regain line on it. The fish waddled through the reeds but surprisingly didn't cause any problems, and it was soon ready to net, the fish was big, and I meant its frame was huge. The net shuffled under, and I peered over, my legs went to jelly at the size of the carp and realised it was another member of the A-team called



Nike tic that had gone up to thirty-eight pounds before. I unhooked the carp and sacked it up while I got the rod back out. As I got the rod back out the other tore off which led to a much smaller stocky, but it was a stunner. I managed to get four or five kilos out before my mate arrived with the camera. I had the stocky out first which was about eight pounds and slipped it back. A couple people gathered around the mat for the unveiling of Nike tic including the bailiff next door, it was lifted onto the scales and weighed in at thirty pounds eight ounces, which was about right for its spawned-out weight. I slipped her back and watched the sun set over my rods as I received another bite, the clutched ticked slowly and another back-and-forth battle led to a long dark common sulking at the bottom of my net. Again, I took some more pics, slipped it back, and but a couple more kilos out to top them off for the night. In the night I had about seven Tench with the rod going off every forty-five minutes, until it ripped off stripping line, a powerful battle led to me catching another lovely common of twenty-eight pounds, it was just past midnight, so I took some mate pics and slipped it back. I got back into bed and woke up just as dawn was breaking to another run, another long common of a similar size, I sacked it up and went to ask matey for some pictures as the other rod ripped off, a more relaxed fight as it just flapped on the surface, a small but special common. A fish called baby white tips which had been on my list since the start of the season. The daytime was quiet as it was blistery hot, and they just wanted to bask in the sun. more bait was put out for the evening as I managed catch another three fish by the end of that session. It was a very

productive couple nights and now had three A team under my belt.

**The Carve Up:** 5 days later, I returned from the back end of an overnighter I did on another lake I work on, a couple of lads I know were down and I found a swim near to them which was opposite the swim I had fished the week before. The swims had been quiet for a while with having nobody fishing them and the fish had moved into the area to seek safety, fish seemed blatantly confident and almost became cocky as they basked over a glowing gravel hump and poking their dorsal out the water like their way of giving me the finger. I quickly set up the bare essentials and looped on some solid bags I had from the trip I had just got back from to try and nick a quick bite. The first rod cast out and felt for a drop. I knotted on marker elastic to save from wrapping up as I was fishing the middle of the large gravel

hump and was confident that I would be presented even if I landed on the outskirts of the spot. The bobbins laid slack over the thick floating weed beds that would clearly give me much hassle in the next couple nights. Minutes passed as I set my brolly up and sorted basic kit out, and put a couple kilos of boilie, pellet, and some worm liquid I had been making, until the left-hand rod melted away, pushing through the weed-bed at the back of the bar. A rough battle resulted in a half lin of about eighteen pounds, another solid bag cast out and another bite, I had six bites that evening and losing two and they were all half Lins, coincidence or not I was not fussed as I was catching fish, even catching one on the drop. The night past as I watched shooting stars pass across the sky while I cooked dinner and sat down with some mates. Morning came round rather quiet with me losing a carp in





the early hours and catching a Tench early morning. at first light I put fresh bags on, and the bites quickly came again, having another four half Lins to about seventeen pounds. I heard a yell, a very loud yell from a swim called 'cattle drink' the swim my mate was in, it could only mean one thing... He had caught his target fish (the koi) I reeled in and ran round to celebrate this special moment with him. While spirits were high, I desperately wanted to

get back to my swim as I saw fish jumping over the bar where I was fishing. I walked back to my swim and got the rods back out. The fishing side went quiet until mid-afternoon after I refreshed the spot with some spombs over the top in the rough area to keep the fish moving about searching for parcels of bait. I had another two half Lins that afternoon and had a beautiful leather that weighed twenty-eight pounds and seven ounces to wrap up the session.

**The Last Goodbye:** I did another two nights resulting in three fish, a mid-twenty common, a long black mirror, and a recapture of Nike tic at thirty-two pounds and three ounces. A couple weeks passed until I finally got out for what turned out to be my last ever session on franklins before I started college and got wrapped up in other things. The swim I first started doing nights in was my port of call as I had seen lots of fizzing out in the middle of the lake, I was using chods with hemp, corn, and 12mm fishy boilie spombed over the top. The first night was quiet but had a good social with a matey next door to me. The dawn chorus broke out and a mist blanketed the surface of the water, the kettle boiling over, and fish poking their heads out at me. The mist cleared off and the sheets of fizz started to peel off the lakebed, liner after liner, I finally had a take, the fish took a substantial amount of line from me and kited round a pole in the lake causing me to lose direct contact with the fish, the hook pulled, and I was gutted. But none the less I sharpened the hook and got the rig back out. It got to about eleven o'clock and the rod went off again, the carp did the same again but this time I was not losing it. I waded from my swim to the next swim to my left to try and steer the carp away from the pole to my right. Using my mates landing net to net the fish it was only a low double mirror but looked pristine. I got a couple pics and slipped it back. Again, a couple hours passed without a take, but I kept getting liners that kept me confident of a bite. My dad and sister came down to the lake to drop me off some food for the night when I was playing another fish, it did the same again, by wading halfway to the next swim where I got the fish safe from the pole. A ball of weed over its head I





had a little brute sulking in the bottom of my net. I got it out and had a couple pictures taken with me, the fish, and my little sister wearing her face paint, I still believe it's the most carpy picture I have in my album. The action died down and me and matey had a feast on the last night eating curry and downing cans of coke. The evening quickly faded to darkness and

darkness quickly simmered into daybreak, my time was up, this was it... I didn't know at the time but as I look back and reminisce on the good times; awesome socials, the fish I had caught, opportunities that changed my angling, and most importantly meeting a load of new friends. Only a year of fishing, ten nights, nine-day sessions, and hundreds of memories made.



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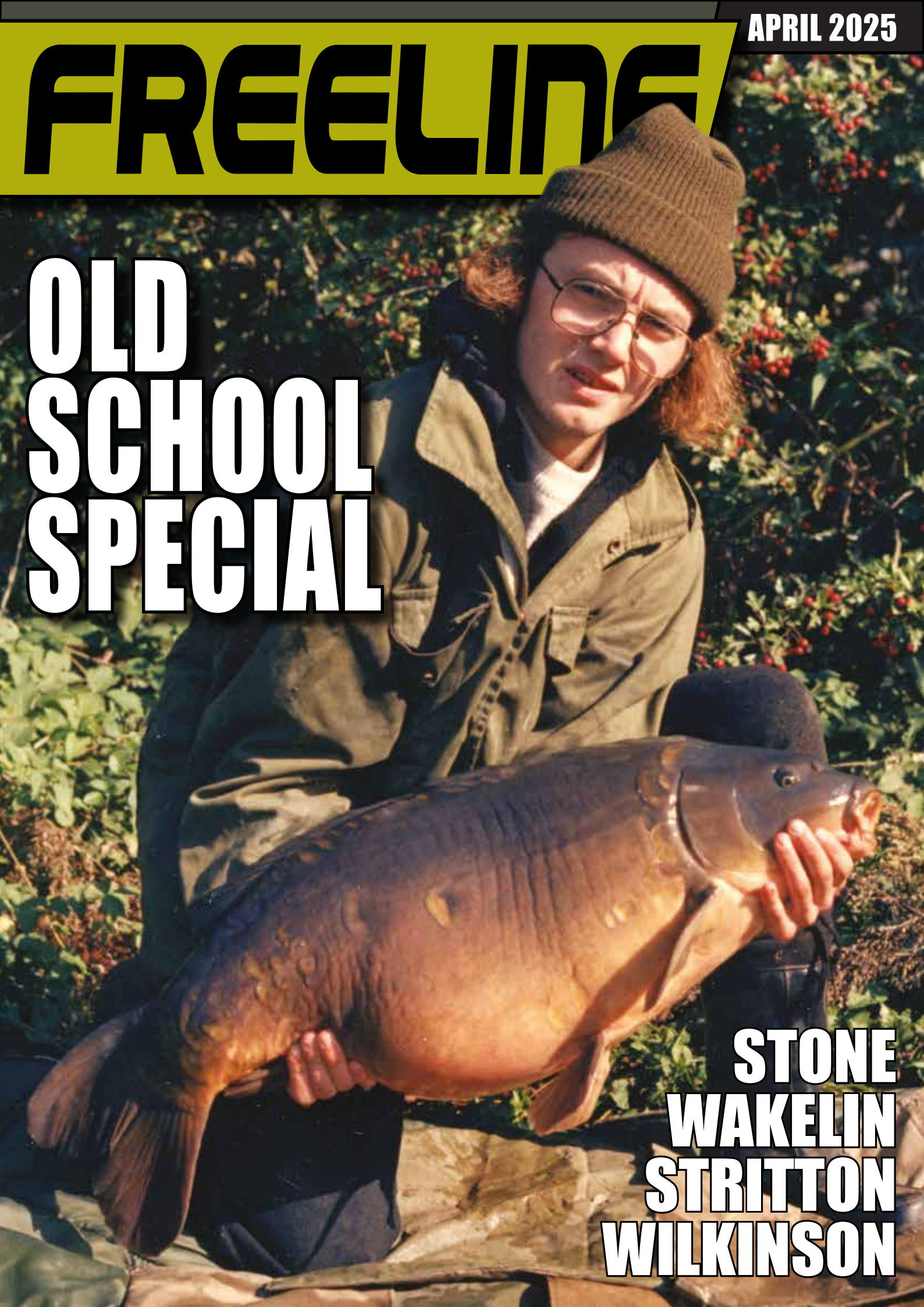


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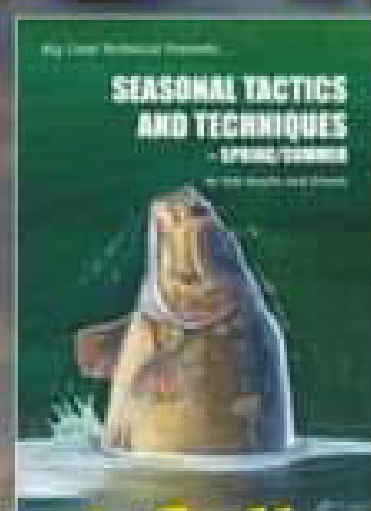
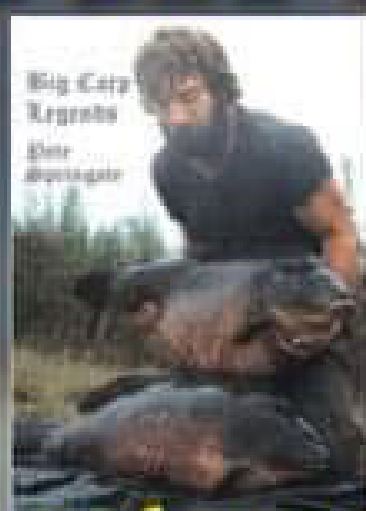
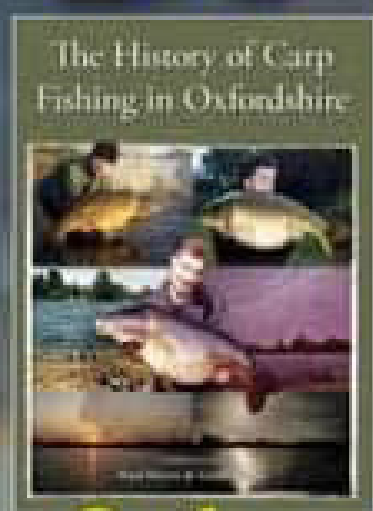
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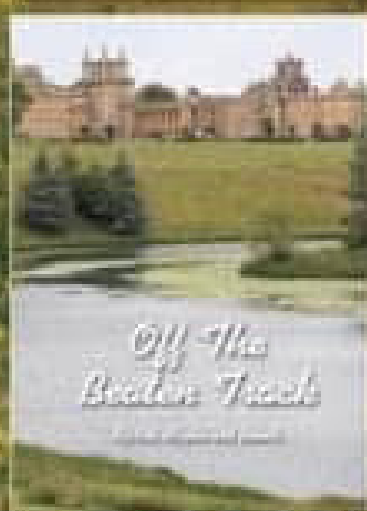
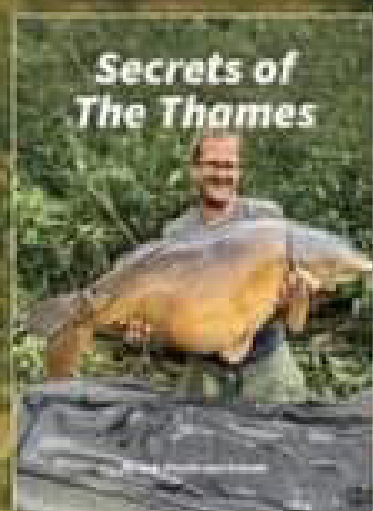
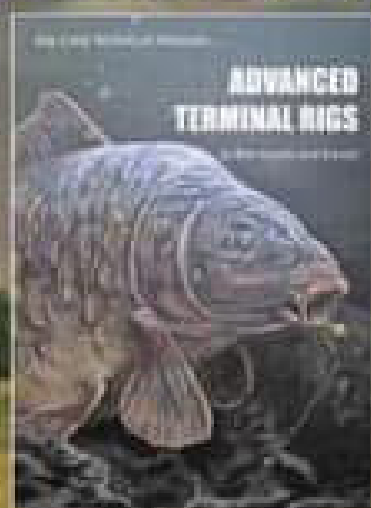
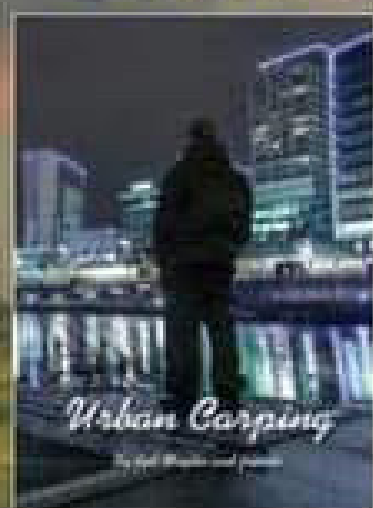
**STONE  
WAKELIN  
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# SPRING INTO



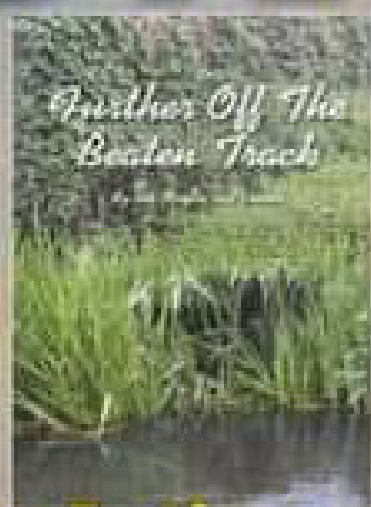
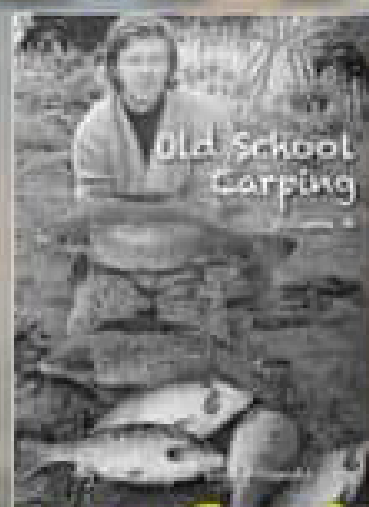
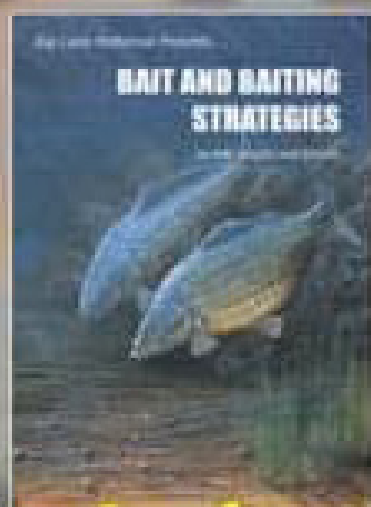
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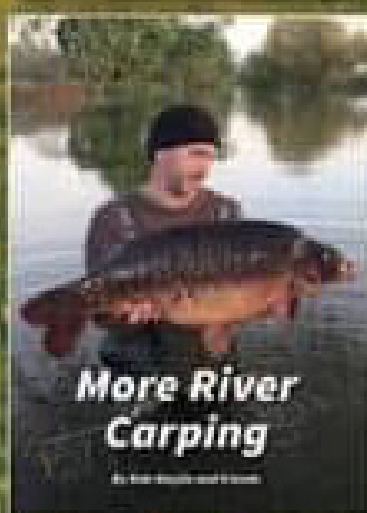
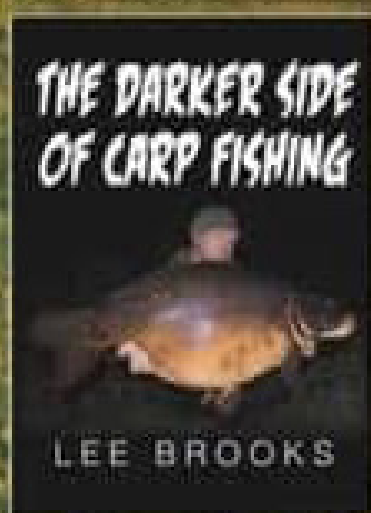
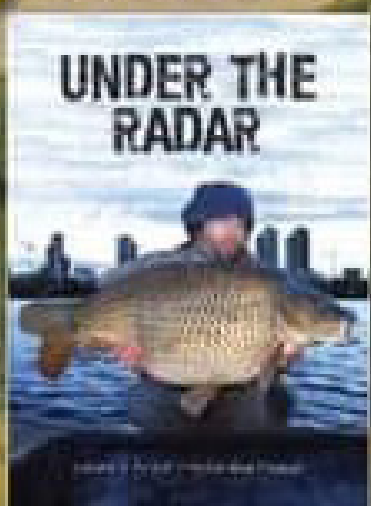
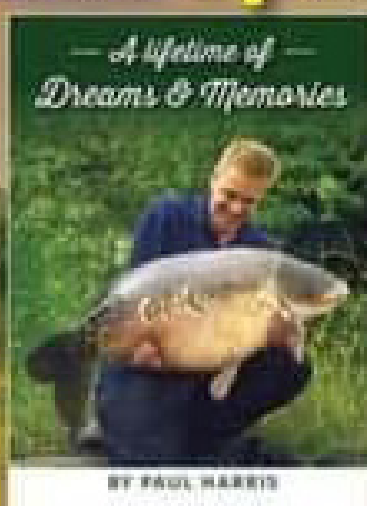
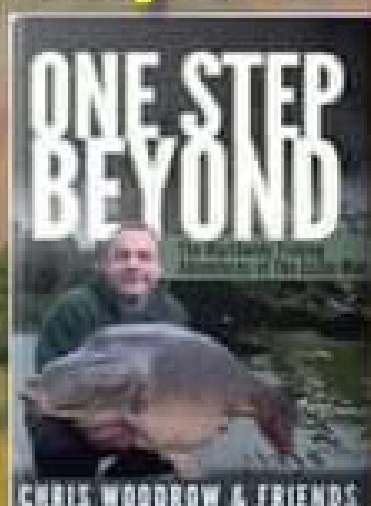
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month Big Carp issue  
345.



Front Cover:  
Paul Wilkinson back in  
the rave days.



## VIEWS VIA DYLAN HARVEY

“Check out these from Kudos Tackle.. Owners Jack and Emma have supported TC Conservation Group - The Legacy Project from the beginning and have become close friends. In support of my Young Angler Support Group, a private page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/839362931541427> where I allocate fishing tackle for FREE to our local young anglers - they have produced a bespoke set of carbon distance sticks. These will be added to the first prize in this years species challenge competition that includes a custom set of rods by Chris Palmer Custom Rods and bait packages from Essential Baits. My initiative runs purely on donation and offers - so please contact me if you have any items that you would like to donate and support our young anglers and the future of angling.



**6. CARP CHAT**

**14. CARP SCENE**

**20. DAVE WAKELIN**

**36. DEREK STRITTON**

**68. MARTIN STONE**

**74. PAUL WILKINSON**

**92. MATT PARRY**



# 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 years '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!

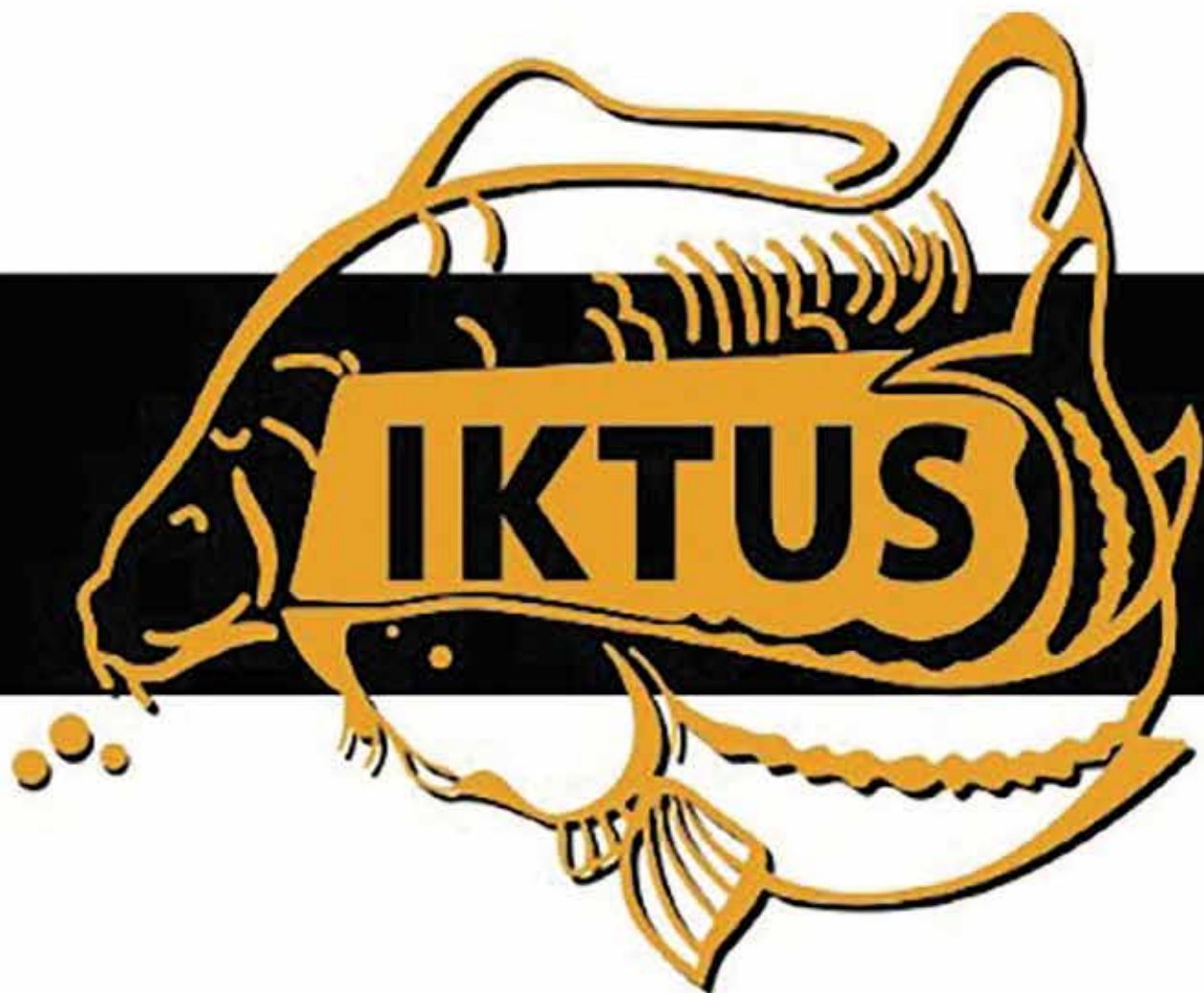
This year there will be:

- 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 ...



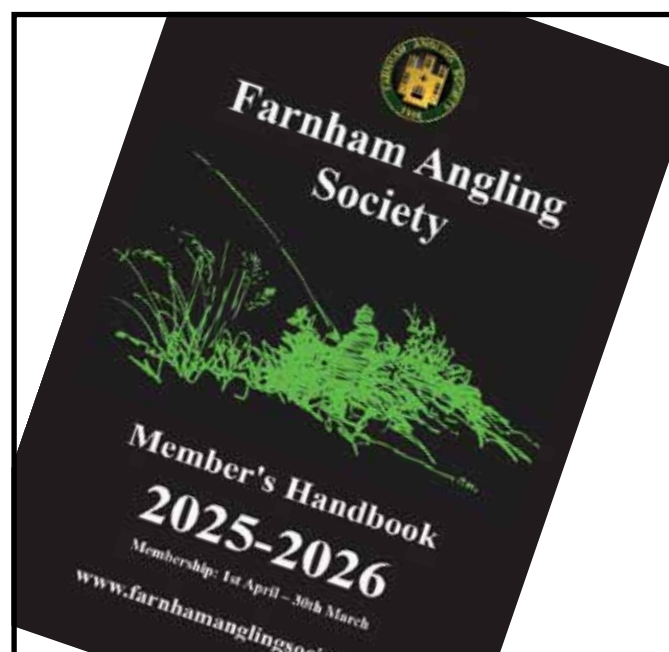


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## FARNHAM RENEWALS



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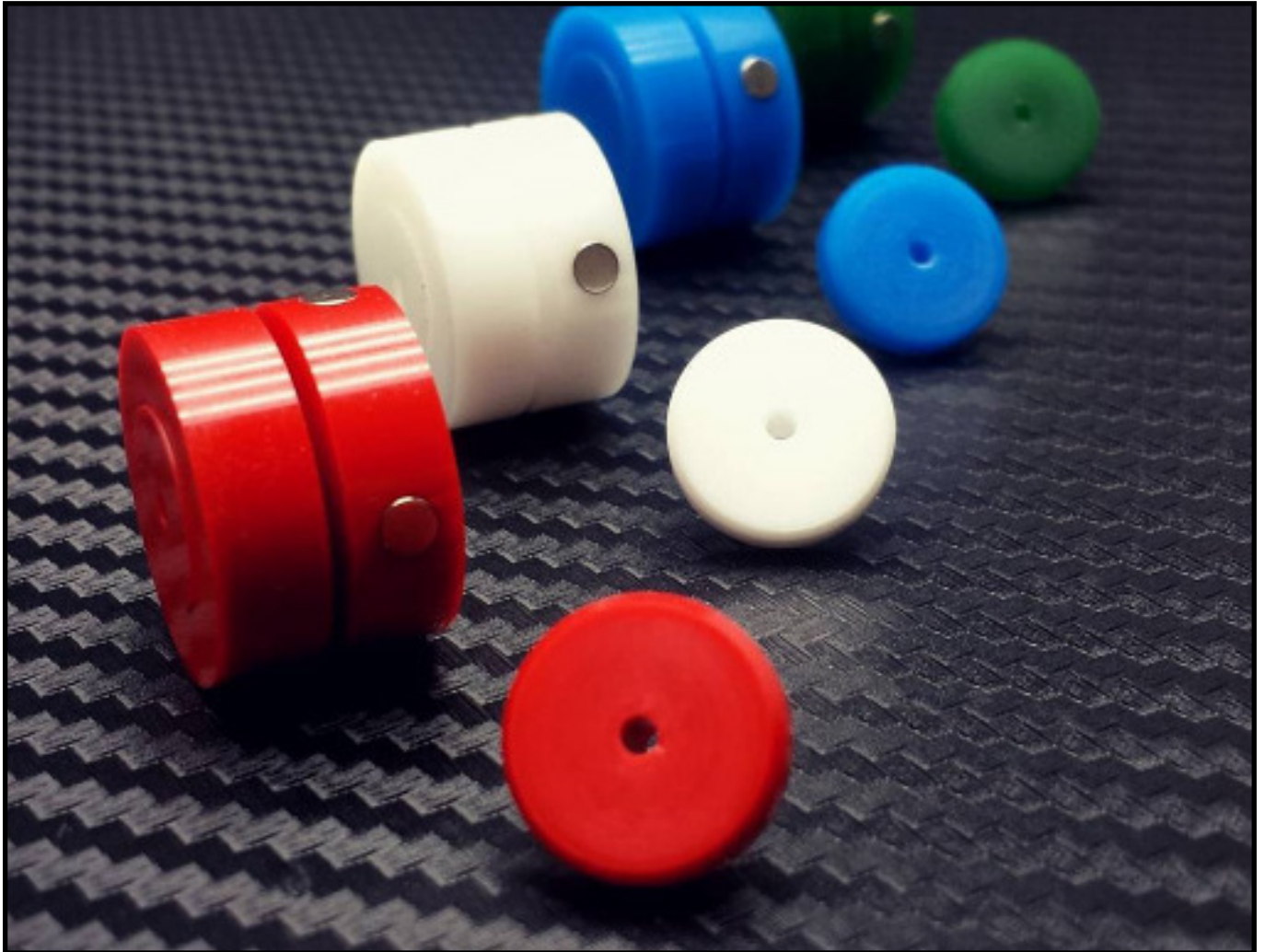


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# HAYMAX HAY FEVER PRODUCTS



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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# THE MAKING OF A RECORD

**B**ig Carp in Nottinghamshire were extremely hard to track down in the early 1980s and the odd water that was believed to have contained fish into that magical 30-pound bracket big fish were definitely on the best kept secret list.

A very small group of us had Bleasby on our radar for the previous two years based on rumours of sightings of good fish from the match anglers within Mansfield Borough AA who owned the lakes – I had tracked down authenticated accounts of low doubles caught on free-lined swam mussel by a family member who had been tench fishing and had carp three or four carp, but we knew nothing of its real potential. We continued to gather intel from club members and local anglers who had occasionally seen carp throughout the summer when bream fishing.

I was totally gripped by carp angling at that time (and still am); it occupied so much of my waking day, thinking, planning, making bait, walking around lakes, prebaiting and of course being out there frequently at the lakeside after them.

Dave, Spinner, Ivan, Rob and I had been doing our homework for some time before the magical June 16<sup>th</sup> opening week of '85, and to be fair we had really gone for it. I had been snorkeling all over the lake in May and early June, plumbed it to death as well as properly mapping it from a cheap blow-up dinghy from Skegness. We had created a really detailed map of the ex-gravel workings without all today's technology - actually swimming it with the mask gave by far the most meaningful insight having identified the main features (two gullies that ran from end to end of the rectangular pit). Most gravel pits in the Trent valley are dug with a deep end corner that acts as a draining sump, and the nearest gully (when viewed from





the dyke bank) ran into this significantly deeper area. This gully was well castable with my Simpsons of Turnford KMCF1s (thank you, Roger Hurst for such beautifully built rods), Cardinal 55s, 11lb Sylcast line and a 2oz hand painted 'Arsley bomb' lead (and that was big gear then!).

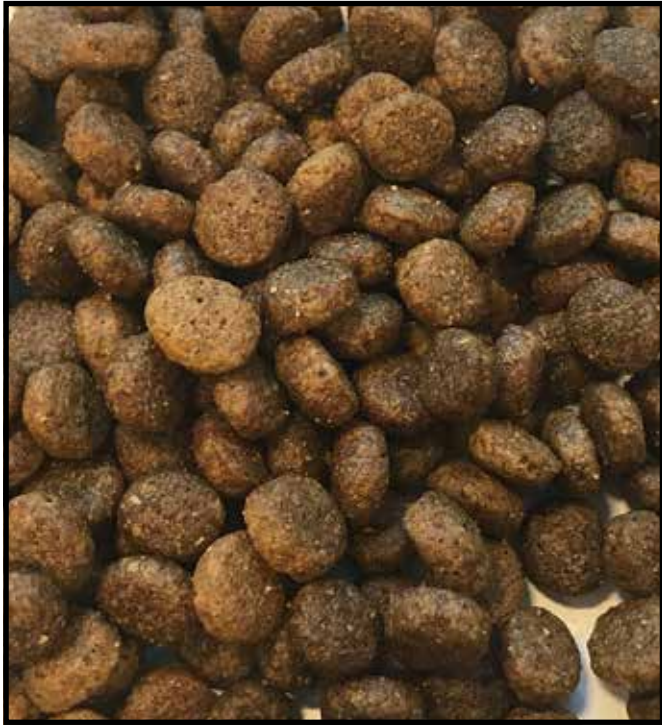
Right up to the opening week, we actually hadn't seen any other anglers on the lake nor heard of anyone even talking about carping it, so whilst we had no idea what we might catch, we were at least confident that we'd have it to ourselves, or so we thought! Bait was a magical mystery then for the majority of us, and next to carp tackle development itself, the bait industry was really starting to get into gear. There were a number of good companies emerging, and there became an increasing number of pioneer anglers writing about their recipes and mixes. It was a captivating time then.

Hutchie and Maddocks were my icons of the day then and my bait was all hand rolled with ingredients from Geoff Kemp, Haiths and Hutchinson's 'Catch-Um' label. This was my original Bleasby mix:

#### Fishmeal

- Ground munchies (a dried cat food – the salmon and pilchard was just legendary)
- PTX
- Yellow seed mix
- Blended milk proteins
- Robin Red

These formed the basis of the bait that rolled well, and to start off with, in 1985, it was not flavored other than with a little cod liver oil. With six eggs, this bait has worked throughout the previous year and was a move away at that



time for us from the mainly semolina/soya loaded baits that we had used previously when we had all descended on the A1 Pits at Muskam in the early 80s.

On to the campaign...

Bleasby was a paradise; the main lake was large and rectangular and with one side allegedly not fishable (as it was almost inaccessible when we first started there). There were also three smaller lakes on the complex with some connectivity between them all that made it all the more intriguing.

The opening weekend was interesting – we rocked up early the day before the season started only to find another group of Bleasby pioneers there who had exactly the same thought processes as us. They were chasing the rumours too and they had hoped to be the first to ‘properly’ carp fish it in anger. After a momentary Mexican standoff between our groups, we got our stories out and realised we were all decent guys looking for somewhere special. They became good mates,





"Walking into what seemed to be another small tackle shop, I was surprised to find it rammed to the roof with everything and anything I could ask for. Speaking to Bob the owner, I found that he had started as a match angler but recently moved over to carp - time permitting. He had extensive knowledge and loved to help anglers get the best of their time on the bank. Pineapple Bob was given his name at Hilton Valley Carp fishery for his food choices and not his bait.. haha

A busy Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/anglingessentials> and 2 websites [www.pineapplebobstackle.co.uk](http://www.pineapplebobstackle.co.uk) and [www.vipertackle.co.uk](http://www.vipertackle.co.uk) with many top brand baits filling the shelves, there are also house boilies and pellet mixes to save the pocket and a range of rods spanning budget to expert. Amazed to find that there are baitboats and sleep systems, chairs and bivies in stock too. Not bad for a small shop...not bad at all"



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and our collective stories eventually would rival any other emerging big carp water of that era – special times.

Nick, Jez, Richie, Alan et al had seen fish that we hadn't in the close season, and they made their start on the big lake for the opening week. On the other hand, we targeted the smaller lakes for the first couple of days and just caught tench – they kept the opening couple of days' success a secret at the time, but when they started to extend their holidays that week and stay on the lake, we knew something was happening (craftiness was a key skill then too!). The secret blew when I went back a week later having crammed in a few days' leave and stood with Spinner behind Nick who was set up on the Point (a very commanding swim looking up the big lake) one early afternoon.

Nick was frying some week-old bacon (it really was a fluoro green colour!) when his left hand rod bent around to the left with a real humph. As we stood recovering from a couple of quick pints in the Wagon and Horses, the size of the carp on the other end became apparent by the effort needed to land what weighed in at a staggering 29lbs, and this beautifully plated mirror is still embossed on my mind. This was a spectacular fish back in the day, and its capture became a real game changer. Our intuitions were collectively right: we had dropped on





what was to be the start of a very special relationship with this iconic Midlands lake.

Getting the rods in was now the priority. I settled for a swim on the dyke bank, and although I hadn't fished it, I had seen it from both the boat and more importantly by snorkeling it, so I knew exactly what I was going to do and why. The gully was a couple of meters wide; the far side a pretty straight side and the near side was gently sloping. It was silt lined and had a little weed but was predominantly clear. The Point swim where Nick was set up was to my right. I believed I could intercept fish in this spot, as they moved up and down the gullies following the wind and therefore the food.

Pond weed columns existed in this area of the lake; I knew where they were and that they were full of water sails because I had swam around them and examined them weeks before. The wind was right for my spot that day – warm – left to right down the lake and in essence funneling warm water down the gullies to the deeper drainage sump area of the lake – it did look perfect.

150 baits were catapulted out to a marker float (I used to count them then for each rod) onto the sloping side of the gully 50 yards or so from the bank. Two-bait stringers were attached, and all



three went out across this baited area on bottom baits. Simple, no-tangle rigs were tied with Cortland Micron braid (dyed brown and green). The hooks were Drennan Super Specialists 6s, hook links were 8ins long, and the hair was tied to come off the shank midway by tying it off with whipping thread.

I remember the feeling I had that day clearly – it was one of huge excitement and anticipation only experienced when you are pioneering on a new, hardly fished carp water – everything was unknown, and my thoughts were all about what could be. The now cult Bamford Optonics were fine-tuned for action and accompanied by my shiny new Kinder Egg Surprise homemade indicators on cut-down broolly ribs (thanks to fellow BCSG member Shaun Harrison for the design). I had the gear; I just needed the carp!

As afternoon turned into evening, the lake looked majestic with warm winds in my direction; everywhere was lush green and the peacefulness of the place was breathtaking. Fish fingers pan were devoured off the frying, and a couple of cans later, all was just perfect. Bleasby was just the place to be. At 6.15 pm, with no prior warning, all hell broke loose. The right hand rod closest to the deeper end roared off, and line peeled from the spool with the yellow Kinder Egg rattling uncontrollably behind the rod eye. Grabbing the rod, it bent so hard in my hand that I had absolutely no control of the beast on the other end as it started a 30-yard run to my left, crossing over the other two rods and running around a big willow immediately to my left. I just couldn't put any pressure on it that could slow it down. Realising disaster inevitably awaited if I continued with so much force, I eased off and tried the "I'll dummy it" approach by really easing off the torque to see it slowed in



its anger as it powered toward the willow tree. Well, the plan didn't work at all, and the carp came to a halt in its sunken branches.

With no time to waste, I was down to my M&S underpants (they only did white then). The lads all gathered around with cameras and landing nets to try to assist as we all realised something decent had come into play here. I remember wading around the tree up to my waist and thinking all the time, 'I've lost it! I've lost it!' The line was motionless; I could feel nothing! Then with a sinking heart, my right hand felt the line tug, and it was game on again. I couldn't see anything initially until I parted some wet branches and leaves and there she sat midwater, facing towards me. Spinner gently passed the net to me, we lowered it in under her, and I slowly lifted the cord over her head. It was netted and secured – job done. This fish probably hadn't ever been hooked before, so it clearly wasn't too alarmed by what was happening at this stage, and with hindsight, it was very compliant.

There was a huge sense of excitement and almost a quietness at the same time. There was a dawning reality that this was a very big carp for Nottinghamshire and the Midlands, so with fish across my chest, I stood and for a moment and reveled in the glory of the capture of my first Bleasby carp. At 33lb 4oz, the mirror was clearly huge and remained the lake's biggest for over six years. I caught her again a couple of years later at a slightly lower weight, as did Shaun Harrison. This fish remains etched in our minds – a proper 'old school' capture. Interestingly, Shaun caught it from off the Point swim, but in the same area where I had hooked it. I am convinced that big carp have their favorite places, and I'd say never ignore a



spot where a big fish has previously been caught. That evening really turned out to be special... The rods were wound in, and off to the Wagon we strolled till very late, as I remember. Phil the landlord loved us; we made him laugh, we filled his till and the pool table with money and caused no problem for him.

The next morning at about 6am, the left hand rod roared off this time and the second Bleasby carp was well hooked and battling. With a rather 'thick head', I was in again. At 22lb





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14oz, this fish was just as good for me as the 33 – it was what it represented and meant to me that really mattered, not just its size. I do wish modern day anglers would talk more about what they think and feel about the pastime of angling itself and not obsess with notching up “at all cost” tallies of 20s / 30s, 40s and 50s – just being there at places like Bleasby in the 80s was good enough.

I enjoyed several years there and caught some great fish, and every one counted, as it certainly wasn't an easy place to get to grips with. The memories of rolling fresh bait up on the bank, which I regularly did, makes lads chuckle when I talk about it now, but it worked, and I do think it all contributed to the picture. Hand rolled pop-ups with 10mm poly balls inserted into them from Terry Eustace's Gold Label brand became a real edge the following summer, and these accounted for some belting fish when presented over weed in the shallows after



heavy prebaiting throughout the close season.

Having moved onto Hutchy's Cinnamon for the 1986 pre-season baiting campaign, still using the same base mix, the carp were literally ripping up the weed for the bait days before the season kicked off. We had the lake to ourselves this time with just a few other local anglers, so it was potentially game on if we kept baiting and the fish didn't move off to spawn before June 16<sup>th</sup>.

I had mastered a way of using pieces of lead to balance the baits to sit up off the weed, and then they would drop slowly after a few minutes of taking on the lake water. They worked better for me than my microwaved pop-ups (who does that now?), as being much softer, they released their flavour quicker and reacted more like free baits when disturbed.

The fish started to come like clockwork that week at around 5-5.30am. I kept adding more days off to my holiday without any trouble – one of the benefits of my boss being an angler and a real gent too. Rolling boilies in batches of three or four pounds in weight behind the swim was an alternate day routine, and with bright red stained hands and the spice smell of cinnamon everywhere, it wasn't that hard to work out what I was using.

Not all the years were productive though as the pressure grew on the lake because of loose tongues. Although



it wasn't my style to talk about the fish we had caught, it was inevitable the word would break out, which it eventually did. Some good anglers came and went after they had had a few fish, and fair play to them all, I say. They followed their passion, and I do respect them for it. There's always more to write about this legendary Midlands complex: other opening week sessions, winter fishing and mass baiting particle success off the long island, but another day perhaps.

Why was the 'old school era' so enjoyable, and now why is it so fondly talked about at carp meetings I go to and on social media group pages? Well, for me it's about a few things: it was discovery time, and everyone was learning together – written material and information about baits, rigs, and styles of carping were all limited. We weren't saturated with magazines and advertising; it was never about looking good on the bank and all walking around in the same olive-colored clothing, and there weren't rig books and pre-tied rigs available, nor were there vast amounts of baits and companies to buy from. Many of us made our gear then; we whipped rods up, made bite indicators and adapted our old coarse fishing gear to do the job. We scratched about for bait recipes and ingredients, experimented with stuff from the supermarkets and wore whatever old clothing we had that was warm. Fundamentally fish size wasn't the major driver for many – yes, we wanted decent fish, but it wasn't an obsession then. What was indeed obsessive was wanting more of the camaraderie that existed on these types of venues and syndicates. The people I chose to fish with then and indeed now are still my greatest friends. The carp scene at that time was just so memorable for me.



I haven't been back to the great Bleasby complex for some years now. What's pleasing though, is to know that it is in very safe hands and now run by another Bleasby veteran who fell in love in with the place so much he decided to buy the rights to it when Mansfield Borough AC eventually sold it. Those 'old school days' were magical – we must all try to kept the spirit of real pioneering carp fishing alive, and I am pleased to say that's my experience of the essence of the BCSG, a group of old schoolers who in the main want to do just that.







# MEMORY

**I** was born in London's East End at the end of the Second World War. It was a great time for kids, even if money and every other commodity was in short supply. There were bombsites to play on aplenty, even if we didn't understand the danger involved, and proper mates to play there with. Like every other youngster of my generation, I dreamed of two things: I wanted to grow up to be a professional footballer or a cricket player for England. My dad didn't rate either! He often pointed out to me that the top wage for a footballer of the time was £20 a week, and I'd never get rich or earn a living like that! Although I played both football and cricket at every opportunity, my dad took it upon himself to teach me another leisure opportunity, that of fishing! "You'll like it," he said. "And the great thing is you can do it on your own, whenever and wherever you wish." I wasn't sure at the time, but the passing of years has taught me what profound words my dad spoke, as he did many times in his lifetime.

In the late 1940s and 1950s, the East End was gifted with many places to fish: the Rivers Roding and Lea, the ponds of Epping Forest, the gravel pits excavated immediately after the war in Dagenham, Ockendon and other parts of Essex to name but a few. As a young boy, I was in my element, fishing with, and learning from, my dad and others in an environment that was safe, and at a time when there were fish aplenty to be fished for and caught. I learned quickly, and because of my teachers, well. Because life was the way it was, and fishing was one of life's adventures, one quickly made friends with other likeminded individuals.

I caught fish of all species, many of which might go unrecognised by today's current generation of anglers: stickleback, minnow, bullhead, loach, gudgeon, roach, rudd,





dace, barbel, tench, perch, pike, chub and even crucian carp. It wasn't until that special school visit to the London Zoo as a primary school pupil that I found and began to fall in love with carp. It was probably towards the end of the 1950s when, with all my classmates, I was set free on the London Zoo, equipped with a clipboard, pencil and questionnaire, which had to be completed after visiting the various enclosures that existed there at the time. I failed miserably that day! I made my initial visit to the aquarium and spent the rest of the time drooling over "Clarissa", Richard Walker's record Redmire common carp. I spent so long there that I was suitably admonished by my failure to answer other questions when I eventually returned to school!

It was a few years later that I saw my first "proper" carp angler. I was fishing at Bent Marshalls gravel pits in Dagenham with my dad when I wandered off looking for a more productive swim, as kids were prone to do in those times. Clambering down an embankment, I came upon a silent man, sat beside two matching cane rods, perfectly matched and parallel, as they rested by the water. I asked had he caught anything, but no answer was forthcoming. I was both confused and embarrassed, thinking at first the man might be deaf. I should have known better... clearly I had just entered the silent and secret world of the carp angler, which my dad eventually explained to me later.

Another significant moment in my initiation with carp was a visit to the Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge on the edge of Epping Forest in Chingford. It had been converted into a museum, and there on the walls were cased fish, large carp that had been caught in the Epping Forest ponds including the

Warren Pond just across the road. A carp angler was born, and what follows are “pictures” and stories from the years that followed.

Without any shadow of a doubt, the most exciting period of my carp fishing, specimen hunting fishing life was during the early years of learning my trade. My first ever carp fishing setup comprised a pair of honey coloured glass Capella Carp Master rods, matched to two Ambidex reels. There were no rigs; simply a hook tied on the line. Much of my fishing in the Forest ponds, for hard fighting common (wildie) type carp was simply freelining lobworm or a bunch of brandling worms. I would spend the time from dawn wandering the bank looking for areas of cloudy water caused by groups of carp digging away in the silt and bubbling like mad. A worm freelined among them would at times bring about a blistering run when one of them found the bait. They were not big fish, but what they lacked in size, they more than made up for in ambition! As no one knew how big they might be, every one was a potential monster.

At this time in my angling life there were only three rigs: the freelined method just mentioned for bottom fishing and a freelined method for surface fishing with crust, link-ledgered crust, which we referred to as balanced crust. Or for freelining bread paste, or sausage paste as it became, we employed a short piece of plastic tube above the hook. A small crust pad was rested in the bend of the hook to support the egg-shaped paste, and the plastic tube was pushed into the top of the paste to prevent the line from slicing through it on the cast. Folklore said carp didn't like resistance! As I moved into the



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early 1970s, the Capella rods were swapped to some green glass rods of the faster taper variety, and the Ambidex reels were swapped for Mitchell 300s. I also began to widen the number of fisheries to include South Essex Carp Fishery, Moor Hall, South Weald, Lake Meadows and Shangri-La near Clacton in Essex.

At the start of the 1970s, I began to travel to Kent with my friend, Jim Twitchett. We fished odd sessions at Brooklands and Horton Kirby, but our main attention focussed on the lakes at Darenth, which were controlled at the time by Halls Angling Scheme. Our initial efforts were on what is now known as the Tip Lake, but we moved to fish on the Big Lake the following year when it became one of the first lakes to be opened for





close season fishing. It was around this time that courtesy of Jim, we discovered trout pellets and began to grind them into a powder and mix them with groundbait to use as a paste for bait. Our catches rose dramatically, even more so when we accessed freeze-dried shrimp and added that into the mix. Courtesy of my friends Dick Gayner, Paul Gower, Dick Bodie and Chris Ford, we also discovered Waveney Valley lakes in Norfolk, and Jim and I had a few multiple catches on C Lake, one of which was witnessed by Peter Mohan and led to my membership of the BCSG.

Around the same time, I also got to know Bob Morris and Cliff Webb who were two very successful anglers fishing at Darenth at the time. I have to say, I learned much from them both –



something for which I am still grateful to this day. In 1972, I met Fred Wilton through Bob, and I also read his articles about “high protein baits” in the BCSG magazines of the time. I was both fascinated and intrigued, particularly when I saw the results Fred and those who fished with him were achieving on the bait. After years of using naturals and paste baits here, we were for the first time given an opportunity to fish with a skinned bait (or boilie as it became known), which was left alone by other species of fish.

To say that the world changed doesn't do justice to what was about to happen. A group of anglers fishing with Fred started to have amazing catches. Bob Morris became the first angler to catch 100 double figure carp in a season. This occurred at a

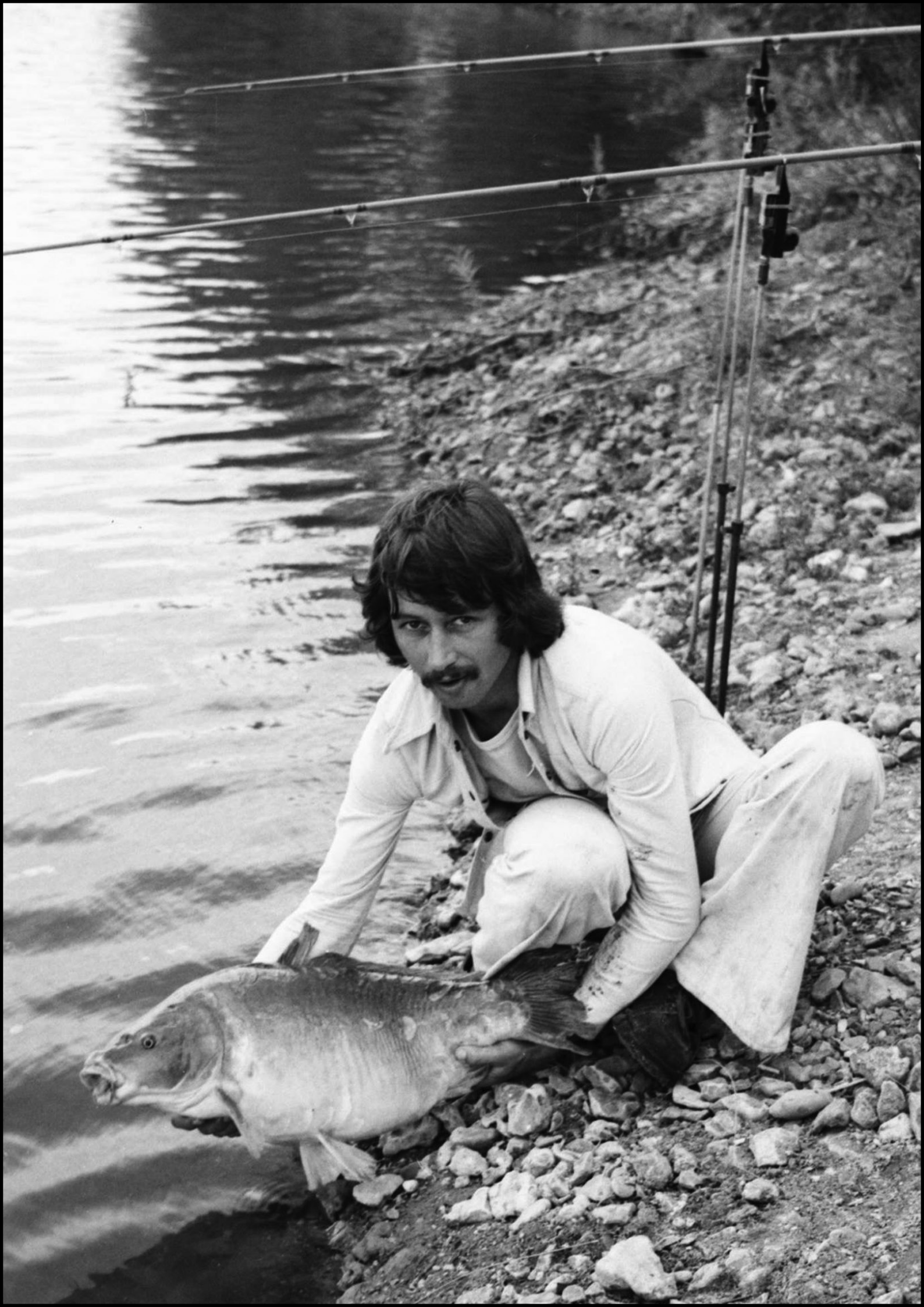






time when the average carp angler of the day was catching 10! Because of my friendship with Bob, I was invited to join Fred's baiting team the following year. My fishing world was about to change! We were catching fish on Fred's baits like they were going out of fashion, and so it continued to be for the next couple of years. We absolutely hounded the fish in the Big Lake and Tip Lake using Fred's baits and baiting approach. We also put Fred's baits to good use on an Essex lake that became known as Little Grange in the years that followed.

As an aside, because of my involvement in the BCSG, I was often called upon to interview prospective members of the group. Two notable names that come to mind from that period were Kevin Nash and sometime after, Kevin Maddocks. I mention







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that at this point, as both have their part to play in the history of carp fishing, and Kevin Maddocks, along with his fishing partner Lenny Middleton, who I also got to know well, came to make their mark on carp fishing in a rather amazing way.

By the early 1970s, the carp at Darenth and some of the other Kent venues we were visiting were becoming quite difficult to catch. They would play with the bait, sucking and blowing,



causing the line to twitch and the bottle tops we had come to use as indicators to rise and fall without giving an opportunity to strike. To overcome this, our rods were fished high, and we would tease the line and the indicator back to improve the chance of a savage take. The practice was known as “twitcher hitting” and resulted in the capture of a good many carp. We also began to further improve our chances by exposing the hook point rather than continuing to hide it inside the bait. Bob, Cliff and I would roll a sausage-shaped bait and mount it on the shank of the hook, leaving the point exposed. We were doing quite well with this when Kevin, Lenny, Bob Davis, Keith Gillings and Paul Bray arrived at Darenth. I wasn’t sure at the time, but I now believe only Kevin and Lenny were using the



“hair rig”. For the second time in a ten-year period, the world was about to change! The blistering runs that Kevin and Lenny were getting had to be seen to be believed.

To put this in perspective, one has to consider the names of the anglers fishing at Darenth at the time. Try this lot for a who’s who of carp fishing: Fred Wilton, Robin Monday, Bob Morris, Alan King, Kevin Maddocks, Lenny Middleton (and their previously mentioned friends), Andy Little, Lee Jackson, Martin Locke, Alan Smith, Paul Snapp, Jim Gibbinson, Gerry Savage, Martin Gay, Terry Glebioska, Mick Nolan, John Holt, Pete Springate, Kenny Hodder, Ian Booker, Dennis Davies, Del Romang, Chris Riddington, the Streeter brothers, Colin Swaden, Geoff Kemp, Billy Lovett, Tony Howells, Micky Sly and Les Bamford, none of which takes into account the many anglers who followed us in the next few years. So the two great advances in Carp fishing happened there and then, at Darenth, and right under my nose – the boilie and the hair rig, and I was lucky enough to find out about them and put them to good use in those early days at both Darenth, other Kentish venues and those in the Colne Valley and Essex as well.

I’m not going to dwell too much on particle baits other than to retell the following... When Jimmy Twitchett and I were fishing Waveney Valley, we were lucky enough to make the acquaintance of Chris Yates, who at the same time was enjoying early success at Redmire Pool. He was interested in our approach and told us about sweetcorn in return. “You’ll know you’ve got the right stuff,” he said. “There’s a little green giant on the tin!” To be honest, both Jim and I thought it was a wind-up! By the time we got into it, others had reaped the rewards before us! You live and learn as they say!





During the 1970s and 80s, I spent a considerable part of my life fishing for carp during the winter months. I'll not write a lot about it, as I was once persuaded to write a book about Winter Carping. Instead I've included a few photos to reminisce about! I think I'd better pause there for a moment and reflect on just a few of the less good moments and experiences of so called "old school."

In the very early days, finding a good quality line was the scourge of most carp anglers. Anyone who used rods with hard chrome rings and tungsten carbide tips rings will remember the damage they did to line. If you add to that the abrasion-less features of line in those days, and you'll start to get an idea. Two of the most reliable lines we found were Bayer Perlon and the Sylcast on a bulk spool, but they were a long time coming. Maxima also had its fans, but I can't confess to having been one of them. Those of you who used the original shop bought Heron buzzers and others of the wire antenna variety will be reminded of how useless they were. For a long period of time, I remember fishing at night without buzzers, being reliant on long drops on the washing up bottle indicators with isotopes. Watching them weave their way into the butt ring as the reel handle began to spin was excitement indeed.

Over many years, we used to alter our Heron buzzers. I remember replacing the wire antenna with stainless steel ones, and the pressed contacts inside with GPO contacts. We even had lights on the front of them. Eventually, my friend Del Romang, he of Delkim fame, began to offer a bespoke upgrading of buzzers starting with Herons. I could tell you of a range of disasters watching friends use the original Herons. I remember my mate Dick Bodie becoming so infuriated one



# 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.

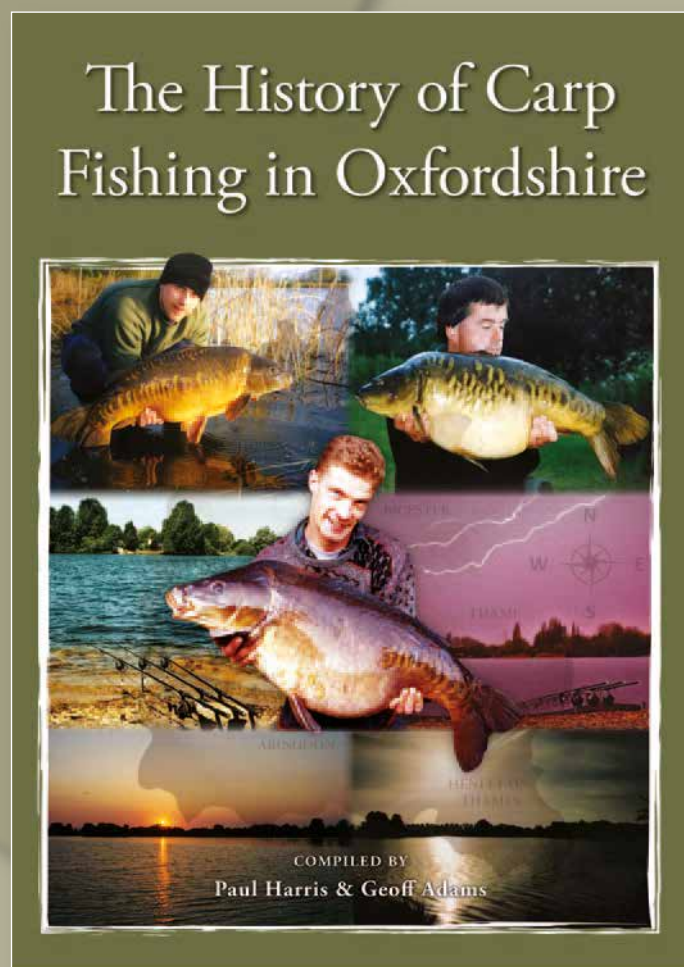
Nick Stansfield is a brilliant young Oxford carper who doesn't shout about his catches. We have two incredible chapters from him from two of the county's most iconic lakes, The Leisure Park and The Big S! Josh Chatfield has written a fantastic chapter which really gives you an insight into how fishing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

## DEREK STRITTON

night at Lake Meadows in Billericay that he wrenched one off the bank stick and hurled it in the air! He then spent about four hours of the following day trying to retrieve it from the tree it had landed in! I also remember watching another friend whose buzzer had been sounding almost all night despite him constantly adjusting it, removing the front plate to find it full of earwigs wthats set his buzzer off with every movement! Before leaving buzzers, I'd best own up to the time when Brian Mills showed the original prototype Optonic to Bob Morris





and me one winter night at Bysingwood. The original had the alarm wheel on the side, not in the middle, and there was the problem of line catching under it. "It'll never catch on," I remarked to Brian! Just shows what I know! Within 12 months I was clambering to get the revised model with the indicator wheel set in the middle of the indicator!

Talking of crass errors of judgement, after years of sleeping on those awful ratchet type sunloungers we used to buy from Woolworths and Argos, which used to split, or elastics break in the middle of the night and deposit you in a heap on the floor, we were clamouring for something better. Anyone who could afford one purchased instead a Lafouma type bed, but even they had shortcomings. Then one night in the 1980s, a young Cliff Fox turned up at a Carp Society meeting at Aquatels in Essex with his first ever version of a Fox bed chair. Ritchie Macdonald was on site that night and asked for his comments on stage. "It's crap," he said, in typical Ritchie style. "It'll never catch on – it's too heavy!" So it transpired that both Ritchie and I proved ourselves at being less than competent reviewers of products!

Anyone who lived in the pre-digital age will tell you what fun it was with photography! Well not quite! You'd just caught the fish of your lifetime and persuaded a passer by, or even an angler in the next swim to take some photos for you. They'd reeled off a whole 36-exposure film, and you'd taken it to the chemists for developing on Monday, for collection on Friday. Then you waited outside the shop excitedly to collect, only to find, after parting with your hard earned cash, that then were out of focus, ten had your head chopped off and the remainder showed you as a distant dot on the horizon. Some of today's



“carp tigers” would probably have committed murder! We just grinned and got on with it, simply because that was the way it was!

We weren't very good at carp care in those early days either! Not by design; I just don't think it ever connected with us at first that a fish we caught today would quite simply go and get caught by someone else in a few days' time, hence those terrible “Billingsgate” photos we used to take! Can any of you remember those plastic laundry bags we used to weigh our fish? On the face of things they were quite carp friendly until



those awful winter nights when they became brittle and the bottom would split, leaving the poor old carp deposited on the floor! In the very early days, we used to retain carp in hessian sacks, not the kindest way of caring for them. Then one day I saw Cliff Webb using what became the forerunner of the much kinder industrial nylon sack. Cliff worked at Bexley hospital and had used one of their nylon laundry bags in which he burned numerous holes to allow the flow of water to retain a carp. For the day, it was simply ingenious. I think I'm right



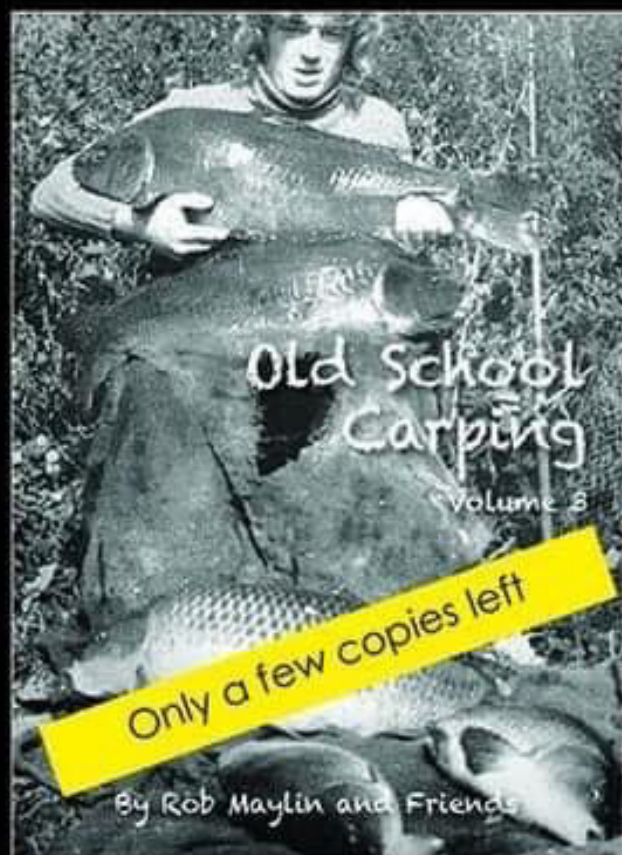
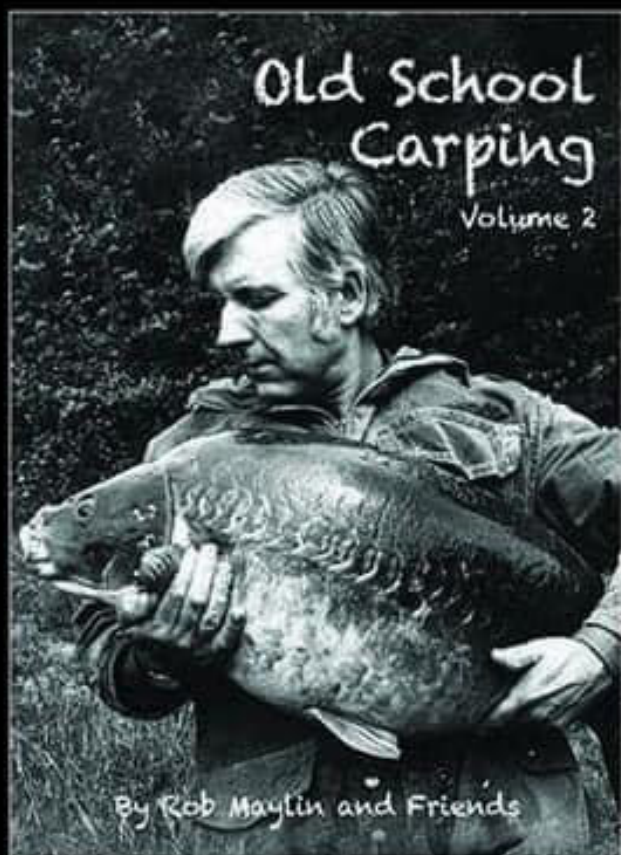
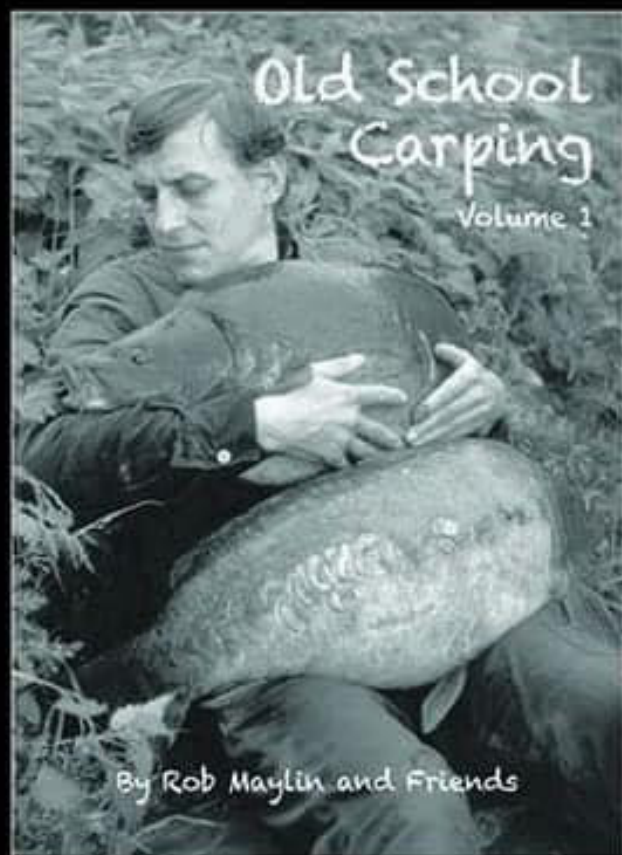
in saying that both Kevin Nash and Del Romang were the first people to produce purpose made nylon slings for retaining carp based on Cliff's idea!

Just before I began to fish for carp on a regular basis, I was doing a fair bit of time on both the Thames and some large Lea Valley gravel pits fishing for bream. Our homemade indicators of the time, and I'm not suggesting we invented them, were made from wine bottle corks. Pushed into them and out the other end were hairgrips. At the looped end of the hairgrip we tied string, which was attached to our front rod rest. The line was then clipped into the sprung end of the hairgrip. If there was a lot of undertow or tide, we added swan shot to the string to increase the weight! Strange that; it doesn't sound a great deal different to the indicator design I use today!

When I first got into carp fishing, we used silver paper coils on the line between reel and butt ring, which was later replaced by plastic rings cut from plumbing pipe. Then there was clear plastic tube of the type used on pumps for fish tanks with a joiner, often with an isotope too. Then there were the Fairy Liquid bottle tops; you could get red, green yellow or orange ones, and they were all free of charge! They were fished with closed bale arms, anti-reverses off and hung between butt and second ring. The quality ones had an isotope attached. Some of us also used them with a metal drawing pin pushed into them with a magnet on the floor to increase tension, as well as saving the indicator swinging back and forth in the wind. The advent of the hair rig brought about monkey climbers, the original designed by Ricky Gibbinson and based on plastic wine bottle coils. There followed a whole range of home made and commercial versions. Not long after there were swingers,

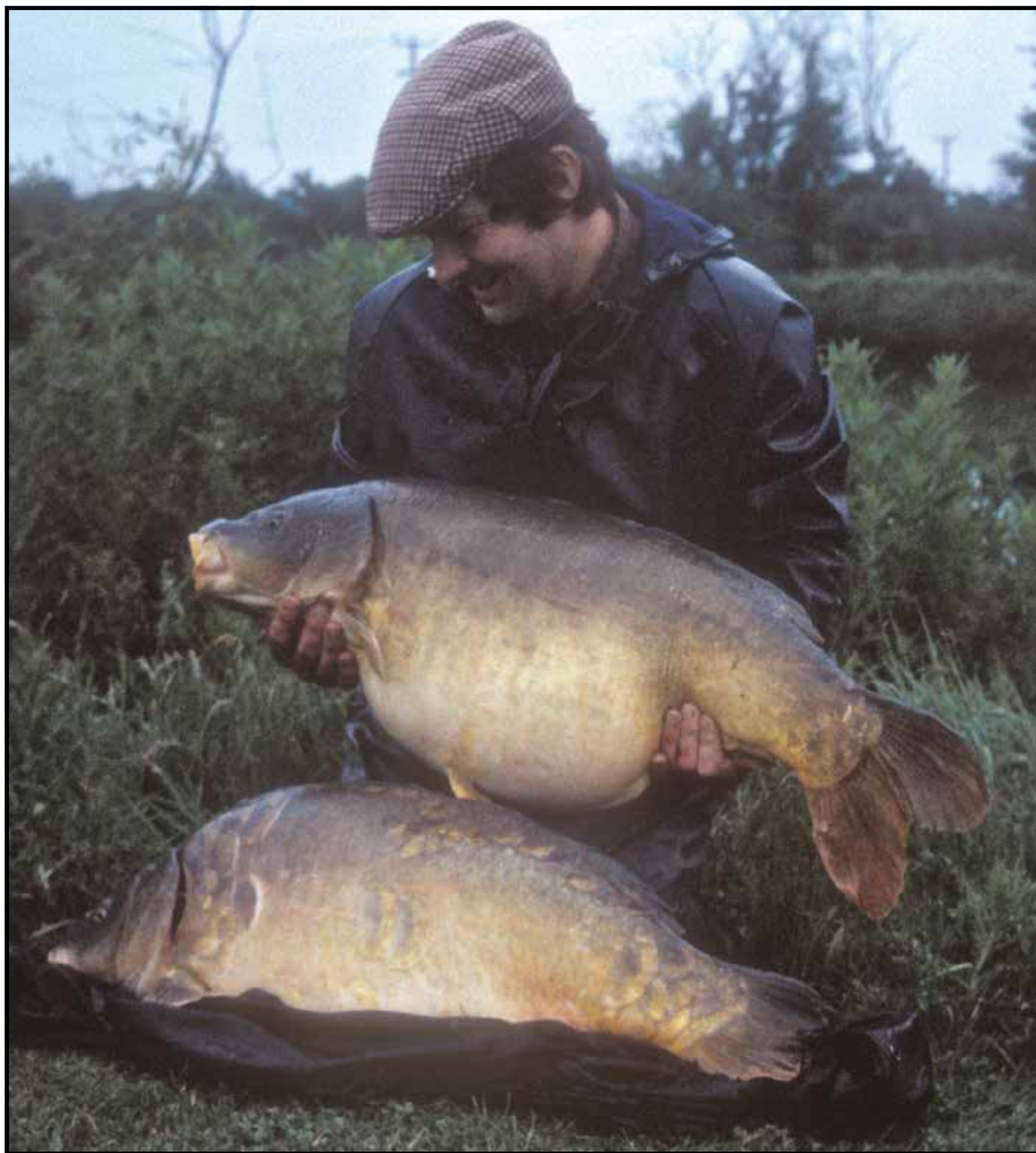


# OLD SCHOOL CARPING SERIES



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springers, and a whole variation of ideas. Strange then that my current indicators are not far removed from the style I used over 50 years ago! As I used to say, "Goes around comes around" for anyone who remembers that series in Carp-Talk.

When Kevin Maddocks appeared at Darenth, he brought with him not only the hair rig, but a set of reels known as Cardinals,



which were quick to catch on. He also brought rods made of the new material, carbon fibre. The rods became known as KM1s. Since that time we have had a whole variety of carbon rods, originally ten foot-plus, then eleven, twelve and even thirteen. More recently, we have seen stalking rods produced anything from six foot upwards. Specialist reels have continued to evolve, although there are a good many who continue to use some of the older and well proven ones, me included!

Towards the end of the 1970s and early 1980s, we began to see carp anglers of the day travelling further afield for their fishing to find fish bigger and sometimes more plentiful than the ones that existed in close proximity to where they lived. I've included pictures here of some of my early experiences



and sorties out of Kent and Essex, including the Colne Valley at Savay, North Harrow and Yateley. They seemed like great adventures of the time, yet when compared to the journeying that goes on today, they were minor by comparison.

My review of “old school” is beginning to come to an end. In 1981, we saw the inaugural meeting of the Carp Society in Sheffield, and from that time on, regional meetings, conferences, magazines and general communications began to open up the secret world of carp fishing I had experienced in my early years. I was part of the development of the early Carp Society, so there is nothing critical in that comment, as I loved that period of time. There was a real buzz about carp fishing, and things began to change with a much more open approach to sharing ideas, tactics and waters. For me, by the end of the 1980s when the Carp Society was really flying, “old school” became “new school.” Your view of “old school” will





always be affected by when you were born and came to carp fishing in the first place. Hence this is mine!

I have been trying to think how best to summarise the changes I've seen over many years. So I'll use a car story to illustrate. When I used to drive my minivan to Yateley, where there was a lot of car theft, I would disarm it (to prevent it being stolen) by removing the rotor arm from the distributor. The biggest difficulty from then on was to remember where



you'd hidden the rotor arm when you returned to the car! If you're old enough to understand that, then you'll realise what an advantage immobilisers and car alarms are today, and how much the world has moved on.

I still enjoy my carp fishing today 50-plus years after it began. At the end of the day, it is what it is and what you want to make of it, and whilst my jaw often drops when I see the size of carp now being landed both in this country and abroad, I still feel I have been lucky enough to experience the most exciting years of it, especially as there is so little that is unknown today, and even if it is, as soon as it's discovered, it's out there for everyone. Most of my fishing nowadays is done on small club waters with no history of big carp, the reason being, it allows me to continue to practice the things I have always really enjoyed: find some fish, work out how to catch them and enjoy the moment just for me, if or when it happens, often in solitude just like the early days.

By comparison to most of today's younger carp anglers, I'm now a bit of an "old boy", so it often occurs that when I'm in my local tackle shop I often encounter "new age carp anglers" who have no idea that I and many others like me have probably carp fished for longer than they've been alive. Their enthusiasm makes me smile, but I sometimes find their patronising attitude mildly annoying, as they often assume that as an "old'un", you could never have entered the world of carp fishing. Since reengaging with the Carp Society in recent times, I have been required to attend a number of carp shows and all of the rigmarole that goes with them. I am fascinated by the current circus that surrounds carp fishing compared to when I started out. I can't say I condone or agree with some of



the gadgets and attitudes I see these days, but there are also some very good guys out there as well as the ones that make me cringe! Each to their own, I suppose. Just treat others as you would want them to treat you, and we can all enjoy this special pastime of ours.

One thing is for sure, despite the awful threat to our sport from predation, carp have never been as plentiful or places to catch them as available as they are today. There are photos that I would have loved to include in here, but many of the early South Weald and Yateley photos went missing when we moved home ten years ago. They are probably under a box, under another box in the loft somewhere! I say this because despite all this writing, I can't help but feel that the photos accompanying this piece tell more of a story. I hope you enjoy!





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**ABU**



# CARDINAL 55 AND 57

**I**n late 1977 Abu Fishing Tackle from Sweden were to introduce their first skirted spool fishing reel. It came in the shape of three models: the 54, 55 and 57. Of the three reels, the 55 was to become an iconic fishing reel for those anglers who would spend hundreds of hours searching for specimen carp, and within three years, the reel had sold in its thousands and was fast becoming a best seller for Abu Sweden.

The reel hosted many different ideas from their finest engineers, the rear drag system being one of those ideas and

the skirted spool another. The internals of the reel were high quality engineering, which consisted of stainless steel worm gear and bronze drive gear, very clever to keep down backlash in the gears, which you so easily found in other reels, silky smooth to use, and the system was every angler's dream to use. Top anglers of the time like Kevin Maddocks endorsed the reel in his very popular "Carp Fever" book, making very clear his preference for the reel. It was the reel the specimen world had waited for.

The same year, same time the Cardinal 54 and 57 were also introduced, and it wasn't long before the 57 took a hold on carp fishermen too, a bigger slightly heavier reel meaning it





also had a bigger, deeper spool, holding more line. This was to be helpful for those anglers who were making waves on the much bigger gravel pits and meres around the country chasing their quarry.

Of the three reels, the 55 was the better seller, but five decades on, the 57 is just about edging the 55 for being a desirable reel. This would be put down to purely numbers of reels manufactured. While the 54 had the same build quality and reliability of its two bigger brothers, it was aimed more at specimen bream and chub fishing.

1981 saw CEO Len Borgstrom leaving the company, and in addition Garcia becoming part of the Abu company. The reels



had gone through a few revisions to make them even better, and just before Garcia got involved, a new silent A/R was added to the reel. That change was really the only major change to the reels, which faded out in 1984. The gold name of Garcia on the decal will show you when the reel became part of that joint business.

This rugged, reliable fishing reel also had the odd problem too – mainly the spools. I do know of several anglers who talk about “spool explosions” and indeed I had one break in half on my reel. For me, it’s all about the way the line sits on the spool, and if there is a slight warp in it, the line ends up strangling the spool and the top part of the spool separates from the bottom half. I do think that having the supplied yellow spool arbour helps prevent this happening by not allowing the line to strangle the spool.







## Cardinal 52·54·55·57

Rugged functionality, designed to do a job, to help you bring to the bank every fish you hook. The anti-reverse button and stern drag control knob are instantly adjustable for lightning-fast fish control, even in mid-fight.

Skirted spools eliminate the old problem of line tangles. Time-phased spool oscillation ensures perfect cross-wound line lay along the whole length of the spool, to prevent coils digging in and spoiling the next cast. Their overall design, incredibly smooth operation and attention to detail represent the finest, most modern engineering achievements in spinning reel development. Manufacturing tolerances are maintained down to thousandths of an inch, and each and every reel goes through 160 critical inspections before it leaves the factory. You have only to fish with one for a few minutes appreciate that there is a lot of very fine engineering under that black Cardinal side plate. Precision you can feel.

The new baby Cardinal 52 is the matchman's reel, for ultralight float and leger techniques with the finest of lines. Cardinal 54 is for the matchman too, especially when he scales up to fish flowing water. The 55 was designed for the specimen hunter. And the 57 was built for the salt water angler. Even though we knew we had designed the smoothest drag system ever for these reels, we didn't realise the 57 was destined to become Britain's most popular 6 lb class boat reel!

(All models convertible to left or right hand wind in seconds.)

Line capacities in meters (approx.)										Ball- Line re-			
Ø mm	0.20	0.25	0.30	0.35	0.40	0.45	Reel	Weight	Gear	bear-	trieve*	Price £	
lbs.	5	7	11	15	18	21	model	g.	ratio	ings	(c. cms.)	Reel	Spool
NEW	140	100					52	235	4.5:1	+	56	35.95	4.35
	300	200	150				54	310	5.1:1	+	71	38.95	4.35
		290	200	160			55	400	5.1:1	+	77	41.95	4.95
					260	200	57	470	4.5:1	+	76	46.75	5.50

\* per handle turn - loaded spool.

All models: low capacity spool included.

The other small niggle is the bail trip. It's a small plastic peg on a block, and it trips the bail when it's been opened. The one thing you need to know is it's classed as a serviceable part and was designed to wear. It brushes over a metal riser in the housing, and if it were made of metal, it would be a question of a new trip or new housing, the latter being the most expensive option.

Probably the last little niggle would be the Teflon drag washers - not the company's finest hour - but as long as they stay clean and dry, they offer a good service to the angler.

Prices for the 55 were £29.85 in 1979.

The cardinal 57 was listed at £34.95.

The Cardinal 54 was listed at £28.85.







# **BRACKENS POOL 1990/91**

What spurred me to write this article was spending the afternoon with Urban Baits' Terry Dempsey. We were engaging in conversation about the good old days and the friends we both have and acquaintances we have made though the angling scene from back then.

So, the season I am going back to is 1990 to 1991 and a small and intimate pit in Hertfordshire called Brackens Pool that was run by Leisure Sports Angling. My brother Kevin and I had heard about Brackens whilst we were fishing at Stansted Abbots and Wormleybury Manor. We first starting fishing over on Brackens around 1988/89, but it was around 1990/91 that we fully concentrated on Brackens Pool.

Now let me give you a little insight into Brackens. It was the smallest out of the complex, the others being the Centre, the South and North Lagoons. Brackens being around three acres in size and full of features including deep margins, weeds, lily pads, snags, plateaux and bars and a small island in the bottom corner called Weedy Corner, Joe Brown's favourite hangout. It really was proper little carp water. At the time the biggest





fish we knew of was White Spot that had reached a top weight of 29lbs, but it had other nice 20s and a good head of upper doubles to go at. A carp anglers little bit of paradise.

I can remember my first session on Brackens. I fished in the corner swim just before the steps on the road bank. I can remember the fish sitting under the snags down to my right around six yards away, so I slipped one rod there and the other just a tad further out from the snags at the bottom of the shelf, the bait being a single tiger nut. The following morning resulted in my first Brackens fish of just under 15lbs, a mirror. And, so my love for the pit was set in stone!

I used to fish with Kevin Wilkinson, my brother who first introduced me to carp fishing when I was ten years old. Now I didn't drive, so Kev was the car donkey, or my dad. Kev had



to have the first pick of the swims, as he did all of the driving, much to my disappointment – he always seemed to get the going swim. Now, my favourite swims were the Step swim, which had reeds to the right with deep margins and to the left a deep bar that crept out of the bay and sloped off at around 25 yards out. There was also a nice clean area around 40 yards out straight in front of the swim.

I spent a lot of time in this area, fishing from the Steps during my time on Brackens. The other swim I liked was one I called the Gravely about half way down the road bank. You could see most of the lake from this swim. Again, it had nice deep margins, but it also had gravel bars around 40/50 yards out. And if no one was in Car Park Corner, you could fish a rod over to the right along the tree lines where there always seemed to be fish.

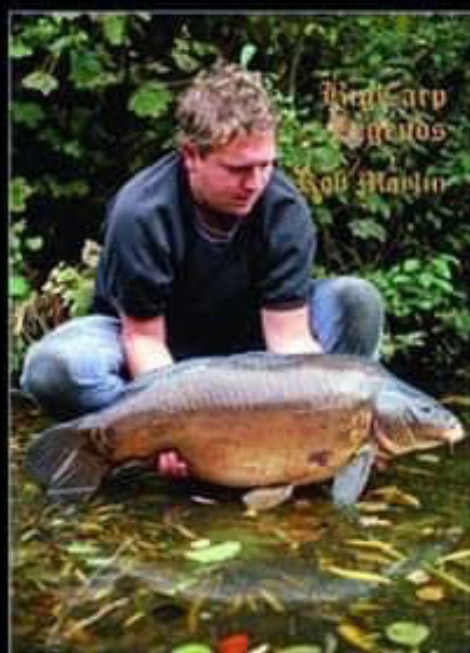
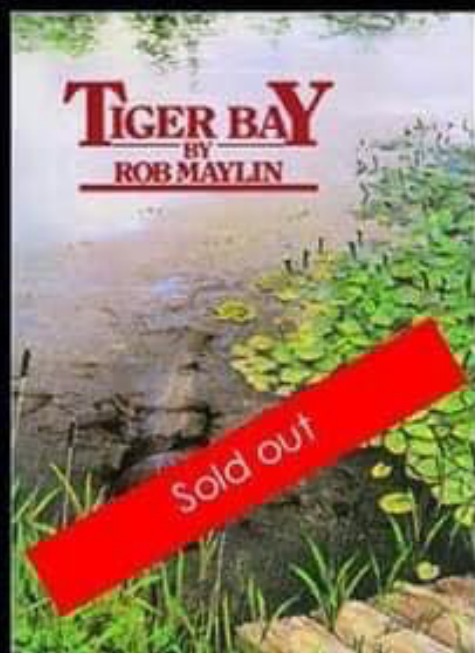
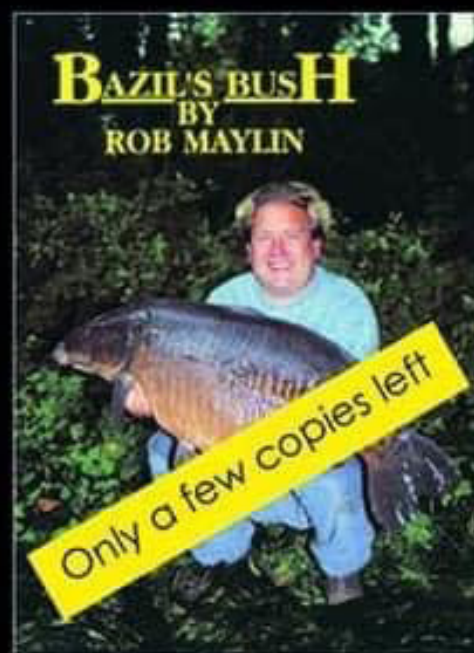
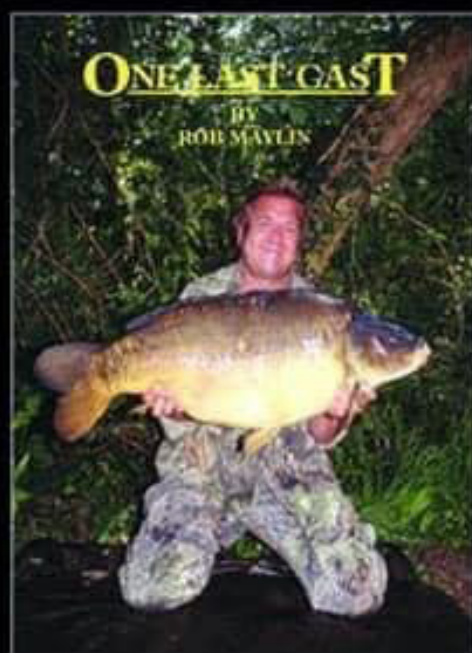
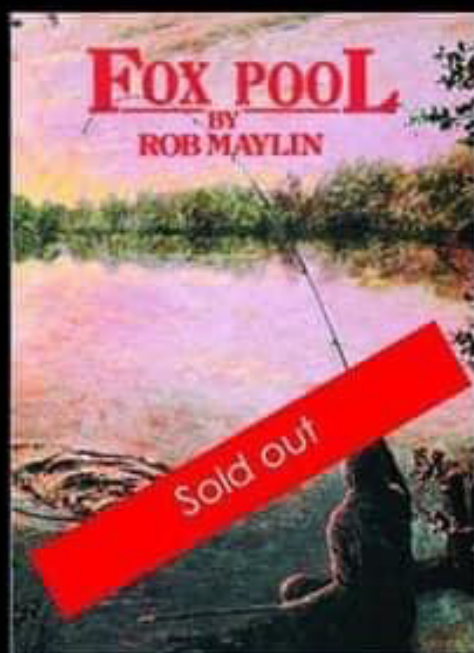
The anglers that fished Brackens were brilliant, such a great laugh. Kev and I regularly met up with people that we had fished with or that we talked to in Simpsons of Turnford. We used to fish with Bill Hancock... RIP, fella... Tony Shaw, aka Wiggy and his mate Lenny... also Joe Brown and his pal Oggy (wonder if he has still got my 55s!). There was also Ivor Davies (the tailiff), Andy the Greek (RIP) Paul Laurence aka Flo and Horse Box John – so many names I'd be here forever if I listed them all. We were all secret squirrels back then, but there





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was no animosity towards anyone, and when someone caught, it was like you caught it yourself. Brilliant, magical times and something that I feel is missing from the sport today.

At the same time, Kev and I had been developing our own fishmeal baits!! Kevin was a bit of a bait buff and I was following quickly in his shoes. And for Brackens we decided to use a fishmeal base mix with large amount of Robin Red and the proper sluice C.L.O, and other binding agents. With this the attractors were the awesome Premier Baits famous Nodd Oil and Krystons Ambio liquid. There were no flavours in this mix, and it smelt the dog's nuts. We made all of our bait fresh on the bank back in those days, only ever taking a small amount of pre-made baits to fire out when we first got there.

Now it was the season of 1991, and there was lots of talk of a new group of lads that were coming to tackle the venue that





had previously been fishing Hainault Park Lake and that they would push the locals off the lake. What a load of bollocks! Not only were they good anglers, but they were really great guys, one of whom became a good friend outside of the angling circuit and I also went raving with on occasions – hence the dodgy long curtain haircut, but that’s another story.

The lads in question were Tyrone Marder aka Tutti, Peter Drisscol, Tattoo Steve the Golf Ball King and Tony More. These boys were humping in the Premier Baits, and their little trademark was rods pointing to the sky, no bobbins or backrests and all had ET bivvy domes... The things you remember from all those years ago! My setup at the time was 12ft 1¾tc North Western Carbon Kevlars (I still have these rods today), Shimano Triton 3500 Sea Spins, Bamford Optonics and a posh 50-inch Nash heavy canvas bivvy and KM bed chair.

Kev and I started to bait heavily, probably anything up to 2kg each over two days’ fishing. This was a lot of bait for back then. The fish really responded to our bait soaked in Premier Nodd Oil, on occasions making a windy lake flat calm. I can recall a capture Kev had of an Italian mirror called Bill’s Fish (named after the late Bill Hancock). It truly was a proper beast of a fish, stunning colours and a proper frame on it. I wanted this fish like you wouldn’t believe, but no, it was never meant to be. Golden bollocks, Kevin, banked it, and here’s the tale of that capture... We still laugh now when we talk about it.

It was around October time, and Kev had had a good run of fish whilst I was blanking my tits off. So, on the Friday, I decided, as soon as the car pulled up at the lake, I’d be on my toes to beat him to the swim. I was full of sheer desperation to get into the Car Park Corner, as when the fish were there,

they were there in numbers, and on the journey to the lake, Kev had mentioned that's where he fancied going.

Now normally Kev always got first choice of swims due to him being the driver, but not today, I thought. As soon as the car pulled up, I was gone like a whippet with my rod holdall and rucksack to secure the swim. In the meantime, I could hear Kev doing his bollocks. Just as I got into the swim, my face dropped! Some dirty bastard had taken a shit right in the middle of the swim. I was gutted! So I walked back to the Gravelly swim where Kev had started to put out his gear. "Bruv," I said. "I feel bad, and I'm out of order... You go in the corner." So a pissed-off Kev suddenly smiled and walked his gear to the corner. One, two, three... and then... "You horrible \*\*\*\*!!" came from out the bushes. I pissed myself laughing and left him to it.







A short while later, Lenny turned up in his work van. Kev came bolting out of the bushes... "You got a shovel, Len?" he said. "Yeah, mate," said Lenny as Kev proceeded to tell him the story. With the offending turd removed, Kev set up. I had fish showing at the back of the bar but failed to catch that night. At first light, Kev came into my swim. "I've got one, mate. It's a lump," he said. I walked into the corner with him and there it is in the net, Bill's Fish. The look in Kev's face was along the line of "That'll teach ya!!" (Karma well and truly got me that morning). She went 28lb 14oz, a proper fish as you can see from the pictures. That session I finally managed a 19lb mirror, all taken on our fishmeal mixes, but have since found out, Kev, being a squirrel, was using Richworth Tuttis over the top of the fishmeals on this occasion, fishing the not so obvious hotspots but fishing to a small fizz of bubbles.

Towards the end of October, I decided to give the rave scene a rest, or should I say, give me a rest, and get back to normality for a week session. I got down on the Sunday to make sure everyone had gone so I had the pick of the swims. I decided on my favourite swim, the Steps on the road bank. A nice breeze was blowing into the bay. I located the end of the bar to my right and put at least 3kg of our special Robin Red fishmeal soaked in Premier Nodd Oil on the bar. The second rod went out in the clear area with only around 100 baits. Both rods were on pop-ups, which were cork ball specials with added Kryston Ambio!! The rigs used were size 1.0 Kamasan salmon hooks with the shank warmed up and bent to give it a kinked over effect with a sliding O-ring and a float stop glued to the bend of the hook. The bait was tied on the O-ring, Cortland micron hook link and a large lump of Kryston putty next to



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the eye of the hook. The rest of the setup was a semi fixed 3oz lead and a long length of rig tubing to help protect the line on the bar.

The following morning, the left hand rod burst into life with a one-toner. As soon as I leaned into the fish, I knew it was a lump, moving off slowly out towards the swim we called the Kamikaze towards Weedy Corner. The fish slowly came back and started to kite left into the bay. I really had to give it some stick considering my rods at the time were only 1¾tc. Finally in front of me and taking gulps of air was a large two-toned mirror. Once on that mat and weighed, she went 30lb 8oz. I couldn't believe it, my first 30 and to my knowledge the first from Brackens in the shape of Two-Tone. She looked massive and my heart was pumping. Mobiles were in the shape of a pay phone in the boathouse club hut. I called Kevin and Tye. Tye sounded happier than me, and Kevin said, "Yeah, right, come on... what you had?"

A short while later, Kevin, Tye and Stud were in the swim looking over the fish and taking a massive amount of pictures. After everyone had gone, the bar received the rest of the bait and the rig went back into position! I was sitting there in awe looking out across the lake trying to take in the capture and eventually jumping up and jigging up and down the bank – MENTAL.

Nothing else happened that day or night, not that it mattered. But I did observe a couple of large shadows moving over the bar on the Tuesday so spent the day rolling more bait. On the Wednesday morning, the right hand rod was away – another one-toner, the sort that's melting line. It was a very similar fight as the two-tone mirror except it looked bigger. I was

trembling seeing it twist and turn in the deep, clear margins, but a short while later she was mine in the bottom of my net.

I was jumping about like a loon. I wound the other rod in and sprinted to the clubhouse to make the call to the lads. Again my brother Kev, Tye and Stud turned up to carry out the photos. The fish was king of the lake and lake record White Spot at 31lb 12oz, a new PB and the lake's second 30lb fish within a week – unbelievable.

The rest of the week went by without any further action. There was a swim that Joe Brown seemed to spend a lot of time in and that was the Weedy Corner to the left of that swim. There was a large bush that hung right over the water and seemed to be an area where hooked and lost fish went and sat under to sulk. So on the Thursday that week, I went and had a look under there, and sure enough White Spot





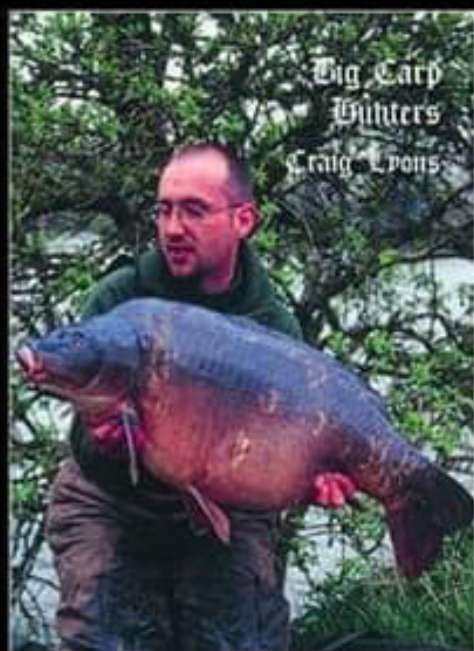
and Two-Tone were both there, but there was a large grey fish I hadn't seen before sitting there too, which was at least 5lbs bigger than Spot. It was bloody massive compared to the other two with dark grey shoulders and light grey underneath.

I managed to hook the grey beast in December from the Steps but unfortunately lost it at the net. Kev just looked as gutted as me as he tried to reach the fish before it realised it was free and turned and slowly moved off as if to say, "Not today, sunshine." I did manage a couple more fish in the winter up to low 20, both commons. The rest of the winter was bleak to say the least, but as we do, we push on with that wanting to be on the bank. But for me it was party time again, and I was back out raving until planning my next season over on the Turnford consortium Railway pit.

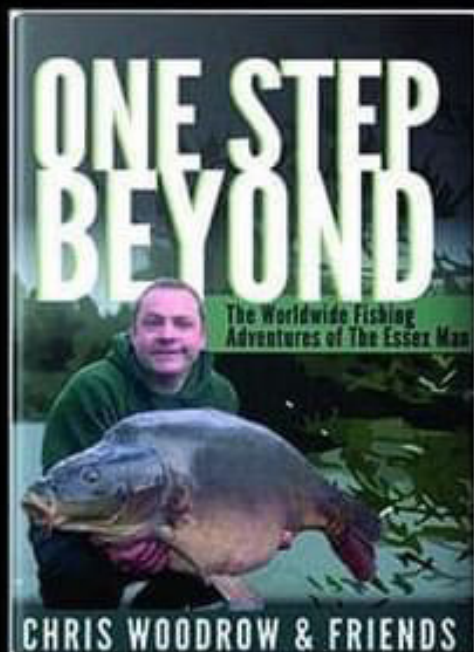
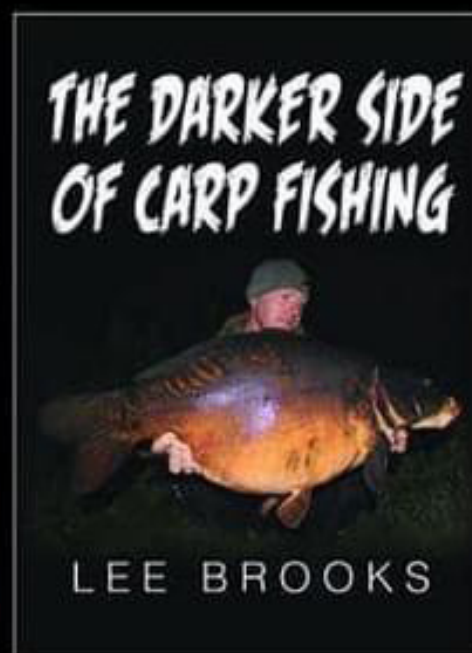




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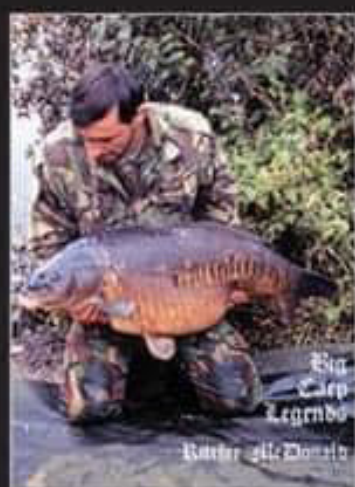
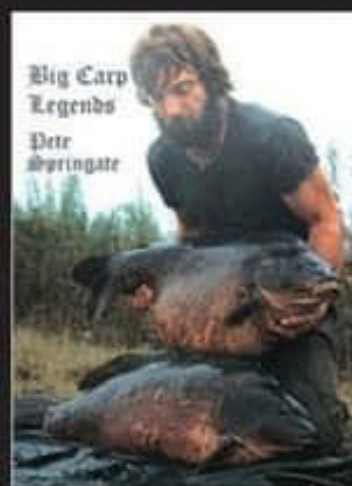
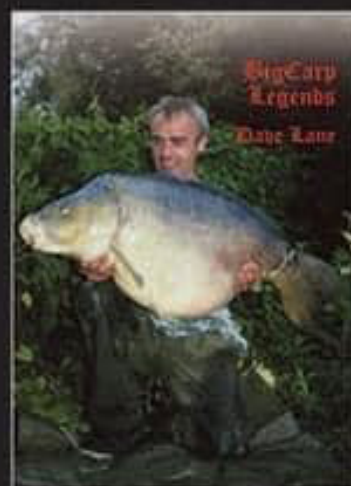
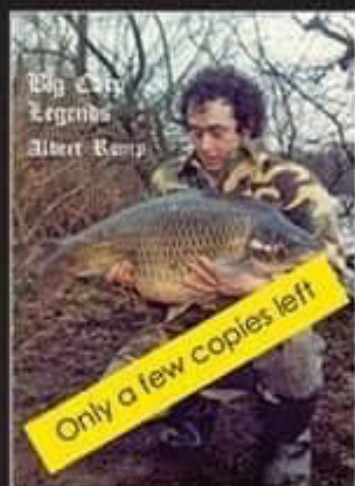


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# IDENTIFY, ADAPT, AMEND AND OVERCOME

**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

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

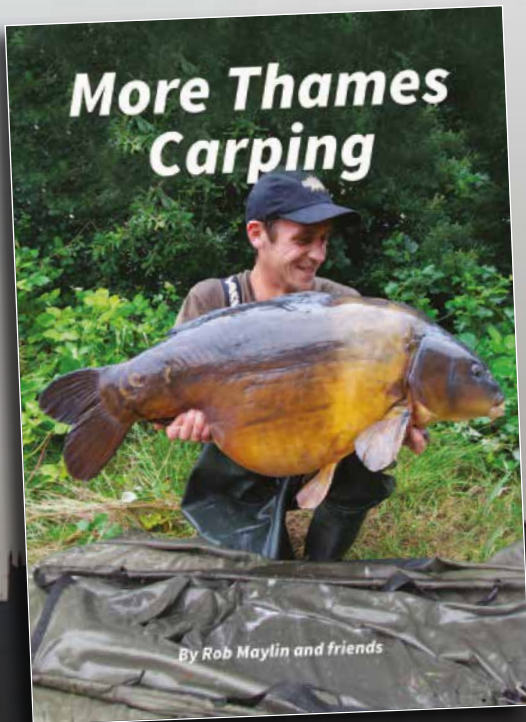




AVAILABLE THIS AUTUMN

# 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!

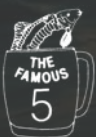
Andrew Sadler has discovered some Thames secrets during his many years on the Thames, for you the reader, he divulges all. Graham Stevens is a Thames stalwart, having written several articles in Big Carp and a couple of chapters in the first Thames book he is back in this volume to tell you how he does 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, a 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 Humphries, 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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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 pecs, 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,

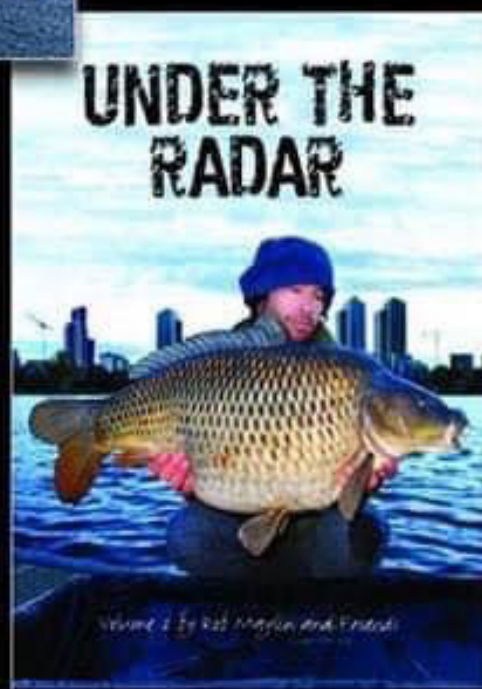
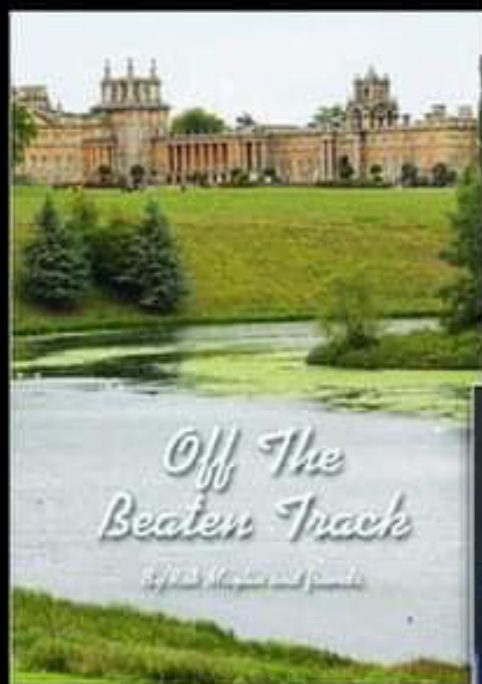


with a fish kiting out of the bay, and with eleven foot depths in the margins, no chance of jumping in! I soon had the battle going my way (braided mainline does that; I'm convinced they fight less on braid, as they cannot get a head of steam up) and soon had a really chunky mirror circling around in 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.



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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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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

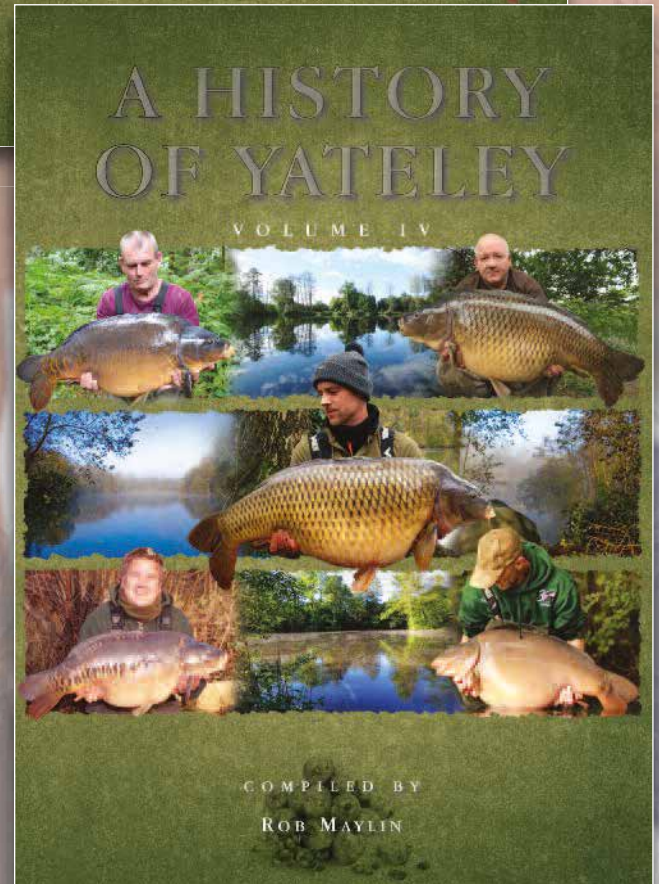
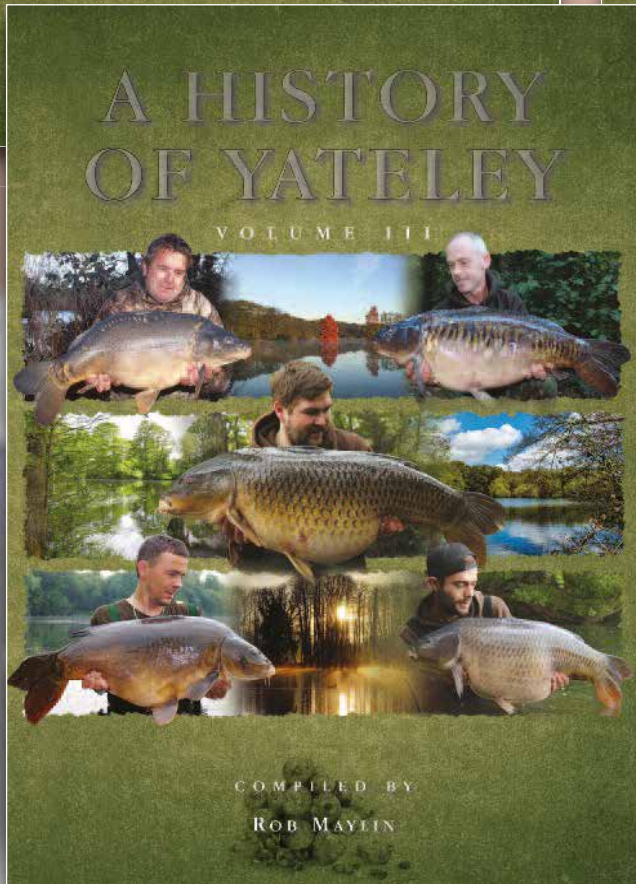
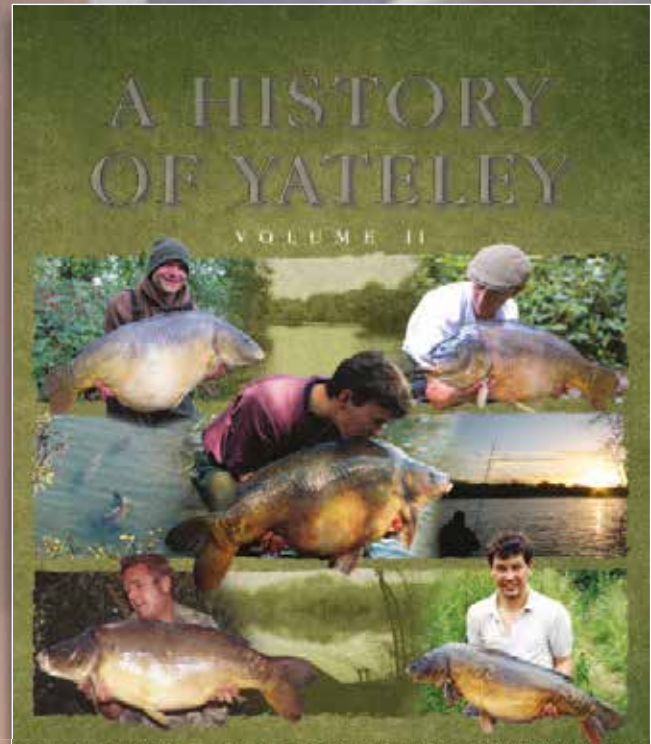
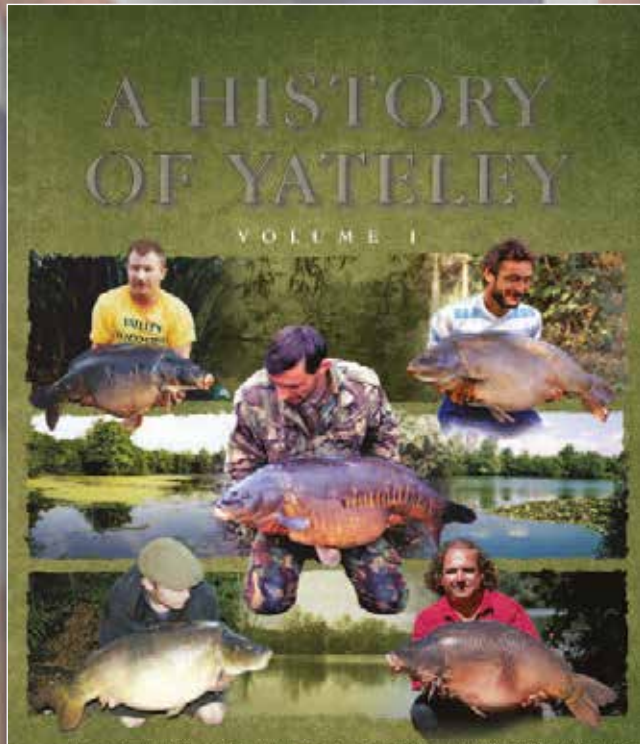


the fish (he was doing a tuition on Lake Eight) and proceeded to rip me for using the distance sticks etc, but you know what? I took it all with a pinch of salt (pink Himalayan), as I knew that all the little things that I had learnt, all the changes I had done and all the effort I had put in, had paid 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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