

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

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DARRELL PECK - MY GO TO RIG
BARRY OCONNOR - REVISITS MILLHAYES
JAMES GRAYSHER - TAKING ON RK LEISURE
SCOTT LLOYD - KEEPING YOUR MAGGOTS

PETE HALL - ELSTOW 1
KATY AYLWARD - CHILSTON
DAVID COWARD - GRENVILLE
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BIG CARP READERS TOP TENS !!

TOP 10 DAY TICKET CARP WATERS

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

TOP 10 FRENCH HOLIDAY VENUES

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

TOP 10 BAIT COMPANIES

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



TOP 10 END TACKLE COMPANIES

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

TOP 10 CARP FISHING BRANDS

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

TOP 10 CARP TACKLE SHOPS

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

TOP 10 ICONIC CARP LAKES

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

BC

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Gary Wadsworth with the best fish out of four, size 6 scorpion curved shank doing the business as usual holding firm against a weedy swim.



Spring is here!!!!
Halo Baits the nuts 12mm pop up over boilie crumb and 2mm pellet. Simple hair rigs with carptackleonline size 10 hooks



I'd seen this one feeding in the edge I quickly tied a size 10 @ carptackleonline zig hook to some light hook link and it gognt take long to get the bite.



A superb looking 20+ common caught by team member Will Cottrell. Will caught this beauty using our size 4 Scorpion Wide Gape hooks and Tungsten Kickers. Well done!



Mark Russell had another successful session, towcesterlakes. With a nice common of 27lb 6oz. and a mirror of 25lb 8oz, using carptackleonline products, size 4 Scorpion Wide Gape hook, Tungsten Kickers, 54mm anti tangle sleeve, CTO Pro hooklink, and composite safety lead clips



No carp, but look at this 3lb 8oz roach which took a 14mm boilie on a carptackleonline size 6 wide gape, caught by Bradley Johnson. Not quite the carp he was after but Bradley was made up with catching such a special Roach. Well done Bradley.



Team member Paul Gill made this 20lb 9oz mirror. Paul used our Scorpion Zig hooks, Zig Foam and Zig Aligners on an 18ft hooklink! Good angling Paul

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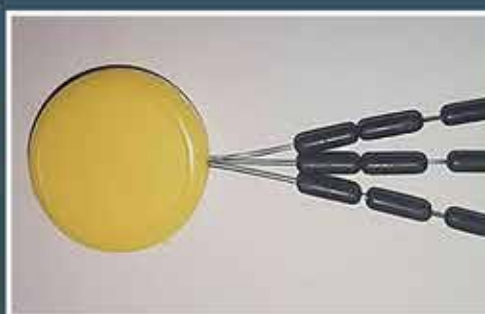
Scorpion Crank Hook



Scorpion Snag Hook



Swivel Deal



Tungsten Hooklink Sinkers



Chod Filament



Scorpion Ronnie Rigs



Composite Leadclip



Choddy Crank Hook



Aligner



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Shrink Tube



Hair Stops

COMING SOON!!

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

WATCH THIS SPACE



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Editor/Publisher
Rob Maylin
Bountyhunter
Publications
44 Herbs End
Cove, Hampshire
GU14 9YD

07768 731425
bigcarpstudio@hotmail.
co.uk

Design & Production
James Harrison

Advertising Sales
Bountyhunter
Publications
mobile 07768 731425

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Publications 2025



Front Cover:
Luke Vallory cradles a
big Sandhurst mirror



Great to see the UK's carp finally waking up despite some of the weirdest weather ever. 20+ degrees in the day and near freezing at night. Fair play to you if you were out braving those cold nights. It didn't seem to upset the carp too much judging by the massive increase in catch reports we've had in.

Also in this month's edition we have Darrell Peck giving the low down on his favourite rig. Then there's the remarkable captures from deep in the west country by Aaron Bunning. Barry Oconnor has been back to Millhayes for a family holiday and Jimmy Glaysher fills us in on his new challenge after joining RK Leisure and it's portfolio of legendary waters. Lots more to read this month with 130+ pages free.

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

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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?

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Has a few little tips and tricks to try if you find you're struggling. Peter pays particular attention to what he is fishing over and fishing accordingly.

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You can't deny the humble maggot still puts a lot of big carp on the bank. Here are a few tips from Scott Lloyd on how to keep the little wrigglers in tip top condition.

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SHOCKLEFORD

BIG NEWS FROM CREEDENCE FISHERY, ESSEX

They have just made some exciting upgrades to make your time at Creedence even better! Brand-New Weigh Station & Photo Area Capture the moment in style! Their brand-new weigh station ensures you get accurate readings of your catch, while the dedicated photo area provides the perfect backdrop for those all-important trophy shots. No more struggling for the right angle! Just quality pictures for your album!

New Social Area – BBQ Ready! They've added a brand-new social area, perfect for relaxing and firing up the BBQ. Whether you're celebrating a PB or just enjoying the atmosphere, this is the place to unwind with friends and fellow anglers.

Tea Huts – All the Comforts You Need! Fishing can be an all-day (or all-night) session, they've kitted out their tea huts with lighting and essential facilities to keep you comfortable.



You'll now find a fridge, kettle, toaster and microwave, everything you need for a quick snack or a hot drink to keep you going!

Visit their swimbooker fishery profile today and book your session to check out the upgrades for yourself!

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 ...

Hay Fever? Dust or Pet Allergy?



Helping Anglers
Catch the Pollen



Unscented varieties
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Natural Prevention for Hay Fever Sufferers



Organic



Proven[†]



60+ Awards



Drug-Free



It Works^{*}



Non Drowsy

From Independent Health Stores, Chemists & Pharmacies,

haymax.biz

[Holland & Barrett](#)

[Cocado](#)

[Boots](#)

[†]Proven to trap over 1/3 of pollen, plus dust & pet allergens, National Pollen & Aerobiology Research Unit, 2012.

^{*}80% said HayMax works, 134 of 166 respondents, Allergy UK survey, 2016.

NATIONWIDE DRIVE TO PREVENT FISH THEFT AND ILLEGAL FISHING DURING NATIONAL COARSE FISHING CLOSE SEASON



The annual coarse fishing including part of the canal close season for rivers and network, and the Norfolk and streams is now in operation Suffolk Broads. It is important and runs until 15th June. anglers check regional rules

The close season affects for each area for more detail all rivers, streams and drains as there will still be many as well as some stillwaters angling opportunities for the and some Sites of Special next three months, including Scientific Interest (or SSSIs), most stillwaters and canals.

Throughout the coarse fishing close season, Environment Agency officers will be conducting patrols to ensure anglers respect the no-fishing period and prevent illegal fishing and poaching. As usual, the Angling Trust's Fisheries Enforcement Support Service and Voluntary Bailiffs will be supporting the Environment Agency throughout the close season, with teams across all areas of the country conducting joint patrols throughout the close season.

To remind anglers about the start of the close season, a joint patrol involving the Environment Agency, Humberside Police, Angling Trust and members of the Voluntary Bailiff Service was held on waters run by Scunthorpe Amalgamated Anglers.

Angling Trust Fisheries National Enforcement Support Manager Nino Brancato said:

"It is necessary that we all help protect our sport from harm, especially with matters relating to poaching, fish theft, theft of fishing rights, anti-social behaviour and fly tipping. At the Angling Trust, our aim is the protection, promotion, and development of angling and anglers, encouraging all anglers to fish legally and safeguard fisheries and fish for generations to come."

To understand the enforcement issues faced across the country, last year the Angling Trust's Fisheries Enforcement Support Service organised a public questionnaire on fisheries-related crime. Results showed an overwhelming majority of anglers indicated rod licence evasion as their main concern. Other areas of issue were close-season fishing, theft of fish, fishing without permission, poaching and the illegal taking of fish.



Our New, 2025 Linear Fisheries Brochure has finally arrived and is now available to order FREE online or collect a copy at our onsite Tackle Shop - Within its 72-pages you will find everything you need to know about the Linear's amazing complex of waters and the fish that reside within them, articles, rules and much more..... It's free to order via the link below.
<https://www.linear-fisheries.co.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=main.brochure>



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



2 carp at 20 lbs 5 oz on swim
21 day ticket lake caught by
Pipe lake member Steve who
was fishing with his boys 9
carp caught in total



17 lbs 6 oz not been seen
before now nicknamed
Starburst by Richard Buddha
Draycott



39 lbs exactly Carp known as Twisted Scale by the members of
Pipe lake Top angling



18 lbs common at 06.00 this
morning nice wake up call



Jensen's Sister landed at 29
lbs 4 oz



A lovely 22lb common that
graved the banks recently



29 lbs 3oz cracker for Jay
Barnes smashing it

THE NEW TAC TICAL

SELK'BAG WEARABLE SLEEPING BAG

Selk'bag, the pioneering brand known for its wearable sleeping bags, is launching its latest innovation: The Swytch, a new design that brings insulation versatility and comfort to the world of outdoor gear. Available in three styles and designed for everything from family camping holidays to festival trips, or simply lounging at home, the Selk'bag Swytch stylishly adds practical function to the brand's original iconic product.

The key new feature of the Swytch is the mid-body zip, which allows users to easily split the garment into two parts: A cosy jacket and a separate bottom half. This design has a very practical purpose, making it easy to answer nature's call while using a Selk'bag, without having to remove the entire suit. And when the full bag is not



needed, the top half can be worn as a standalone jacket, delivering the signature comfort and warmth of Selk'bag.

Selk'bag has introduced several other new features with the Swytch, including: A softer, more luxurious hand-feel; waist adjustment; and a larger, adjustable hood, to ensure a perfect fit, whether using it as a jacket or as a full wearable sleeping bag. The new straighter zip design also eliminates snags, making it easier than ever to put on and take off.

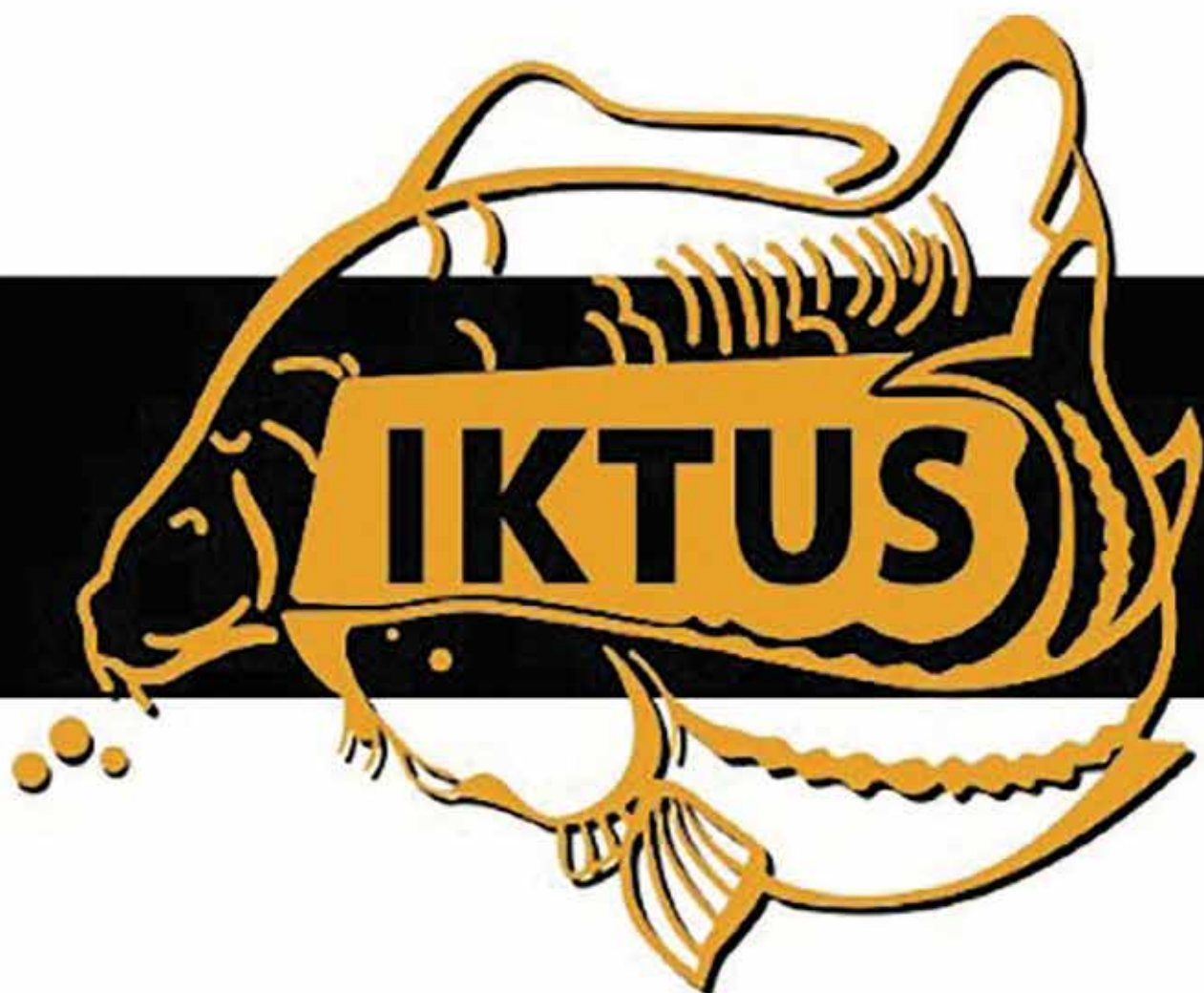
Available in three versions, the Pro, Original and Lite, the Selk'bag Swytch is designed to meet the needs of every outdoor adventurer who values warmth and comfort. The Pro features an insulated adjustable hood, balaclava, removable booties and dual zips for ease of use, while the Original provides the perfect balance of warmth and flexibility. The Lite has a lower weight, but maintains the same level of comfort, making it ideal for those who want a more minimalist option.



Sustainability remains at the core of Selk'bag's ethos. The Swytch is crafted from 100% recycled materials across all models, reinforcing Selk'bag's commitment to eco-friendly practices. The Pro version features Primaloft® insulation, which is warm, water-resistant, and made from 100% recycled materials. All versions of the Swytch are equipped with SBS® recycled zips and are fully PFAS-free, ensuring each bag delivers both high performance and environmental responsibility

The Selk'bag Swytch Pro will come in Volcan Navy, the Original in Azul Midnight, Pasto Green and Maipo Burgundy, while colour options for the Lite will be Cobalt Blue, Damasco Teal and Cobre Black. All will be available from April at www.selkbag.co.uk and from selected specialist outdoor retailers.

- www.selkbag.co.uk
- £ TBC



FISHING RESORT



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HAYMAX HAY FEVER RELIEF

Many anglers experience hay fever symptoms because of their allergies to grass pollen. For most people the worst months are May, June and July when grass pollen release is at its peak. HayMax is an organic allergen barrier balm that traps over one third of pollen before it gets in the body where it can cause a reaction. It's perfect for anglers as it's drug-free and certified organic and won't affect your ability to concentrate.

Hay fever is a result of our immune system's overreaction to innocuous antigens such as pollen. The body's reaction to pollen is to produce histamines. Normal amounts of histamines in your brain are good – they keep you alert, attentive and awake. But, when there are too many in your



body, they produce the various symptoms common to hay fever sufferers including sneezing, a runny nose, nasal congestion, itchy eyes, watery eyes, streaming eyes, swollen eyes, itchy nose and throat.

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

HayMax is natural, organic and drug free, with no drowsy-side effects so it's suitable for anglers and won't affect your ability to concentrate.

2025 is the 20th anniversary of HayMax's launch. Back in 2005, HayMax was ahead of its time, a natural prevention for hay fever – and indoor allergies too, such as dust and pet allergies. It is different from most other hay fever treatments and remedies, seeking to stop allergens getting into the body before they can cause a reaction, rather than attempting to treat the symptoms or the effects of the allergen once they occur.

Apply first thing in the morning, keep a pot with you and re-apply throughout the day and/or whenever needed. It depends on the pollen count, the temperature and lots of other things can have an effect, but most people seem to find applying 2 or 3 times a day does the trick. Some people apply more often, and some less often. Apply before bed to trap pollen particles that are blown in through your window, or that might have landed on your pillow during the day.

- HayMax organic drug-free allergen barrier balm £8.49
- www.haymax.biz.

CARPTACKLE ONLINE COMPOSITE SAFETY LEADER

New in at Carptackleonline is the Composite Safety Leader. This fluorocarbon leader has their Composite Lead Clip fused to one end and a fused mainline loop at the other. With the option of a Quick Changeswivel or a Large Ring Swivel for rig attachment and choice of clear or green leader. The fused Composite Lead Clip allows for safe ejection of the lead when needed without the risk of the clip “travelling” up the leader or mainline.

- available in green and clear
- choice of ring or quick change swivel
- pack of 2
- £9.99



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.

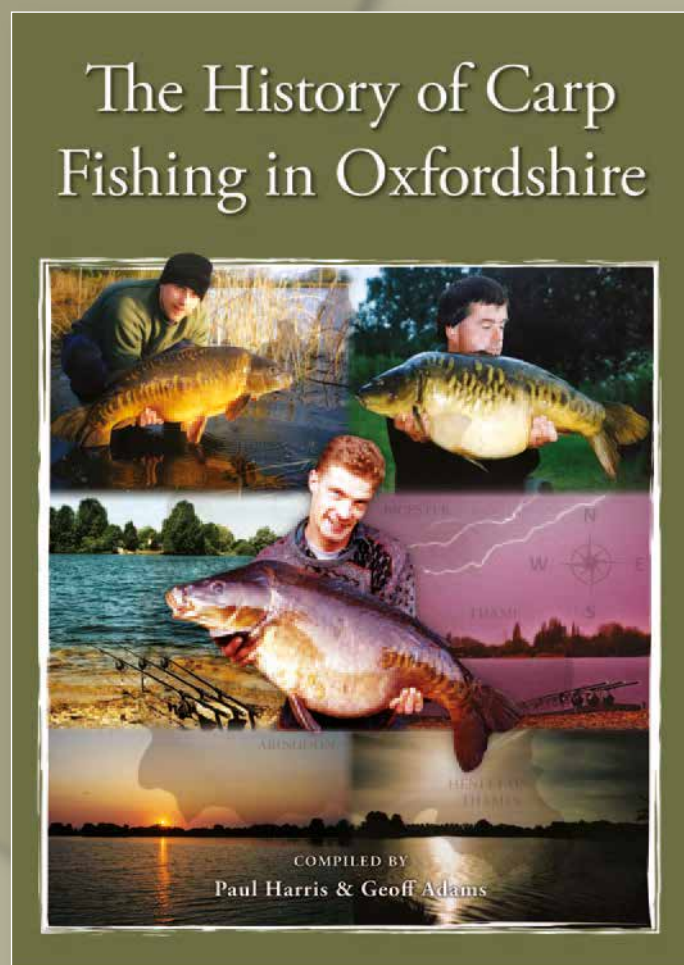
Nick Stansfield is a brilliant young Oxford carper who doesn't shout about his catches. We have two incredible chapters from him from two of the county's most iconic lakes, The Leisure Park and The Big S! Josh Chatfield has written a fantastic chapter which really gives you an insight into how fishing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



JAMES HAYES

LIVING THE DREAM

We swapped our stressful London jobs for a fishing lake in France. I'm James Hayes and I've been carp fishing for nearly 40 years and now, along with my wife Gerry, am the owner of Moulin de Passais Lake in Normandy, France. Having spent memorable fishing holidays in France with my brother, I'm grateful that we now have the opportunity to provide memorable holidays for others.

Growing up with no father figure, I'm thankful that my older brother Steve has always supported me and has showed me how to keep on the right track. He also taught me so much about carp angling. We've spent many sessions on various Essex and Kent club and syndicate waters and met some interesting characters over the years.

One of my fondest memories was when I was 19 and we

were sitting on Darent big lake, doubled up on the Road Bank whilst a fresh wind started hacking into us. This was my first experience of watching big carp boshing out over our baited spots and the memory will stay with me forever. The magical feeling of the bobbin lifting an inch was incredible. Later on in life, he also taught me a lot about fishery management. I've helped him out with nettings and building swims (also sticking the rods out!) and I've learnt all I can from him about how to run successful fisheries.

Over the years, I've dabbled in various careers, joinery, furniture making and finally being a London black cab driver. After 12 years driving around London, breathing in the smelly fumes and my blood pressure reaching an all-time high, something had to change. Together with my wife, Gerry (also

disillusioned with her job in HR), we decided to take a small break and travel to France in search of our next adventure.

We rented a campervan, chucked the dog in and went on a road trip around France to find our dream place. We spent 6 weeks checking out the different regions and areas all over France. We looked in the central regions of Limousin and Dordogne, east of Paris in the Champagne region and in the northwest, Normandy and Pays de la Loire. Each has their own charms of course and all are beautiful – we were spoilt for choice with the lakes we saw and surrounding areas that they were in.

As Gerry wanted to create a yoga retreat venue as well as it being a fishery, she really wanted the hot climate that the south of France could provide. However, with the primary business being a



carp venue, we had to weigh up the pros and cons of living so far down south. Many carp anglers are lazy (I can say this because I am one of them) so they wouldn't want to travel for 10 hours to get to us when they are passing 100's of beautiful lakes on the way. We knew there would be a few die-hards that would relish that challenge (and the travel), but we wanted to cater for all types of angler (the families, the lads' socials, the novices and a few die-hards of course). So, we decided that Normandy would be the safest bet. Only 4 hours 20 minutes' drive from Calais (or 90 minutes from Caen) on quiet, well-maintained motorways and through peaceful villages. This is so important when looking for a venue. It's the old adage of location, location, location. Fly and survive is something we looked at and although I

like the idea of getting on a plane and turning up like a rock star and starting to fish, I know that many anglers just simply have to have their own tackle.

After viewing nearly 20 potential places on our discovery trip, we ended up buying the first lake we saw. Always the way...but it was important we saw all the different lakes and properties that were available.

We settled on Moulin de Passais; two 18th century properties (one 2-bed cottage for anglers and a 3-bed mill house for us), 13-acres of land including some wooded areas, meadows, a couple of stock ponds and the 5-acre lake (created in 1829). When you compare that to our little 13-foot-wide house with 3-metre square courtyard garden in Walthamstow, it seemed like an absolute no-brainer that we'd done the right thing.

Selling a house is always stressful. Selling a house and moving countries is even more stressful. Add Liz Truss to the equation and you'll be in a whole world of pain. Our buyers decided they would pull out of our house sale because of the economic uncertainty, which left us distraught. The current owners of Passais were incredibly supportive and understanding. They gave us more time to resell, and the trust levels went up a notch when the current owner and I decided that, because it was coming into the winter months, any potential netting of the lake to check stock levels would need to proceed anyway. So, there we were in minus temperatures in January, netting in the snow and recording each fish by weighing and photographing over 200 carp. You've got to have balls of steel to stay in the cold water when you

can't feel your toes and you know there are another 100 fish to go!

We also decided that because fish shouldn't be moved after the winter and the stock levels were too high, we would move anything under 15lb to the two stock ponds on-site. That's all great, but we hadn't even signed the *compromis de vente* (the legal document of house sale in France), and there I was moving 40 fish out of this man's lake and rehoming them for the future (which at the time was uncertain for me).

Whilst this all sounds like good fun, I can assure you, it wasn't. I was so stressed out with our situation, that I'd made myself ill. A few trips to the hospital for various tests and probes stuck in places I'd rather not mention, they came to the decision that I was just highly stressed. All this time, I was still driving

a black cab around London which I absolutely hated with a passion. I aptly named him "Rocky" just to remind me of the hard battle we had to get here.

Looking back, although it was the most stressed I'd ever been, we now know it was the best thing we've ever done. When I look back at the photos of the netting, I look like "Mickey" from the Rocky movies. The next thought.

My problems changed from being a cabbie, wondering whether I would get my passengers to their meetings on time, could I turn right or



left at the next junction or was that road still closed (and all that bollocks) to....how am I going to get customers to the venue, will they enjoy their holiday and what needs to be done next.

Fortunately, we were left a handful of regular customers who enjoyed the peace and tranquillity of the venue. They didn't mind catching a mix of sizes and enjoyed coming back year after year. This was a good place to start to build on our customer base. We quickly realised that the 2-bed cottage was a big draw for families and the more comfort-seeking guests. The cottage was nice but it definitely needed some attention.

Now, before I tell you this next story, I want to make it clear that we have fixed all the problems.

It became apparent that we needed to focus on the cottage when, because

the sale took almost a year to go through, behind the cottage became completely overgrown with brambles and trees. Without realising it all sorts of undesirables had decided to make their new home in the roof of our cottage. They wanted to hibernate there through the winter and leave once the warmer weather got here.

Unless the warmer weather consists of two OAP guests deciding to turn the log burner on full and all the oil filled radiators in the bedrooms on max. It created what I can only describe as a tropical beach vibe (without the cool music). All we needed was a couple of pina colodas, Rodney, and the scene would be set. Unbeknownst to us, a lovely serpent had decided to come out of hibernation a little early and pay a visit to Club Tropicana (and why wouldn't you!). I got a knock on the kitchen door at

7pm, to a white-faced older gent who looked like he was about to break down on my doorstep. "What's up mate, are you ok?". I was told that his old friend Bernie was having a hot shower (of course he was) and when he came out of the shower, stark bollock naked, he was greeted by a 1.5m snake looking at his tackle. I could see the headlines now...1.5m snake meets 3-inch one eye trouser snake. There would be no contest. It was the longest thing he'd ever seen in the bedroom, that was for sure. With this, Bernie ran into his mate's bedroom, arms wailing, no towel. His friend thought he was having a throw-back dream to the 1970s!

Instead of being the hero myself, I immediately ran over to my French neighbour and gave him the glory. Ex-special forces, para-trooper and gendarme – this was

definitely a job for him. He quickly removed the snake to the relief of everyone involved. Rest assured that all entrance and exit points for any such visitors have now been closed up.

Our very first guests and they get visited by a bloody snake! This was the first steep learning curve of living in rural France, everything in the winter wants to live inside with you. I wouldn't mind, but our mill house is colder inside than out!

The next problem was with our septic tank. Literally, the first week we moved in, our septic tank started overflowing. Having never had a septic tank before, we were a little out of our depth. Back to our lovely neighbour (and now best friend), without hesitation, he said he would take a look. He got changed into his PPE, safety goggles, knee high wellies, the lot. Marched purposefully over

to ours and within minutes had his arm stuck down the septic tank hole. His hat even fell in but this didn't deter him! 20 minutes later and he had found the culprit (a feminine product that definitely should have gone in the bin...). This is the problem, he said, waving it around. This had probably been stuffed down the toilet 6 months before we bought the place and had only turned up now. But we had been rescued by our lovely neighbour yet again (and not for the last time!). We had learnt the moral of that story, do not throw anything down toilets or sinks!

One of the many other times



our neighbour helped us out. This huge bucket was stuck in the stream outlet pipe causing the stream to flood over into the lake.

We have an ongoing list with all our projects and tasks to do. It's never ending, even when we cross things off as there's always the emergency things that crop up (see above!). One planned project was to upgrade the

electricity around the lake. Most of the questions we get from guests is whether we have wifi and electricity in the swims. When we bought the property, we were told there was electricity around the lake but it quickly became apparent that it was an accident waiting to happen. Upgrading the electricity jumped up the "to do" list. We ended up spending



about 2 months laying the cables and trunking, digging them into the paths, making electric boxes for each of the swims and getting an electrician to hook it all up. Pulling three lots of cable through 450 metres of trunking, all the way around the lake is some feat! But once it was all connected and signed off by our friend, the French building inspector, we could then sleep soundly knowing we now had safe and compliant electricity all around the lake, with good wifi in each swim and bait boat charging stations too, just for good measure. We now know it was all worth it.

We've been here for two years now and I think we can finally say we've settled in. The fish have come on leaps and bounds with the correct feeding programmes through the winter. And throughout the season we've seen a steady increase in weights,

which I feel is the best way to manage the stock. It would have been all too easy to buy a couple of 60lb+ fish and whack them in but to put all the other fish at risk was something I just wasn't prepared to do.

We now have a steady flow of regular and new customers that we welcome each Saturday, and the best part of our week is seeing how excited they are to get started when they arrive. We understand that they have worked hard for their holidays and I feel it is a privilege that they chose us for their break. We don't take that for granted and we truly are grateful to everyone that makes that choice. We try to make sure that all our guests have the best time here as possible. After all, they're on holiday!

We also make sure that our fish are well looked after and so while we are open for

the usual fishing season, we keep at least 4 weeks free from fishing so they get a proper rest from the angling pressure. We had queries about winter sessions, so last year we opened the lake up for a limited amount of time. The beauty of this is you can choose the dates and length of time you want to come. We had three tough northern lads who braved the snow and minus temperatures in February but still bagged 19 carp in 5 days. So, we now know it's a great winter venue too. The season has started again for us and our first guests last week kicked it off well, landing 71 fish, with 23x



40's. April and September are by far our most productive months like anywhere but it's weather dependent of course. All through the year we have a steady catch report which you can follow on our socials below. Also, if you're looking for your own French lake or interested in learning more about our experience, please get in touch with us. We'd be delighted to pass on any tips that we have.

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@moulin_de_passais

Facebook:

Moulin de Passais

Website:

[www.moulindepissais-](http://www.moulindepissais-retreats.com)

retreats.com and [www.](http://www.hayescarpfisheries.com)

hayescarpfisheries.com



FORTY TOPS FLURRY



Jon Williams persevered in bleak conditions with a quick flurry of bites towards the end of his session which included a couple of 20s and his first forty of the year at 41.1

40S CLUB



Sam O'Brien landed this 40lb 4oz common from his local club lake

BIGGUN GOES 60



The biggun, a carp that had become a myth around the office, so many lunch time walks leading to stories of a common that “Has to be 60lb”... a few people claimed they’d seen it but all of us knew the lake had potential.

With @alanblairurbanbanx’s yearly session coming up talk of a potential monster increased and as we broke up for Christmas everyone was hoping for the same thing.

On the morning of the 29th the message went out... it had happened! It was real! And it bottomed out the first set of 60lb scales, 62lb 4oz of Nash common.

CATCH REPORTS

THIS IS THE WASING

Just shy of 50lb, member Robbie landed this renowned fish from Wasing's Cranwell's



RECORD FOR MATT



Blackthorn Fishery - 50lb 12oz for Matt

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON



Adam and Jordan Honeysett headed back to Elphicks Pullens Lake with fish of 30.04 & 40.06...



SPRING CRACKER



Congratulations to Louie Steere who's just landed a new personal best. Bringing the scales round to 41lb 4oz

GHOSTIE GOES 44



Rick Willeats landed this 44 lb old warrior of a ghostie common



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SALMON'S BANGER




One of the big girls caught in the early spring a few years back - Targeting an island shelf with a steep drop off in to 15ft, I made sure to get it as far under an overhang as I could ensuring it was in the shallower water where I'd expected the fish to be as they came in off the deep water in the upper layers. A single white pop up on a Spinner Rig in low lying weed being the winning tactic, with a 6-inch 25lb Boom ensuring everything would neatly kick away. Having had a smaller fish a couple of hours before being due to leave, the phone call went in to the missus to blag an extra couple of hours and it turned out to be a good move as the bite came just a little while after. It became obvious from the off it was a better fish, as she used her weight to head into the deep water – Fortunately, the size 4 Krank ensured a mega hook hold and I was soon looking down on one of the lakes finest, in perfect early spring condition

KING PATCH



King of the lake,
the elusive 'Patch'
at 40lb 4oz.

TARGET ACHIEVED



Shane Bundock
landed the big lin
his target fish at
50lb 10oz

MORNING VICAR



One carp instantly springs to mind when it comes to a pinnacle moment in my angling, The Vicar; a blind eyed, absolute classic king common carp from a headbanger of a Yateley club lake know to some as “Ze Grinder”! Having first clapped eyes on the place back in '97 when I first dipped my toe in the water, this carp had worked its way up to ‘Arch Nemesis’ status over the years until we finally crossed paths.

GASKINS GOLIATH



Arriving at the lake and light fading I had a quick look around, and it was evident that the warmer day temperatures had encouraged the carp to congregate in the upper layers. There were enough subtle signs to make it clear that there were a few carp in the area. With temperatures still cooling significantly during the night, I hedged my bets and fished two on the deck and the other on a Zig. Late in the evening, a fish showed no more than 20 yards out in a feeding fashion rather than a 'parasitic shedding' fashion, so I wound in the Zig rod, changed over to a Manilla Popup and repositioned it where I saw the fish show. With a firm enough thud on the lead, I was confident the rig was presented and given the short range, it was easy enough to catapult a few Manilla freebies around it. The simple tactic worked as I had the work alarm traded for a Delkim hitting the high note. After a dogged fight, the big angry mirror was in the net, and after inspecting each flank, I recognised it to be the king of the pond at an all-time high of 51lb 06oz!

LADY'S MAN



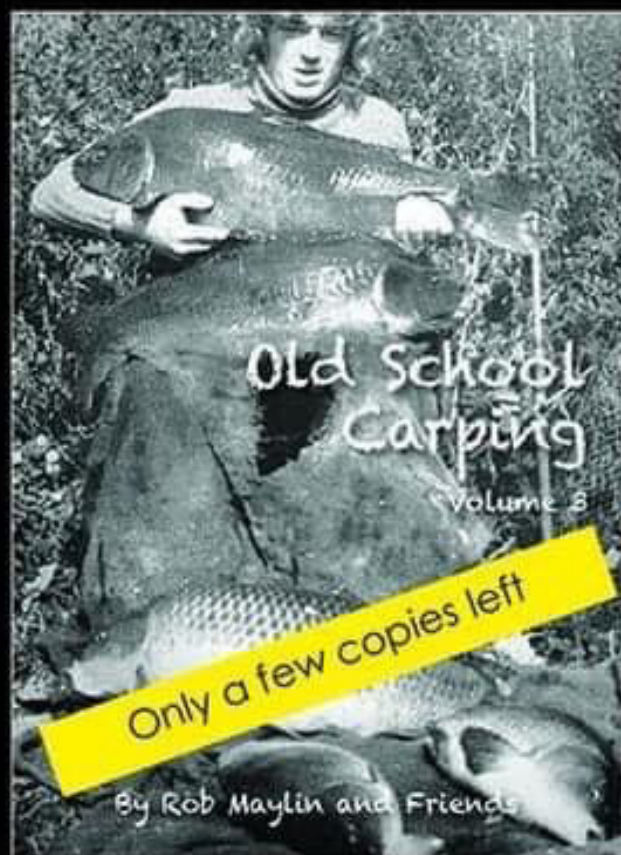
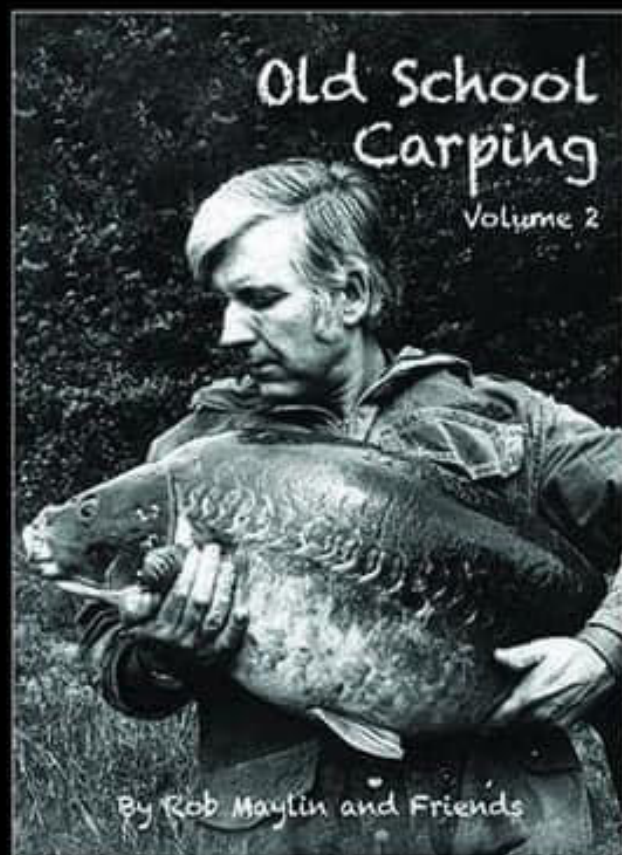
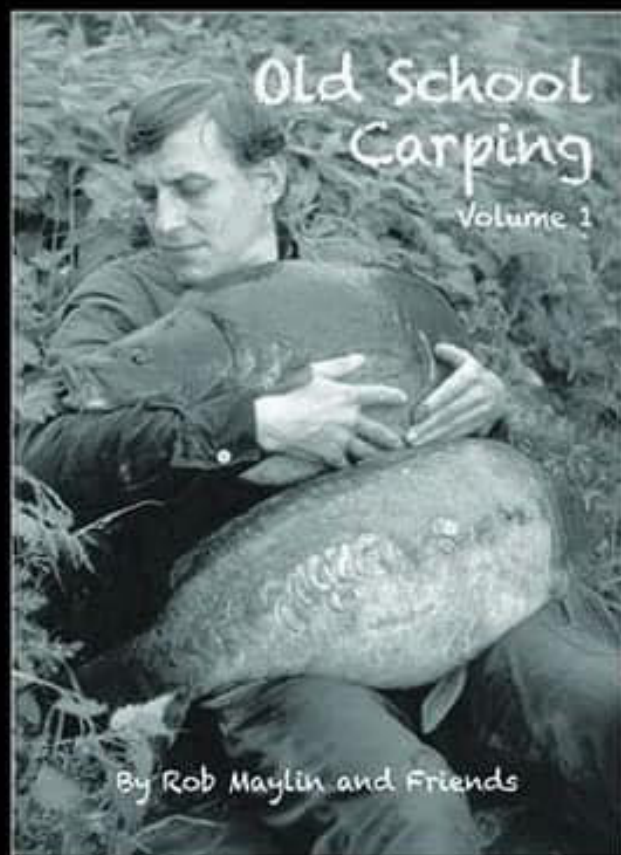
George Bags the Lady at over 40lb....

SCALE PERFECT



Couple of weeks ago Adam had this one fish out on a 48hr session.

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SUPER SIMMO



This stunner was taken at 47lb by Liam from Baden Hall

FARLOWS FORTY



Michael Roche had a great session on Farlows lake 1 managing 3 fish with the biggest being 42lbs

GO MO

Craig Knowles with
Mo at 41.12



and Dave
at 49.07



BEDS BEAUTY

54lb of one of
Bedfordshires best
for Phil Nicholls



TORRIDGE RECORD

Torridge Carp
Lakes has a
new lake record
of 40lb 15oz.
Thanks to Mike
Faulkner



SYNDICATE STUNNER

Liam Gingell
with Shoulders
at 41lb



A quick 24
hr session
produced
this amazing
41lber for
Callum

CROMWELL CRACKER



LUKE'S SANDY SUCCESS

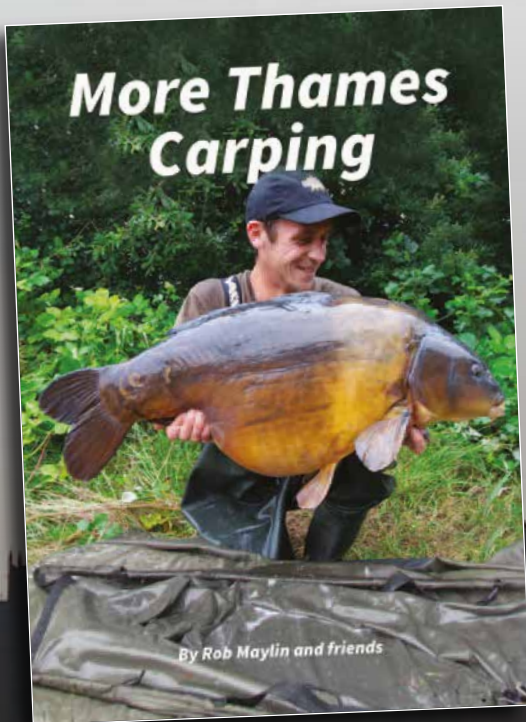


One of Sandhurst's big girls, caught on classic spring tactics, a single 12mm pop up cast to a show, the captor, Luke Vallory

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!

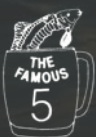
Andrew Sadler has discovered some Thames secrets during his many years on the Thames, for you the reader, he divulges all. Graham Stevens is a Thames stalwart, having written several articles in Big Carp and a couple of chapters in the first Thames book he is back in this volume to tell you how he does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



Bounty Hunter
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MANOR FORTY

Craig Thomas
fished Manor Farm
this week and landed
this mega 42lb 8oz
mirror



ROYAL RUCK

"Nice little wake
up call I was so glad
to slip the net under
this 42½lb common"
said Gary Norton



TRING TRING

Alan Tring said
“My first spring
capture of 2025,
Rihanna at a
hefty 41.14lb”



Danny Ormiston did
72hrs on Meadow lake last
week resulted in 2 carp
43lbs 11oz and 29lbs 10oz

MEADOW MIRROR



BIG LIN BUZZ

Chris Hockell is "Absolutely buzzing right now. with the scales round to 48lb a new PB mirror for me."



GOLDEN OLDIE

Jack Price, landed the pit 3 biggun 1 eye 46lb ,old as the hills.



TILLY TURNS UP

Lee Hanson with
the beautiful Tilly at
51lb 4oz.



Alan Harper with the
BBQ Zip at 49.10 from
Long Lake

BBQ BEAST



RICKY'S GREATEST CARP



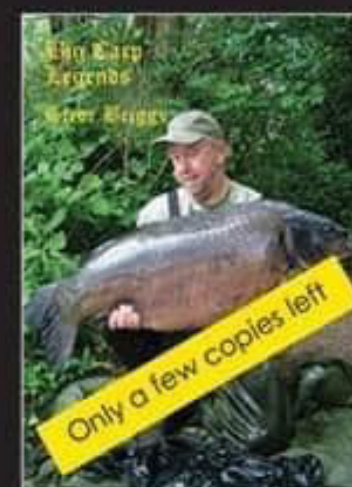
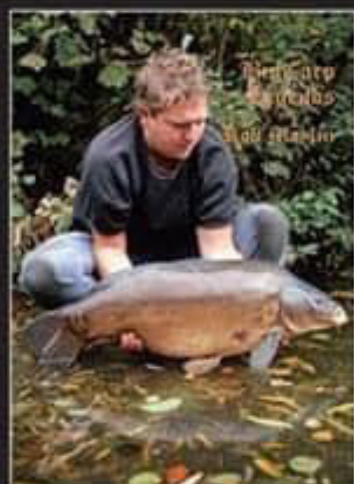
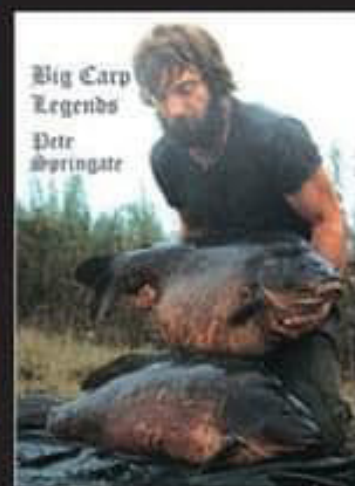
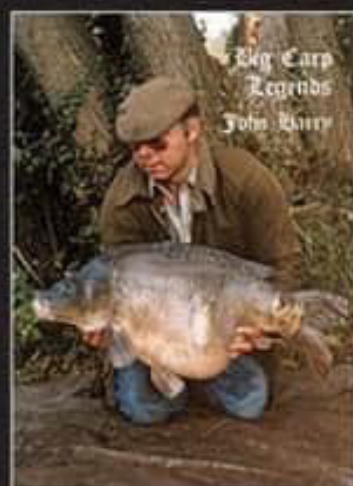
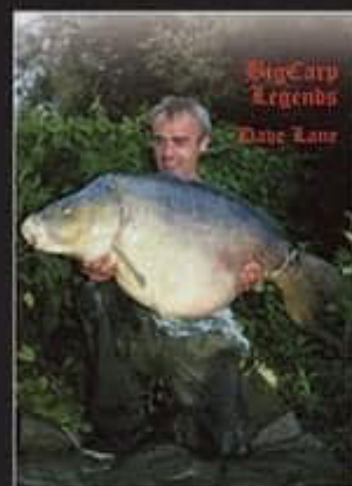
Ricky Knight said “ A phrase that’s often thrown around, but for once it feels just right — dreams do come true.

This is the greatest Carp I’ve ever caught. Maybe even the greatest I ever will catch. But none will ever mean more. Not because of its size alone — but because of the sheer hard work, persistence, and patience it took to meet such a stunning creature face to face.

It truly was a venture into the total and utter unknown — and somehow, that made the reward all the more meaningful.”

BIG CARP LEGENDS SERIES

The anglers that shaped today's carp scene



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CRAZY TIMES

4 hours into my first session after 5 weeks in the Caribbean and the Asylum graced my net at 51lb2oz, said Steve Dore=sett



CLUSTER -F**K

Connor Everson with Cluster from an overnighter on Sandmartin at 44lb.



Last minute session and bagged a 44lb mirror said Kieron Finch

NEW PB FOR FINCH



Rob Drinkwaters awesome first morning to the 25/26 season on the church with Alfie at 45lb 4oz

NICE START



GREEN WITH ENVY

Greenacres in Peterboroughs' biggun down in weight at 45lb 5oz for Mike Jarvis



LOVE YOU LONG TIME

Steve Squire with the VS Scattered Lin at 41.08 from Long Lake



Leia 48lb
4oz for Karl
Bowles

**BOWLED
OVER**



Dan Cleary with
Pawprint at 43 02lbs

**DAN'S
BACK!!**



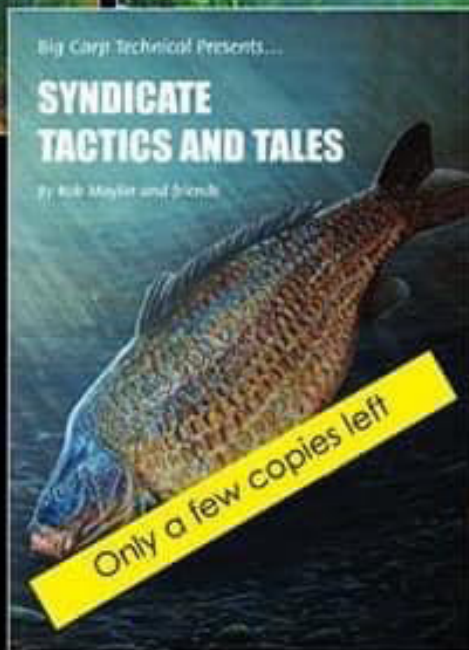
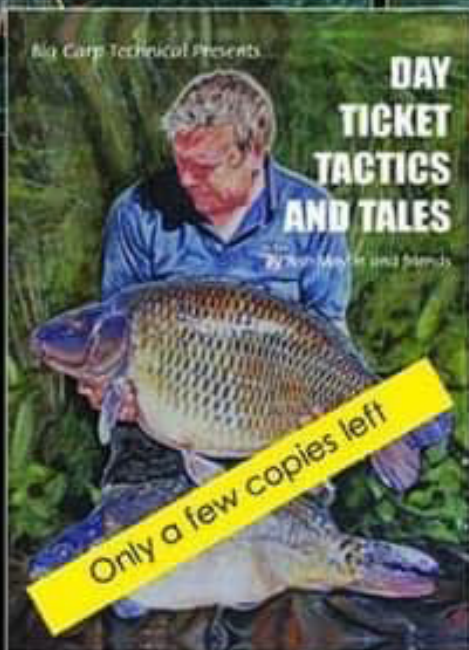
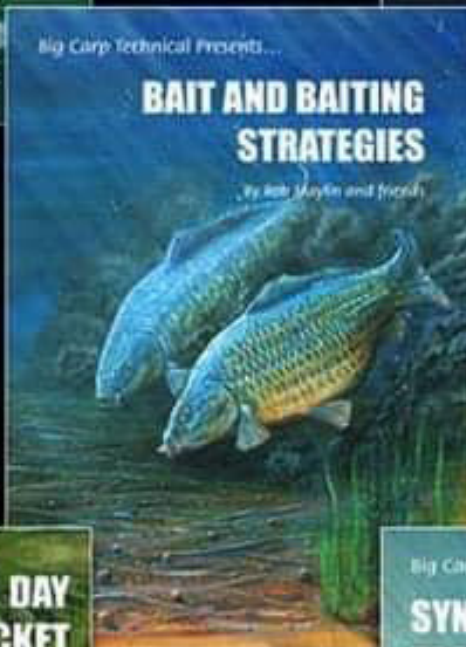
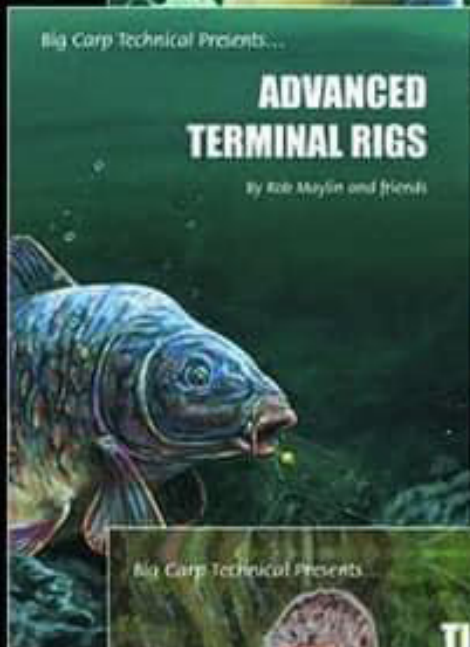
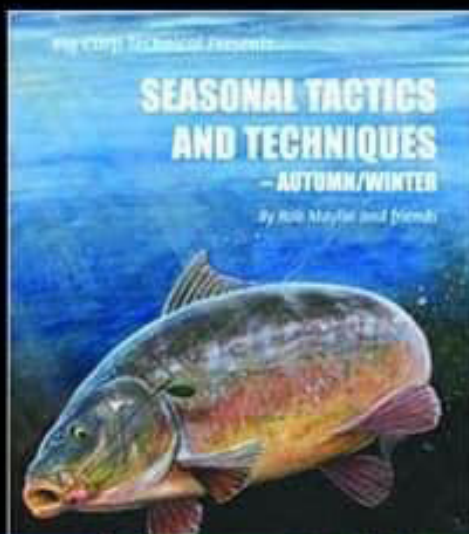
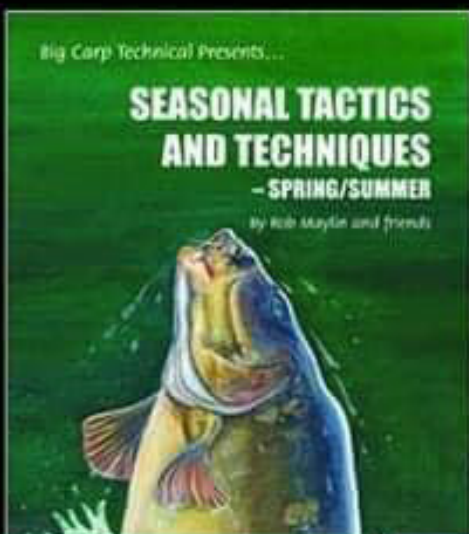


PASS THE DUTCHY

Nathan Jackson's first bite of the year and this one was the culprit! I'm still actually shocked now as I've never had a lump for the first bite of the year ever in over 20 years of carp fishing! The fish is known as "spliff" which did make me chuckle when I was told its name 44.10 of absolute perfection

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AARON BUNNING

NO CORNISH PASTIES

Aaron Bunning has swiftly followed up his capture of a Cornish 50 mirror earlier this year - with another one! Well, done Aaron!

my campaign on the Oaks syndicate culminating in the capture of my target fish, the lake owner (Jack) offered to return my deposit if I didn't wish to renew my ticket for the following year. We came

to the agreement that I could exchange this for a session on Jacks Lake exclusive venue (spooky pool) towards the end of the month. The idea being, more in hope than expectation, that it would give me the chance of banking a second Cornish 50 in a month. Spooky contains two old ghosties over the magical mark. These being the only other 50+ fish in Cornwall.

Fast forward to yesterday afternoon a little over 24 hours into my session. A short flurry of beeps on my receiver alerted me to the line pinging out of my washing line clip on the far bank. Upon picking up the rod I furiously wound down to pick up the slack line and make contact with the fish. As the line was approaching my margin with a distinct lack of resistance, I thought I had been done. A moment of relief as the pressure built

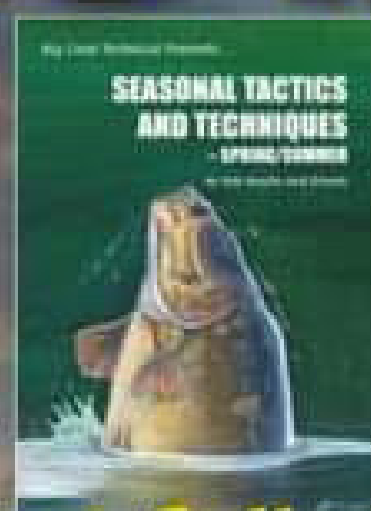
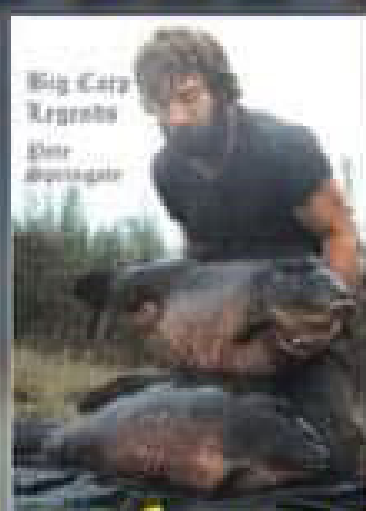
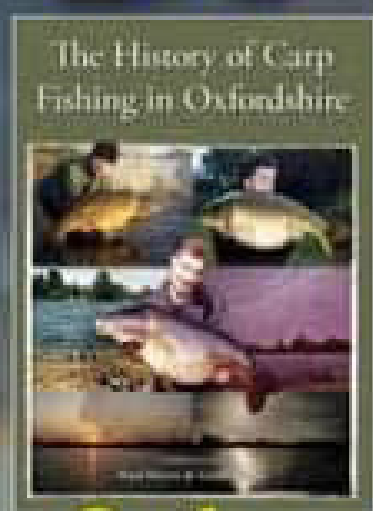
up through the line, a tail pattern the size of my bivvy started swirling a couple of rod lengths out as the fish went on a slow, irresistible run to the far side of the lake. I immediately knew I was attached to one of 2 fish. With no major snags and the weed having not grown much yet this year it was a case of keeping my cool while the fish fought its way around the lake. I managed to net her first time of asking which was a huge relief.

On the scales she went 52lb exactly, what a month. As far as I am aware this puts me in the fortunate position of being the first angler to bank two Cornish 50+ fish.

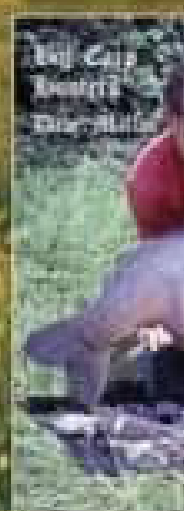
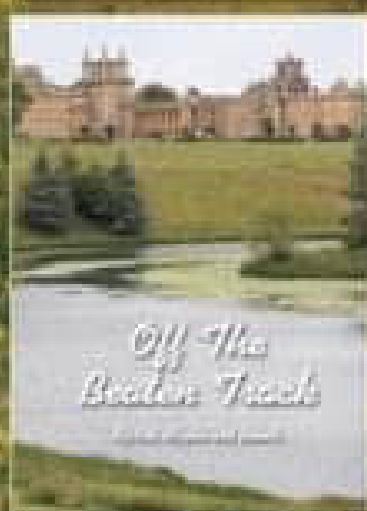
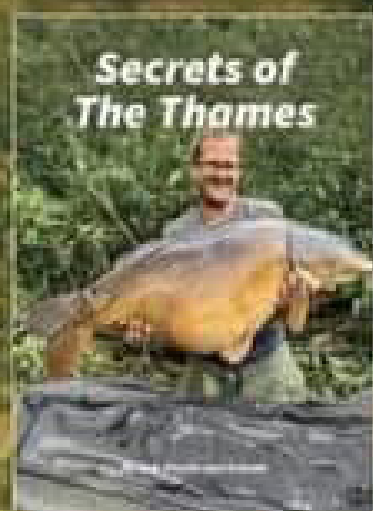
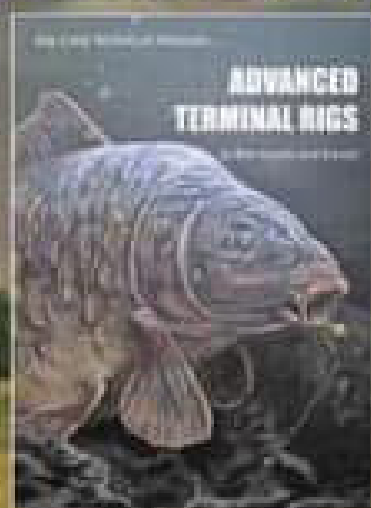
I caught her on a hard spot just off the side of a bar. 18lb syncro loaded mainline with a 5oz drop of in line and a 7" kd rig constructed of Tungsten Loaded soft and a size 5 Cryogen Slammer proving the winning formula'.



SPRING INTO

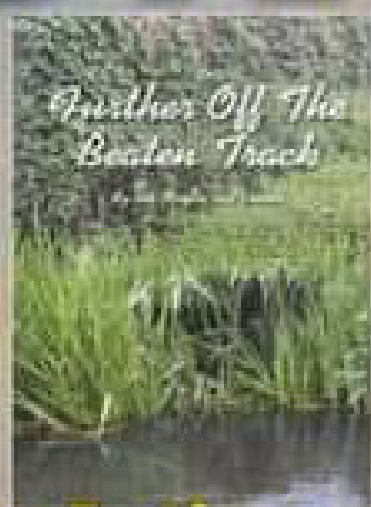
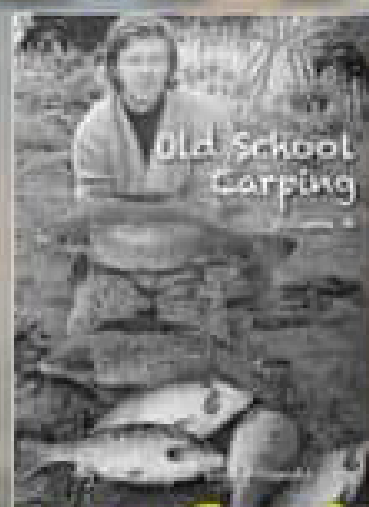
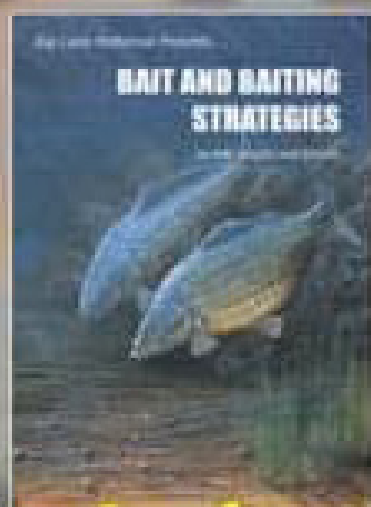


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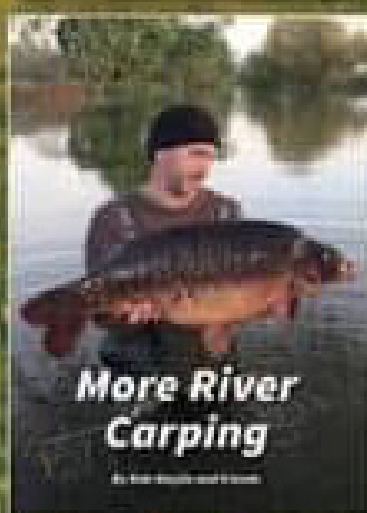
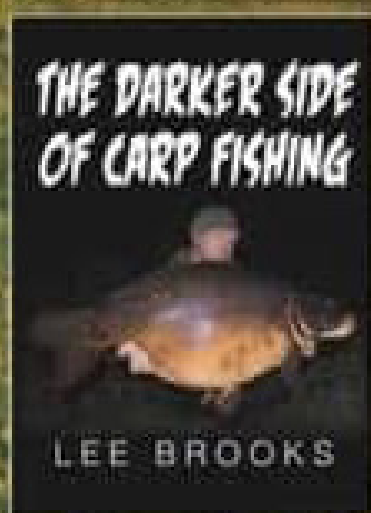
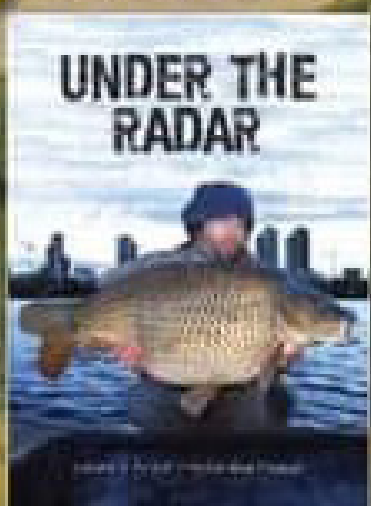
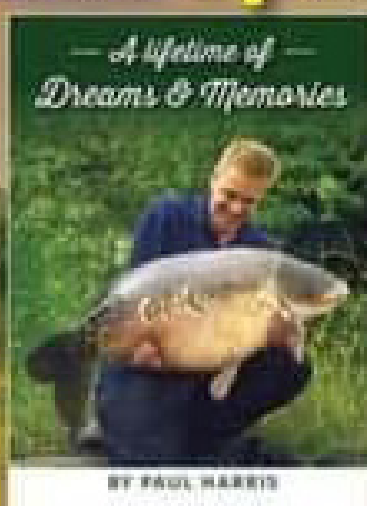
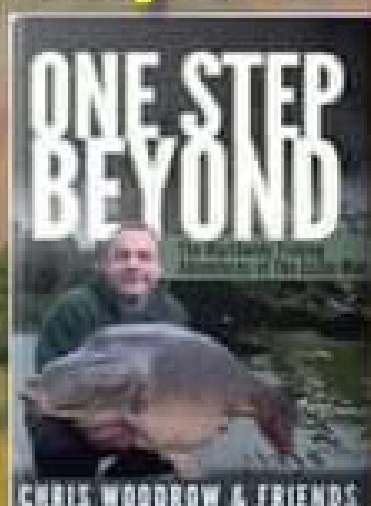


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TO ACTION



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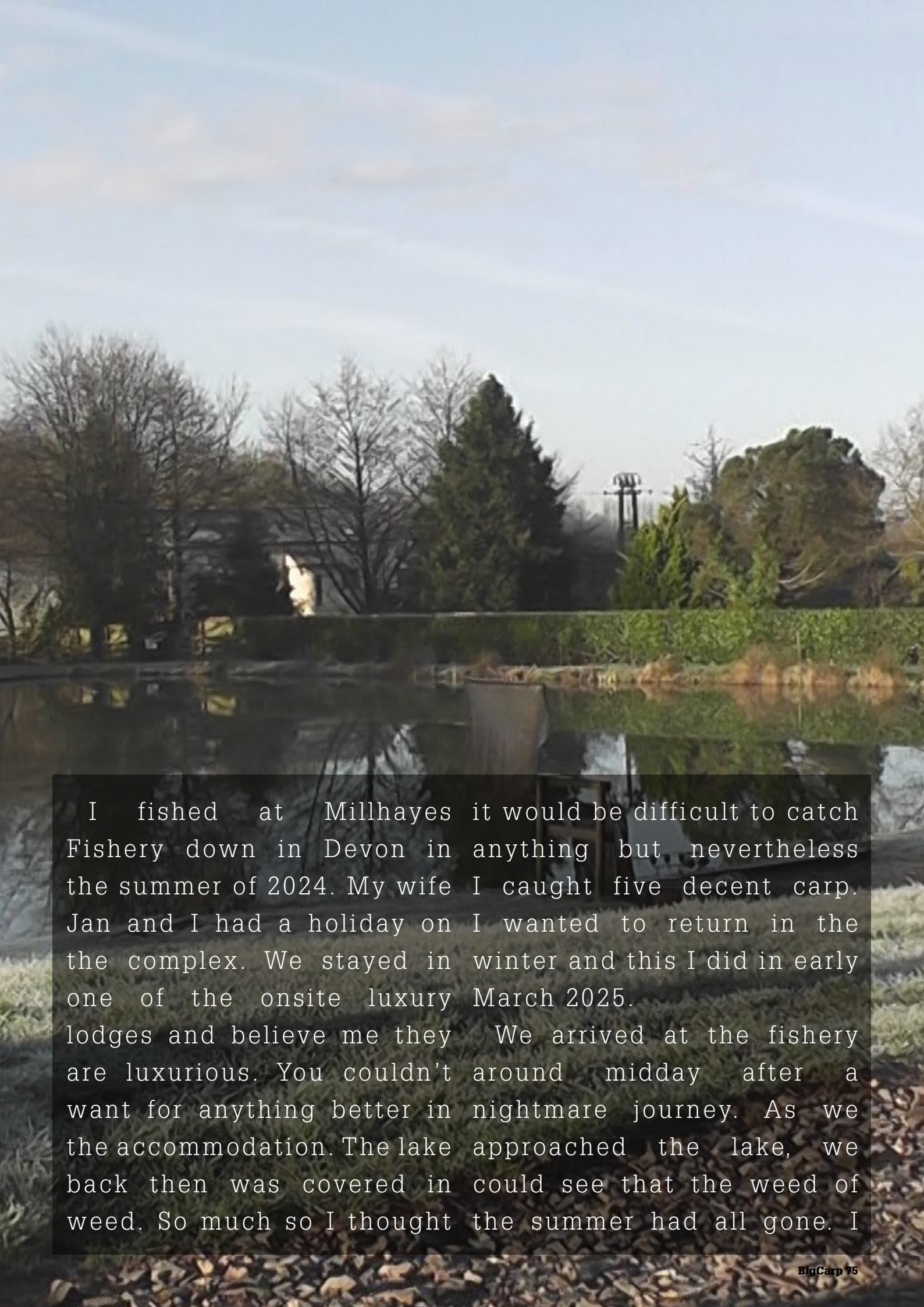


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A landscape photograph of a river or stream. The water is calm, reflecting the trees and sky above. The trees are mostly bare, suggesting autumn or winter. The foreground shows a grassy bank. The sky is blue with some light clouds.

RETURN TO MILLHAYES

BARRY OCONNOR

A scenic view of a lake at dusk or dawn. The water is calm, reflecting the sky and the surrounding trees. In the background, there are several trees, including a prominent evergreen. A building with a chimney is visible through the trees. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, suggesting the time is either early morning or late evening. The overall mood is peaceful and serene.

I fished at Millhayes Fishery down in Devon in the summer of 2024. My wife Jan and I had a holiday on the complex. We stayed in one of the onsite luxury lodges and believe me they are luxurious. You couldn't want for anything better in the accommodation. The lake back then was covered in weed. So much so I thought

it would be difficult to catch anything but, nevertheless I caught five decent carp. I wanted to return in the winter and this I did in early March 2025.

We arrived at the fishery around midday after a nightmare journey. As we approached the lake, we could see that the weed of the summer had all gone. I

was certainly pleased to see that. Quickly we got settled into the lodge (there are two lodges you can fish from) as I wanted to get my rods set up and get fishing. There are two swims that come with the lodge we were in which are about ten yards from the lodge. I proposed to put two rods in one swim and another two in the other swim for Jan. A marker was cast out to see what I was fishing over. The lake bottom was mostly silty



with a covering of silk weed. Some of this silk weed was quite prevalent in places. It wasn't showing on the surface. After about an hour all the rods were in position.

My approach was to fish different baits on the rods. The rigs were 5 inches of black coated braid hooklinks tied to size 6 hooks. This was fished in conjunction with a safety clip and tail rubber. A three-ounce square lead from S M Leads completed the set up. Each set up had a small pva web bag of Steamies pellets attached to it before casting it out. The hookbaits I started with were all pop ups (because of the silk weed) these were TNT, Krill and Bloodworm, Squid and Pineapple and Butyric.



The web bags were liberally doused in Steamies Rocket Fuel before casting.

Although I did the hard work of using a marker rod to try and find some clear spots, I didn't find any. As I said the lake bottom was silt covered in silk weed. I did Spomb out some bait over the hook baits. Mostly pellet, sweetcorn, chops and hemp. I didn't see a fish for the first few days. It was freezing

cold so maybe that had an effect on them. I know the fish are in there I just hadn't seen any to cast to. Later on, after coming back from having lunch out. I saw some bubbles appear on the surface but was thinking maybe they were gas. Nevertheless, I put a bait on them. It was out there for about half an hour when it went off. Although there was no weed showing there was some on the lake



BIG CARP

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WATERCOLOUR CARP PAINTINGS

The Legendary Big Carp Series



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

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bed and the carp was tearing through it. I got it to the bank where my wife Jan netted it for me. It was covered in weed. It was a fully scaled Mirror weighing in at 23.8. It was a stunner caught on TNT.

The bubbles definitely weren't gas then, they were caused by carp foraging on the bottom. I looked for more bubbles every day and cast to them. It wasn't until

early the next morning that another run occurred. It was from the same spot. After a bit of a battle again we got it into the net. Another stunner this time weighing 23.10. The weight had gone up by two ounces. This one was caught on a cut down Steamies Pineapple and Butyric pop up. I put cut down Pineapples on all the other rods and dotted them about. My thinking was it might be a visual thing





the carp could see. The cold weather was very much still with us. It was very frosty in the mornings whereas the afternoons were sunny but still cold. The bucket of water that I was using to balance my pop-up hook baits froze solid. Later in the afternoon that same day I had a screaming run. I picked up the rod and bent into what was a powerful carp. My lead had dumped but there was silk weed coming up the line. I was hoping that it didn't get stuck in the tip eye as it sometimes does. This would make it difficult to land the fish. The carp was making heart stopping runs and stripping off yards of line off the reel. I would gain line only for it to be taken back by the carp. Eventually it began to tire and I was gaining line.

As it came nearer, I could see it was a good fish. It was still fighting but tiring. As it kissed the spreader on the landing net, we could see it was a monster Mirror. It looked massive on the unhooking mat. We put it into the weigh sling and hoisted it on to the scales hook. The dial on the scales stopped at 35.6. It was a lump!

It was early morning of the next day that another run occurred. This was from a different spot. A gentle take was showing on the bite indicator and the alarm was sounding. I lifted into it and the tussle began. A short battle commenced and before long the carp was in the net. It was a nice Common that weighed 27.4. This was the





first Common of the trip. 23.4. That was number five Photos done and it was soon

returned to the water. The morning was still with us and I was reeling in one of the rods because we were going out for the day, when one of the other rods went off. I could feel whatever was on the other end of the rod. Slowly it came to the net and was captured. Another Mirror this time weighing 23.12. A couple of hours later and

We came back from shopping around midafternoon. We had lunch out in a nice Chinese buffet restaurant in Torquay. It was lovely. The rods were baited up again and put out in no time. It didn't take long for one of them to burst into life. It produced a fine-looking Mirror at 23.12. A





another one of the rods went off. Something very was away. Another Mirror powerful was taking line. graced my net at 22.00 dead It weeded itself and I was on. The cut down Steamies unable to move it. I let the Pineapple and Butyric pop line go slack and waited. ups were working very well. As the line began to move, I The afternoon disappeared pulled it tight and was back into evening with nothing in contact with the carp. It coming to the rods. As I was was pulling and thrashing to about to go to bed my remote try and get free. As it came sounded and warned me of near to the bank it went a run. It was the rod on the solid again. I carefully with original spot that was going. minimal force began to move I quickly got to the rod in the carp towards me. It was question and pulled into it. covered in silk weed which It was very dark but I could was making it difficult to get see the swirls the carp was it to the net. The carp could making because of the bright just about be seen through moonlight. It pulled and I the weed. Managing to slowly pulled back and eventually I move it towards the net, my won. By the light of the silvery wife Jan stretched out and moon, I could see laying in netted it ,weed as well. As my landing net was a very we pulled back the weed, we nice 26.8 Mirror. Again, on a could see it was a very good cut down Steamies Pineapple Common carp. We removed and Butyric pop up. the weed and got the carp

I had nothing through the into the weigh sling. It looked night but early next morning massive! The scales went to which was our last day just 31.8. Another lump. Photos as I was packing up a rod done it was returned safely.

That was it session finished. We packed everything away ready for the long journey home. I'd had nine carp to 35.6 in various weather conditions consisting of being very cold and frosty, rain and sunshine. We went out on most days to the local towns and villages. We had some lovely lunches in the pubs and restaurants.

Most of the towns are within easy reach from Millhayes. This was my second visit to Millhayes Fishery and it won't be my last. If you would like to book a fishing holiday or just a holiday, please contact Tom on 07884437375 or go to their website at info@millhayeslakes.com you won't be disappointed.



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BRAD

20 YEARS IN THE MAKING

This season, I've been targeting a private syndicate lake in the Colne Valley. The complex boasts five lakes as well as the impressive, exclusive venue @redwoodlakefrance in France. I learned to fish on this particular venue from 8 years old with my dad until my late teens. After starting University and moving away, I decided it was no longer viable to keep my ticket. Three years ago with my dad still being a syndicate member, I was lucky enough to be offered a ticket again. Not only were there new fish that had come through the ranks with their ongoing stocking program over the years, but there were still some of the old originals left

that I'd dreamed of catching nearly twenty years ago. For the last few years, my fishing has been limited due to work, family commitments, and buying a new house, but this year I firmly had the venue in my sights.

After a season of strategic baiting and perseverance, battling tough conditions and balancing life at home, it finally happened. On a wild December morning, after fruitful period of angling on the lead up I ended the year on an incredible session, with fish of 30lb, 33lb, one of the big Leney mirrors at 43lb+ and the one I really desired, Blindeye! Tipping the scales at MASSIVE 55lb 12oz.

.An unforgettable session and the perfect end to 2024! Sometimes, it's just meant to be. Big thanks to @rob__burgess for the photos and the venue for allowing me to share this moment.







DARRELL PECK

MY GO-TO RIG: THE COMBI- MULTI

Being able to cast my rig untangled to my chosen spot, regardless of range is of the utmost importance, and is always my primary focus. A rig that tangles, is an ineffective rig that drains confidence. The Multi Combi is almost 100% tangle proof when fished in conjunction with a lead clip system, tail



rubber and tungsten tubing.

The second most important thing for me is its low maintenance, and that I'm able to change the hook quickly & easily, without sacrificing the rest of rig. I use sharpened hooks; they need changing regularly so this saves me lot of time.

A strong rig that creates great hook holds is everything when fishing for big carp; you just never know what that next bite might be. For this reason, I use the Wide Gape pattern, and when combined with a multi combi rig I land a very high ratio of what I hook, even if using barbless.

Finally, but equally as important as the above is presentation. The 5" Boom is vital - its inherent stiffness pushes the hookbait away from the lead when it impacts the lakebed. This means that the hook link cannot be looped up off the bottom, and that it will reset in the event





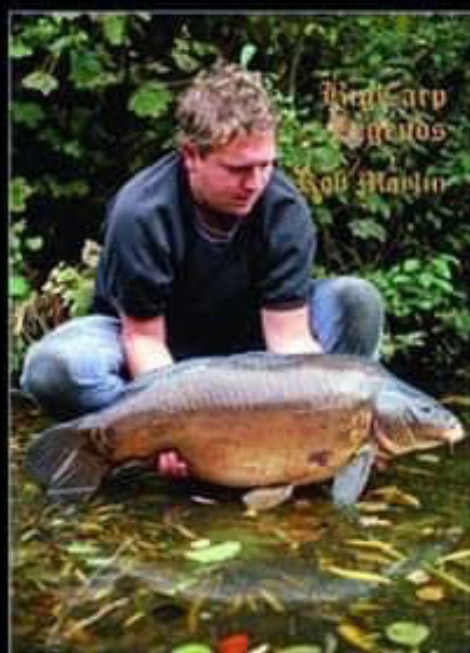
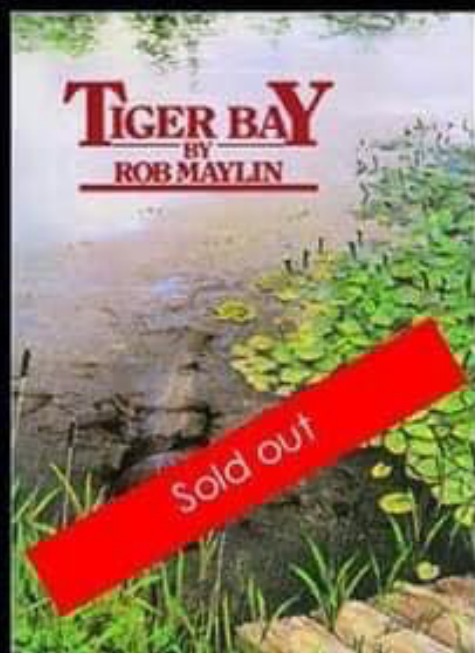
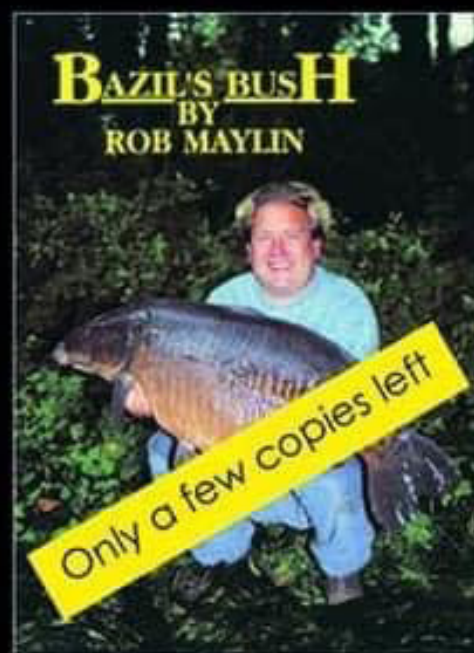
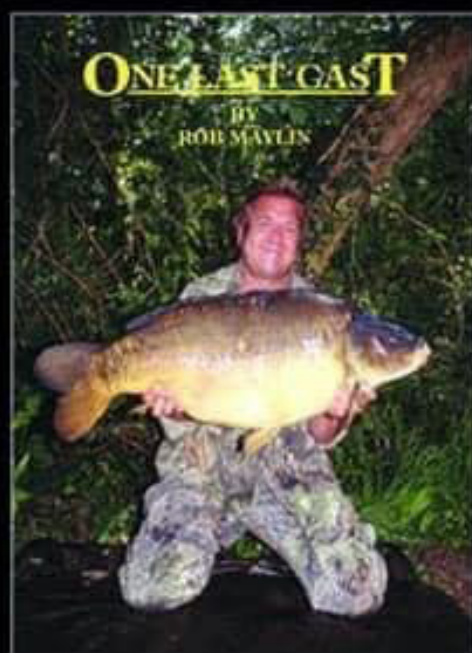
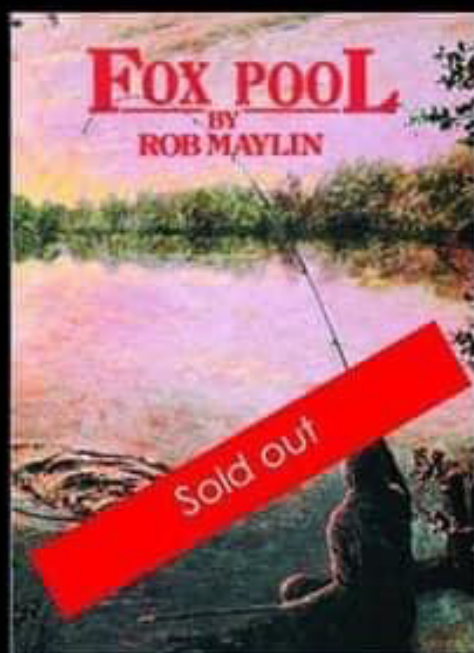
of being ejected. The length of the Boom is also critical. Too long and the fish has more time to spit out the hook bait, and too short and you risk edge of the mouth hook holds. There's a fine line here and I wouldn't recommend straying too far in either direction.

hook baits only, where the hook will lay flat to the lakebed under the bait. It's also designed to only be fished over firm hard spots free of debris. (Gravel, sand, mud, clay or firm silt). If barrellled into a softer lakebed there is real potential for the boom to be poking out of the lakebed designed for slow sinking and presenting horribly.



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JIMMY GLAYSHER

FACING A NEW CHALLENGE

After a long winter I'm Hearn, Dave Lane, and Rod looking forward to getting Hutchinson plus many more back down south to the who inspired us all.

Horton side of the road. Standing in the lodge

It's always a massive buzz looking down the length of walking round these set of church lake and boat pool pits steeped in carpfishing was exciting before my first history. All the anglers season had started on an who fished here like Terry open day.

I'm just about to start my second season which I'm just as hyped for as the first but this short story touches on my first season. Many miles travelled, a lot of effort, learning and a few successes.

Too be honest I was happy to of just secured a ticket on the complex. I had planned to fish it three days on and four days off back at work back in Norwich. I'd been working in my local fishing shop Wensum Valley Angling four days a week but shortly after securing the ticket the heavy floods that year had ended my fishing shop career due to a quite winter in the shop. Last in first out kind of thing. Looking for new work started and eventually I came across an opportunity in Peterborough's famous Bluebell lakes working in their tackle shop and around the lakes. This meant travelling from Norwich to Peterborough then to west London after work once I finished my 3-5 day shift at Bluebell. It was a lot of traveling but I still wanted to stick to my plans of fishing consistently and having a good go.

Kingmead Island and Crayfish Pool

My first sessions were on Kingsmead island lake cruising round on a boat in 70 acres of water and islands trying to get familiar with the place. I had a small one on my first session but kept walking crayfish pool which was beside Kingsmead. I soon had some intimate up close experiences with the residence of crayfish which led to my favourite moment of the season fairly early on landing a fish called "the baby long" from the small water. I believe these fish are some of the oldest across the complex and the pit has been enjoyed by many anglers over the years. It's only a small

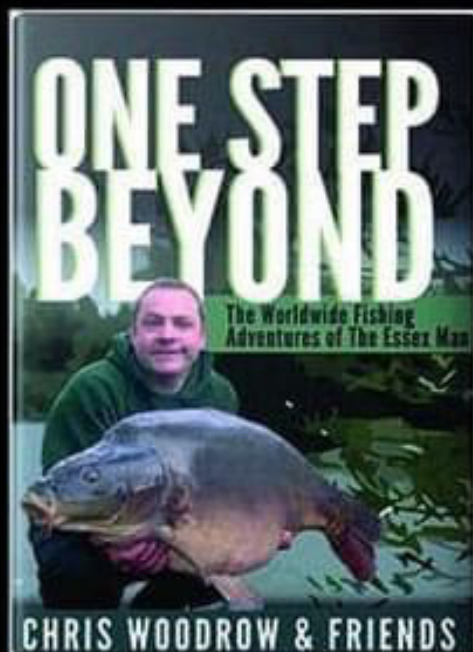
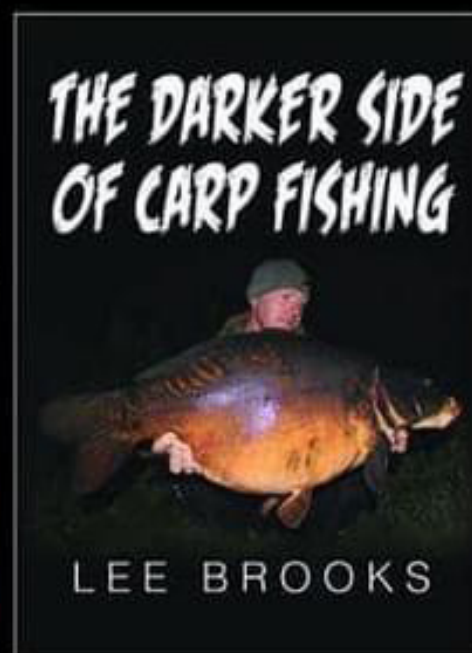




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but a lovely little pit.

I did mainly day sessions to start with and fished Kingmead island lake for longer periods but was always drawn to crayfish during the day time. I'd nip over the car park after ditching my boat on the launch ramp and walk crayfish a lot with polaroids trying to find spots and fish.

I started fishing a steep clear margin spot with mega vantage point behind a large

tree and big overhanging canopy.

I was baiting fairly heavy in April/May as the fish began to hit the margins, I could see them visiting and eating in small groups or sometimes on their own.

As the margins where clear and the sun was hitting it after around midday I could see the fish's behaviour as they began to arrive.

My rig was placed in the



edge before baiting and it was always super exciting seeing them show up and start circling and sampling the bait. I could see they were big dark mirrors. I remember amazing details like watching their mouths move as they ate free offerings and recognising scale patterns as the visits became more frequent.

I always made sure the rig was placed so I could see my hookbait and it was always heart in mouth moments as they got closer to the hookbait. I love this type of fishing as it's so intense and you can live the moment rather than sitting behind your buzzers.

I'd seen fish go over my rigs and pretty much mug me off for a few sessions which was frustrating but helped me learn that I definitely needed to change something, so I shortened the rigs length and increased the lead

size. New plan hatched and rig placement and baiting process repeated I pulled back from vantage point after seeing the odd fish arrive. Instead of watching as soon as I'd seen fish start feeding, I sat well back until the alarm gave out a few beeps and rod bent off to my right away from under the margin canopy back out into the pit.

I turned the fish quickly and had a short battle in close under the rod tip in the clear water. I could see it was one of the older mirrors. The fish then managed to tangled itself around a crayfish trap. I could see it was a nice one and not one I wanted to lose so I managed to net the fish and the crayfish cage all in one and quickly unhook the fish in the net and remove the trap.

A couple of minutes rest in the net then a quick few pictures and weigh, she went 30lb and ounces, but

the weight was irrelevant. A really special carp I'll never forget. Dark scaley and decent size was a bonus. The pictures came out nice with spring green background and the fish's lovely proportions displayed.

I went on to have a good run of smaller fish from same area before the spawning season began and I didn't return till late July/August.

I originally joined RK Leisure to learn a new trade of boat fishing on Kingsmead





Island Lake which was great fun and I managed a few fish from here also, best being a 37lb clean framed common and a 36lb linear plus handful of 20's and doubles up until October when I returned home to fish for the winter, but now it's nearly time to return.

My first season was far from a disaster. I definitely only scratched the surface but really enjoyed my time there treading the same paths of some our hero's.

Carpfishing has changed a lot but the place still holds magic even if times move on. I can't wait to get back

after keeping it local for the winter. I had a good dabble last season learnt a fair bit and caught a few.

I hope you enjoyed reading this short storey it's just about sharing your hobby with likeminded people. It's a hectic lifestyle with a lot of normal life sacrifices. It's not just the end goal of a fish

picture. Most likely there's a lot more to it than the picture you see posted on social media ect. I just love being outside with the dog enjoying my hobby. Enjoyment comes first and catching is the cherry on top.

I hope your new seasons go well wherever you are fishing.



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

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

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OZ HOLNESS

MOMENTS IN TIME

At dawn, I saw that the rods had remained inactive and so started questioning the rig choice. I had changed back to my multi-rigs because there had been a fair amount of debris when I first cast onto the spots a few weeks before. As I was sitting in the swim having a chat with Stella Darren later that morning, a big, plated mirror rose up directly over the right-hand rod before dropping down amidst a foaming stream of big bubbles. Minutes later, an eruption caught our attention as the fish again surfaced before surging away out from the zone. We both stared on in disbelief. It was clearly one of the fully

and she seemed somewhat spooked.

Gutted, I left the rods for an hour or so before checking the rigs and line-lay to the spots, but all seemed perfect, although my doubts still lay with the rig, so I changed back to the double-bottom-bait D presentation, with the little hook-ring swivel for maximum movement and hooking efficiency. I decided to rebait and cast early that day because I wanted everything settled and natural for the coming night. My confidence in the bait and rig were paramount, and once I received the best drop on the cast I was buzzing for a bite. One of the fullys had definitely been about that very day, and I hoped that





she would return and get another fully this morning? busy once again. I had until The clock was ticking, winter 10am the following morning. would soon be upon us, so Stella, Joe and I had a this was the time to make it Chinese feast that night and count. I had landed the king talked away the evening, of the pond, Blackspot, this along with a few beers. Soon time last year, having stalked enough, it was late, and as him out in the edge within they wandered back to the ten minutes of walking on the Pads, I was left in a head- lake. I needed another lucky spin over the day's events. break like that, a sighting of Had I missed the chance of the Big Fully, maybe!



BIG CARP

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WATERCOLOUR CARP PAINTINGS

The Legendary Big Carp Series



This is the first in a series of watercolour paintings capturing England's fantastic carp history. 'The Legendary Big Carp series' has been especially commissioned to celebrate a massive milestone in Big Carp magazine's history – the 200th issue! Basil, that famous Yateley North Lake legend, seen here in her natural habitat, is the first in a set of numbered and signed prints – absolutely breathtaking and scale perfect. The A3 prints are very modestly priced at only £25 and are available now on the Big Carp website www.bigcarpmagazine.co.uk. Visit the site, go to the shop and select the 'Fine Art' section. There is also more information on the rest of the series, which will be available at one to two-month intervals, but I can tell you that the Black Mirror, the Burghfield Common, Heather, Jumbo, Jack, Mary, Clarissa, the Bishop, the Royal Forty, the Fat Lady, Mary's Mate etc are already on the list and we are up for any more favourites – just let us know – Rob Maylin

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PETER HUDSON

LITTLE EDGES

With any type of angling we all love a little edge over the guy next door, with the warmer weather finally starting to make a show it is time to wash down the gear, restock and make battle plans for the year ahead, like thousands of anglers every spring I start a new water and revisit a couple for the ones that got away...

In my last article I mentioned the power of salt on Lovell's and what a little edge that is especially at this time of the year where I believe the carp hurt out the minerals more, I did take that method to another day ticket water called north view lakes at Gedney hill in Lincolnshire, a fished filled 48 hour session was soon

underway with fish coming left right and centre, with an evening rush on the second day with four fish landed in the matter of 30 minutes, later on in the night I landed a 20lb common falling to the salt, I was throwing out salt, chopped scopex squid and whole scopex squid boilies to an area around 15 yards out where fish were showing easy simple fishing, simple blowback rigs were the order of the day. Salt is just one little edge I like to use, I hope to list a couple off for you to consider in your angling.

LEADS :as we all know the lead is one important factor in the rig department, getting it right can sometimes be a challenge, I personally only use leads between 2-4oz I find that ticks all the boxes for my type of angling , where I get a little edge is to start at 2oz's and increase the weight from there on if I feel I need to. I also carry a few different types of lead, I've seen loads of anglers who just use one type of lead and struggled, personally the flat pear and dumpy pear type are my favourites; however



a gripper type lead is always in my box especially when im fishing big open waters as I feel the lead stays in place better. So I would certainly recommend having a couple of types of lead and in different weights.

UNDERSTAND WHAT YOUR FISHING OVER: a massive understanding of the lake bed and structure of the lake will help you bank more fish, im referring to things like gravel bars, weed beds, snags etc.. all these areas will hold carp some will hold them all year round some only for a short time, take weed for example during in the day it gives off oxygen during in the night it takes oxygen out of the water it would be better to find an area near a weed bed for a 24 hour session to fish, during in the night it will be likely to have a visit from fish. Feeling that lead



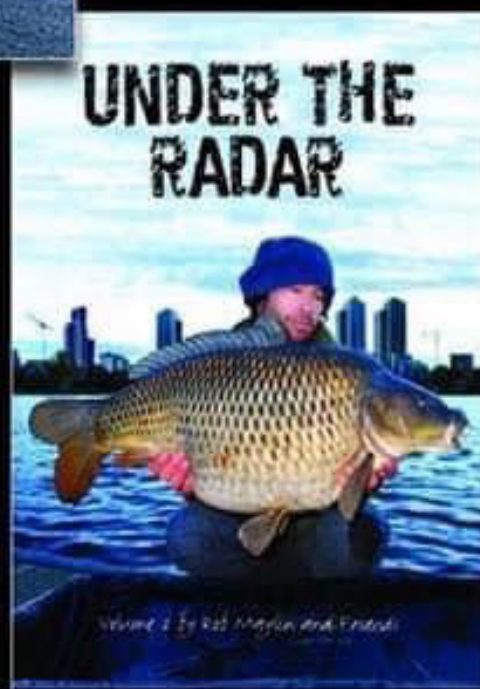
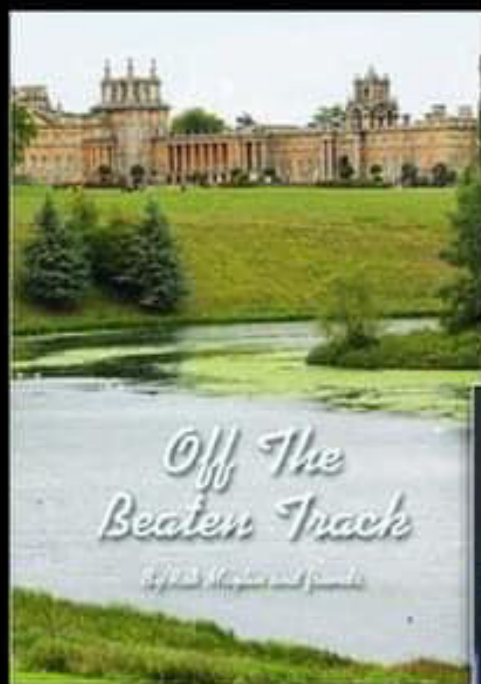
down will certainly help you find these areas and will ensure your rigs are fishing correctly ready for those fish. I would also recommend you talking to other anglers who have either fished the venue or are currently fish it, listening to them will give you information on the going bait, rig and areas, if im completely honest I tend to speak to anglers learn all of this then go in with a different plan to what the other anglers are doing, it's not disrespecting them it's the fact they all seem to follow each other and have very little results.

UNDERSTANDING THE NATURAL WORLD: before sounding like a David Attenborough here let me explain, the natural world tells you everything you need to know about a venue, when the sun is out head to the shallows when its cold head towards deeper water although there is more than meets the eye, it's all to do



OFF THE BEATEN TRACK SERIES

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with food as we know carp are basically pigs with fins, so with this in mind I always look for the start of the natural food chain within the lakes ecosystem, it always starts in the shallower water and gradually goes into the deeper water as the season goes on, understanding this and using it is pinpoint and will get you extra fish, there is no text book answer to all of this as every venue is different however a few pointers to look out for would be water snails, Beetles, fresh weed growth and a big one I have found is bream spawn for some reason carp love feeding on bream spawn or at least they do in the venues I have fished over the years.

TACKLE AND BAIT: a quick pointer on your gear, always put fresh line on your reels at least once a year, keep plenty of supplies in no point starting a new campaign and when you're really on it suddenly running out of items half way through and then having to stop. Always make sure your rigs are strong enough to land any fish in any situation, always carry fish care products and never run out it is so important that we look after these wonderful creatures. Finally bait a subject that could be a whole article in itself however I get loads of anglers ask me what bait I use, boilie wise its scopex squid from Nash bait, I've used Nash bait for years and it's never let me down, just recently I've joined midland mixes ltd as a team member so that sorts the particles out, the main one is hempseed I love the stuff as if it is used correctly it looks like a bed of water snails which goes back to the understand the natural world, I always say to people once you have found a bait that works for you just stick to it, you can



always find edges with the application of that bait, chops, crumb, whole, different sizes will all work. Although in the last year a top little edge I now have in the bag at all times is the insect meal from DNA BAITs I think it works very well on the more wild type waters where I've had some good results from, even a couple of tricky day tickets I've fished it seems to work well there as well.

FINAL POINT IS HOOK LINKS : a subject that can be very off putting, every time I go into a tackle shop there seems to be countless hook links on the market and it can certainly be off putting at times when x y and z companies are saying it's the best of the market, the general rule is when its soft bottom fish and softer hook link when it's a rock hard bottom fish a stiffer hook link. I always pay

great attention to hook links and its where I get my little edges over other anglers, I love using fluorocarbon and soft style coated hook links together, they have been a massive edge for me in recent years, mind you sometimes just going back to basics has helped me bank some lovely carp, a simple braided hook



link of around 20lb breaking strain has been a massive edge, when im banging my head against the wall on a venue and everything isn't working that is when trigga link comes out, I love the stuff, I use it in 30lb breaking strain and have had some epic battles on it not just from carp but other species as well.

It takes time and patience to put all of what I've said into practice, don't get frustrated that it doesn't work the first time, keep going , keep going into those experiments on your venue, it could be as simple as casting further than the other anglers or fishing much shorter will help you land some more carp this year, it could even be fishing with boilies instead of particles. Never stop trying new things and I promise you it will catch you more fish. Now its time for me to head off to a lake.... Stay lucky...

BIG CARP

fine arts

WATERCOLOUR CARP PAINTINGS

The Legendary Big Carp Series



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

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SCOTT LLOYD

LOOK AFTER YOUR MAGGOTS

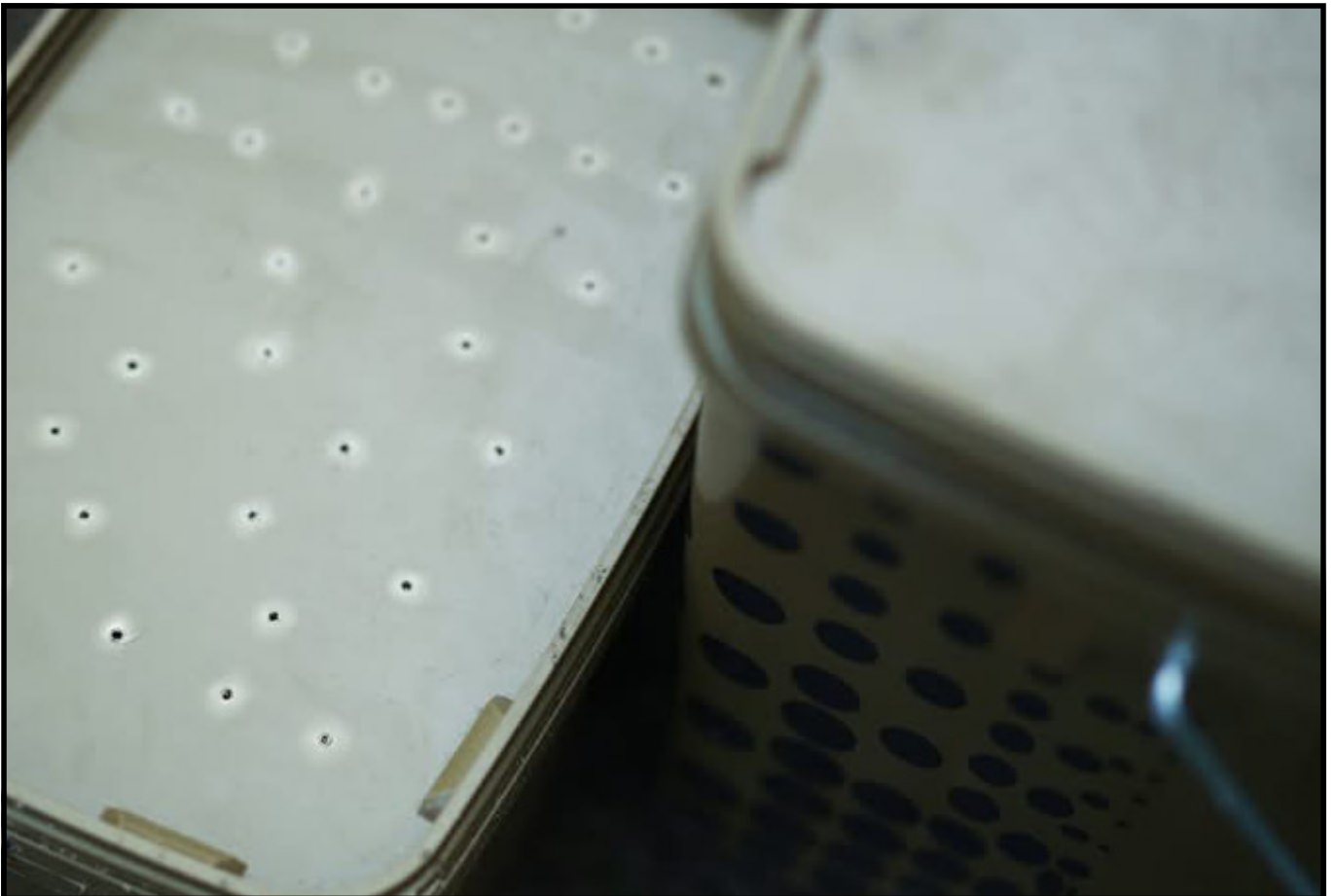
You've got to keep your maggots clean and ready to go at all times, there's nothing worse than opening up your bucket, and they're all sweated up, crawling up the sides and just stinking, it's not the one!

There's a couple things I like to do to prevent this; I put holes in the top of my bucket so there's some airflow in there, which helps keep them dry and allows them to breathe.

I also like to upgrade them

from the standard sawdust and maize you get from the tackle shop, I give them a good hit of the Manilla Active Mix, which not only keeps them nice and dry but also gets them to take that Manilla flavour on, adding more attraction to an already extremely attractive bait.”





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MAY 2025

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Gary Wadsworth with the best fish out of four, size 6 scorpion curved shank doing the business as usual holding firm against a weedy swim.



Spring is here!!!!
Halo Baits the nuts 12mm pop up over boilie crumb and 2mm pellet. Simple hair rigs with carptackleonline size 10 hooks



I'd seen this one feeding in the edge I quickly tied a size 10 @ carptackleonline zig hook to some light hook link and it gognt take long to get the bite.



A superb looking 20+ common caught by team member Will Cottrell. Will caught this beauty using our size 4 Scorpion Wide Gape hooks and Tungsten Kickers. Well done!



Mark Russell had another successful session, towcesterlakes. With a nice common of 27lb 6oz. and a mirror of 25lb 8oz, using carptackleonline products, size 4 Scorpion Wide Gape hook, Tungsten Kickers, 54mm anti tangle sleeve, CTO Pro hooklink, and composite safety lead clips



No carp, but look at this 3lb 8oz roach which took a 14mm boilie on a carptackleonline size 6 wide gape, caught by Bradley Johnson. Not quite the carp he was after but Bradley was made up with catching such a special Roach. Well done Bradley.



Team member Paul Gill made this 20lb 9oz mirror. Paul used our Scorpion Zig hooks, Zig Foam and Zig Aligners on an 18ft hooklink! Good angling Paul

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Micro Rig Swivel

Micro Bait Swivel

Swivels



Scorpion Chod Hook



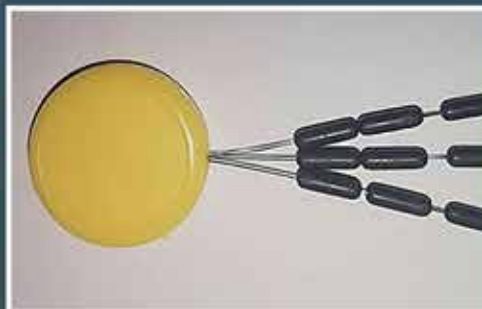
Scorpion Crank Hook



Scorpion Snag Hook



Swivel Deal



Tungsten Hooklink Sinkers



Chod Filament



Scorpion Ronnie Rigs



Composite Leadclip



Choddy Crank Hook



Aligner

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

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Shrink Tube



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Publications
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co.uk

Design & Production
James Harrison

Also available this
month Big Carp issue
346.



Front Cover:
Kate Aylward with a
Chilston chunk.



PRIMAL ANGLING CLUB

Primal Angling Club is more than just a fishing club. It's a space where people can reconnect with nature, develop their fishing skills, and benefit from the therapeutic effects of spending time outdoors. Whether you're a beginner or an experienced angler, our club welcomes everyone who shares a passion for fishing, conservation, and mental well-being.

Club Features: Community Fishing Events, Mental Well-being Focus, Junior Anglers Programme, Conservation & Habitat Management, Exclusive access to Mill Dam for club events Workshops on tackle setup, bait selection, and advanced angling techniques, Discounts on fishing gear through partnerships.

Mental well-being sessions incorporated into outdoor activities

Contact: 07593962767

Email: Admin@primalmentality.co.uk

8. CARP CHAT

20. CARP SCENE

28. DANNY HOLLAND

48. DAVID COWARD

54. JAMES REED

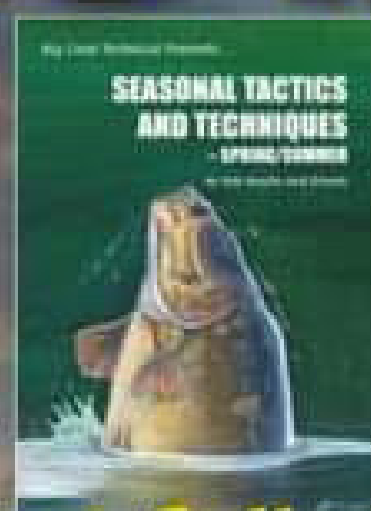
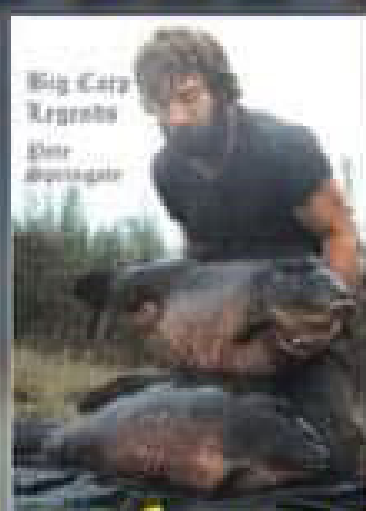
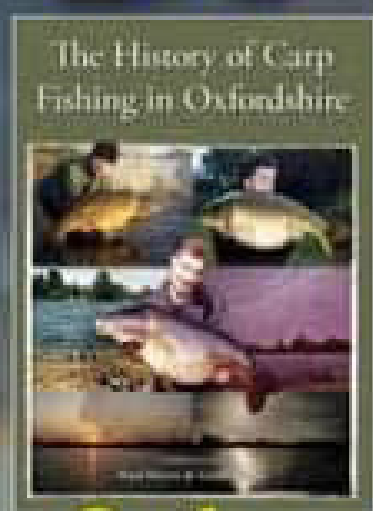
62. KATY AYLWARD

72. PETE HALL

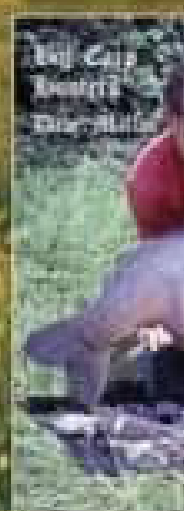
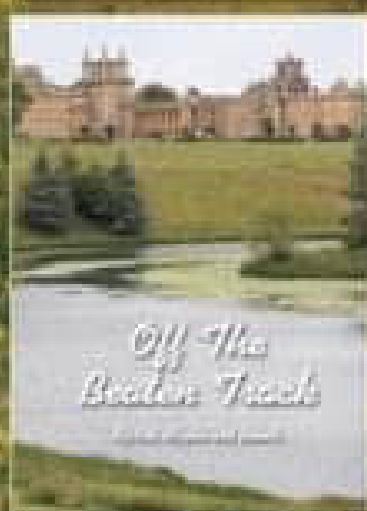
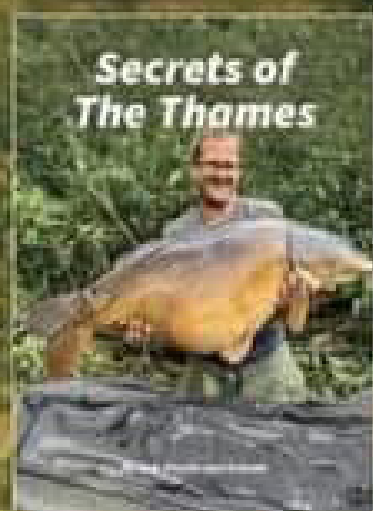
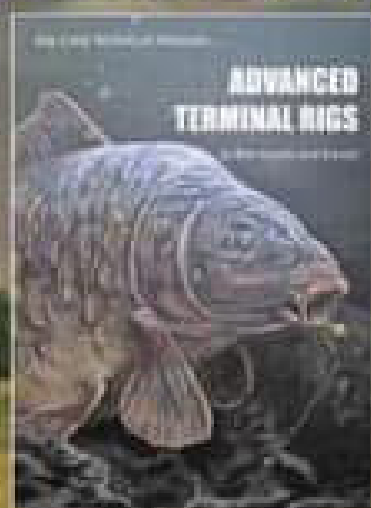
84. STUART HIGGS



SPRING INTO

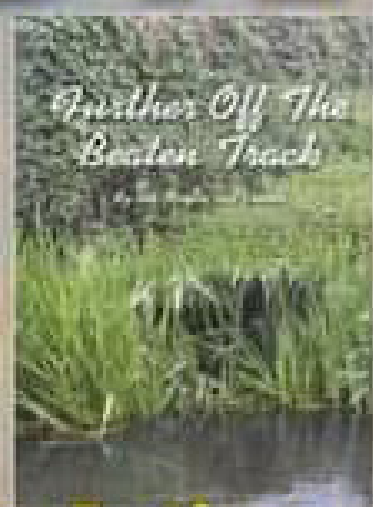
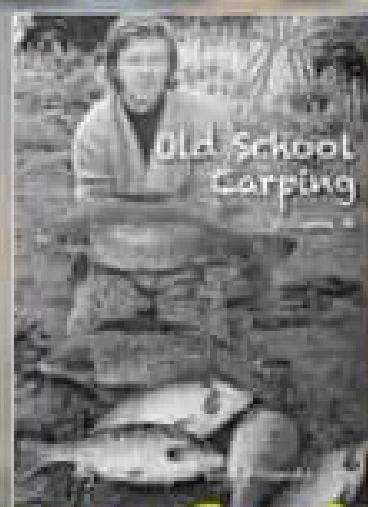
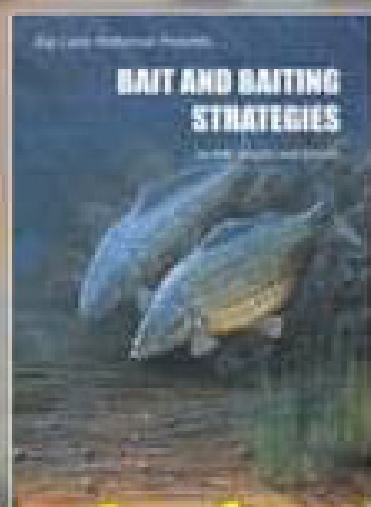


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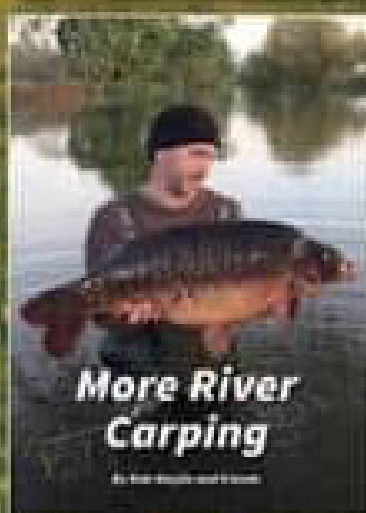
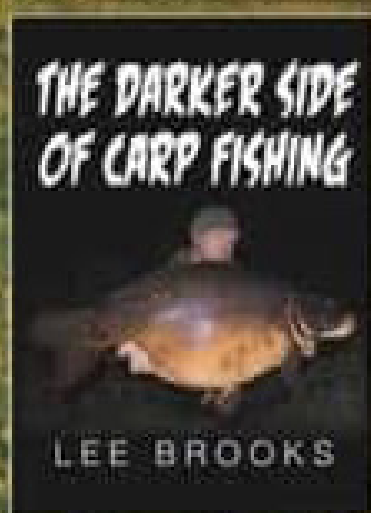
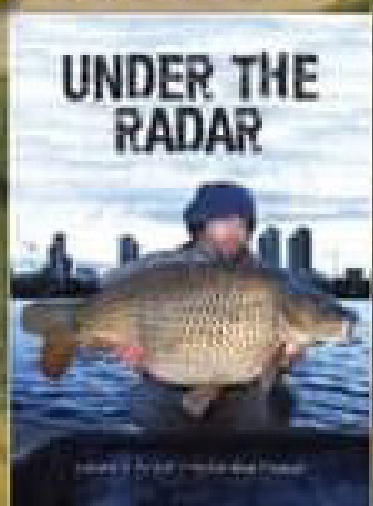
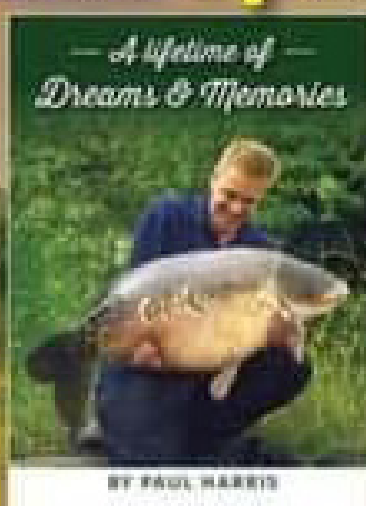
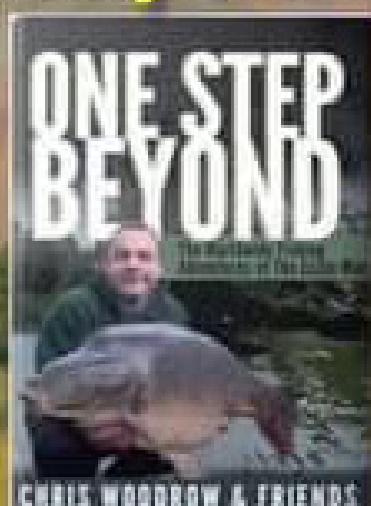


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CARP TEAM ENGLAND UNDER 22 ANNOUNCED

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

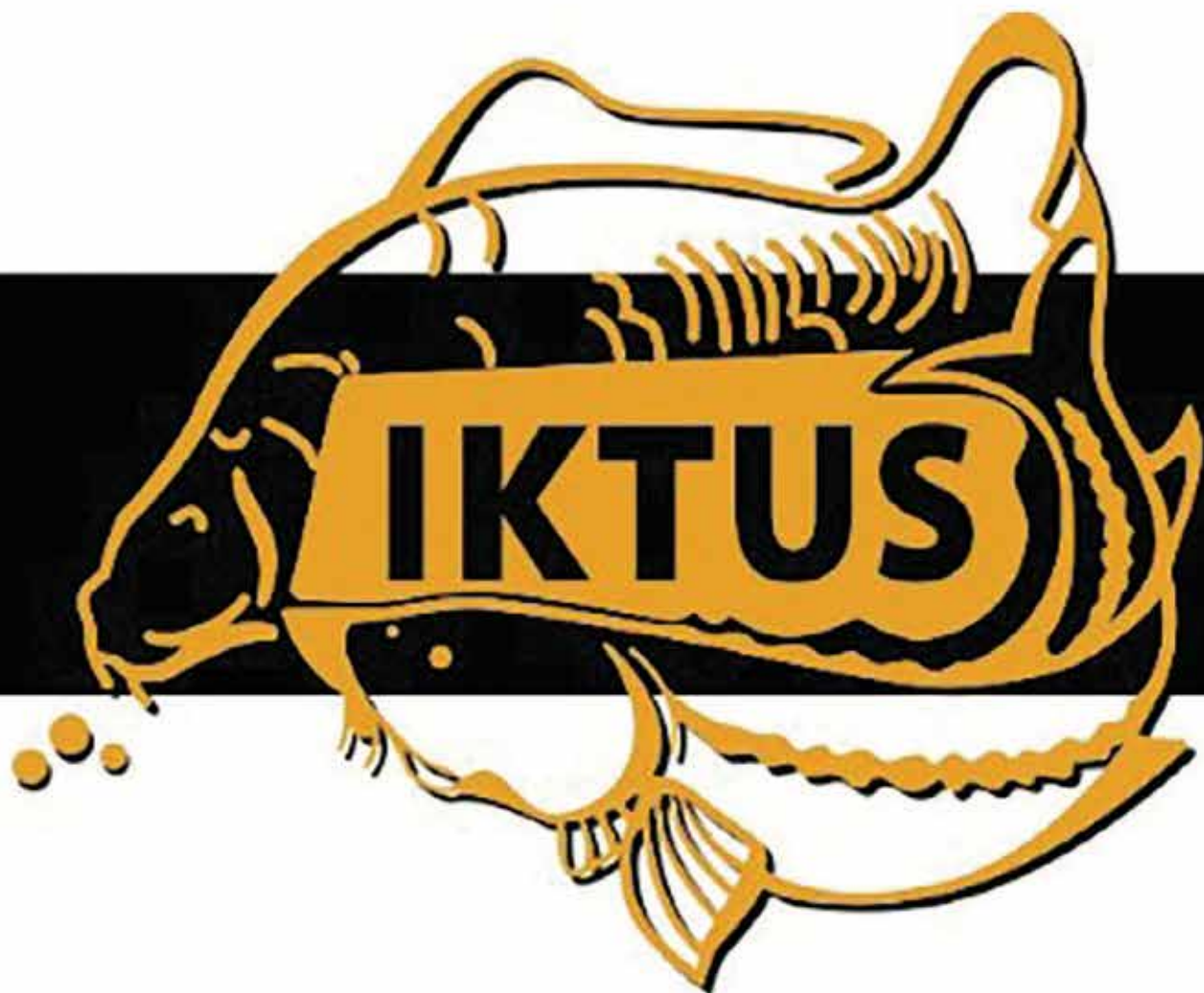
Save the date for this years 'Festival of Carp.' The event will be at Horseshoe Lake in Lechlade on Saturday 12th July, it's always a good social event with something for everyone, we hope to see you there!

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 ...

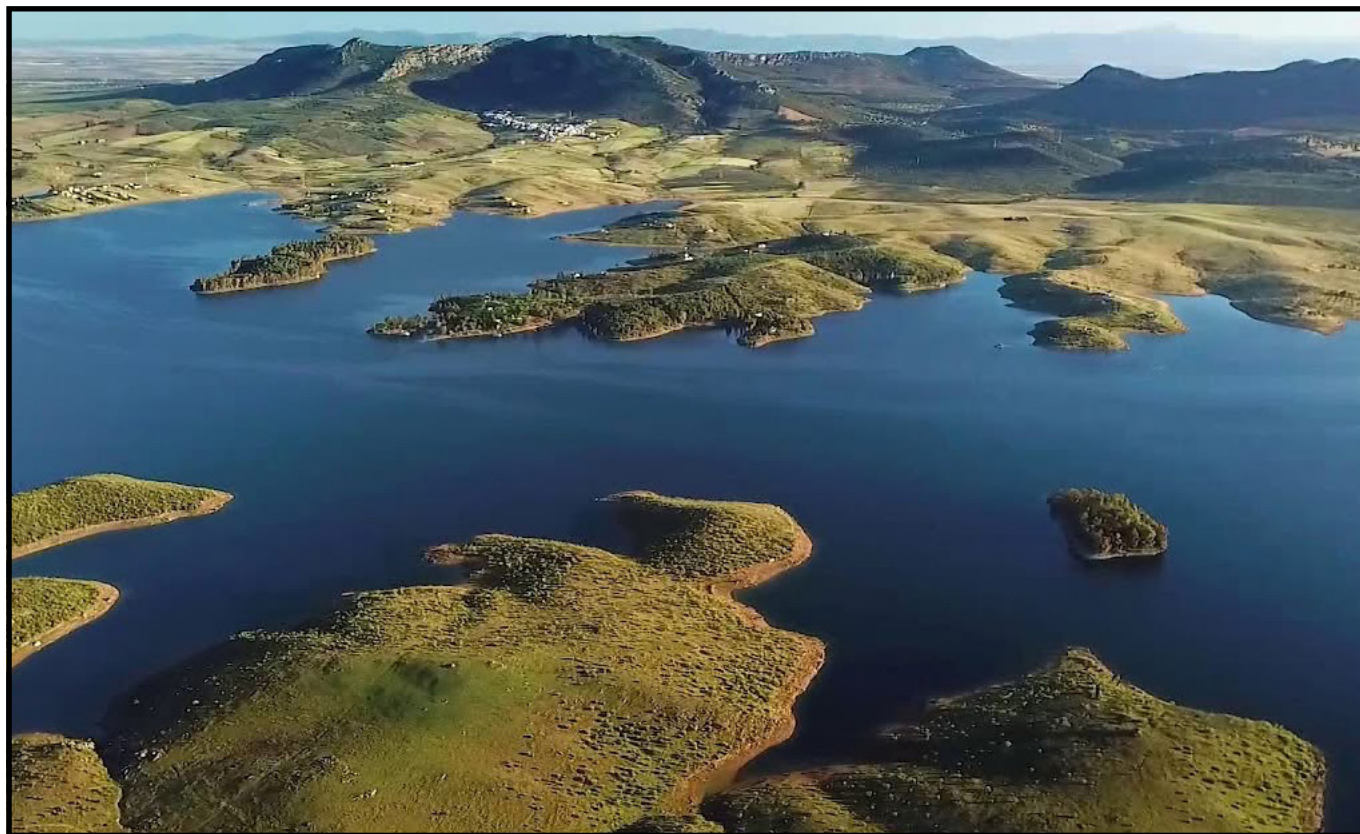


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REGISTRATION IS OPEN FOR 2026 WORLD CARP CLASSIC ORELLANA, SPAIN



<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/worldcarpclassic/1620911/r/wcc26-28th-edition> The response has been overwhelming with lots of teams already registering - it's bound to be an incredible CLASSIC event. More about Orellana - A vast, untamed venue spanning over 35km, 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 sport! Teeming with huge of carp, ensuring intense action and the potential for record-breaking catches.

ANGLING DIRECT ADD THEIR SUPPORT TO THE ANGLING TRUST'S WATER QUALITY MONITORING NETWORK IN THE FIGHT AGAINST POLLUTION



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



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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

A promotional image for Horseshoe Lake. It features two side-by-side photographs of anglers holding large carp. The left photo shows a man in a green jacket and beanie holding a large carp. The right photo shows a woman in a green beanie holding a large carp. The background of the entire image is a scenic view of Horseshoe Lake with trees and a cloudy sky. Overlaid on the image is the text: **HORSESHOE LAKE** in large green letters with a white outline, followed by **MIDWEEK FISHING TICKET SPECIAL** in white letters with a black outline. Below that, **ENJOY 4 NIGHTS FOR THE PRICE OF 3 MONDAY TO THURSDAY*** in white letters with a black outline, and finally **THAT'S 96 HOURS FOR JUST £90** in blue letters with a white outline.

Acquired by the Carp Society in 1992, Horseshoe is a picturesque 62-acre lake 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 specimen tench weighing up to 12lb, as well as rudd, perch, and pike.

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 where it will entertain media, customers, business partners and influencers.

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 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.

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



Yateley South Complex: Tree Lake, Pumphouse Lake and Horseshoe Lake are now open again to fishing. Aerators have been fitted within these three lakes, which we hope will ensure that dissolved oxygen levels are maintained at a healthy level, with all of the associated benefits that brings to the fish. The pond was previously surrounded by, and had a lot of trees growing in it, whilst all of these have been removed, please be aware that there are still a number of smaller branches and twigs in there.

We are unsure of the stock at the present time, but know that some Tench are in the pond, so your feedback would be both welcome and helpful. Please note: Anyone found tampering with the aerator system in any way whatsoever will have their permit removed immediately.

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

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Carp Scene

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.



Carp Scene



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 and from selected specialist outdoor retailers.

Hay Fever? Dust or Pet Allergy?



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Catch the Pollen



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Organic



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60+ Awards



Drug-Free



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haymax.biz

[Holland&Barrett](#)

[Cocado](#)

[Boots](#)

[†]Proven to trap over 1/3 of pollen, plus dust & pet allergens, National Pollen & Aerobiology Research Unit, 2012.

^{*}80% said HayMax works, 134 of 166 respondents, Allergy UK survey, 2016.

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Removes:

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Bacteria - 99.9999%

Cysts - 99.99%

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Capacity: 400ml (14 fl oz)

Purifies up to 2,000 litres



LifeSaver Liberty™ water purifier bottle and inline pump

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Includes a replaceable Activated Carbon Disc for chemical and heavy metal reduction as well as removing bad taste and odour, effective for up to 100 litres - Our standard activated Carbon discs used in all LifeSaver products have been tested to show excellent and consistent heavy metal and chemical reduction for their stated life over a range of sample contaminants such as chlorine, lead, nickel and cadmium. Improving taste and odour along the way.

The water is still safe to consume without an Activated Carbon Disc installed. Screws right in to most wide-mouth water containers, like Nalgene or Hydro Flask bottles

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BACK TO THE FUTURE

It was the May 13-14 season, and after 12 years away from carp fishing, I was back having a go. My first trip was upon me, and I decided the land of the giants would be my first port of call. All set up and raring to go, I couldn't believe the massive changes to carp fishing since my last efforts some 12 years ago. Things had become so busy – bivvy after bivvy after bivvy with TV aerials and solar power panels in the swim. I thought, what the hell was this all about? Modern day carping had finally hit home.

Nevertheless, here I was on the next chapter of my carp fishing journey, Rockford lake, land of the giants... How hard could it possibly be? So here I was totally lost with hinge rig this, chod rig that – what had happened to a good old bottom bait? All these young anglers catching 40lb-plus fish for fun,

yet I was still biteless. Eventually after months of fruitless efforts and feeling dejected, some success came my way with a couple of 30s and a 28 to my name. Ten months had passed, and I needed a change, and this is where my fishing really began.

Talk about out of the the frying pan into the fire! I decided to look for some peace and quiet on the lake next door, one I had enjoyed some success on some 15 years prior. The mighty Boating Lake, 65 acres with 40 fish and just about every hurdle you could face, was right in front of me, but the place was empty, so I was a happy man. Any fish would be a bonus from this deep mass of water. The lake is a slice of heaven on Earth – tree lined margins, bays, islands – everything that the lake next door wasn't.

For the next few weeks, I was just happy to fish this beautiful and quiet piece of gold, strewn with wildlife and all the sunsets and sunrises pure gold too. Through these first few weeks, I bumped into a guy called Rob Young, an avid tench angler fishing the pit at the same time, who to this day is one of my closest friends and an outstanding angler in his own area. Still carpleless at this time, I was however getting action from tench,

much to Rob's displeasure... Bloody carp anglers!

Maybe six weeks passed with some good tench under my belt, things were looking good for a carp sometime soon. 1.30am and my middle rod was away, and bleary eyed and confused, I had somehow



managed to land my first Boating Lake carp, a beautiful 22lb chestnut mirror known as the Baby Tuna. Happy was an understatement... ask my mum, as I woke her at 2am to inform her I had one. I got on the phone to Rob and without hesitation he was on his way to take some pics.

All of a sudden, like a switch, my carp fishing brain suddenly returned. After the bashing I received from Rockford over the previous months, this really was a monkey off my back.

Now full of confidence I actually planned my next course of action and decided to fish an almost forgotten carp swim called Long Island. My memories of this swim go back to fishing next to the great Terry Lampard some 15 years previously and chatting to him in the mornings on his way to work. I will cherish those talks, as I was there when he was fishing in the period that later went in his book.

Now I was settled in my new swim, which hadn't done a carp for the best part of ten years but seemed an ideal spot to try something different. At the time most of my fishing was at catapult distance at the bottom of the shelf 25 yards out – totally not the norm. All of my fishing is done with three rods in an area about size of a tennis court. My way of thinking was: one baited area, three different chances, as I was looking for just one bite.

My first visit to the swim was a three-night blank, but to my surprise, I had seen fish roll over my baited area, so god willing and with a touch of luck, there might be a bite. Five kilos of New Grange went in over the first two sessions, but still no joy. On the third week, as per usual, I put out two kilos straight out, tennis court style, ready to go. Before setting up, Rob had been tench fishing the margins for a few days prior, and I had

seen many tench roll in previous weeks. Unbelievably I was sat in the swim on the phone to Rob when out boshed a dirty great black mirror over his hemp spot a rod length out. It was so close, I'm surprised Rob didn't hear it down the phone. The fish came clean out twice, and I could see every scale.

So, I put all three rods out on fluoro bottom baits and running leads, and I was brimming with confidence. Two days passed without incident or even a sniff of a fish – typical Boating Lake. Day three, and out of nowhere at 6am the middle rod took off big time. I was up to my neck in water just in my pants, and after a dogged fight, I slipped the net under a beautiful black mirror of 32lbs, and yes it was the very fish I'd seen jump two days previously. Photos done, I was elated my second Boating lake fish, and later that day, Ash in the local tackle shop who knows the stock like the back of his hand, informed me it was a fish called Special K, which was missing, presumed dead. My capture was only the fifth time this fish had ever been caught, so happy wasn't the word.

The following week exactly the same traps were set tennis court style, and I was sky high confident. At 3am on a still, misty summer morning, I was awake to a one-toner on the middle rod. Again, I was up to my neck in the drink, and I'd got a big fish stuck in the weed. Panic stricken, I made the error of just giving it too much pressure and ended up straightening the hook. I was devastated! If only I had left it, the fish might have freed itself. Without recasting, as I still had two rods in the zone, I sat on my bedchair a broken man. What had I done?

Anyway, a change of clothes and a few coffees later, I was starting to recover when all of a sudden one of my other rods was away at 5.30am. Back up to my neck in water in my second



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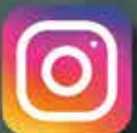
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set of clothes, I'd connected into what seemed a very big fish. After a short, uneventful fight, I couldn't believe when I slipped my net under the biggest common I'd ever seen. I was in total shock, and I can remember it like it was yesterday. It tipped the scales at 45lb 12oz, one of the two giants of the lake, the Ivy Common – wow! Photos and video footage done, I spent the next five days in a spin. This was to be my last fish from this swim, as I stuck it out for another six weeks to no avail.

With my carp brain kicking in, it was time for a change since I'd now caught a few fish, so I found a new spot in a well-known swim, but I fished in a different area than most other anglers fished it. By this time, I'd now changed to braid and tapered



clear leaders, as I was fishing at about 130 yards. Everything the business end was clear mono, fluorocarbon leaders and hook links, as I was sure they could see the braid in the clear gin water. Seven weeks passed with my usual tennis court approach and 3 or 4kg a week at about 130 yards.

It was blinding hot conditions and not a breath of wind at 9am with the sun blazing, and off went the middle rod. There followed a good scrap with fish on the top after dumping the lead, and I eventually slipped the net under another enormous bar of gold common – wow! It was only the Ivy Common again at 44lb 4oz! I couldn't believe my luck – the same fish seven weeks later dead opposite from my previous capture.

Another year passed, catching well into double figures of carp with three being 40lb-plus – incredible stuff. My last session was one I will never forget in mid September after a four-month blank due partly to an algae bloom. I was blessed



with a three-fish capture – a 20, a 30 and a finally the lake's biggest, most sought after fish, the Big Common well into the mid 40s. Four 40 pounders was a first for the lake and still unequalled to this day.

After 16 months and the Boating Lake done, I headed back to my old nemesis, Rockford. After my Boating Lake conquests, surely this time I couldn't fail? Oh my god... 127 nights later and fishless, Rockford really had beaten me badly this time. Eight months of hell – déjà vu, I said to myself. Making all the same mistakes as my first try, I'd decided to go back to my normal tapered leaders and bottom baits and ditch the pop-ups. Fortunately during this period of fortune I'd become friends with my good friend Adam Rawlings, Rockford's most successful angler with over 37 fish – 17 forties, 14 different



ones and two 50s – wow! He would come and visit me and keep me going, and just him encouraging me was vital. As per usual, I picked a lightly fished swim that looked a good bet with lots of features. I put one rod on a hump and two rods tennis court style at about 130 yards. First night with bottom baits, I got a take but lost this one... I was gutted but pleased I'd had a take.

Back a few days later, tail up after the loss a few days previously, I was back in my forgotten swim. With the hump and tennis court baited and rods out, I was ready for another crack. Tucking into bed on a beautiful warm, still night, I was out like a light when BEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEP! At 3am, one of the long rods was away. Knees knocking and already thinking



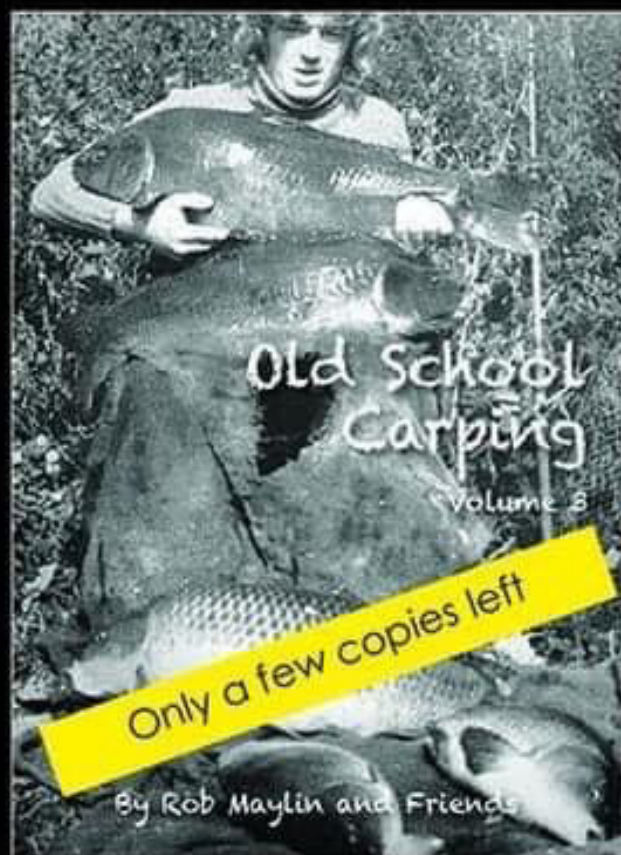
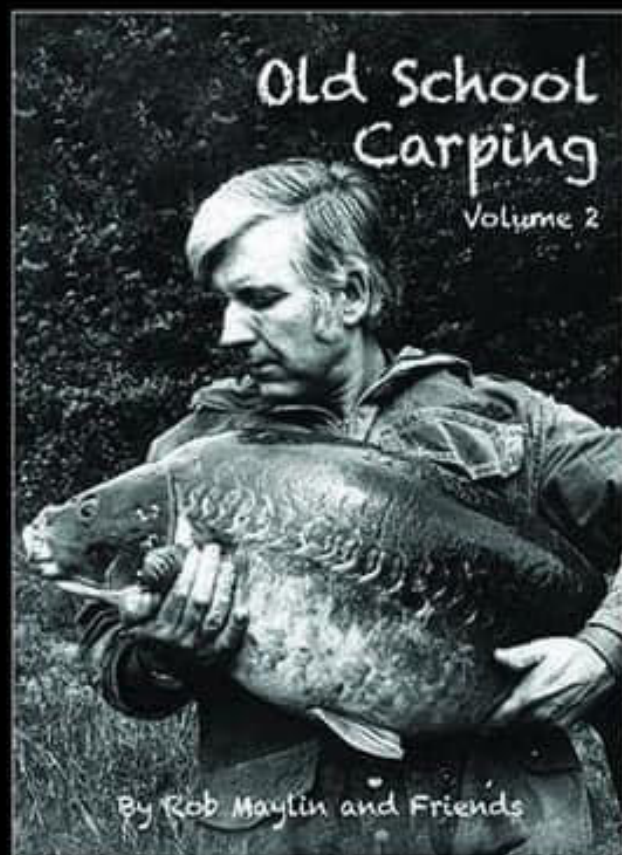
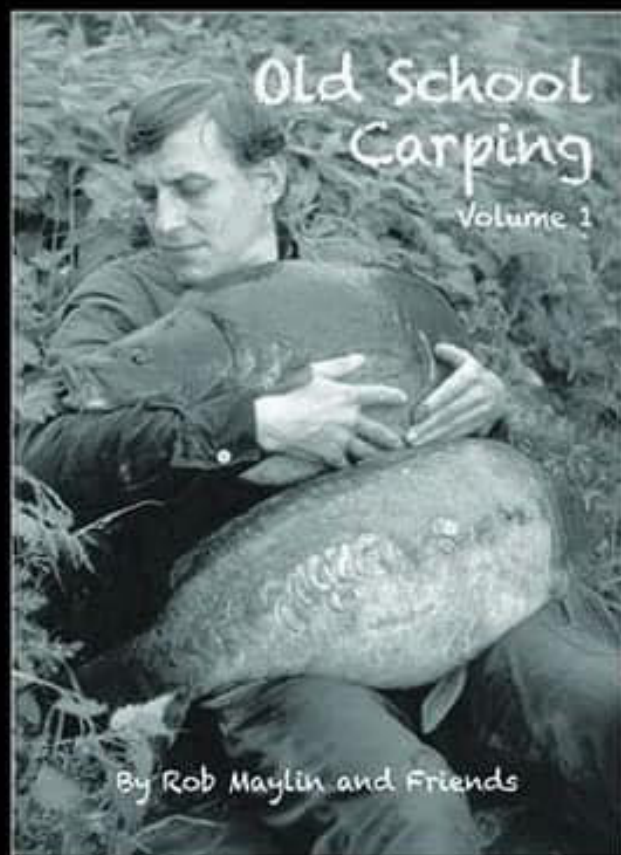


hook pull, I finally managed to slip the net under one of the most beautiful 22lb commons I'd ever seen, one of the lake's smaller but rarer jewels. Relief was an understatement – 127 nights and my bad run was over. Over the next few weeks, I managed to catch a single fish every week – 22lb, 25lb, 42lb (the Brute) and 43lb (Half Lin). What can I say? I was elated! I'd gone back to my original ways and caught well. 127-night lesson learned – if it isn't broken, don't fix it.

Private Lake.

With Rockford getting busy, it was time for a change of plan, so I decided on a little weedy private lake renowned for its difficulty – 20 acres with 20 fish – just my cup of tea. Not

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making the same mistakes as Rockford, I used tapered leaders, fluorocarbon everything and leads that matched the lakebed. I was ready from the off for this notoriously difficult pit. These fish are probably pound for pound the hardest fish to catch in the entire area, only doing a handful of bites, maybe two a year, so these little buggers knew their stuff.

With water clarity in mind, presentation was everything for me, even more than location. I was happier to fish smart and try to bring the fish to me. Once again I picked an area of the lake that received very little attention from other anglers, a typical tennis court size bit of water sort of in between swims. It was 10ft deep and clear of weed with white sand – perfect for my pinned down fluorocarbon approach that had served me so well on previous occasions. With the area baited ready for



a new campaign, to my surprise, on my first night at 2.30am, I had a screaming take and an original 32lb common that fought as though its life depended on it. I was totally in shock and the fish was safe in a retainer waiting to be photographed.

Over the next nine months I was to continue with the trout pellet and boilie approach that I still use to this day and that had struck gold for me on this hardest of hard waters and such rarely caught fish. I was fortunate to catch seven originals, one stockie and a 32lb recapture. These fish really were special – a beautiful stockie common of 32lb, a perfect 22lb linear and a 32lb original mirror that I was fortunate to





catch on two occasions, my first capture being at night so I couldn't capture the true beauty of this tremendous mirror. On another occasion, it was on a beautiful sunny day and it's still one of the nicest fish I'd ever had the pleasure to catch. I also had a strong 25lb character of a common at Christmas that was shaped like the letter Z, maybe some birth defect, but truly welcome. Then finally, the lake's three A-list 40s, one of them being one of the most sought after mirrors in the land, a beautiful scaly 43lb 1oz bar of colour and two 40lb commons of 40lb 13oz and 42lb 13oz in the same week – wow! I couldn't believe what I had done! One common had gone three years



avoiding capture, and the biggest of the two nearly five years. Once again, I was just in awe of such glorious untapped carp.

Mission accomplished, I decided to return to Rockford for another go at a 50-pounder as I'd never had one. It was back to basics again – yes, the old tennis court thing and pellet and Krill boilies. With spring approaching and the same type of plan, I decided on a not overly busy area for Rockford, so there was a good chance of getting something going in the coming spring. Swim chosen, my plan as normal was pellet, pellet, pellet with a few Krill boilies. My idea here was to try and get the bream to feed and bring the carp in.

So a few weeks passed and I had a few double figure bream and a good tench to my name – all things good considering the

weather was less than ideal. Cold southerly winds blowing straight at me made for some pretty uncomfortable sessions. Still, persistence always seemed to pay in the past, so I just kept it going in. I spent about six weeks in this area, which was nothing special, just a weed-free area about 120 yards out and some smooth sandy ground amongst weed and gravel bars – a typical area for a few naturals to appear as things warmed up.

Then one day at first light, I had a one-toner on the middle rod, and I was up and away. As usual I was a bungling wreck, as this felt a good one. The fish didn't do much; it just came slowly to the net after a blundering fight. Eventually she was in, and she was enormous. I recognised the fish as the Leather from photos of its last capture at 57lb last November. I was pretty sure she was a 50. I was straight on the phone to my





good friend Lenny Hedges, who I would like to give a massive thanks to. He drove all the way to Rockford from Portsmouth to take control of the weighing and photography. After putting her on the scales, she eventually stopped on a massive 53lb 8oz – wow! I had finally done it – a 50lber after a four-year quest.

Looking back on my memories of the last four seasons with great affection, it's only now dawning on me my tally of big carp. With a little dedication, a bit of spare time and a lot of Lady Luck, anyone's dreams are possible. Big fish from the valley now complete, it's back to the future for me with some smaller carp and hopefully a few more bites. Thank you all for reading, and may all your dreams come true.

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GRENVILLE

The time had come... I had been so excited about this trip, five nights fishing on Grenville Lake in Cambridge on a guest ticket through a friend who is a syndicate member. Early Sunday morning, we set off to Cambridge. It was a three-hour drive from Manchester, and we arrived at the barrier at 7am. Paul the owner drove down to meet us. We had a chat about Grenville and the fish stocks, and he blew me away with what he was telling me. Of around 1500 fish, around 70-80 were 40s, a dozen 50s and even a possible 60 and loads of stunning, scaly carp.

I had the lodge swim for the five nights, so I set up in my swim and found a nice clean clay area at 110 yards on a large plateau area that Paul feeds once a week with his own boilies that he makes on site. He puts bait out in different swims around the lake, and he had put 20kg out on my spots on the Wednesday before I arrived.

The first 24 hours I just put out a couple of kilos of 18mm Urban Baits Nutcracker and Tuna & Garlic boilies with my carbon stick to see if I could get a quick bite, but nothing happened! That night I got up an hour before light and put the kettle on just as it started to lighten up, seeing fish showing right out in the main body of the lake 300 yards away. I must have seen about 50 shows that morning.

Another day had passed, and I got up early again, watching the water at first light. Fish were showing again around the same area of the lake over deep water. Paul came around for a brew and a chat and said he was going out in his boat in the afternoon to put some more bait out in a couple of swims where no one was fishing over on the other side of the lake, and he offered to put some out over my spots.

So that afternoon, I made two large buckets up of crushed boilies and mixed sizes of Nutcracker and Tuna & Garlic with three bottles of Nutcracker glugs and two bottles of Nut Juice – around 30kg in total. Paul went out and scooped it in over the area, then he went over to the far end of the lake to put his own bait out. Paul feeds his fish every couple of days in different parts of the lake, which keeps them looking for it, and they do love his bait. Just looking at his records of the fish growth throughout the year is unbelievable.

Another night passed with no joy, again watching the fish in

the main body. I was getting itchy feet because I had booked the Cabin swim, but I couldn't move swims, so all I could do was sit it out and wait, hoping the fish would turn up at some point. Paul did keep telling me they would turn up at some point; he was certain of it.

It now was Thursday, my last night. At around 4:30pm I was eating my tea, and the weather looked bang-on. It had been the mildest day since I had arrived – 13 degrees. The weather had been mad that week with a couple of frosts and strong winds blowing in, but this night was great weather. Just as I



finished my tea, I saw a right lump crash over my baited area and again ten minutes later. Just on dark, I was sitting there thinking, come on, it's got to happen any time soon! The carp had definitely turned up now!

It got to around 6:30pm, a couple of hours into darkness, and my left hand rod was away! I hit into it, and I knew right away this was a big fish. It started peeling line off my clutch, and it must have taken 50 yards on a really powerful run. I started gaining line back, but then again it took another powerful run. All I was thinking was trying to stay cool. I didn't want to pull out if this one, and my legs were going to jelly.

After a hard 20-minute fight, the fish was somewhere close in the deep margins. I put my head torch on, and I could see the fish coming up through the gin clear water. My heart was in my mouth! It popped up quickly, and I got the net under it and in she went. The pressure was off! I was staring into my net, thinking, oh my god, the size of this one! It was one of Grenville's giants, and I was properly blown away. I got her weighed at 48lb 12oz, a UK personal best for me. A couple of lads who were fishing came over and gave me a hand with photos etc. I got my rod straight back out because when they turn up, they turn up in numbers.

Sitting there, I put the kettle on while sorting out new rigs, and an hour later my middle rod was away. After another real fight, I got it in the net, 37lb 12oz and a proper chunk of a mirror. Nothing else happened that night apart from couple of liners. I think they wiped me out of bait and moved on to somewhere else. My final morning, I slowly packed down and loaded the van, thanking Paul Ward for letting me fish his lake. What a place! A tricky week, but it was amazing in the end.





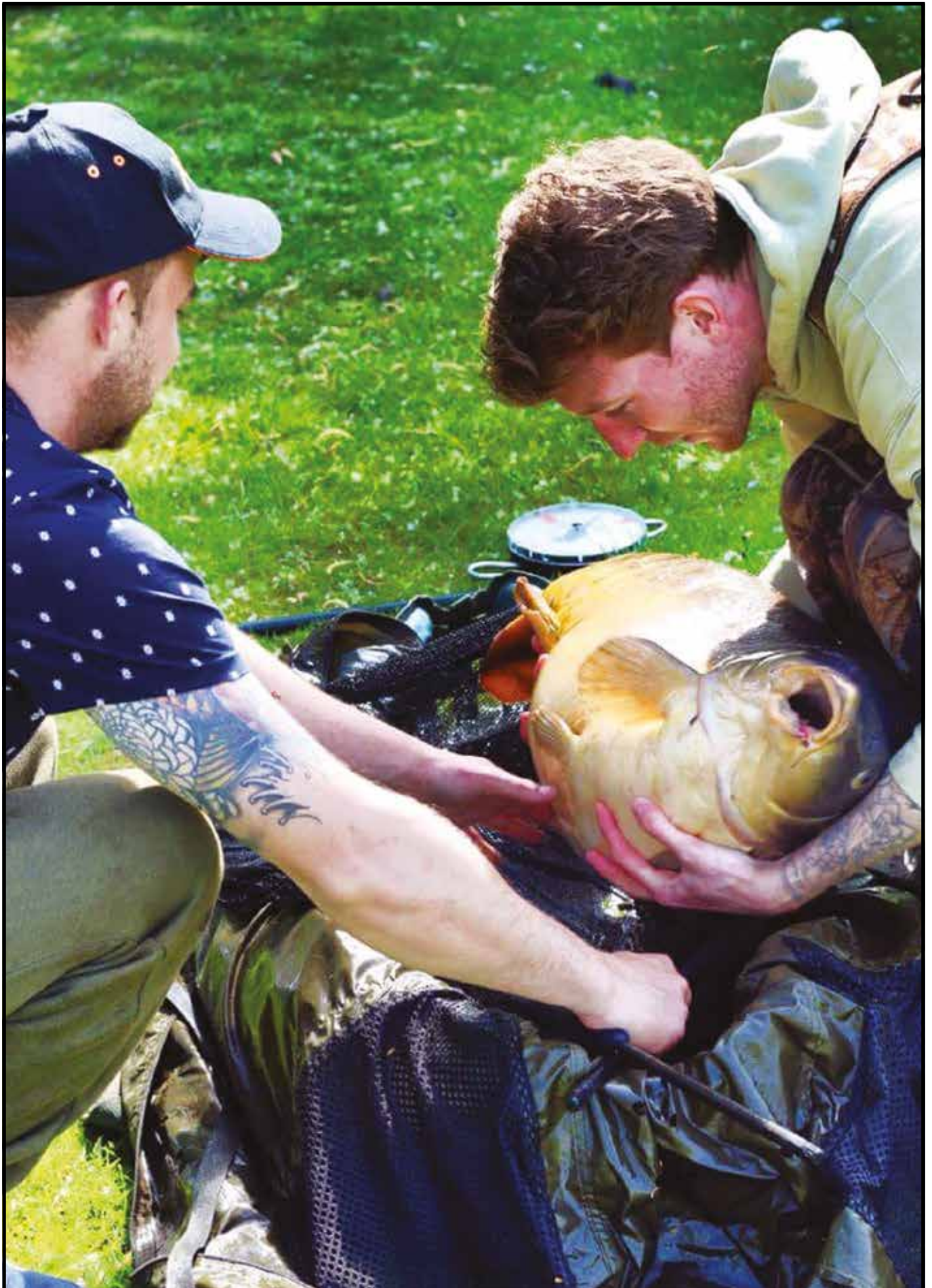
GEORGES

I got my ticket that year knowing that there are some quality fish that I could get amongst if I was lucky enough! As you do when you join a new lake, there's the A-team that you are always looking out for, in this case Northern Lin, Stella and George's. I fished a few nights, and the lake was really low at the beginning of April with not really much happening – just a few fish coming out each week. I had a French trip planned to Kingfisher on the Abbey Complex for the last week in April, so I only managed five nights before my trip. Whilst I was out in France, I received a text from my mate Grant saying the lake had switched on and there were loads of fish coming out. I couldn't wait to get back from my French trip!! Saying that, I had a really good trip in France catching two 50s to 53-plus and three 40s totalling in 12 carp to me.

Grant was still updating me whilst I was out there and the weekend I got back I had to catch up with the girlfriend so still couldn't get a night in when I knew the lake was still fishing well.

Work came back around after the bank holiday Monday, and that week I couldn't get the time to get down there, I sorted all my fishing gear out and finally managed to walk round on Saturday, catching up with the lads on the lake. Whilst I was there, I saw a few fish show, and it looked good for a bite. I got back down the Sunday afternoon. Turning up, I knew it was busy, as there were a lot of cars in the car park. My mate Grant was in the Rope, so I caught up with him, as there weren't many swims left. He told me that the End Pads was coming free. I walked down there and it was free, so I quickly put my bucket in the swim to reserve it. I climbed up the tree to see if I could see any fish, and I found one of the ghost mirrors quite close into the reed line, so I quickly went back to the van, grabbed my gear and was back in the swim sharpish. I wrapped up my rods to the spots where I knew the fish were and had three rods on the spots in a matter of 30 minutes. They all cracked down, telling me they were bang-on! I was confident of a take! I climbed up the tree again, and the ghost mirror was still there. I could just about make it out in the deep water, but I couldn't see which other fish it was with... or was it alone?

I flicked out about 50 baits in the area, the ever-faithful Cell being my choice. Within an hour I had a pick up on my right rod, and after a quick battle, the fish came in really close, but unfortunately, I had a hook pull. I was gutted at losing my first take! I wrapped the rod back up, quickly cast it back out and spread about another four pouchfuls of Cell around it. Then in

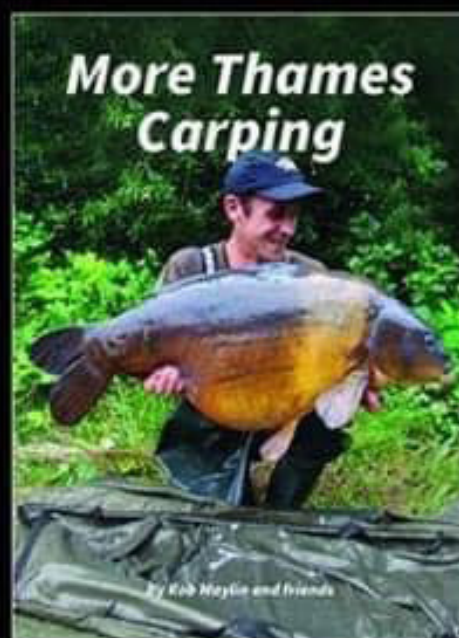
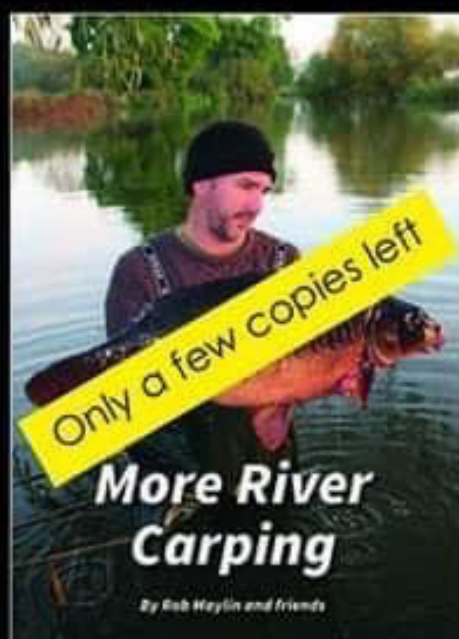
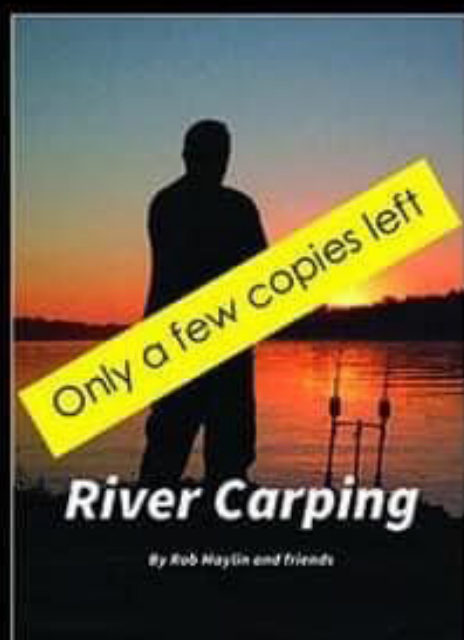


the next 30 minutes I had a one-toner on my middle rod. The fish quickly took line, and I couldn't stop it. It took me right in the reeds in the corner, and I couldn't get any line back. Slowly I managed to gain line on it, but it was still in and out of the reeds, and I was worrying, as I'd just lost one. I slowly managed to get the upper hand, and it came in closer to me. By this time, I had to wade around the end of the margin to get



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closer to the fish. I still hadn't seen it at this time, but other anglers on the lake were gathering behind me. Yet again it locked me up in the reeds, which felt like forever, then all of a sudden a huge carp just popped up to the surface! Seeing this, I walked straight in, not noticing that water started coming over the top of my waders. I netted it and saw it was a chunk. I walked it back to the bank, and another member verified it was George's! I was over the moon to catch my first Manor carp and not only that but one of the A-team! We all weighed it, and the scales settled at 47lb 4oz – a new UK PB for me!! Then a few of the members came round, took photo and we set it on its way for another member to enjoy such a special moment! I was over the moon and called my mates, but they couldn't believe me!







EARLY MORNING LOOK OUT

I 've just started my second season on Chilston Fish Farm Stour Syndicate, and so far the carp gods have been very kind to me. It's situated just outside of Canterbury, Kent and is only five minutes from home for me. Before I joined here, I had a gold ticket for Mid Kent Fisheries and decided to fish their Ham Road lakes. There are two lakes to choose from: Bird Lake and Scout Hut Lake, which are very different considering how close together they are. Bird Lake has a few bars, but the majority of it is silt-bottomed, but the Scout

Hut Lake is clear and can get quite weedy. There are lots of features to find and have a go at, and both lakes are between 7-14ft in depth.

Before I decided to wet a line in either of them, like most people do, I walked round them with the marker rod to see what I could find and then plan my first trip there. Just before my first trip to the Ham Road complex, I had had a phone conversation with Pele Johnson, owner of Spotted Fin, and we'd set up a meeting for me to go to Abbots Langley and look at the factory and the products. It was there and then when I signed to be the first female consultant for Spotted Fin. With a new bait and new lakes to fish, I was off.

I had decided to fish Bird Lake first, so with the barrow loaded, off I went. I remember standing in the Beach swim (I called it that, as it had small pebbles in it), and a guy walked past me and said, "You don't want to fish there, love, as it's known as the Shit Swim." I just laughed it off... I'd found my spots, set the bivvy up, and I was happy knowing that I had the next 48 hours sat beside the lake. For the first 24 hours, I hadn't had a sniff let alone any indication of a bite and started to think that chap was right... perhaps it is the shit swim... That evening the onsite bailiff, Swampy, who I've known for years, walked round. I told him what this guy had said, and he gave me a bit of advice. He told me to use a 12in hooklink, size 4 hook and triple shot it like you would do in France. My partner and I looked at each other and thought he was mad! With this new information, I set to work... New rigs were tied, traps reset, and I rebaited my spots.

At 4:30 in the morning, I was rewarded with my first fish, a lovely golden common of 17lb. Throughout the day, I ended

up landing seven fish: two doubles, four twenties and 37lb 7oz mirror (which was my new PB) known as Three Scale. I was absolutely buzzing! It was an emotional moment, as I couldn't believe what I had just caught. I was on the phone to Pele telling him that I had just smashed my personal best but had to cut the conversation short, as my left hand rod melted off! I did a couple more visits to the Bird Lake, which saw me bag a couple more fish, but I was eager to get onto the Scout Hut Lake.

I moved to the Scout Hut Lake, notoriously a trickier and harder water to fish, which was made easier by my partner having fished it previously ten or so years ago. During the



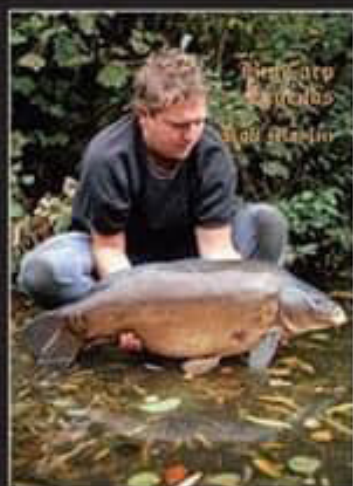
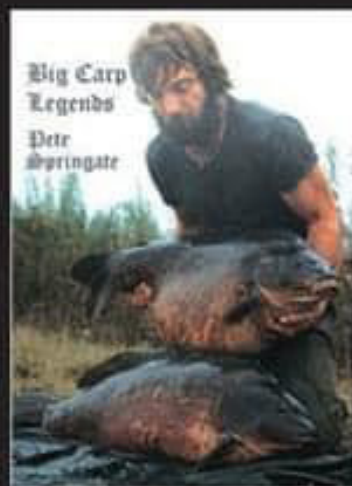
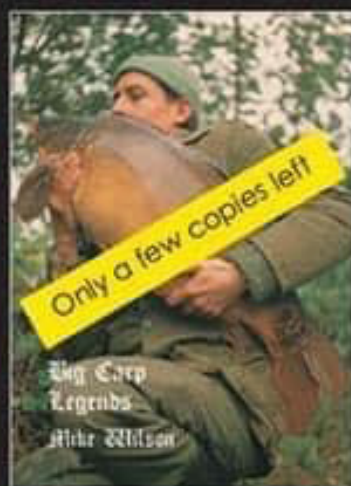
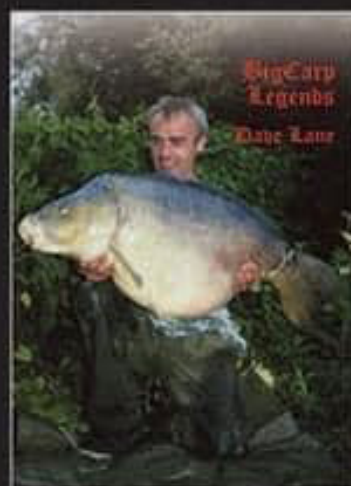
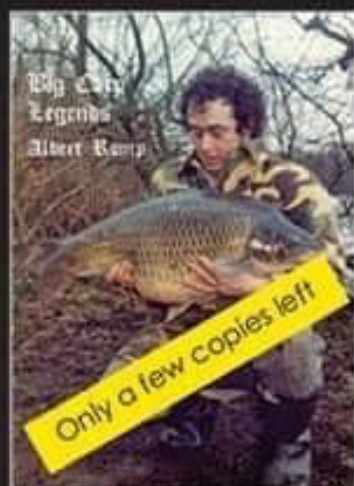
visits to the Scout Hut Lake, I found myself picking up the bigger fish out of the two us, and I managed to beat my PB common three times, increasing it from 23lb to 25lb 12oz to my current PB of 27lb. The 25lb 12oz and the 27lb fish arrived in the same trip about an hour apart from each other, so to say I was buzzing is an understatement. I was on cloud nine! To smash it once is good, but to do it twice in such a short space of time was an amazing experience.

In 2017, I decided to move with my partner to the Chilston Fish Farm Stour Syndicate after hearing some good reports from fellow anglers about the new owner, Marc Harrison, and his plans for the restocking and management of the lake.



BIG CARP LEGENDS SERIES

The anglers that shaped today's carp scene



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We started fishing Chilston Fish Farm Stour Syndicate in the January, and I won't lie; it was tough, especially after fishing at Ham Road from the June to the October of the previous year. Obviously I knew it would be tougher, as it was a different time of the year, but I wasn't prepared for just how tough it would be... I didn't land a fish for three months regardless of what rig I tried. I felt I went from A to Z and back to A again to crack the Lake.

I carried on using the multi-rig, as this is what I had faith in, but after some serious thinking, I decided to switch to chods due to the amount of weed that is in the Stour Lake. Having switched rigs, I had an immediate change in fortune and started to land fish. The weed in the Stour is notoriously thick, and every now and then, I found myself dropping fish. Due to losing these fish, I thought about how I could prevent that from happening and wanted to add some weight to the chod. For this, I attached a boom to the chod, effectively changing it into a hinged chod.

I always try to improve my fishing, as everybody does, and even though I'm not a baitboat fan, they are allowed to be used on the Stour. So after doing some market research and talking to friends that have baitboats, I came across a firm online that was local to us, UK Bespoke BaitBoats, and I liked what I saw. After speaking to the lads there and asking them to show us what benefits their boat would have, we opted for one with an underwater camera to show me what features I could attack in the lake.

Having bought the boat from them, we were amazed on how much easier it is to target and bait specific areas more directly and less sporadically than when using other techniques. Even

though we have the use of the boat, it is however only used when we need to target specific area such as under trees and finding little feeding holes etc. Having made these changes, the increase in my fishing skills has increased immensely, and I now know where to target more specifically and confidently.

Since the beginning of April, the new season, I have been fortunate enough to have already landed numerous fish including a new PB common and a new PB mirror. The common weighed in at 32lb and the mirror an astounding 40lb 8oz. Both of these fish, and all of my fish, have been caught using the new fishmeal Spotted Fin Smokey Jack baits on a Ronnie rig.

I chose to get to the lake on my most recent trip on a Sunday and thought to myself "What am I doing?" as it was nigh on 30 degrees, and I knew that the fish would be due to spawn at anytime in the coming days. Considering it was a bank holiday weekend, the lake itself was pretty quiet with only a few other anglers taking advantage of the weather and dangling a line.

We opted to fish with me in Peg 2 (Viewing Point) and my partner in peg 1 (Car Park). Having set up and baited up my target areas, I wondered if this trip would see me landing the much sought after Black Mirror, as she had been seen opposite in the Oaks earlier on in the day.

At 4.30am on the Bank Holiday Monday morning, I had a very slow bite on my left hand rod with three beeps, and the rod tip pulled round to the left. I lifted into it, and immediately thought, "Ooh, this isn't right... this is different. Could it be her?" After a reasonable time, her head popped up to the surface, meaning that she was ready to be netted, and I slowly eased the net around her. When she was in the net, I started

KATY AYLWARD



FREELINE 70

to realise that this could be one of the biggest mirrors in the lake. I then put her into a holding sling and went to get my partner out of his bivvy.

It was at this point we realised that this fish was something special. We got the weigh sling ready to weigh, and to our surprise, the scales rocked around to 40lb 8oz, and realised that it was the Black Mirror. After successfully getting her back into the lake, we then discovered that it was the heaviest weight that she had ever been caught at.

Still to this day, I still can't quite believe that I had the privilege of catching her and holding her, and to be fair, I think shes probably older then me. What a fish!

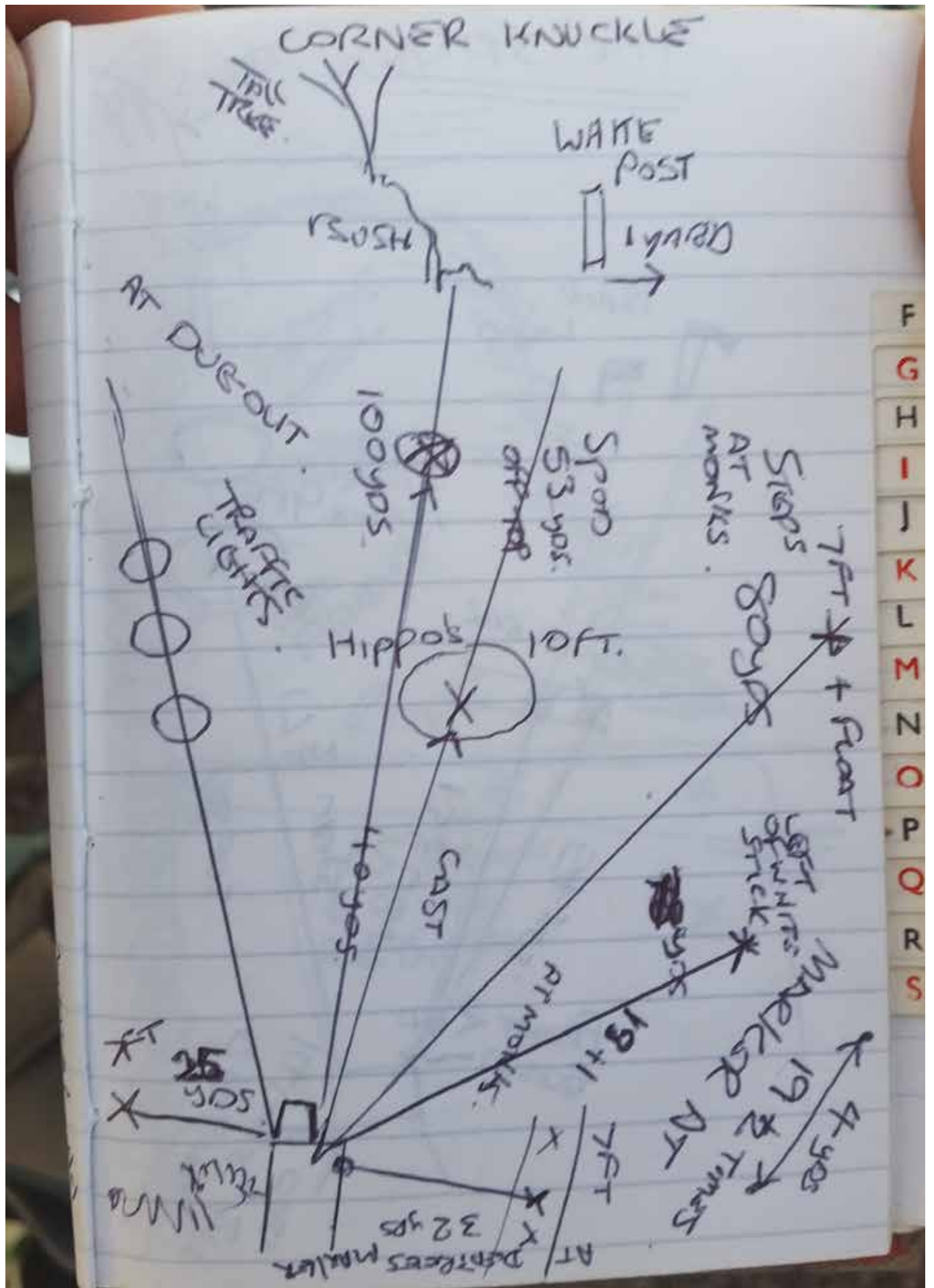




ELSTOW PIT 1

(PART 2)

Whilst blanking away on my last 48-hour session in Alcatraz, I needed to hatch a different plan. I had set up on them in Alcatraz, which was a definite no-no, so I would play the waiting game. By that I mean I would have watch and see where they liked to be. I had a good idea already, as there is a series of humps called the Traffic Lights that lie between two swims, Corner and Bottom Knuckle, and are out of bounds, so naturally the fish spend time in there. I chose the Corner Knuckle, as this swim has Hippo's bar, which is 40 yards to the right or so



from the Traffic Light humps and 50 yards' cast from Corner Knuckle. This would mean the fish would be passing over my baited area as they made their way up and down the lake from the Traffic Lights area.

A good look with the plumbing rod showed me a decent sized area a rod length and a half to two rod lengths wide and 12ft to 14ft deep with surrounding depths of 20ft or more. I thought that would do me for two rods. I know some of the lads get three rods on a 2ft square, but I had to allow for my dodgy casting, so it was just two rods on 18ft wide. Even I could manage that, I thought, and two multi-rig pop-ups were placed on Hippo's, and the third rod I would position on the Steps bar. This area



is in the middle part of the lake well away from the other two rods and 80 yards' cast. Depths in this area were 10 to 14ft, so I positioned this rod on the top of the shallower 10ft part. Most of the bars are quite weedy and gnarly, and there's even a swim called the Gnarly, named after the savage bar in there. No way I was venturing into that swim! What I'd found out here was savage enough. 49 Midi Spombs of 18mm boilies were despatched to both spots, and then I got the house up and kettle on – sorted! I had 72 hours to ambush one, I thought. The action started at first light with a few stockies and low twenties, then the better ones started to show up, and on the ninth bite, I had the first thirty, a 33lb mirror. An hour later, I had a 32lb mirror followed by more stockies and mid twenties. The action dried up mid morning, so 12 o'clock came, which



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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...

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

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saw me wind 'em in and pop up to the garage for a well earned clean up and large wildbean black coffee. Then it was over to Pit 2's Headland swim for a good chat with Zak and a mooch around carp spotting. Pit 2 is hard to leave alone; it puts a spell on you, and even though I'd been and done it, I still love the place.

Coffee downed and carp fat chewed, I headed back over to Pit 1's Corner Knuckle and put out another 50 large Spombs of 18mms on each spot, banged the rods on their spots and made a dinner fit for a king in case I needed the energy for the next morning. Night time came along with a few more stockies but no more thirties. Not a bad carp wrestling session, I thought



- 12 bites would do me! You definitely need your Weetabix for breakfast on this pit; it's hectic. Driving back up the M1, it was time for analysis... Well, that's an easy one - they like the bait and the spots must be right, so roll on next week!

Tuesday came around pretty quickly. I didn't need a look around, as I knew I was going straight in Corner Knuckle - bad angling maybe not having a look around, but I would make 'em come to me. You don't see a lion chase its prey around all day; only humans are silly enough to do that! A real predator sets up an ambush... well, that's my excuse anyway. So, barrow stacked to the hilt, I was Knuckle bound. A lot of puffing and panting later, I was in the swim, and a quick scan along the ground showed it had had at least one bivvy if not two since I left the previous week. You can't hide anything on here, but that's half the enjoyment to me - fishing against the other anglers. Carp ain't too clever, so a bit of a chess game with the other anglers makes it all the more fun.

House up, spots baited, kettle on... sorted! Let the games begin! Midnight was the first bite, a fat mid-20 mirror followed by a 30lb and ounces mirror that scrapped like an animal. Then at first light, a really heavy lump on the end that cut me off on a steep bar close in to my right, then ten minutes later, a hook pull on the same bar - what a disaster, I thought, but what can you do? These fish knew where to go to stitch you up. I left the two rods out for an hour or two to get my head back together and landed a stockie on the remaining rod, and that was all the first morning's action.

Wounded, I limped off to the garage for a coffee and a chat with Zak. I could rely on Zak to cheer me up. After telling him I'd lost two chunks in ten minutes, he said, "What did you do



that for, you t**t?" He he... good old Zak. After it was all put into context of all the things going on in the world, it's only fishing but the end of the world when it happens at the time. With the smile back on my face, I got the rods reloaded and ready for battle and moved the brolly closer to the rods so I could get control of the situation quicker and stop the fish going where they wanted... or that was the plan anyway.

The second morning started with a stockie then an upper 20 then a scraper 30 and a really nice scaly low 20, and then Scale-on-the-Shoulder at a low weight of 32lb. It should be 35lb, but it still looked awesome. Then I had another stockie



and another low 30lb mirror. Man. what a morning's carp wrestling! I was in need of more Weetabix! Moving the brolly closer to the rods helped with getting the fish under control earlier as well. I was getting the hang of it now.

The Third night passed uneventfully until dawn, and then it kicked off with the usual stockie attack, an upper 20 and an awesome long, lean 32lb animal that pulled my arm for 20 minutes, and that was it. I needed a break! These carp were savages! 18 bites that session and 12 the week before – who needs the gym? And the action was just warming up, but I will leave that for the next installment.







UNFINISHED BUSINESS

As I sit and ponder over the first half of the season on Horton, it has given me time to reflect on what has happened with my return to the Church and to look at what has been achieved so far. At the same time it has given me time to look back at where it all started.

It was back in 2007 when my ticket finally came through for Horton Church Lake after six years of being on the waiting list. I was still fishing Yateley Match Lake at the time and had just taken a ticket on Swan Valley, but the opportunity was too big to turn down, even if I was only to fish a couple of times the first year. It was very different ten years ago under the ownership of CEMEX; a fifty-man syndicate was in place, and the knowledge of the Church being an exclusive, tricky water steeped in angling history gave a sense of privilege just

to be arriving at the famous gates. A number of what were deemed to be original fish, such as Thorpe Park Common and the Boxer still resided in the deep, gin clear water as well as a new generation of carp who are later to form part of the new A-team.

With a closer look into Horton's historic water, the lakebed is alive with natural food sources and a variety of weed, all indicators of the quality of the water delivered from the spring feed, and it gave a significant clue to why these special fish have thrived over the years. The grassy, well-cut banks and overhanging but undercut trees made me feel like I had just stepped off the local golf course and walked onto the first tee at Augusta, which speaks a lot for the keepers of the complex.



However special it felt, it was also daunting; there was a huge sense of etiquette and tradition, and it felt as much of a priority to be accepted in as 'the new member' as it was to try and catch one of the wily residents.

There is so much to talk about, past and present, and I would like to take the opportunity to discuss my recent success, but it is important to understand the motivation behind my return to the Church. The first few seasons saw me catch my fair share of carp including a couple of the sought after originals. There were two, possibly three forty-pound fish in there at the right time of year, very different to today, however there was a significant number of 30lb-plus fish all growing fast, and the future was bright. As I spent more time on the complex, it became apparent that Kingsmead One was a less spoken about but just as special water with a very dedicated and loyal syndicate who had nothing but praise for the water, the syndicate and its residents. The temptation was too much, and after having a great start to the season on Church, landing 23 fish in three weeklong sessions, I decided to move onto Kingsmead. There were a few fish in K1 that really appealed to me, the well-known and publicised mirror Starry's and one special but tricky to catch common known as the Upfront, or more recently, UFC. There was also a range of Sutton strain fish, very sought after for their attractive shape and unique scale patterns, which were also of interest. The next few seasons were spent on K1 and a little time spent on Wraysbury, but that's a whole other story we will keep for later.

A great friend of mine, Alex Bailey, had joined the Horton complex back in 2012. We had grown up together and shared the love for fishing. We spent many hours fishing gravel pits

in Oxford as youngsters, but in the last few years due to unfortunate circumstances, we hadn't fished together as we had liked. We spoke all the time about Wraysbury and Horton, specifically talking about the history, the current stock and the fish we both wanted to catch and most importantly, how we were going to catch them. It was a dream realised for both of us, for a short time anyway. Unfortunately that season, during Alex's first session, he had an issue while carrying his gear to the swim, stopping him from carrying it further, something that later turned out to be very significant, although we didn't know at the time. That was the end of Alex's fishing in general, and unfortunately his time on Horton was over before it started. Alex sadly passed away recently after a long illness without having the opportunity to chase his dreams, but he did get to see some of my achievements this season, which I know he was grateful for, and I dedicate my achievements to his memory. I am sure his achievements would have been just as great.

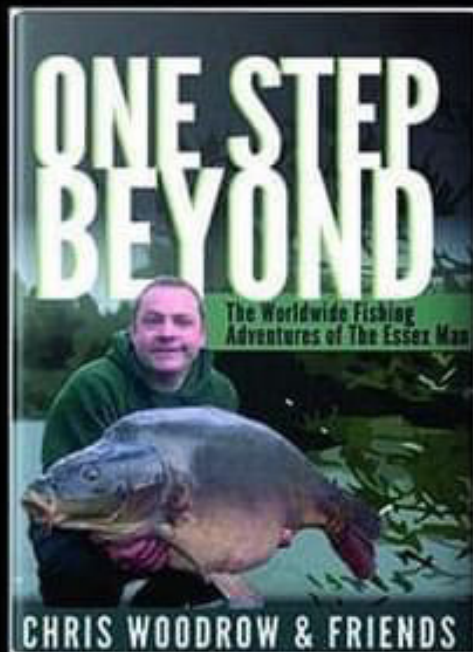
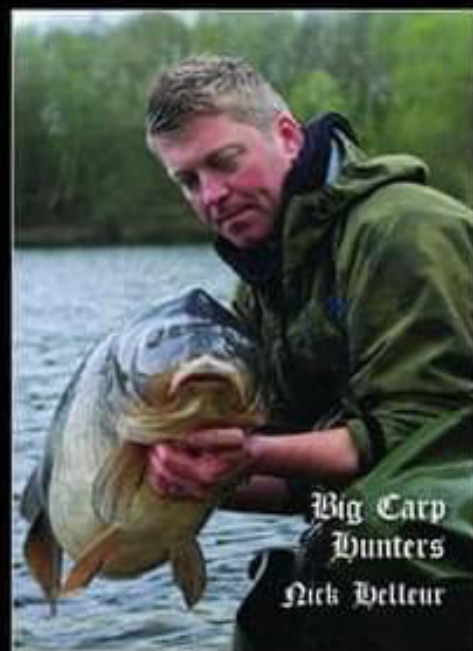
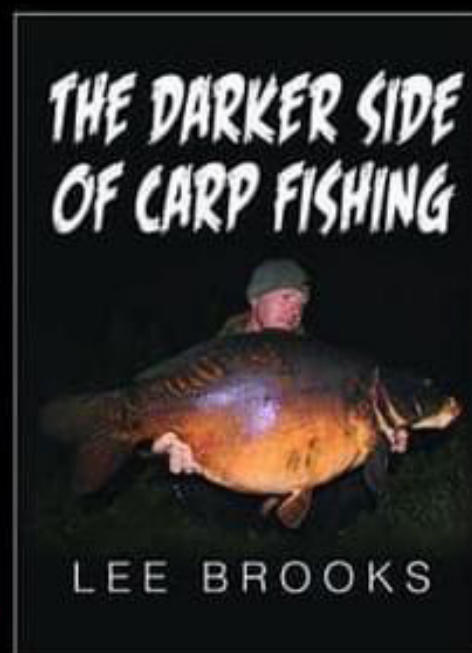
I was always planning to return to the Church, but little did I know this time I wasn't going back to catch a few fish that had eluded me; I was going back to try and catch what my friend didn't have the opportunity to fish for and attempt to catch all the fish we spoke about. This was serious for me, and anyone who knows me would know that I wouldn't take the responsibility lightly and this is something I just had to do, but sooner than planned. Alex was still with us at the start of the season and was monitoring my progress; he knew the plan. We both had unfinished business, and I was going to finish it.

Spring is always a special time for angling; the fish are waking up from the winter and on the lookout for food, and they tend

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to be very close to their top weights. All the trees and flowers are starting to bloom, the water is warming up and the banks are filling up quickly. The new season buzz was in the air.

I was lucky enough to start my season on Church full of confidence after having a very successful few trips over to my local Orchid Lakes during the closed period. A number of different tactics were tried there, which is something I normally like to do over the winter period, as winter on Orchid is always good for a few December to February bites. One tactic had been very successful on Orchid after trying a few things, and the setup seemed suited to the type of fishing I do on Horton, so not changing anything was definitely going to be the plan for my Horton campaign.



The second week of April was my first real session on the Church following a quick overnighter on the opening night. On the first night of the session, I was lucky enough to get a quick bite, landing a fish known as Trouble from a swim known as Spindly Tree. This swim eventually turned out to be pivotal for me in my early season success, which we will come to later. The next few days were slow, and it wasn't until a move of swim that I managed to pick up my second bite. A 4am rude awakening was slowly followed by a slow plodding battle, which ended up with a 41lb mirror known as Tash kissing the spreader block. At this point the lake had become extremely busy, whereas K1 next door was almost empty, so I decided to move there for the remainder of the session before my planned return to the Church in couple of weeks.

There were a couple of things I had learnt since I first joined the complex, one of them being how significant monitoring the





carp's patrol routes could be and how targeting these routes can bring great success. I realised this while watching a very special and wily common on K1. I was watching where it liked to feed and how it moved through the area in an almost clearly defined process, which it didn't divert from much. Targeting the patrol route of this fish in the weeks leading up to me catching it, combined with a very crude little rig, which I decided on using after discussing the fish's feeding habits in the edge with my friend Greg Ellis, in my opinion played a huge part in why I caught it and where I caught it from. This is another story I hope to share sometime. With this new experience banked, it would then be applied to my approach on Horton, and I believe it had a dramatic effect on my catch rate.

During my first session of the season, I had noticed that in one very weedy area of the lake, the fish were regularly visiting it at certain times of the day, normally when the sun was high and at its hottest. You could see the shadows under the surface in a very shallow area known as the plateau; they were giving themselves away while catching the early spring sun rays. They were following each other on the same routes, turning up at a similar time and leaving at a similar time, and there was a clear pattern emerging. After watching their behaviour and patterns, I decided I was going to target a swim called the Spindly Tree, which was extremely weedy and put a lot of anglers off. I decided to try and find two small but fishable areas on those patrol routes, and it took four hours to find the right spot on one rod and about the same amount



of time the following day to find another suitable spot, but it was worth it, and my experience of fishing very weedy lakes in Oxford as a youngster had certainly prepared me well. I suppose you could say the rest is history...

When I arrived at Horton for the first time with the new plan in mind, there was a fresh, blustery, strong southwesterly wind pushing straight into the Spindly Tree. I was sure the swim would have been taken, putting a quick end to my plan, but to my amazement it was empty. From the lodge balcony, fish could clearly be seen crashing out in the area of the plateau, and so a brisk walk round was called for followed by the traditional bucket placing in the swim, which marked my territory. An hour later I was ready to go. It looked perfect for a bite or two and confidence was high. The setup was simple but ensured presentation of the hook and bait under pretty much any circumstance, and believe it or not, it wasn't a chod rig. The rods were clipped up, the baits went out without incident, the drop was felt and firm and we were set for the night. There was no holding back with the bait – a healthy offering of 5kg of boilies scattered on the patrol routes was called for, as the plan was to target this area of the lake for the foreseeable future.

As the sun started to go down and the wind died off, I was contemplating a recast to set me for the night ahead, which I wouldn't normally do, but the undertow can be so strong on the Church that it does make you wonder if the lead has been dragged off the spot. As I was contemplating the recast, two beeps of the left indicator stopped me in my tracks, and a minute or two later, the right indicator beeped as well. They were here; I was sure of it. I settled back down, made my

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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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dinner and relaxed.

The blissful period didn't last long... A few beeps and the hanger on the left rod had pulled tight to the rod, the line was picking up in the water, and a few clicks of the drag were heard before I managed to pick up the rod. After a short but aggressive battle, I safely slipped the net under a fish known as Gizmo, weighing in at 35lb. The feeling was good, the plan was in action and the confidence was as high as it could be. The rod went back out on the same spot, and I settled down for the night ahead.

At about 4:45am the left hand rod ripped off, and I woke up like a startled bunny in the headlights of a car. It took a second or so to gather myself before hooking into a slow, heavy lump. This fish felt a little different, not a lot of head shaking; it was powerful and moved slowly but precisely. After a relatively long but uneventful battle, I slipped the net under an easily recognisable fish known as Uno weighing in at just under 42lb. I slipped it into the retainer, sat down, made a brew and gave myself and the fish some time to recover. Rupert Whiteman was fishing on Boat Pool, so I thought I would give him a call to help with pics. It was just starting to get light at this time, and surprisingly Rupert answered his phone and responded with, "What you got? Make me a coffee and I will be round in a minute" and hung up the phone. It took all of about one minute before the phone went again and Rupert said, "It's 5am, you..." I burst into laughter. By this time it was too late, he was awake and on his way.

Uno was slipped back quietly, and the rod was cast back to the same spot. Paul had joined us from the swim next door, and an early morning chinwag was well underway over a brew.

The sense of achievement was clearly evident. After chewing the fat for some time, a late morning snooze was in order. Rupert and Paul had vacated the swim, and I managed to get my head down, but not for long. The left hand rod was away again, and this time I had hooked into something that felt very heavy but wasn't plodding slowly – it was charging around, angry and determined to shake my rig. It must have passed in front of me a number of times in the deep clear water. I could see it was a big fish – deep body, big, dark shoulders and an unmistakable rudder. I was relieved to safely get it in the net. It was definitely another 40, but it wasn't until it went 45lb-plus on the scales that I knew I had just broken my PB. Alfie, a real Horton character, completed the brace of 40lb fish. I was made up. Another night was in order but to no further



success... I went home a happy angler.

It was two weeks before I could return to the Church, and in that time I thought about whether I should continue to target that area of the lake or go with the normal approach and make decisions based on the conditions on arrival. I decided beforehand to continue with targeting that area of lake regardless of conditions, but it was to my disappointment on arrival that the Spindly Tree was taken. There was a gentle easterly blowing, and it looked perfect for it at the opposite end of the lake, but a strong southwesterly was due in the morning, so this area of the lake would be favourable for the next couple of days... I was caught in two minds. The swim next door to the right of Spindly Tree was the Scooter, another very weedy area of the lake the carp visit regularly, and it was almost on the front of the wind due in morning. Fishing no further than 30 yards out was the plan, as there was a shallow reed covered bar at approximately this range, which you could get a good drop on, whereas all around was thick weed. The first night passed with no action, but as predicted, the southwesterly picked up at about 9am and was pushing diagonally towards and across me. Getting in front of the fish with a change of conditions definitely paid off, as it had got to about 11:15am, and the right hand rod sprung into life. The fish dived straight in the weed, and after a short battle, the fish and weed bed started moving towards me, before I netted both. After removing the clumps of weed from the net, I was happy to see the distinctive two-tone figure of a mirror known as Chunky, a short, plump, little under 40lb character that was more than welcome. The rest of session was fruitless, but I felt safe in my mind that my tactics for



fishing amongst the weed were spot-on and no changes were to be made moving forward.

Once again it was two weeks before I could return again, and this time the Spindly Tree swim was free, and there were a lot of fish congregating in the Plateau swim and the pontoon area. There were too many fish too ignore, so instead of going back to the Spindly, I decided to set up in the swim directly opposite known as the Plateau. This allowed me to target the same area of the lake, but at the same time I had the opportunity to set up right on top of them. A short, shallow, weedy spot was chosen for the left rod, which was right on the patrol route of the fish, and the right rod was cast towards the back of one of the other patrol routes I had noted from the Spindly Tree.

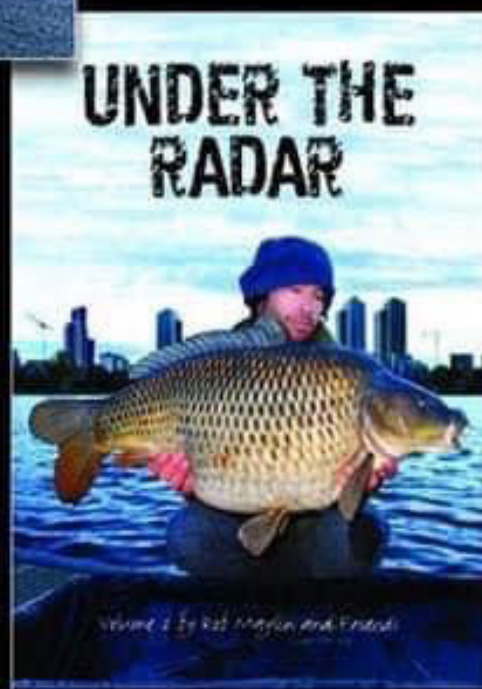
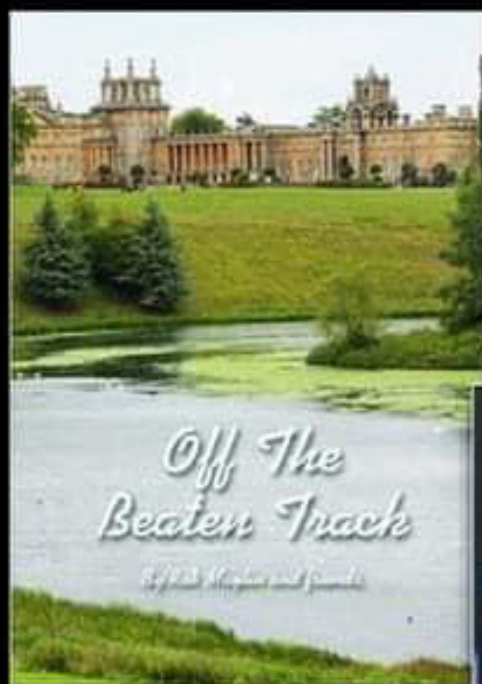
I couldn't believe my luck; it was about 10pm before the left hand rod went into meltdown. The fish stripped 50 yards of line from me before I could stop it, and it took a while to get it back. This was a hard fight; it scrapped in front of me for ages, and I couldn't get its head up. I flicked the head torch on to take a look, and I could see a large, dark carp. I was sure it was one of the A-team, and by the way it was fighting and the way it looked, I convinced myself it was Hercules, one I was desperate to catch. I flicked the torch back off and continued to battle with it for a minute or two more before one last turn of the fish and everything went slack. The hook had pulled, the rod got thrown on the floor and the sulk was on. The rig was checked, and there was no issue, so I put it back out to the same spot and sat back thinking about what could have been.

I had got my head down for all of an hour and a half before the right rod was away, but after a short battle, the hook pulled again. What was going on? The same rigs that had done me well all year, but I had two hook pulls in quick succession. I didn't read into this too much. I was fishing in a weedy area, and hook pulls are just one of those things. I put the rod back on the spot and sat back down in one foul mood. The mood was short lived, and within a few minutes, the left rod burst into life. This time the fight was over quickly with no dramas, and after closer inspection it was Gizmo, the same fish I had caught a few weeks before, so a quick weighing for the record and she was slipped back. The confidence was once again high, so I slept easy for the next few hours until the morning.

The morning came and went without as much as a bleep, and it wasn't until about 1pm when the right rod burst into action. This fish was staying deep and diving for every weed bed

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possible. By the time I had got the fish close in and relaxed a little, I turned around to a crowd that was quietly and eagerly waiting to see what was on the end. I slipped the net under a very wide, nicely shaped and leathery looking fish. Oli Davies took a quick look in the net and said, "That's Little Leather, and it's going to be 41lb-plus'. He was right; it went just over 41lb on the scales and was my fourth 40 of the season. A few pics were taken by Oli, and she was slipped back to fight another day.

I managed another two fish that session, one being a stunning 35lb linear known as Silky and another 28lb fish known as Harpo. They were part of a late afternoon double take that saw Chris Cox and I playing both fish at the same time. Apart from losing one of the A-team, I took some great memories from a very eventful session.

At this early stage of the season I was already on cloud nine.



Three 40-plus fish this early meant normally I wouldn't be too concerned about what happened for the rest of the season. I had already exceeded my own expectations, but I still had a plan, and I was going to stick to it.

Another two weeks had passed, and two nights were ahead of me. The familiar southwesterly that had been evident in previous weeks hadn't changed and was a little stale, so I thought I would take a look at another swim where fish were showing. It was middle of the lake, and in my opinion, by the time I had got the rods out they would have probably moved on, so the plan was to get in front of them, as always. The Spindly Tree was once again vacant and in front of them, and I knew they would turn up – I could set my watch by them. I decided to go with my instincts and moved to Spindly quickly, as the lake was starting to fill up with anglers. The rods went straight on the same spots, and I introduced 4kg of scattered boilies onto the patrol routes over the next few hours. Rory Adair and Justin Harrington had turned up after work as normal for their overnights, and Rory had decided to set up in the Scooter next door. There were clearly fish in the area by the time the sun went down, as they were throwing themselves out near the patrol routes, and I was sitting on my hands waiting for the bite. The evening passed with nothing more than a single bleep, so I got my head down while I could.

At 00:30am the left rod went into absolute meltdown. I picked up the rod and couldn't even tighten the drag up, as the fish had flat-rodded me, and was peeling line. Eventually I stopped it, but at this point, it was well out in the middle of the lake, at least a swim down to my right. It was a long, slow slog to get the fish back in my water. It felt huge; it

was going where it wanted to, and I couldn't do much about it. As I got it closer in, I was fully aware that Rory's lines were somewhere to the right and didn't want to take them out, as it would have been a nightmare for both of us, so I really started to put the fish under pressure as it bolted up the right hand margin. Within an instant, in the light of the moon, the fish came clean out of the water down to the tail like a shark taking a seal off the surface, peeling more line as it did, something I had witnessed fishing for smaller fish locked up near snags but never seen it with fish of this size.

This fish was huge and very angry, and to make it worse, it was in front of Rory's swim. How it didn't pick up his lines, I'll never know... it was meant to be. After another few minutes' battle, I eventually netted it and a big sense of relief was felt. I had been royally beaten up to say the least. I turned on my head torch and there was a very deep and wide fish, but not very long, and I turned it on its side and noticed the distinctive single scale on its left flank. I recognised the fish instantly; it was Spotty, a fish that had previously done over 47lb earlier on in the season, but she looked even bigger now. This was potentially a new personal best for me, and after putting her on the scales they quickly moved round to the 49lb mark, and after settling, the weight was confirmed as 49lb 10oz. I couldn't believe it; I was overjoyed that I had broken my personal best and at the same time even more in shock that a fish of this size was capable of launching itself clean out of the water while attached to my line. What a fish, and certainly one to keep an eye on in the future.

Rory had kindly got out the sack to do some photos for



me, and as I lifted Spotty for the first time, the right hand indicator gave out a bleep, and a few seconds later it gave out another. Rory responded with, "Don't worry about that," which was quickly followed by a few more bleeps. The right rod was away, so I gently put the fish down, and Rory was quick to put the fish back in the sling and held it in the water while I battled with the other fish. It had weeded itself up; it was locked solid, and I couldn't move it, so I kept the pressure on, and after a minute or two, it started to move slowly before completely freeing itself from the weed. This felt like a big fish too; it was fighting hard and kiting to my left, and I couldn't stop it. It must have taken me 40 yards up the left margin and under the trees that lined it, and I thought I was never going to get it back. I dipped the tip under the water as far as I could to avoid the trees and leant in to it, and within a minute or

two it was back in front of me. I turned the head torch on and saw the large two-tone flank of what I knew could only be one of two fish: Chunky or my main target. Roger the Dodger. Rory said, "That's Chunky," and in response I replied, "Chunky doesn't fight like that," and as Rory slipped the net under her, I knew straight away, Roger was mine.

We left Roger safely in the net while taking pictures of Spotty and slipped her back before weighing Roger in at 49lb 12oz. I was absolutely made up, two personal bests within a few minutes of each other and a huge brace that has been the pinnacle of my angling career and something that I will talk about for years to come.

Following the previous session's success, my confidence could not have been any higher. The two weeks away from the pond felt like a year, so I was glad to get back down there



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to continue the form. A large southwesterly was pushing diagonally towards and across the Spindly Tree swim. Once again it was vacant, so I ran on round to the swim, quickly got set up and was looking forward to the few nights I had ahead of me. The rods went straight onto the same spots I had previously fished and 4kg of scattered boilies were slowly introduced onto the patrol routes. To my amazement, it was a couple of hours before the left rod ripped off, and I was rewarded with 28lb mirror known as Burty.

The rod went back on the spot, and at about 1:30 the right rod was away. Another hard battle followed, and on turning the head torch on to take a look, I could see it was another large resident. I couldn't believe my luck; it was Tash again, a little bigger this time but still another 40-plus to the record. The following day was spent mostly trying to



sleep with the sound of low flying planes doing their best to disturb me. It didn't matter though – nothing could change the positive mood I was in.

That night the rods were set, the traps placed as before – no changes here, the same old same, and why not? If it's not broken, don't fix it, right? Sat eating my favourite Singapore beef noodles and prawn crackers on Friday night, I couldn't help but think about the few special, old fish left in the Church, a couple I'd already had and a few that have managed to avoid me. From experience some fish tend to trip up to certain methods and tactics, and my current approach of large, scattered boilies was not ideal to target some of the older sought after residents, or so I thought.

It was around 1am again when I was rudely awakened as the right hand rod burst into life. It didn't feel like a huge fish but had that aggressive headshaking thing going on, which I personally link to the smaller fish and or common carp trying to shake the rig – it is very distinctive. The fish didn't put up a huge fight, but when I turned the head torch on in the deep clear water, I could see a nice common, bobbing and weaving like a boxer, but at the same time twisting like an eel. It was desperate to rid itself of my hook and clearly knew what it was doing. I knew straight away this had the potential to be something a little special, so I was relieved when I slipped the net under the glorious bar of gold. As with most commons, it can be difficult to tell them apart, and full identification would happen back in the lodge the following day, but I did note straight away the very distinctive tail heart-shaped tail and thick wrist.

The rest of the session was quiet; it almost felt like my time

was done in the Spindly Tree, and it wouldn't be long before the fish would become accustomed to my traps, so a new plan was being devised. After returning to the lodge to write in the carp log book and mark my place in history, it was immediately apparent after checking the picture board that the common was a special old common known as the Thick Tail Common. This common was one of the less frequent visitors to the bank, one I really wanted and topped off a great spring and early summer campaign.

Moving into the middle of summer and towards the autumn, I still have a few targets left. My Horton campaign will continue; I still have unfinished business, although I am doing my best to fulfil my promise. I look forward to sharing my summer/autumn campaign with you. Tight lines, and thanks for reading.



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