

NOVEMBER 2026

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FREE LINE / 10 YEARS

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5	COKING FARM
6	NORTON DISNEY
7	OAK LAKES FISHERY
8	BERNERS HALL
9	CEFN MABLY
10	CROMWELL

TOP 10 FRENCH HOLIDAY VENUES

1	IKTUS
2	ABBAY LAKES
3	CRETE LAKES
4	BRITTANY FOREST
5	GIGANTICA
6	RAINBOW
7	THE AQUARIUM
8	DREAM LAKES
9	FISHABIL
10	RIBIERE

TOP 10 BAIT COMPANIES

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



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
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TOP 10 CARP FISHING BRANDS

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

BC

35TH

ANNIVERSARY

SPECIAL EDITION



Over 130 Pages

and ALL totally FREE!

Big Carp Magazine 35th Anniversary Special Edition

To celebrate the 35th anniversary of Big Carp Magazine and the 10th anniversary of Free Line Magazine we have some big news!

I am extremely pleased to bring you the 'All New' November Issues of Big Carp and Free Line Magazines. My son Max has joined me in the family business and his company, webautodigital will be designing both magazines going forward. Although the magazines will look somewhat different our ethos remains the same as it has always been. Proper articles by proper carp anglers, no bs of course, I respect you guys far too much to change that.

We are just evolving as we have done several times over the last 40 years. We were the first to have a digital App version, as well as a paper one, when we joined Magazine Cloner and Pocket Mags. Our incredible historic archive contains over 200 back issues, available now. We were the first to have 2 FREE digital magazines every month. We were the first to publish all advertising on the main social media platforms, increasing potential customers tenfold. And now as we enter a new age of AI, we are evolving once again with new look magazines and a new website created by webautodigital, bigcarpmag.com.

We appreciate your feedback, we strive to publish the best articles while keeping it real. Nothing much in this life is totally FREE but Big Carp and Free Line are!

Tight Lines

Rob

P.S. May I personally thank all our loyal advertisers and awesome writers and contributors for their support over the years, which has helped us reach this incredible milestone. Thirty-five years is no mean feat; no other commercial carp magazine has come close to this. Thank you and long may I continue to work with you fantastic people.

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Want to advertise in our 2 FREE carp magazines?

BC is the longest running commercial carp magazine EVER. It has a huge readership with 45,000+ email subscribers. It caters for experienced and novice carp anglers alike with its cutting edge, 'Keeping it Real' style of articles. Free Line caters for the younger angler too with technical articles and step by step watercraft. Combined with edgy editorial to appeal to current trends in carp tactics. Between the two magazines every different genre of carp angler is covered from 'Old School' to 'First Timers'. Perfect for your advertising needs. The two magazines containing your advert are posted on Facebook reaching over 300,000 carp anglers. We also post the magazines on over 150 carp angling groups on Facebook some with up to 200,000 members. Both magazines are regularly posted on X and Instagram to a huge audience both here and overseas. We have the digital market and all social media platforms covered. We have been producing carp magazines for 35 years; we know what makes our advertisers happy and that's putting their adverts in front of a massive readership. That's exactly what we do. We also know that times are tough and that's why our prices are realistic and cost effective. We look after our advertisers and look forward to working with you this year and beyond. Rob

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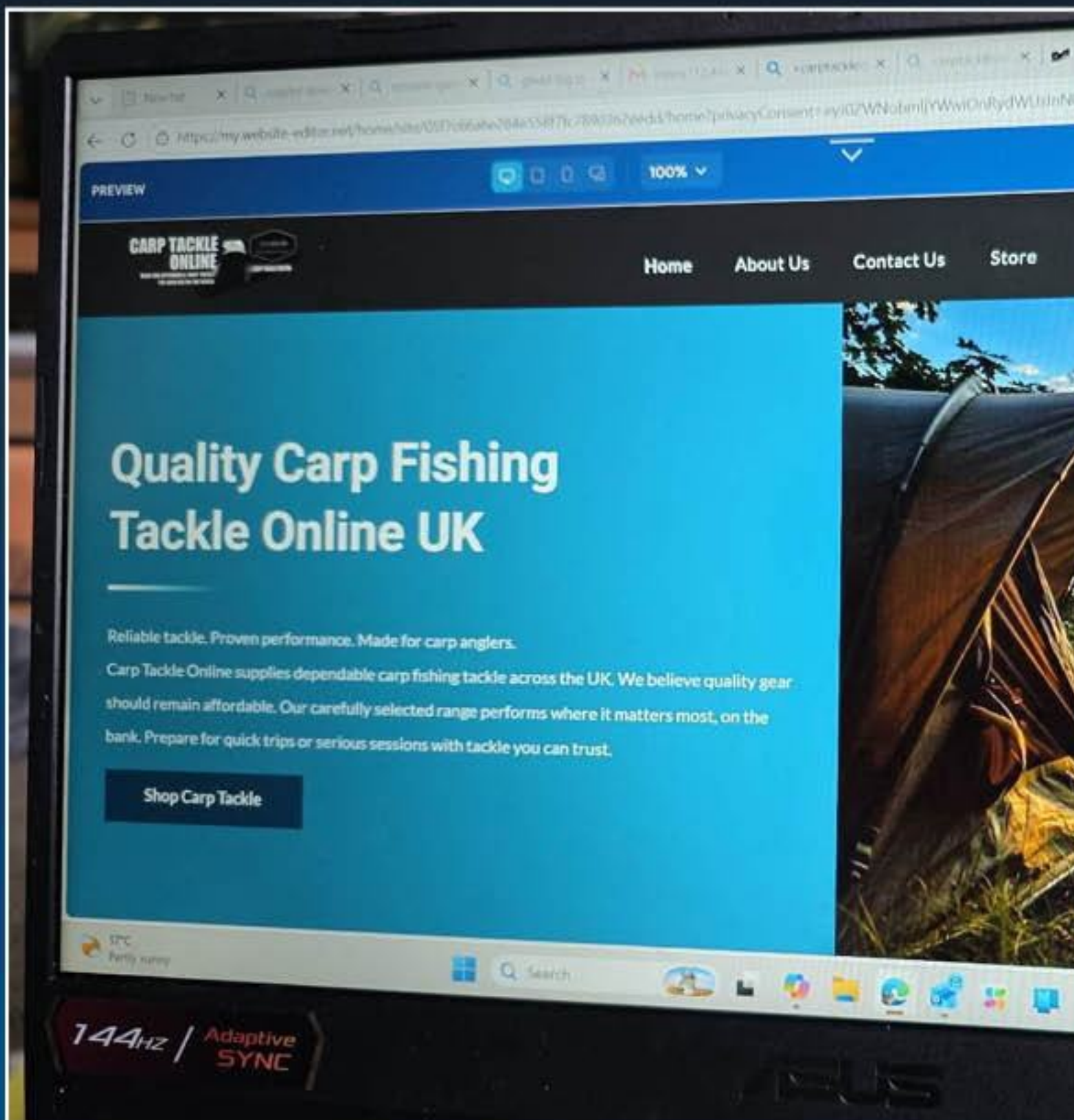
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Fred WILTON

The sad news of Fred's passing reached me this morning when his friend Mark Smith sent me a message. After shock, I was initially very angry with myself as I hadn't been in touch with Fred for a while, this was followed by an overwhelming sadness when many of the memories of time in his company came flooding back.



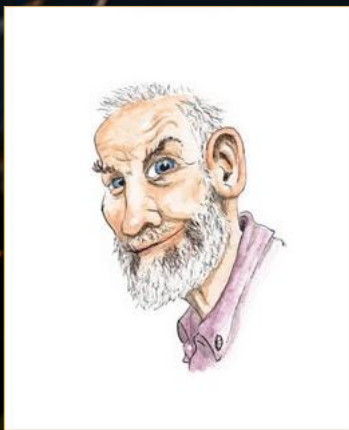
I was one of the very lucky people to have had Fred influence not only my angling life to a huge degree, but also have him influence my personal life too. Even now 50 years on I occasionally remember something Fred said that either makes me smile or sometimes laugh because it was so funny.

He had a wicked sense of humour! Or I recall the more serious conversations we had about the right and wrong things in life.

I still recall our conversation when he convinced me to give up smoking, something I'm eternally grateful for, as I'm sure I'd no longer be around had the conversation not taken place.

In my view no one has influenced the direction of angling as much as Fred over so many years. He began a bait revolution the like of which none of us had seen before or seen since.

A lasting LEGACY.



And although I don't think he'd like me saying so now helped to change the face of Carp and other specimen fishing forever. Quite how he remained so grounded and humble I will never know, but I'm so glad he always remained the same inimitable Fred.

Having him agree to Chapters I'd written about him for several publications was both an honour and surprise (he always shunned publicity) as each time I asked his permission expecting a refusal he agreed they could be included.

'As it's you Stritton' he said. But make sure the spellings correct! (Fred used to call me the teacher who couldn't spell!)

I suspect many of today's younger Carp anglers will have little knowledge of Fred Wilton even though indirectly they will owe many of their success's today to the work and ideas he put forward for them.

Photos: Fred at a social gathering, one of my most treasured photos of Fred netting a carp for me back in the 1970's, PYM canister and an affectionate caricature from the pen of Peter Curtis used in a chapter about Fred.

Go forward on your journey Fred, knowing you have left a lasting impression of those of us lucky enough to have known you, and an everlasting legacy on Carp Fishing history.

Thoughts to Joan and his family.

ECTON LAKES 2.0

Exciting times for the Ecton Lakes Complex!

We are delighted to announce our new full-time fishery manager, Craig Dexter.

It's been 20 years since we employed the wonderful Paul Adams to look after Alan's set of blooming lakes.



Fast forward to now, and the dynamics of the angling industry have changed a lot, and we feel now is the perfect time to invest and progress the fishery to the next level. Ecton will always be a natural fishery with no WIFI, woodchip, or stoned pegs.

Now we envisage Ecton to be a wild but manicured slice of angling heaven, and we already know from Craig's years of love and hard work for the place it won't be too far round the corner before we achieve our dreams.

Help us welcome Craig and keep an eye out for updates along the way of our Ecton Lakes 2.0 Journey.

Chiltern Custom Rods

We are based in Buckinghamshire and we specialise in building high quality rods, hand built to your requirements using the best quality products from many leading manufacturers



Our custom compact rods are available in 10ft 3lb, 3.5lb or 4.5lb spod versions. All are built to your requirements and specifications.

We also have our own 10ft and 12ft blanks, our own guides, handles and reel seats to keep the overall cost as low as possible but still offering high quality products.

We can also upgrade or refurbish your existing rods, giving them another lease of life.

We now stock rod building supplies for DiY rod builders. Check out the full range of materials, components and resins on our website



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WELCOME ABOARD BLAISE.



Welcome aboard Blaise.

We at CC Moore are pleased to welcome one half of the current British Champions and all round carp catching machine Blaise Price. Since joining our team just over a month ago Blaise has been putting the bait to good use banking lots of big carp including this stunning linear weighing 46lb. Blaise fished a Pink NS-1 wafter over a bed of 15mm Pacific Tuna boilies and Bloodworm pellet soaked in Pacific Tuna bait booster.

SEVEN CARP. ONE WEEKEND.



What made Blaise's catch even more impressive was the fact that he had 7 carp over the same weekend with 2 more over 40lb.

Well done Blaise, mega carp and a mega result

PROTECT OUR WILDLIFE.



We are starting to report incidences of illegal fishing and cruelty to the birds at the pond to the police. We would ask that members of the public do the same and then send us a message or email with any crime reference numbers so we can assist the police with CCTV footage. It is useful for the police if you take photos or videos but please do not put yourself at risk in doing so.



We have unfortunately heard that a moorhen was caught with a fishing hook over the weekend but we are not aware of the outcome at this time. We ask that Yateley works together as a community to help protect the wildlife not just around the Green but throughout the entire parish.

@munemushi_carp_
JAPAN 🇯🇵

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From Japan to the UK, carp anglers speak the same language.
A love for the outdoors, great locations and reliable tackle.
Thanks to @munemushi_carp_ for the support and for putting
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Versatility at its best - The Standard Lead Clip Systems from Atomic Tackle give you more control over your lead set up



Whether you want to fish them running or fixed you can simply insert or remove the locking pin to create either lead set up.

Likewise you also have 3 settings for how easy the lead drops.

THREE WAYS TO RELEASE.

Pushing your tail rubber up to the increased section on the lead clip body will set the lead to discharge every time. Fitting your tail rubber on to the raised section will create a semi fixed drop off and over the raised section will set the lead to drop only in emergency. Using a two way colour system the translucent bodies blend perfectly with the tail rubbers and following onto our rig tubing creating a broken effect rather than one solid lump.

All our Lead Clip sets come supplied with 10 of each component making them great value for money at just £7.00 a kit.

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Out of sight. Out of mind. Keep your lines pinned to the lakebed with the Conceal Back Lead – helping to reduce the chance of spooking wary carp while keeping your line clear of boats and birdlife.

- Secure clip design that's easy to attach



SMALL DETAILS. **BIG DIFFERENCE.**

- Pulls free if snagged
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- 3 back leads per pack



Available in:

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MATCH OR STAND OUT.

Matching VS Bright ones?..

With the dying vegetation and leaves beginning to fall, pop-ups can be key to good presentation during the Autumn.

The question is do you match your freebies or go for a bright one? which will be your go-to this Autumn?



WE'RE HEADING TO THE WINTER CARP SHOW



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READY FOR THE SESSION.

The 30L Modular Bucket System gives you plenty of capacity for bait, tackle and bankside essentials, while the two freezer-safe bait boxes keep everything organised and close to hand. When not in use, they store neatly inside the bucket for easy transportation



ONE BUCKET. MORE OPTIONS.

And with the CoZee Toilet Seat fitting directly onto the 30L bucket, it can also be transformed into a practical, portable toilet system when nature calls

One bucket. Multiple uses. Built for life on the bank



ALPHA Z STORM

The last model in our STORM series has landed, the ALPHA Z Storm, with it's deep, moody aesthetic encased within it's special ops inspired tactical casing.

A subtle textured matt dial paired with brushed stainless steel hour and minute hands, playing with the light, revealing subtle shifts as your wrist moves while clean light grey numerals and a light grey second hand keep everything crisp and effortlessly legible.



WHEN THE LIGHT FADES.

It wouldn't be a NITE Watch without our signature super bright tritium illumination. This time we've doubled up at 3, 6, 9 & 12 on our ALPHA Z model to emphasise key time stamps on the face, a small addition that makes a significant difference.



Available in Green/Orange & Blue/Orange Tritium combinations.

Tritium illumination is widely regarded as the most reliable form of watch illumination. These incredible self-powered tubes ensure dial visibility when the light disappears and time matters.

With the release of the ALPHA Z, our STORM series is complete. Other STORM watches include the MX10 and HAWK. Each bring their own capabilities as a watch with the same unmistakable STORM identity.

Which one suits your wrist?



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

THE BLIND VETERANS CHARITY EVENT 2026

£30,000+

Raised over six years

Army veteran Mark has now raised more than £30,000 for blind veterans through a fishing event that started six years ago. Driven by the belief that "as veterans, we never know when we will need the support of charities like Blind Veterans UK", the annual event brings together anglers, veterans, serving personnel and supporters, all united by a shared commitment to helping blind veterans rebuild their lives after sight loss.



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

CARPERS FOR VETERANS SUPPORT

£5,170

Raised at this year's event

This year's event raised an incredible £5,170 and included a visit from blind veteran Jules, who gave participants a first-hand insight into the difference their fundraising makes. A huge thank you to everyone who took part, OAK LAKES FISHERIES SOUTHMINSTER for their generosity over the past six years, and Holdfast Training Services for their continued support. Together, you're making a real difference to blind veterans rebuilding their lives after sight loss.



Oak Lakes Fisheries

www.oaklakesfisheries.co.uk



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



30 lb. 9 oz Del Boy caught by Buddha back on the bank catching



Buddha has a 16 and a 15



Just over 24 lb



24 lb Nice fish



15 lb Scaly one



Just over 24 lb



20lb on the nose. 8am



The ghostly common



He calls himself The Pasty Basher



16 lb new Pipe lake stock



3 am wake up call



22 lb Dorsal up for the camera



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



23 lb at 1am



21 lb



Nice scaly one and thanks to Archie for getting the bucket



26 lb 12 oz nice one Dean



22 lb



16 lb 10 oz



The glass common 24 lb 12 oz



27 lb Buddha is back



Peg 12, roughly 15lb, scales were 10lb out



25lb common caught on a pva bag, pva rig with abit of maize caught this lovely fish from peg 21.



Patience was finally rewarded with micky on the munch at 6:30 @ 37lb - well done Bill Curtis



20 lb 14 oz Pipe lake

IN THE NET



Six years of searching paid off for **Jack** when he landed this special Big Lin.



Steve Grantham banked a **57lb** UK mirror — a new UK personal best.



Colin Fowler landed Uncle Albert from Gaunts Lake on the Guys Syndicate at **54lb 4oz**.



James Floyd's 58lb Big Fully was both a new lake record and a personal best.



Johnny Guselli caught Emma from Clover Lake at just under **50lb**.



Dave Grayling landed this Essex Manor carp at **50lb 10oz** on KLS test bait.



Nick Stansfield joined the 50s club with this English common at **52lb 2oz**.



Darren Jempson beat his personal best when he landed The Box.

FROM THE BANK



Brian Warrick battled under a full moon to land this Welly carp at **50lb 4oz**.



Louis Collins banked the Tiger Linear at **50lb 8oz** on Essex Manor.



Michael landed Charlie from Pit 2 at **48lb**, backed by several more fish.



Steve Dorset caught The Asylum from Oak for a second time, this time at **47lb 3oz**.



Phil Luciano's **47lb** wild UK common came from a 100-plus-acre lake.



Golden Balls Gav was delighted to see his biggest stock fish again — a new personal best of **55lb-plus**.



Neil Rivers' first bite on B1 produced the Beast of Brasnose at a new lake record **55lb 13oz**.



Dave Levy's last-minute plan change brought Scar at a new lake record **45lb 8oz**.

THE ONES WE REMEMBER



Johnathon Douse finally landed Butthead, a fish he had pursued since around 2008, at **61lb 4oz**.



Colin Gotts caught known resident Axel from Berners Hall Fishery at a new top weight of **48lb 8oz**.



Richard Lofthouse landed Bricktop from The Rise after a memorable battle.



Matt Eaton's campaign on a big southern pit produced a **48lb 8oz** leather.



Damien's Baby Bully weighed **40lb 4oz**; alongside him **Steve** held Ted's Common at **41lb**.



Andy Lippo enjoyed a session to remember at Combley with this heavily plated mirror.



Dan Belfield caught Black Spot from Manor Farm at a new lake record **52lb**.



Lee Dunn landed one of The Manor's old guards at a new top weight of **47lb-plus**.

WORTH THE WAIT



Carl Stratford caught three on Manor Farm, led by Big Fully at a new personal best of **47lb**.



Gregg Regan described this powerful, perfectly proportioned carp as a **47lb** bar of gold.



Ryan Meloy caught Kingsmead 1's Floppy Tail Lin from the Horton complex at **44lb 8oz**.



Four years of graft brought **Will Bale** this Norfolk common at **50lb 13oz**.



Robert Mitchell landed the Goldfish Common for a new personal best of **49lb**.



Paul Heseltine caught Apple Slice on Newlands Syndicate, surprised by its beauty.



Royston Clarke held a carp so imposing that "unit" scarcely described it.



Micky Draper landed this handsome Big Lin.

MOMENTS THAT MATTER



Mike Holly with a recent big carp from an unnamed pit.



Pete Kingsbury's largest fish of the Church session was Rodger at **48lb 12oz**.



Martin Wheatley's rod tore off just as he was packing down, saving the blank.



Enzo Lambert caught the elusive Italian from his syndicate at **46lb** on Mainline Baits.



Paul described his best 24 hours after this **47lb** carp from the Quarry at Baden Hall Fisheries.



Chris Falcon's first time on ISO and ABS ended with this hard-fighting mirror.



Leslie Hughes caught the Big Lin from Coking Farm at **51lb**.



Stu landed Circle Scale from Bluebell Lakes at **50lb 2oz**.

A SESSION TO REMEMBER



Mark Willcocks enjoyed a five-fish trip, topped by this magnificent mirror.



Danny Williams caught six on B1, led by a **52lb** carp, with five more to **31lb 12oz**.



Callum Chappell banked this superb carp from his syndicate water.



Mike McMahon banked a new personal best of **56lb 10oz**.



Nicky Hart landed 11 fish on St John's: one double, four twenties, five thirties to **36lb 10oz** and a **46lb 4oz** ghost carp. All came to Sticky Baits Krill with wafers over the top.

MORE THAN ONE MOMENT



Stuart "Wiggy" Wigg caught four carp in a three-night session on Broom Big Lake, led by The Unit at an all-time high of **52lb 8oz**. Fishing around 100 yards to a gap in the weed, he baited morning and evening with crumbed Mainline ISO Fish, mixed pellet and corn. Two pieces of fake slow-sinking corn on D rigs brought him a **22lb 5oz** mirror, a **25lb 12oz** common and a **30lb 5oz** mirror as well.



Martin and Andy Storey caught three twenties, a **35lb** fully scaled carp, a **40lb 3oz** mirror and a **45lb 7oz** mirror on Manor Farm. They also landed a new lake-record bream at **17lb 6oz**.

STORIES FROM THE WATER

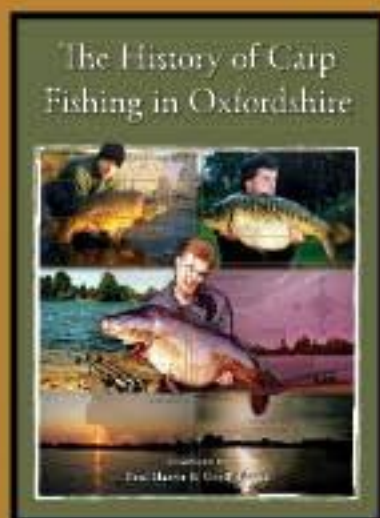
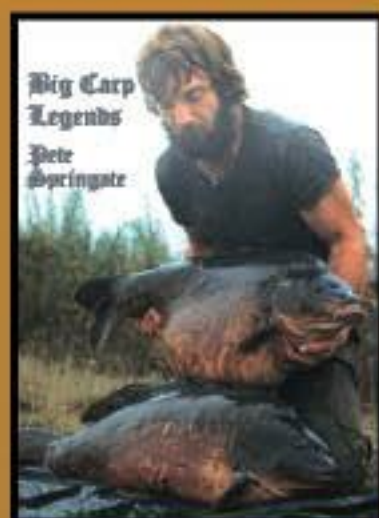


Winston Austin-Fell enjoyed a seven-fish session on Broom Big Lake. Among the catch were Frostbite at **35lb**, Monks at **44lb 2oz**, Fang at **38lb** and Swirly at **37lb 8oz**. He fished two rods on a spot with hinge-stiff rigs and homemade ISO Fish cork-ball pop-ups, using around 12–13kg of boilie over the session.

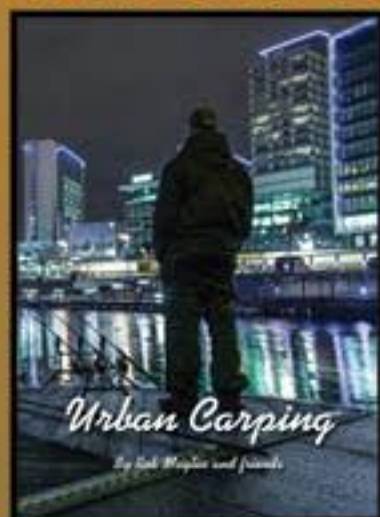
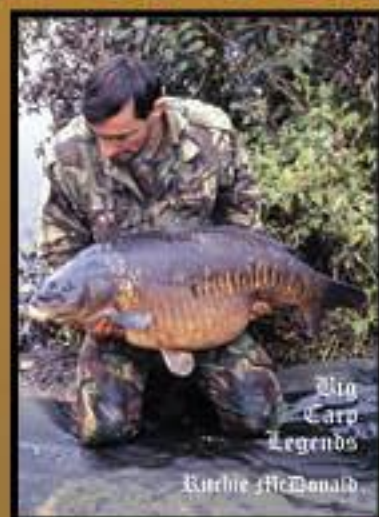
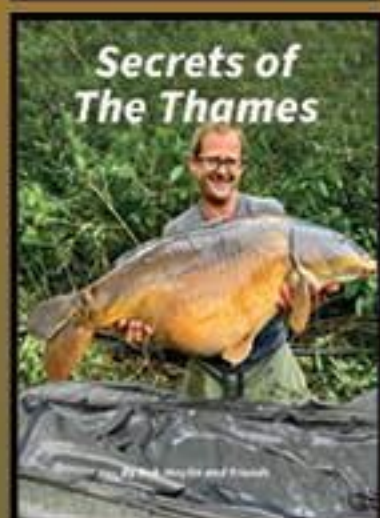
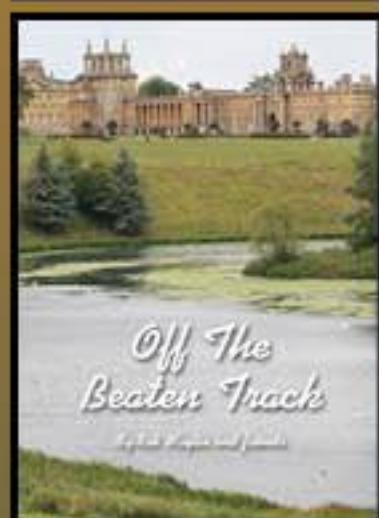


Dan Hallett's Drop Scale weighed **49lb 12oz** from Peg 15 after taking a floater. The fish had weighed **47lb 12oz** the previous year and later passed **50lb**. In a separate return to Cottington, Dan had three fish just one night into his session, including a **43lb** common.

AUTUMNAL

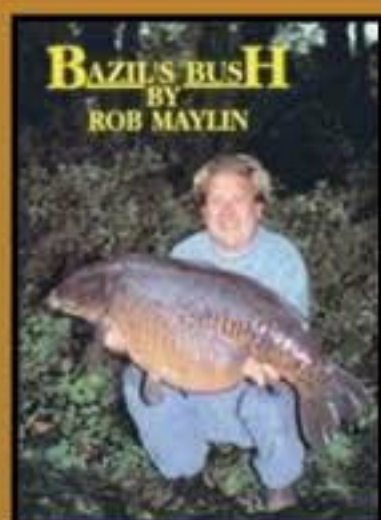
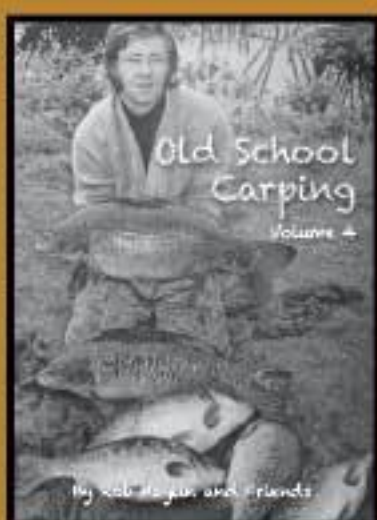


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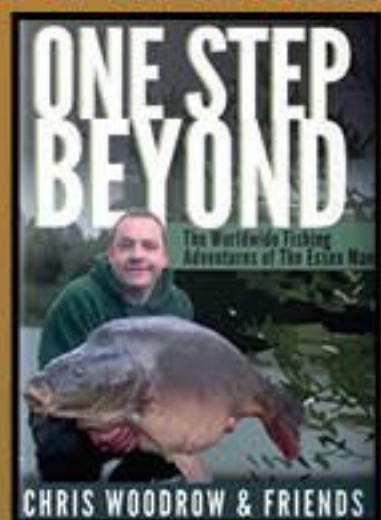
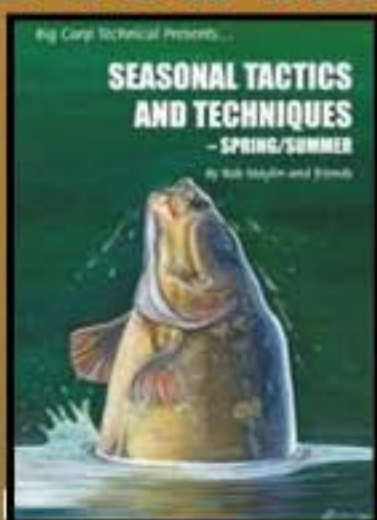
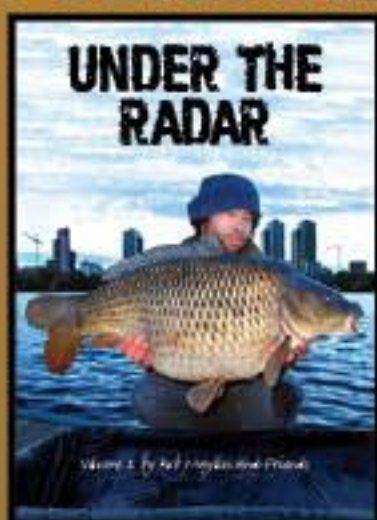
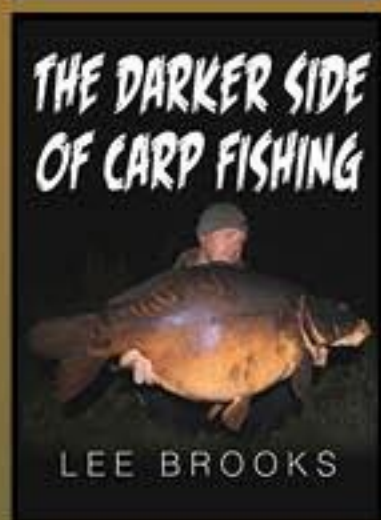
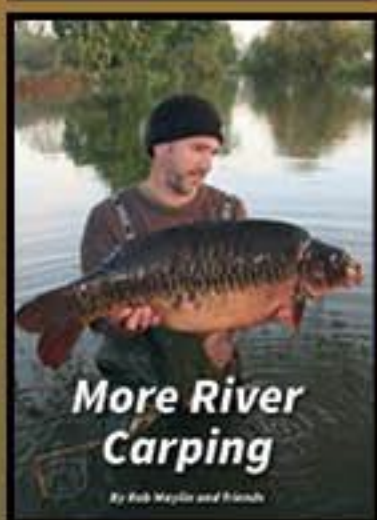


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L READING



AND BE PREPARED FOR THIS SEASON



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WELLY

Rick Willeatts

THE WAITING GAME

FROM THE WATER

Needs little introduction, but nevertheless, it would be rude not to introduce it anyway! 35 acres of shallow gravel pit set inside a beautiful country park, on the outskirts of Reading and absolutely steeped in modern carp fishing history... consistently producing big carp for many years and once considered the holy grail of uk carp waters! At one time there were over 20 fifty-pound plus carp to just over 60! But like all living things, big carp come and they go, and several years ago a fair few of the lake's old dinosaurs unfortunately passed away... making room for all the back-up fish to step up the ranks and the lake is now very much in its ascendancy with a good 10 fish surpassing that magical fifty-pound barrier again at the right time of year!

The syndicate itself is quite small by modern angling terms and around 50 members.

I first put my name down on the waiting list in around 2017 whilst still knee-deep in my angling adventures on Horton and KingsMead, paid a deposit and forgot about it almost.... fast forward 7 years to 2024 and after rattling a fair few cages I finally got my chance to fish here (I'm sat by the lake now with the rods out!) I'd more than exhausted my time in the Colne Valley by that point and was desperate for a change of scenery so to say I was excited when I got the call was a bloody understatement!! Waiting for it to start was almost akin to June the 16th again when I was a kid!

OPENING NIGHT

July 1st eventually came around, and Dottie the carp dog and I were at the site reception bang on 5 to 9, waiting to pick up our key and pass. Keen as mustard, we made our way straight to the pond for a mooch about, and that we did. I must have stood in every empty peg and just immersed myself in each one, not physically in the wet stuff! But studying the unknown before me, that classic mixture of excitement mixed with a layer of intimidation, not so much fear, more the knowing of all those that had stood those banks before me... keen to know I was worthy of my place on this hallowed venue if you like!



FROM THE WATER

Of the few members I'd met and knew by that point, everyone seemed as kind and humble as the next, and still that remains 2 and a half years on. Many a warm welcome from what seemed more a gentleman's club rather than a clicky circuit water! Refreshing!! I'd love to say I turned up and hauled on that first session, but that was sadly not the case! I found a few fizzers and quickly caught a couple of tench, moved swims a couple of times, and although I didn't catch, I learned enough in that few days to say it wasn't a complete blank!

THE FIRST BITE

FROM THE WATER

I got back down a fortnight later and chose to fish a part of the lake that had been quite prolific for someone else on my last trip, and there were a few about still! With the traps all set, I went to bed full of anticipation and also eager to just catch one.... When you know you can catch one from a new lake, you know you can catch many more! 6:30 am and I'm standing in the lake, shaking like a shitting dog, looking down into my net at my first welly carp, not a welly monster by any means but an upper 30 common and my first from the new water!

I went on to have another 6 bites that session! Nothing big but a few thirty's and a lovely way to open my account.... the swim itself is synonymous with doing a lot of smaller ones and the odd biggun, but not that time.

That really started me off, and I caught relatively consistently after that but only ones or twos. I'd find a few in and edge somewhere and pitch up near to them and winkle the odd one out, sight fishing really. But all the time I was learning more and more. I'd go into empty swims near the ones I had my rods out of and have a lead about, noting down spots etc. on my phone. The learning curve was steep, and I was right on it! One of the biggest things I think I had to get my head around was how shallow the place is!

I'd been fishing pits in the Colne Valley where you could almost knock up a brew waiting for a drop, and now I'm in 5 feet, and that's the deep stuff!! It really changed my thinking about presentation and line lay etc. What was really weird also was that you just don't see many showing.



FROM THE WATER

Sometimes you do, and you'll see a load, then nothing but the odd show or tail flick for weeks. With it being so shallow in places and the fish so deep and big, you'd expect to see them waddling about more!

OCTOBER'S GIFT



FROM THE WATER

It was until October that the lake blessed me with one of its bigguns. I'd be on pest control but was still getting bites, and then I did a weekend in Boat House Point, a good autumn area and one that had been doing the odd bite. With so many areas in that peg to put a rod, I settled on three nice spots spread over the bay. 48 hours in, and I was pondering a move. A small one showed to my left and kept me there luckily.

The following morning, I had all the gear on the barrow ready to go home with my tail between my legs, and the middle rod absolutely melted off!! Unpacking my waders with the fish on and off, I went into the pond.... I knew this one was a better fish right from the off, slowly plodding across the swim, not letting me gain an inch..... Eventually, though, she did, and after a few scary moments at the net, she was mine! "Lumpys Mate" A classic welly-shaped mirror, deep and leathery with a thick wrist and massive heart-shaped paddle.... And at mid-forty, she was one hell of a blank saver!

THROUGH WINTER



FROM THE WATER

October was kind, and I landed my second forty, a ghostly common of 43 pounds. I'm on a roll, or so I thought! I landed a few more in October and a small one from the snags in early November, then boom... 3.5 months of blanking! It was winter, and I had such high hopes with the lake being so shallow, but the place went dead, I mean stone dead! To my knowledge, it did 3 bites that winter! I fished too, a fair bit but couldn't buy a bite! I had to wait till mid-March before I had another bite; in fact, I had two! The first was a beautiful scaley one just under thirty and then closely followed by another forty! The cut-tail ghosty at 43 if I remember rightly! And just like that, I was back off again... another 4 bites to 38 pounds on my next session, including an absolute worldly fully, just under 30 but stunning... And totally unexpected when I looked down into my mesh!



SPRING RETURNS

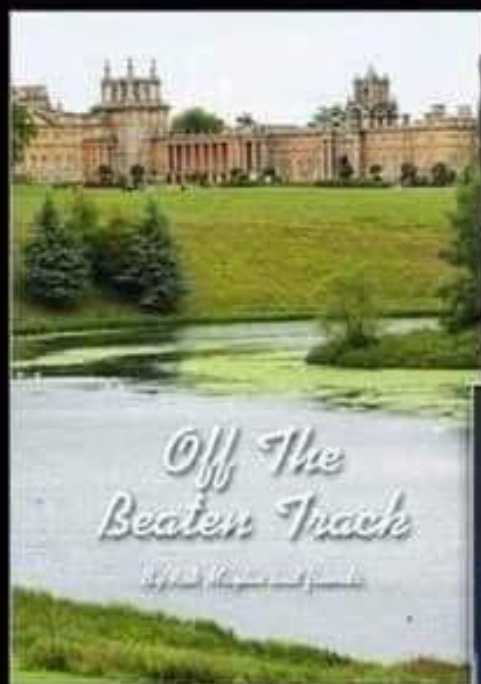
FROM THE WATER

Spring was well underway, and I fished probably every other weekend right through till spawning and pretty much the end of the ticket. I caught another 40-pound ghosty common in May and numerous angry 30-plus commons! That first season, I amassed almost 40 bites for around 35 fish, with roughly 130 fish to go at, and although that was a good return and a great first season, I never really felt close to the big girls... I knew why and endeavoured to make my second season one to remember; you see, I found myself fishing a lot of woodwork swims, comers, bays, etc., where I was seeing them at the time, but by now I'd realised the big girls like the open water; they do get nailed in the aforementioned areas from time to time, normally when I was next door lol!!



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OPEN WATER



FROM THE WATER

So a plan was hatched, quite simple really, fish the open water swims as much as possible, and that's exactly what I did and have been doing since; I have nicked the odd blank saver here and there from the woodwork, but almost all of my fishing would now be out in the pond, which suits my style of fishing more now... Trapping rather than hunting if you like.

So season two was off to a flier, bouncing between all the open water pegs and having the results, I was catching consistently and the average weights were much better....

August saw me land 3 big forties, a big grey box common that I'd never seen before, and a mid forty mirror named "Si's fish" as well as "the big ghostie" again at mid forty and a classic shaped carp, big head, over-slung mouth and a saddleback, if it weren't a ghosty it would be top of everyone's list! It's even been fifty plus quite regularly! Having seen it in all corners of the lake many times before glowing like a beluga whale, I was chuffed to have a cuddle with it!!



FIVE NIGHTS

FROM THE WATER

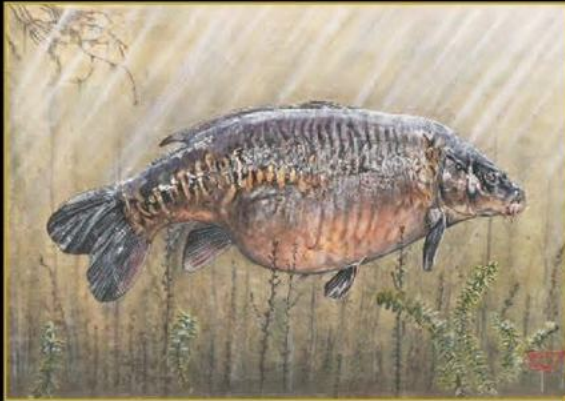
Each season you're allowed one 5-night session and I booked mine for late September, my favourite time of year for big carp and as I was desperately seeking one of them a team 50 plus big girls I just had to make the most of it! I again found myself in boat house point, autumn was well and truly in full flow and I put a significant amount of bait out on my spots, knowing I'd have a while to sit on it.....

and sit on it I did! After the second night I was up early, slightly despondent and getting seriously itchy feet I started looking about for a possible move.... Just as I was about to make the decision my middle rod was away! A long steady, heavy dogged fight and another one of Welly's jewels was in my mesh, a proper character fish known as "C scale" looking back up at me and looking big..... 46 odd pound in the scales she went and I got some great snaps of her in the water and of course, I stayed well put lol!



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THE MIDDLE ROD

FROM THE WATER

Around lunchtime I was away again and landed a small, angry common for my troubles.... I topped up the spots and waited, and waited, it was my fifth and final night that I was on the phone to my good pal Dane talking about fishing of course, I'd already joked earlier that day that there would be a live bite this evening (while he was on the blower) and sure enough, all hell broke loose on the middle rod again! "It's ya fifty!!!" I heard him shout as I ran down to the rod!

The battle was different, right from the start, stripping line off me at range and unable to do a thing about it, it went hard right, tunnelling under the masses of blanket weed on the bottom and making its way up the finger arm to my right with its back out the water, this thing was an animal! I managed to curtail its runs and it was getting tired as was I, as it got closer the blanket weed blocked up my tip so at one point I had the rod in the water behind me over my shoulder, tearing weed off the line with my right hand and handlining a carp with my left!

With all the weed clear I wound down into it and quickly pulled her over the chord..... I didn't even have to look I just knew..... in the folds of my net was a fifty-pound carp, for about seven years now I'd been fishing venues with carp of this size in them at times but had yet to land one of my own, many at spawned-out weights of sub 50 and many that have gone on to do 50, but this one was mine.... I stood in the lake with a net in one hand a rod in the other, covered in shit and in complete awe..... I stood there, looked up to the sky and I'm not afraid to say, I shed a tear.... All those years of anticipation, waiting for that one magical bite, time after time..... and there she was, my fifty

A fish called "Drop scale" renowned for its wild fights. On the scales she went 52-4 and I've not smiled for so long in years..... a lifetime's ambition complete. When I was a wee lad the record carp was Chris Yates's fish, "the vicar" and I remember being ridiculed among my mates back then for claiming I'd catch one bigger one day..... one of my proudest angling moments! I fucking love fishing!



THE NEXT CHAPTER



FROM THE WATER

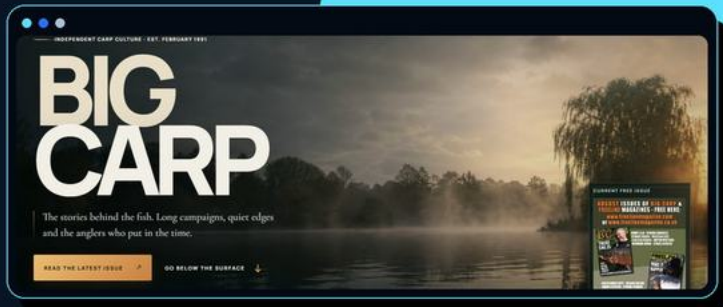
I had another small common that night, a repeat in fact. I let that go without fuss and in the morning, still on cloud nine, I packed up and went home two feet taller! I actually had a breather after that, a reset. It was a good month before I hit back at it and even the winter was kinder than the previous. I managed bites in December, January and February, not many but it kept me going. Spring was a short-lived affair as come mid-April they started a little spawning and it was on and off from then..... I didn't give a shit, my season was absolutely made and I finished on around 35-40 fish again but this time, 7 over forty and my 50..... Season three is well underway and I'm sat behind the rods while I pen (thumb) this very piece..... one not long stuck its head out over the left-hand rod, looked a goodun too..... I'll save what happens for my next article..... welly monsters part two.... Be lucky x



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AT LAST.

Dave Cornes

THREE YEARS



FROM THE WATER

Any one that knows me well, can tell you truthfully that the last three years I have talked about only one fish! 'The Common'. Why this one haunted me so much is hard to say for certain, but it did! Upon reflection, I think the place has a soft spot in my heart as was one of first places Dad took me fishing as a bin lid in around 1986, so thinking about it it's perfectly natural to want to catch the biggest fish in the lake!

Effort and hard work through cold Winter nights and hot Summer days, and even speaking to the moon a couple of years ago when Dad finally died at 84 has never tainted my belief that it would happen, it will be mine !

I took the week off as this male fish can get caught normally until September and then is not seen until April the following year, so again I was running out of time.

FROM THE WATER

Fish number 144 since my return to the lake it happened on what turned out to be a perfect session.

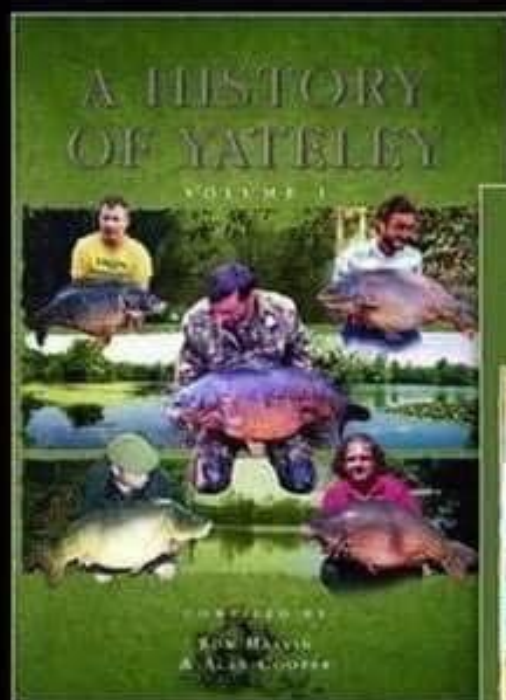
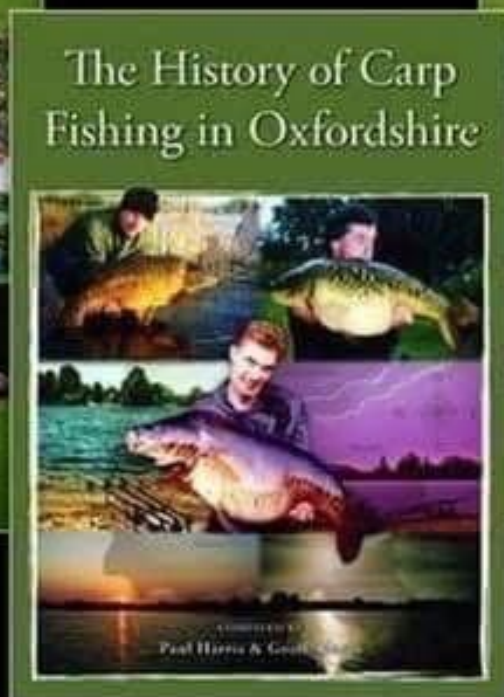
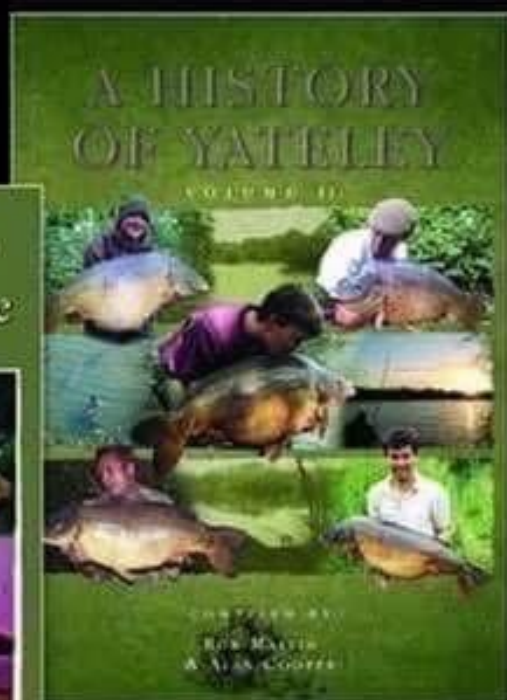
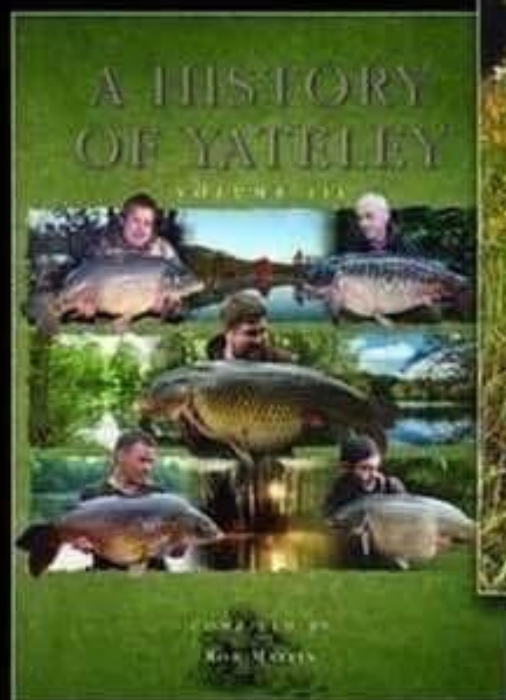
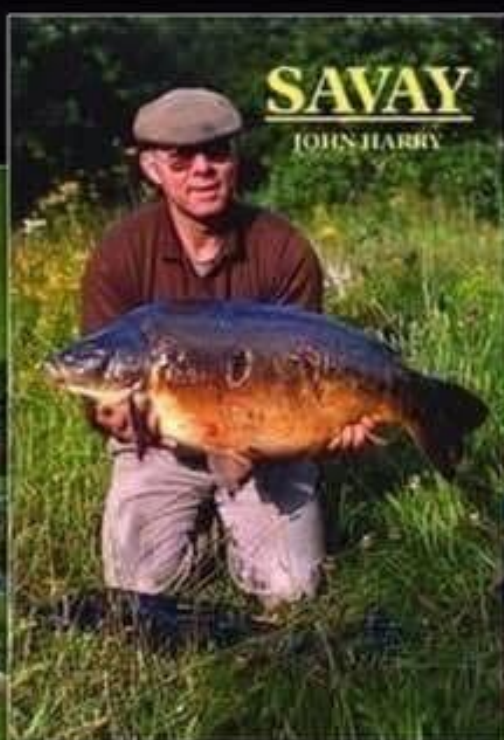
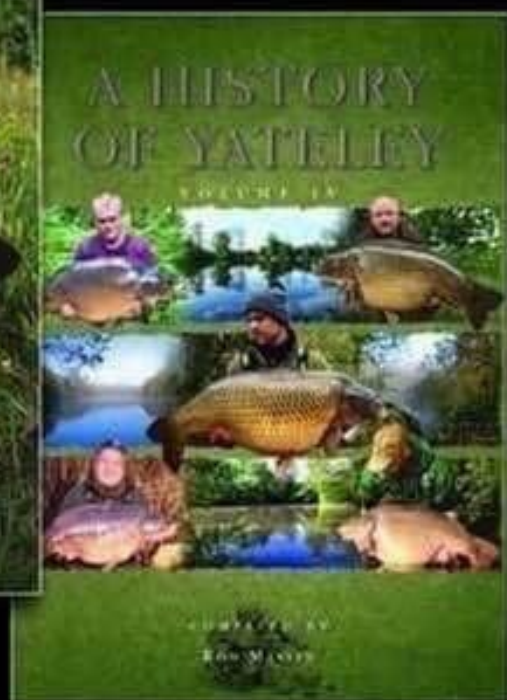
I want to Thank all the bailiff's from the top down, you know who you are and I don't want to make you blush or fingerprint this, but you are good lads as well as the regulars who fish it, and not forgetting my boys !

Superpower as always was Mainline Baits and the winning approach was Cell wafter with Smart liquid which is deadly in the right hands, even mine as well. They fed well this week introducing a significant amount of bait to the swim bought a 16 fish catch!

At 44 lb 9ozs it's the new lake record and Dad, I dedicate this one to you
DC XX



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CIRCLE SCALE



Tom Downs

A SPECIAL FISH



FROM THE WATER

I've been fishing the lakes at Bluebell for many years, and over the last seven years I've fished Kingfisher and Swan Lake on and off. One thing I'd never managed to do was catch one of Swan's A-team. I'd had plenty of fish over the years, but that one special fish had always eluded me. On this particular session I had nothing for the first 24 hours. My middle rod was on a spot that had produced some decent fish for me before, but with nothing happening I decided to move it. I put it out at 23¼ wraps, behind a bed of weed. I was happy with the spot and just hoped it would produce. Then, at roughly 2:15am, the bite alarm went off. To be honest, it sounded more like a bream bite than a carp. I was still half asleep when I picked up the rod and at first the fish hardly fought at all. She just seemed to come in without giving me much trouble.

THE MOMENT



FROM THE WATER

It was only when I got her within a few metres of the bank that she suddenly pulled away like a train. She went straight through all the marginal weed and buried herself. At this point I honestly thought I wasn't going to be able to land her by myself. After a few minutes she eventually came free from the weed and lifted her head enough for me to get the net cord underneath her. As soon as I looked in the net I knew I had a massive fish. I still wasn't fully with it after being woken up, so I rolled the net up, put it into the sling and carried this absolute brute back to my cradle.

I left her in the sling and removed the net from underneath her. I started applying carp care to all of her sores and, while I was doing it, I kept looking at her thinking to myself, "I recognise you!" I was shaking with adrenaline by this point. I zipped up the sling and hooked it onto the scales. They went just under 58lb. My wet sling weighs a tiny bit over 6lb, which meant the fish weighed a whopping 51lb 4oz. And this wasn't just any fish. It was the one and only Circle Scale. I knew she had previously been caught at 46lb, so to finally have her in my arms at 51lb 4oz was a pretty special feeling.

SEVEN YEARS

FROM THE WATER

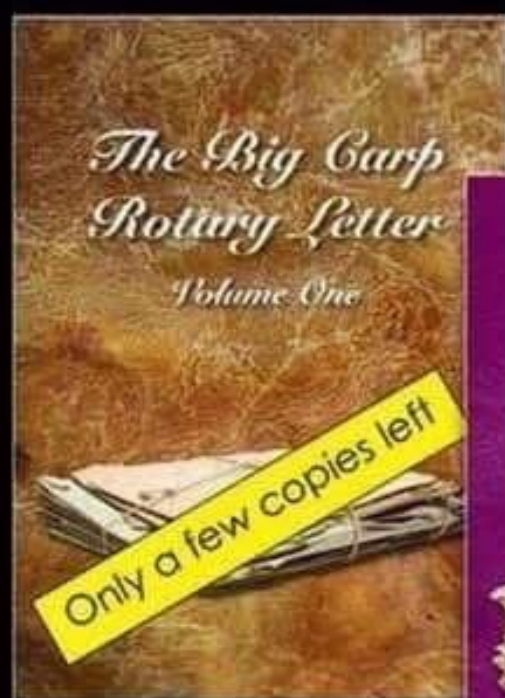
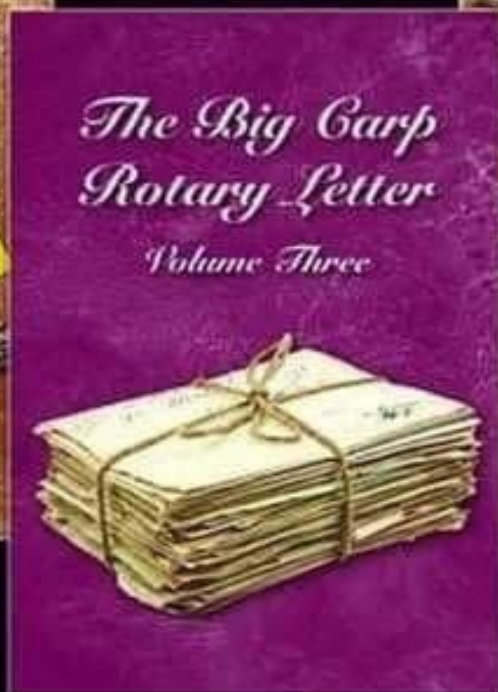
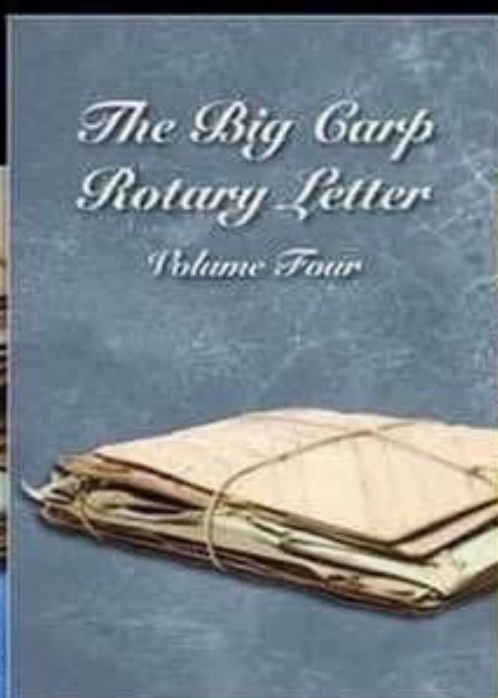
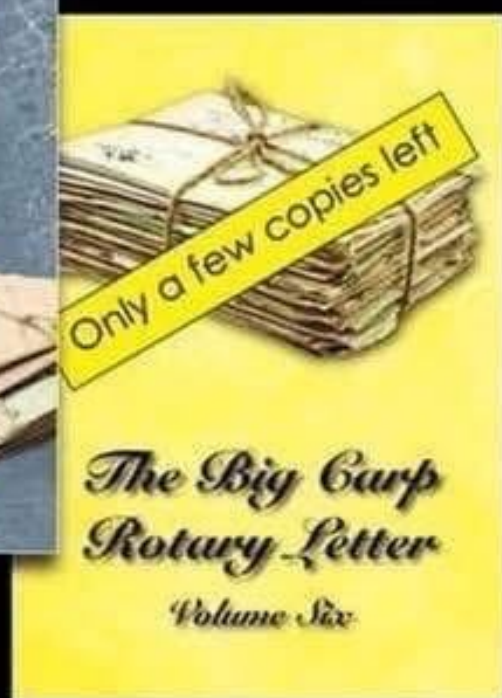
After seven years of fishing this lake on and off, and never managing to catch one of Swan's A-team, I'd finally done it. It may have only been a few minutes from that first bream-like bite to getting her safely in the net, but it's a memory that will last a lifetime. A massive thank you also has to go to all the staff and bailiffs at Bluebell for the great work they do across the complex. The care they put into looking after the lakes and the fish really is appreciated. Circle Scale — 51lb 4oz. One fish I certainly won't be forgetting.





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A HARDWICK AND SMITHS SURPRISE

Rares Tintisan

A HARDWICK SURPRISE



FROM THE WATER

THE SPECIAL ONE There are certain carp that haunt you, fish you stalk for days. And then there are the fish that surprise you entirely—the hidden gems that rarely see the bank, possessing characteristics so unique they stop you in your tracks. My recent session on Hardwick and Smiths at the famous Linear Fisheries complex produced exactly that: a stunning, heavily scaled mirror carp that seemed entirely unknown to both me and the local bailiff. This is the story of how an unexpected change in tactics brought a true rarity to the net. **THE STRATEGY:** The session began as a mobile affair. Over the course of the trip, I moved three times, chasing showing fish and trying to pin down their feeding areas. Mobility is often key on busy day-ticket waters, but as the session drew to a close, I settled into a swim I'd earmarked for the final two nights. I decided to alter my usual approach for the first night in this new spot. Instead of deploying my standard spod mix, I committed to a boilie-only approach, intending to fish "match the hatch" hookbaits over the top. My bait of choice was Mainline's Essential Cell. To give the freebies an edge, I washed them out slightly, pouring boiling water over the fresh baits—a tactic that softens the baits and releases those vital attractors quickly into the water column.

A DOGGED FIGHT



FROM THE WATER

With the bait prepped, I spombed out about 15 loads tightly onto the top of a gravel bar, fishing at a comfortable range of just 10 wraps. For the first few hours, the rods lay motionless. As the light faded, I reeled in, attached fresh 10mm and 15mm Essential Cell wafers on multi-combi rigs, and sent them back out to the spot for the night. The night itself passed uneventfully, save for a few single beeps and line bites—telltale signs that fish were in the area and likely visiting the spot. **THE MORNING PRIZE** The take came on the middle rod. It was an immediate, heavy weight, and the fish gave a fantastic, dogged fight for several minutes, using its deep flanks in the water. When it finally broke the surface and rolled over the net cord, I knew immediately this was no ordinary Hardwick and Smiths resident. As I peered into the mesh, the sheer scale of the fish became apparent. It wasn't just the huge, distended belly; it was the incredible, oversized mirror scales scattered along its flank. This was a spectacular, heavily plated mirror—the kind of classic, old-school carp that anglers dream of.

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UNDER THE RADAR

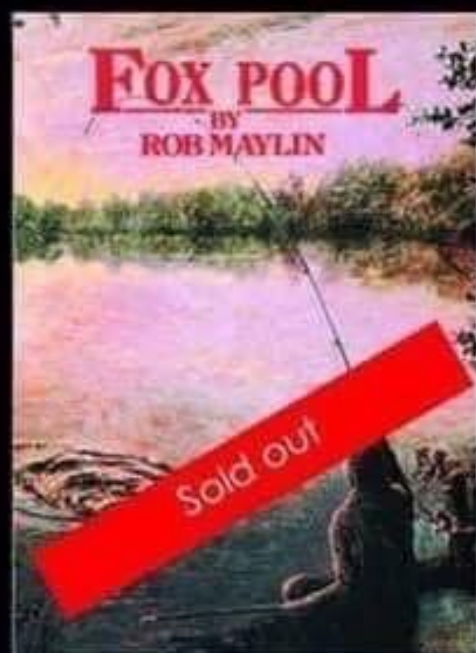
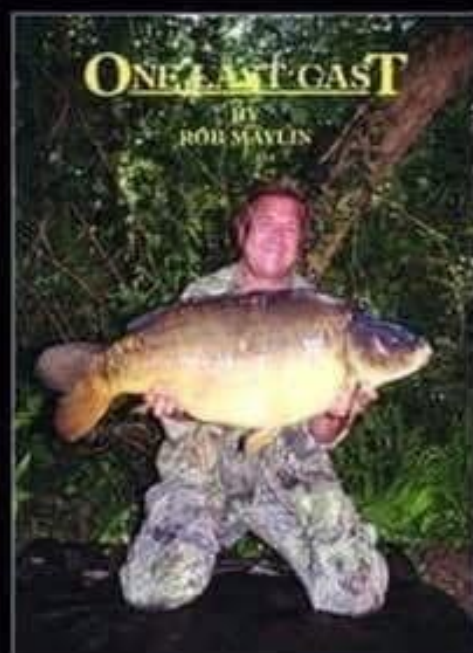
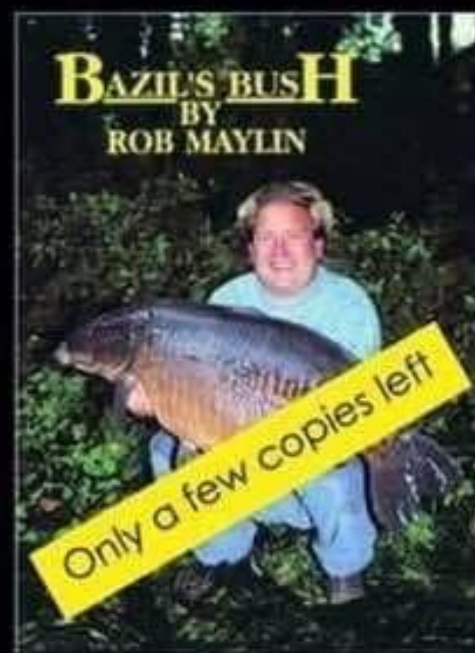
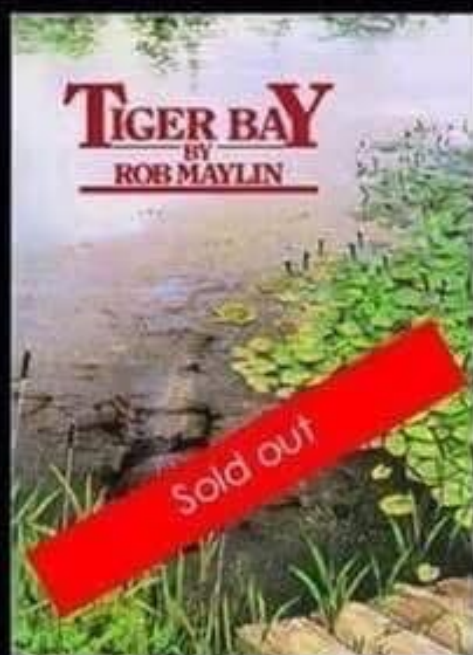
FROM THE WATER

A RARE JEWEL What made the capture even more special was the mystery surrounding it. After securing the fish, I realized I had never seen this particular carp in any catch reports from the complex. Even more surprisingly, when I showed the fish to the bailiff, he couldn't recognize it either. On a complex as heavily fished and well-documented as Linear Fisheries, catching a large, distinct carp that flies under the radar is incredibly rare. It was a true testament to the fact that even in the most popular waters, there are still unknowns swimming beneath the surface. It was a perfect ending to the session, proving that sometimes, a simple, targeted boilie approach is all it takes to trip up a rarely caught giant.



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AUTUMN FISHING



Darrell Peck

IT'S A FEELING



FROM THE WATER

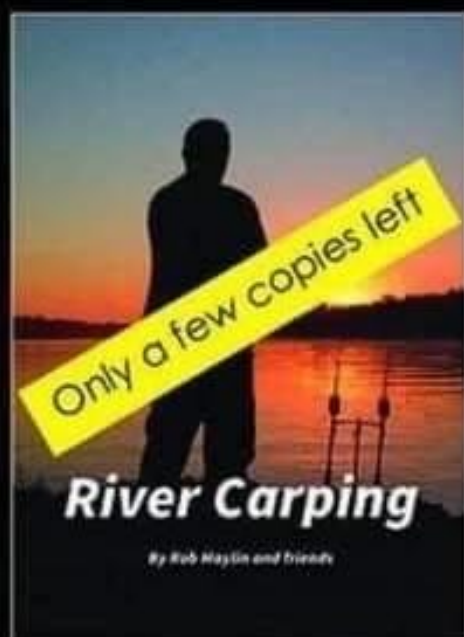
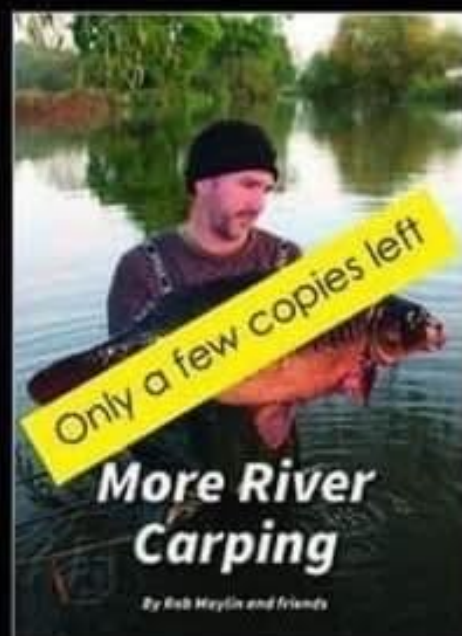
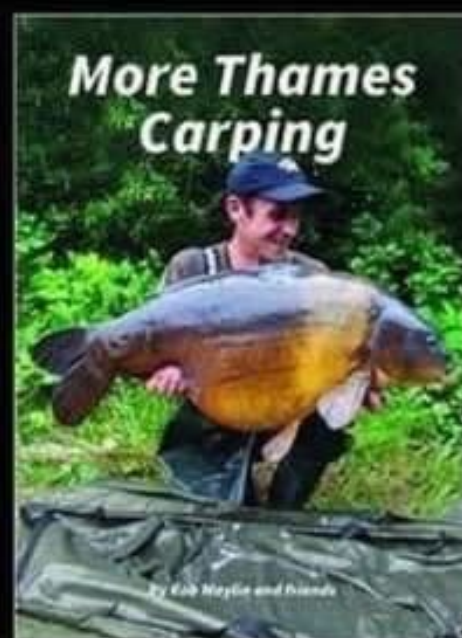
There's something about autumn carp fishing that just hits different. The cold, crisp mornings. The stillness before sunrise. The days when the wind howls across the lake and the water comes alive. The changing colours, the fading light, and those unforgettable nights when the silence is broken by the sound of a carp rattling out somewhere in the darkness.

But above all, it's the anticipation. Waiting. Watching. Putting the hours in. Knowing that at any moment, everything could come together and a fish you've dreamed about could finally slip over the net — bigger than ever, and in its absolute prime. Autumn isn't just THE season for big carp fishing. It's a feeling.



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LATE AUTUMN STRATEGY

Joe Stephens

ONTO A WINNER



FROM THE WATER

‘In the autumn I like to scale down on my bait, reverting to naturals where allowed, usually maggots into the softer areas. Small piles of red maggots in the right areas are irresistible to carp, with a balanced bait over the top, you’re onto a winner. Where there are nuisance fish present, I might introduce some bigger items such as chop, crumb or sweetcorn, but I’m happy to fish a pure maggot approach where I can get away with it. Rig wise, I still go in with my usual bits, size 4 hooks, big shrink tube kickers and big leads, the usual stuff, just more thought goes into baiting and areas at this time of year.

You can see the small split shot on the tag end of the rig, I just think this gives the shot more movement, rather than fixing it directly onto the rig – This might just be a 1% advantage, but when the carp picks the rig up, that shot has a tiny bit of movement which I like’.



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AUTUMN PREP

Scott Sweetman

LAST LIGHT



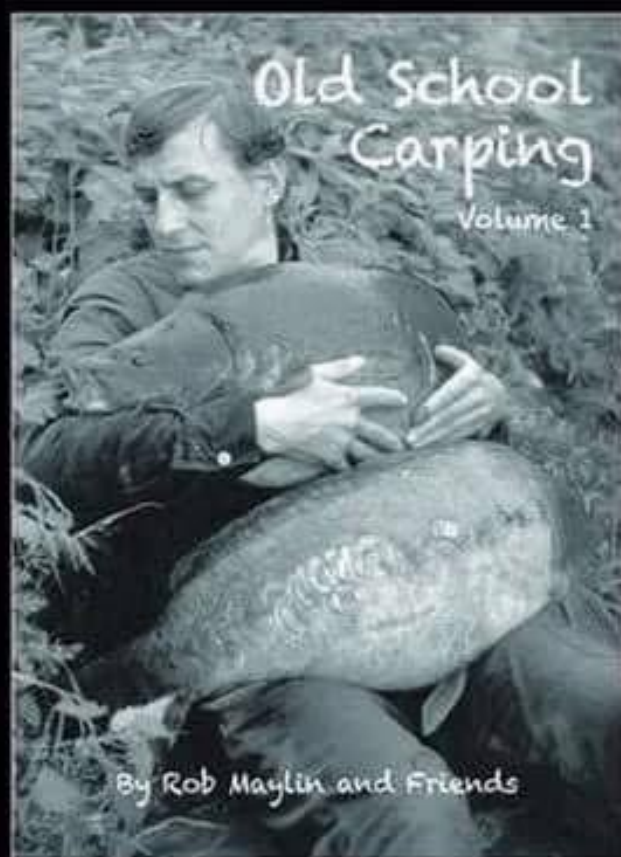
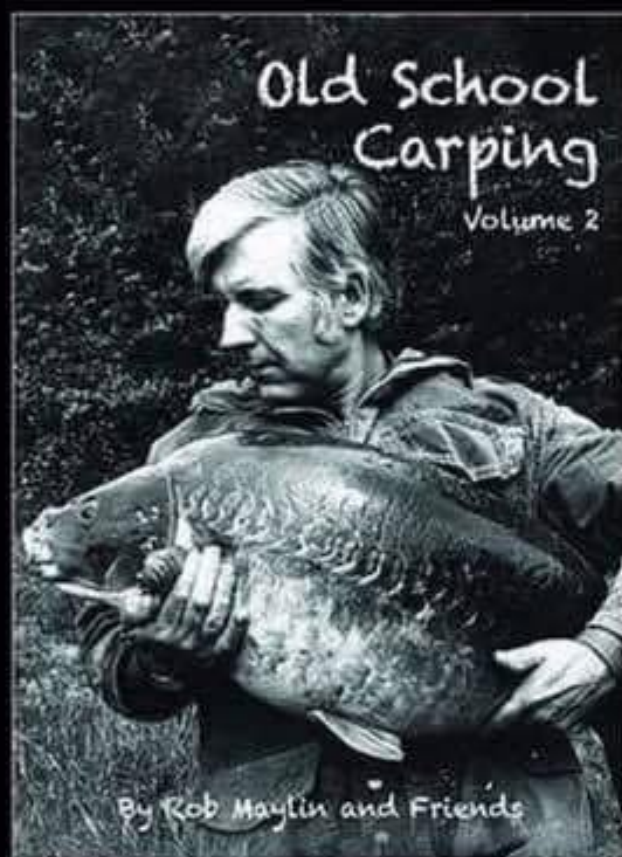
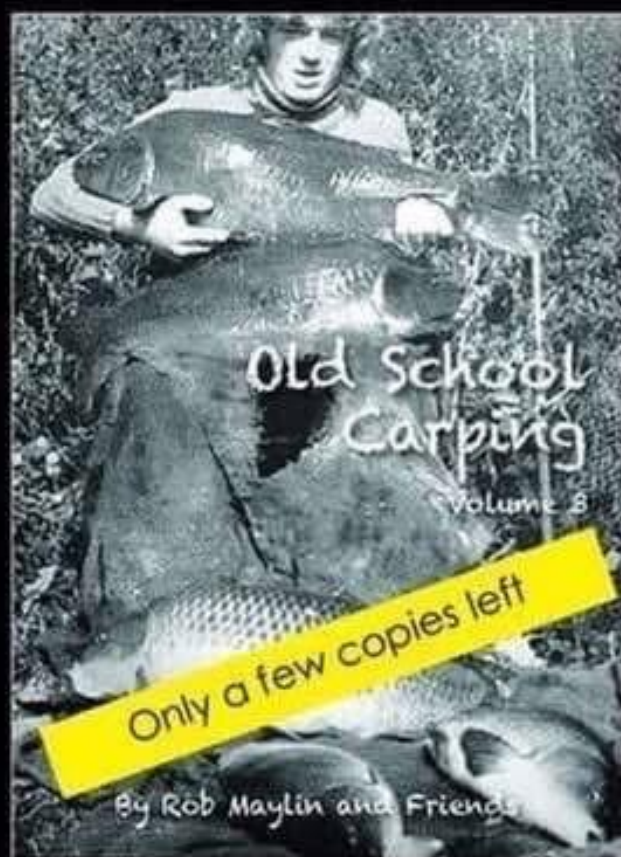
FROM THE WATER

‘With the clocks now changed, the autumn is in full swing. It’s imperative to be as organized as ever and it’s great time to reorganize your kit. The weather is going to be a lot less forgiving; you’re often getting the rods out just on last light or doing them in the dark, walking around in the wind and rain. It’s very easy to start winding down and not going as much, but it really is a great time of year coming up especially for those biggens. Making sure you’ve got all the kit and having everything as organized and prepped as possible will really help you to push on and make it happen through this period.

A few things I do is to make sure my barrow is packed with waterproofs, barrow cover and spare clothes. I check my brew kit, tackle pouch, rucksack and bait freezer is all full and organized. Take the time to make sure I have rigs, leaders, booms tied and ready to go. Get all my lights, flash and camera charged as the activity can often be through the night. It’s nothing revolutionary but can really help to get the most from my trips’.



OLD SCHOOL CARPING SERIES



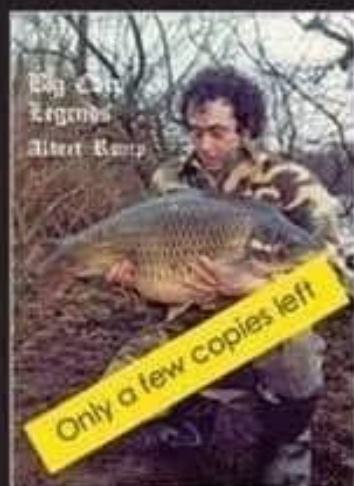
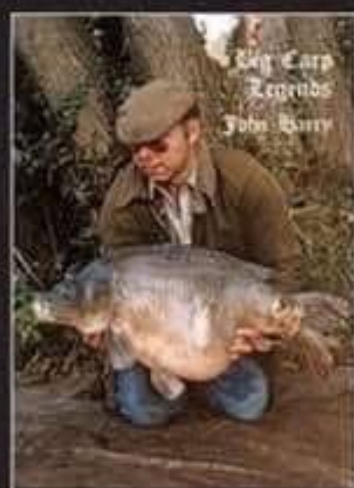
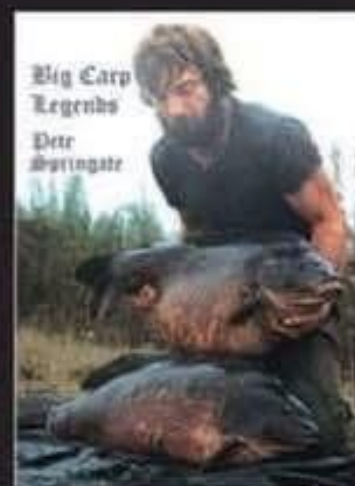
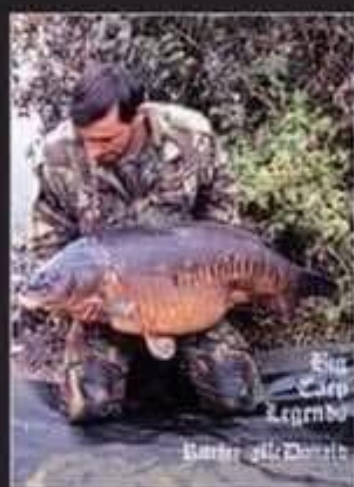
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CANAL DIARY

Rich Hogg

29TH OCTOBER 2018



FROM THE WATER

I've been enjoying catching a few predators in the last few weeks but it would be wrong to miss out on mornings like this behind the rods.

Over the last few weeks, I've been putting in a few blanks on the carp but to keep a bend in the rod, I've spent most of my angling time targeting predators on light lure gear. This morning though, I popped out with a dead bait set up for the 1st time this year, in hope to pick up a better fish. Well, it only took half an hour before the first bit of interest, which after a slow take and an epic battle turned out to be this canal monster of just over 21lb. Over the moon!

31ST DECEMBER 2018



FROM THE WATER

Well im absolutely buzzing to end the year with a couple of canal carp. I've had an enjoyable few months targeting pike but with the recent mild spell I had to give it one last bash for a carp and it paid off, this old common being the biggest of the pair and coming just as I was about to pack up, making it my last fish of 2018. I'm really looking forward to next year's adventures along the tow path and if it's only half as enjoyable as this year has been, itl be a good one! Tight lines for the new year all

20TH FEBRUARY 2019

FROM THE WATER

Absolutely buzzing to get off the mark for 2019!!! The pike rods have been put away for another year and the weather seems to be on the turn and after a handful of unproductive carp sessions, a lovely dark common finally slipped up earlier today a little wafter with a few freebies close by was just enough to nick a bite on a quick couple of hour session



12TH MARCH 2019

FROM THE WATER

Well with the weather as awful as it was earlier, it would have been far easier to have stayed at home in the warm, but I decided to make the effort for a couple of hours and set up in the rain. After losing a huge pike early on, that latched onto a tench I hooked, I found myself doing battle with this common which managed to bury itself in the reeds before I even got to the rod! A bit of patience and a lot of luck, and she worked herself free and ended up safely in the net.



22ND MARCH 2019



FROM THE WATER

Absolutely made up with this big old warrior of a common! Everything screamed perfection this morning, from the second I left the house, to the moment I turned up at the canal. It was made even more perfect by the sight of a fish 'flanking' on the near margin. It was a case of waiting for the fish to leave the spot before quickly placing a bait on it as I knew if I was spotted, it would have been 'game over'. Only ten minutes passed before the rod went into meltdown with a savage margin take. There's rarely an easy battle with a canal carp but a wise old fish like this knows every trick in the book and it very nearly beat me... nearly.

16TH APRIL 2019



FROM THE WATER

Big or small, i love them all! A mint little common from this morning's short session. Time on the bank has been very limited for me the last few weeks so this little fella along side 3 tench were more than welcome.

21ST APRIL 2019

FROM THE WATER

A brace of bank holiday bangerz. These 2 little gems were my 1st of the year from off the surface. The common took first and as it slipped over the net cord, I spotted a stunning little fully rise up and take a piece of bread. With the common safely in the net, I quickly flicked another freelined chunk of bread out and with full confidence, it was the mirrors turn to trip up! First mirror of the year and first S/W fish of the year too





14TH MAY 2019



FROM THE WATER

A lovely little scaly stunner from today, falling to a chunk of freelined bread. I absolutely love these warm evenings along the tow path. There's nothing like watching a piece of bread getting taken from off the top no matter what size they are.

16TH MAY 2019



FROM THE WATER

Beautiful start to the day on a new stretch of canal...

Absolutely chuffed with this little fella from this morning! My first ever ghosty mirror from a little pit stop session on a new canal on the way to work. It looked like a blank was on the cards as my hour session came to a close but I stumbled across a couple of fish right in the dying minutes. Another one falling to a piece of floating bread, and what a little character.

29TH MAY 2019

FROM THE WATER

Chuffed with this one! It's been quite a while since I've done an early morning sesh behind the rods, but this morning I nipped out at first light for a quick couple of hours and managed to bag this chunky canal common. Rods were out by 5:30 but the fish had me waiting right till the last second before absolutely ripping off like a rocket. A more than welcome end before shooting off to work



4TH JUNE 2019

FROM THE WATER

Mega fun little sesh on a small stretch of canal this morning. Just a little pit stop on the way to work was enough time to put 3 little canal gems on the bank and losing a fourth fish too, all in just over an hour of flicking some bread around. No monsters but a perfect way to start the day.



10TH JUNE 2019



FROM THE WATER

Always a buzz to have the silence broken by a screaming run. I've had a lot more commons than mirrors so far this year, so when this hard fighting mirror rolled over the net cord, I was more than happy. Only a couple of hours and a handful of bait needed to nick a quick bite before heading off to work and dodging the rain.

16TH JUNE 2019



FROM THE WATER

Absolutely blown away with a new pb canal mirror! This mid 20 brute has ended a frustrating few years which got me to believe I would never up my old mirror pb. Last year I watched this fish pick up my hookbait and spit it out right under my feet and it gutted me, but let me just say this... 'Revenge is very sweet'!! I'd love to say she gave me a run for my money but actually no more than 2 beeps on the alarm and a very lazy fight through the lilies' was all I had; do I care? Not 1 bit! What a stunning creature and an absolute pleasure to slip the net under!!! Buzzing!!

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WALTHAMSTOW MONSTER

Dave Levy

THE CAMPAIGN



FROM THE WATER

After always wanting to do a spring campaign on Walthamstow's Lower Maynard, this year Dave Levy was more determined than ever to make it happen.

His first few sessions were frustrating, losing a couple of fish in quick succession. Refusing to be beaten, Dave moved to a new swim to gain a better line angle to his target area.

With a three-day session ahead and prime big-carp conditions approaching, he knew there was a good chance.

FROM THE WATER

Day one brought heavy winds and driving sleet showers. Before leaving, Dave committed to the plan, prebaiting three hopper loads of broken Mainline Baits New Nut boilie mixed with 10mm Cell using his Hunter 750 bait boat.

Returning the following morning, he positioned two rods over the prepared area. At 10am, a drop-back bite initially felt like another big bream, but it soon revealed itself as something far better. After a steady fight, Dave landed the lake's Big Common at 50lb 10z.

I had wanted to fish the Lower a year earlier, but I had way too much work on. My first trip this spring was a blank. On my second, I hooked a good fish only for the hook to pull in the margin. The next trip, another carp cut me off. I couldn't believe the bad luck I was having.

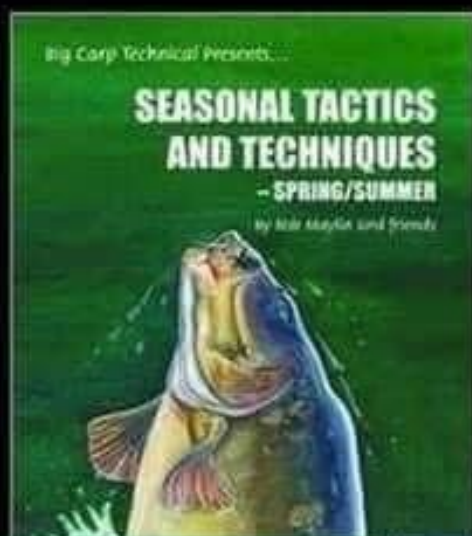
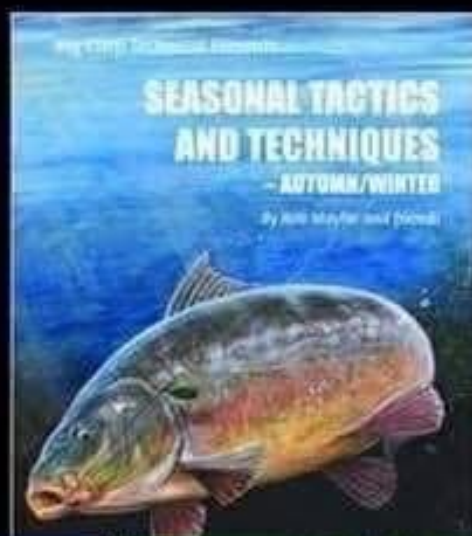
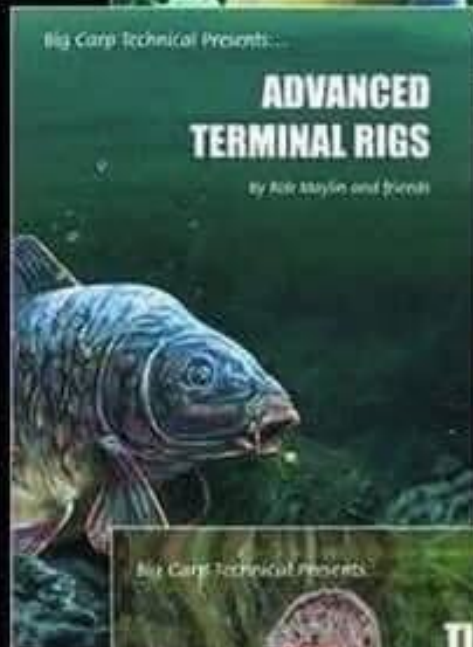
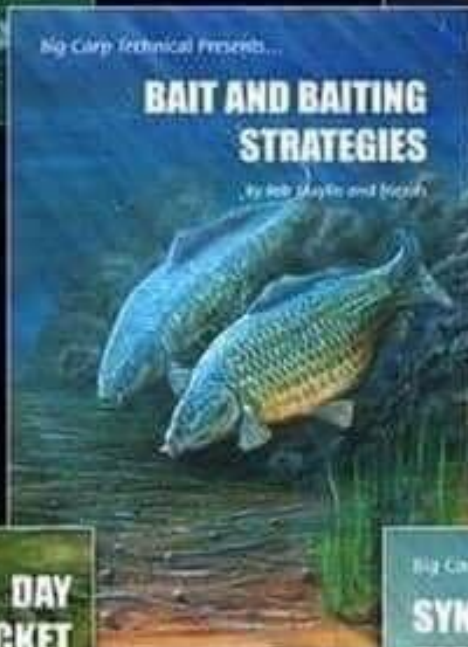
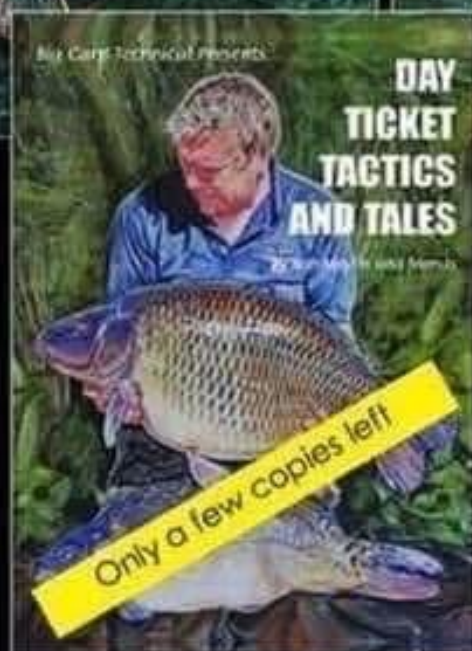
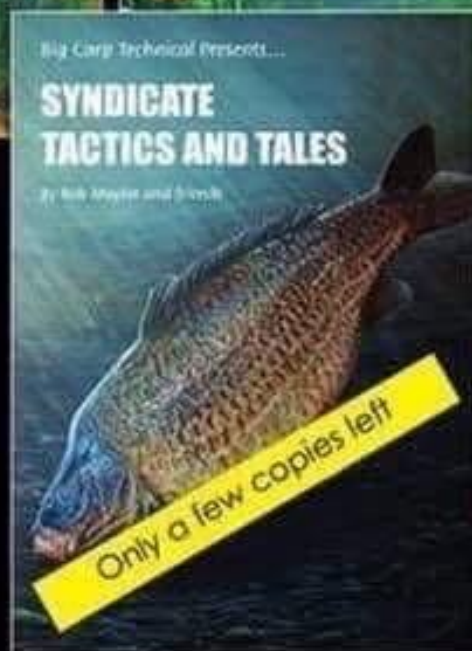
I went back the following week with a plan to fish three-day sessions and keep baiting the same area. The first day brought big winds and sleet, and I was nearly blown away on the big reservoir. Before leaving, I bait-boated three kilos of broken Nut boilie with 10mm Cell mixed in. The weather was much better the next day. Although I felt the carp had moved, I knew the Common loved the area I had baited. At 10am, my blowback rig was picked up. I played what I thought was another big bream, and it wasn't until the fish came close that I realised it was a carp.

I soon had it in the net. There was the biggest carp on the complex at 50lb 10z. I spent a lot of time on this complex in the 1990s, so to come back and catch this fish really means a lot to me.

The fish fell to a Blowback Rig tied with eight inches of 25lb CamoX coated braid, a size 6 ApeX Beaked Point hook and Connexions shrink tube.

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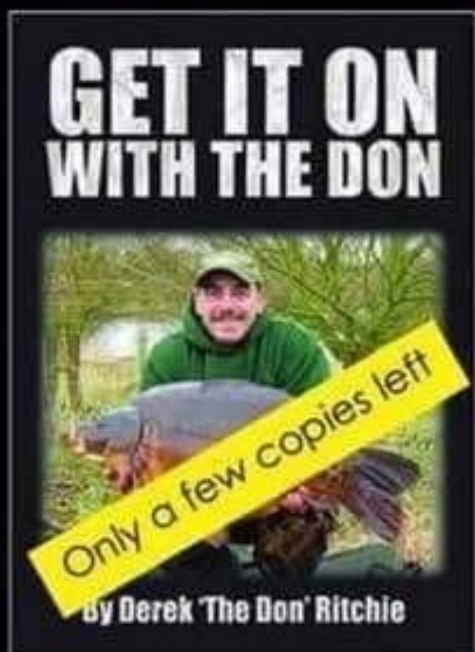
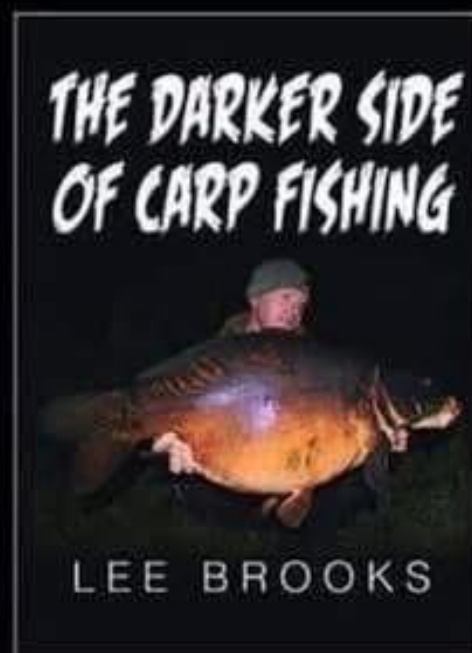
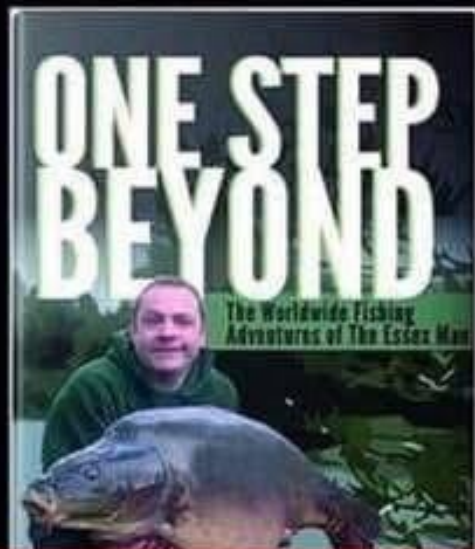
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AN AMAZING BUZZ

George Benos

FIRST LIGHT

FROM THE WATER

Back in the spring, George Benos captured the Waterside Common at a massive 68lb. Here is how it unfolded.

Sunday 22 February. With Tom Dove's Small Willie Challenge and the weather looking absolutely prime, I just had to be there. I arrived just before first light, and it seemed everybody else had the same idea. No fewer than nine anglers were already fishing, with another mate, Tom Lorraine - the housewife's favourite - loading his barrow.

I did the right thing and gave Tom first choice of what little was left, but I already had my eye on the only remaining swim, knowing the others were stitched for the next few days.

My first night came and went, and the second was much the same. Although I did not catch, I saw and heard a few fish.

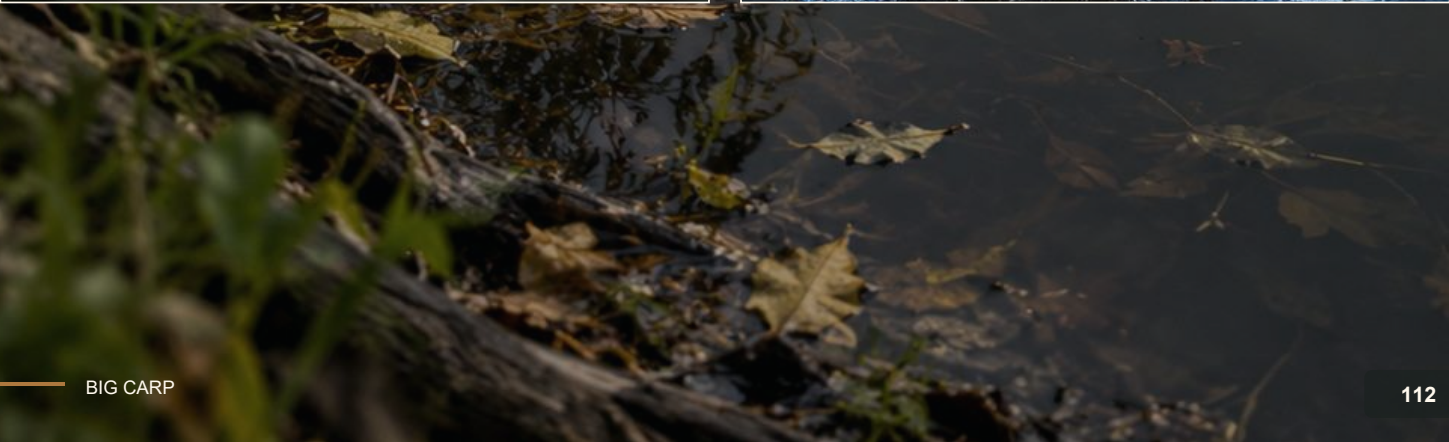
The swim to my right was potentially becoming free that morning, and I gently enquired about moving up. This is where fishing Burghfield has made me forget that, if you do not mark your patch, you get schooled. I am so glad I did.

To be honest, I would not have moved anyway after what I saw at first light. They were out there in front of me, clearly feeding on my well-spread 18mm Super Cell boilies. I had been preparing them for weeks, allowing them to take in the same flavour Smart Liquid several times until they became lovely, sticky and white. Deadly.

At around 10.30am, I saw the Big Common show twice on the right of the swim. Almost all the shows I had seen were at least 10 to 15 yards closer than where my rods were positioned.

I decided to redo all three rods quickly and place them in a line around 20 yards out. It was shit or bust.

Two hours later, the left-hand rod burst into life.



FROM THE WATER

At first, I thought it was a small one, but after the fish kited to the right and I saw the unmistakable size and golden frame of the beast, I knew exactly what I was attached to.

The next few minutes were some of the longest I have ever felt. If I am honest, the only thought running through my mind was that this would end the same way as when I hooked and lost the BC.

I need not have worried. The fish was nailed and the size 4 Crank X was not coming out.

What an amazing buzz.





SPRING CAMPAIGN

Martin Reeves

YATELEY

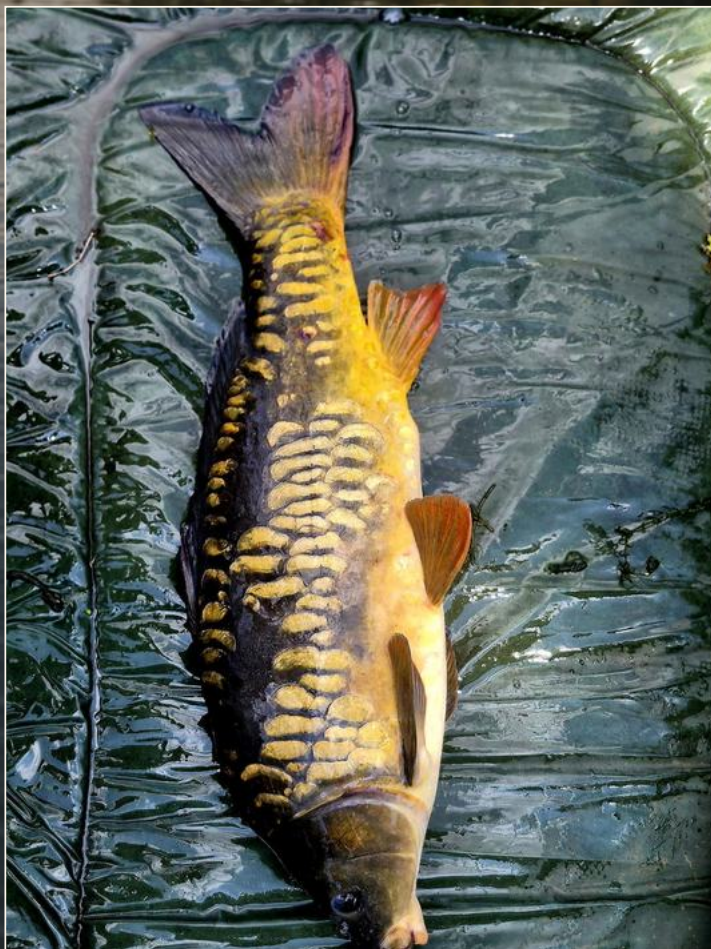


FROM THE WATER

At the beginning of April, when my Farnham Angling Club ticket started, I walked the club's many venues. I found myself at Yateley Pump House and Horseshoe, with sight fishing and bread - my favourite method - firmly in mind. I completed lap after lap looking for an opportunity.

In a quiet corner of Pump House Lake, I watched the lilies knocking. After strategically placing my piece of bread beside one, it was quickly slurped down by a beautiful fully scaled mirror.

HORSESHOE



FROM THE WATER

After catching a few of Pump House's many commons, I decided that, when I returned, I would give Horseshoe a go on the surface. By then, high temperatures and no rain had caused a large algae bloom, but the carp were very active.

It did not take long to catch some of Horseshoe's wily, wrinkly characters. They were all commons until a small, scaly mirror appeared in perfect condition. I will return for some of the lake's larger residents, but for now the next stop was Mill Lane.

MILL LANE

FROM THE WATER

Mill Lane had always been a venue where I wanted to spend some time. A few years earlier, I photographed the lake's largest resident, Whiskers, for a good friend. The fish has since passed away.

In mid-May 2026, I started walking the venue. It was busy, but I regularly found fish. The carp at Mill Lane are very showy for a venue regarded as difficult.

On my first night, I introduced a mixture of boilie, hemp and corn to a gravel spot only a few rod lengths out. The night passed uneventfully, but at first light I was treated to a very active display.





SMALL TAIL



FROM THE WATER

A couple of days passed and I wanted to get back. After leaving work early, I walked the lake and quickly found what I was looking for: fish showing over the spot where I had seen them that morning.

I tied a couple of rigs and deployed two yellow pop-ups, with a light scattering of bait over each rod. Later that evening, a good friend joined me and we had a small social, talking about some of the special carp that live in the lake.

The night passed, but during the morning cup of tea the left-hand rod pulled up tight. After a slow, deep battle, she was sulking in the bottom of my net. I knew instantly which fish it was and gave a little shout: "Small Tail!"

With such a special carp, I did not want to take any photographs on that bank. We weighed her quickly and she spun the scales to 43lb 2oz - a new personal best common. We got her straight back into the water for a few water shots before sending her on her way.

I fished a couple more nights that spring without further luck, but I will be back in the autumn for another go. Watch this space.

BAY LAKES

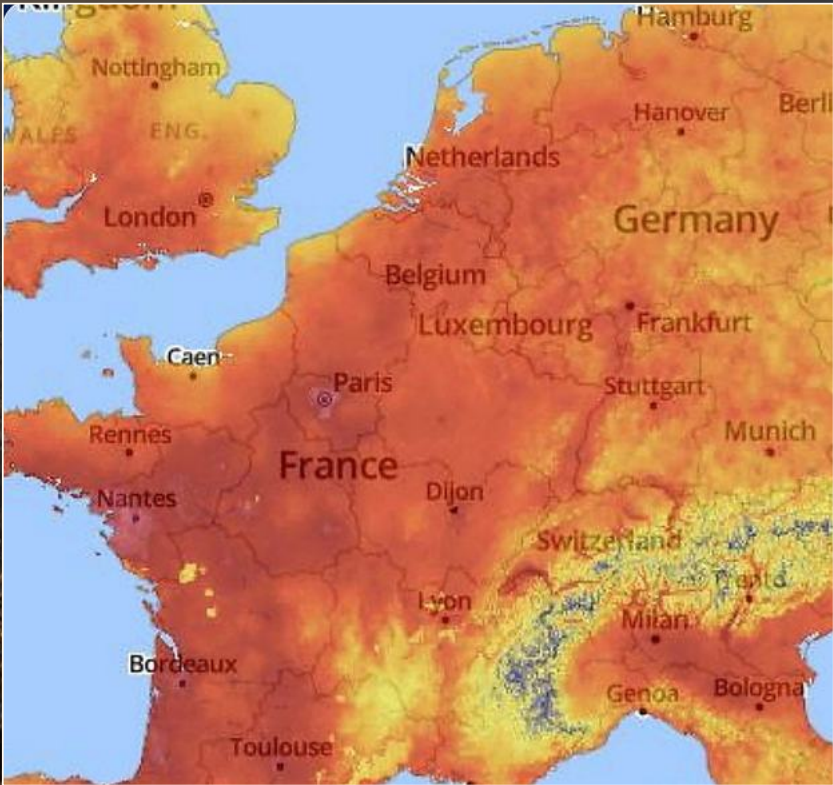


FROM THE WATER

After catching Small Tail at Yateley, I had a week's fishing at Bay Lakes in France with a few friends. We were all keeping a close eye on the forecast because some incredibly hot weather was due.

When we arrived in France at 8am, it was already above 25 degrees. After a two-and-a-half-hour drive, we reached the lake. Once the draw was completed, we headed to our pegs to set up and find spots, but temperatures above 30 degrees made that difficult.

On the first morning, I got off the mark with a pristine 37lb common. By 9am, the heat was extraordinary and even sitting beside the lake became a chore. Fortunately, the site had power showers, which I visited several times a day.



FROM THE WATER

After a couple of days with daytime temperatures reaching 44 degrees and nights remaining around 35 degrees, it was time to take a break from the lake. I investigated a two- or three-mile section of nearby canal, where I spotted a super-dark common around the mid-20lb mark and several giant grass carp interested in taking bread from the surface.

We returned to the lake and prepared all three rods for the spots. Like clockwork, I received another bite around 8am and landed a second common in the mid-30lb range.

Both lakes on the complex were fishing incredibly hard, but our group managed several fish up to the low 50s. With the daytime temperatures still so high, some of us drove to Lac du Der a few miles away. It was a huge expanse of water. We met English anglers who gave us the low-down on the man-made lake, and we even went for a swim to cool down.

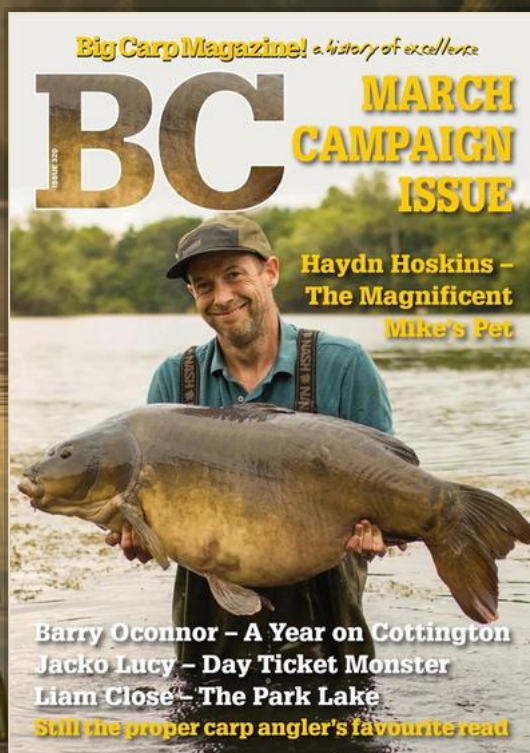
After four days above 40 degrees and almost no sleep, we decided to cut the trip short and head back to the tunnel.



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FEATURING TOM MAKER

A TALE OF TWO FULLIES

THE DOUBLE TAKE



FROM THE WATER

Tale one begins with a double take at Manor, as double takes go, the one on Manor in August will certainly take some beating with this 36lber being the first of the 2 bites that I received during my “quick” session! The rods had only been out for around an hour when I started to receive the odd liner on both rods, now fishing with braid your indication is increased massively and these liners were going on for almost half an hour before I eventually received the first take, but it got me thinking was it this fish and the big fully feeding together for that entire period? Or were there multiple fish on the spot and I just got extremely lucky with the 2 that picked my bait up? I always ask the same questions in my head over and over and I suppose I will never know the answer, but it does just go to show that you never know what that next bite could be!

A DREAM ACHIEVED

FROM THE WATER

Take number two was 'The big fully at 46lb 8oz' and a dream well and truly achieved, I'm still struggling to comprehend the events of that Thursday morning on Manor after receiving the double take of a lifetime.

Now before I go any further the back story to how I caught this fish really does just go to prove that you have to take up any small offer that you may get as you literally do never know what could happen next, an early morning move into my mate @benhagg1991 peg for a social soon saw me fishing 2 rods way out to the right in an area that we both never expected this fish to come from, now I fully (see what I did there) understand that carp swim all around the lake but based on previous captures we spent most of the morning talking about this carp and that how it's probably sat down the other end on its own.....but how wrong was we!

The left hander went first and with a big mirror soon in the net, but before we could even start to deal with that fish the other rod was away! All the way in it felt big and when it hit the surface about 20 yards I honestly fell to pieces and in a blink of an eye jumped in with the rod and proceeded to scoop up this insane carp, now every carp I catch gives me a buzz but seeing this in the net the emotions of realising I finally had the "ONE" I so dearly wanted overcome me. I said when I had that fully from the Wharf that I wouldn't be beating that capture anytime soon.....but I think this one just about tops it!



THE WHARF'S PATCH FULLY



FROM THE WATER

But the story did not stop there! Only a few days later my run of luck continued in fine form, the second fully was none other than the 'Wharfs Patch Fully!!'

A carp that I so dearly wanted in the album and a capture just 5 days on from the big fully from Manor, I'm still finding it hard to believe that it's actually happened but at 7am on Tuesday morning I slipped the net under one of the Wharfs most wanted, the Patch fully at a healthy 38lbs!!! I arrived at the lake very late on the Monday and didn't actually get the rods out until the early hours of Tuesday morning, but due to the very well-lit nature of the urban venue it meant I could go to bed knowing that the rods were out spot on!

THE CONCRETE JUNGLE



FROM THE WATER

First came a 30lb common which was soon followed by this relic of a carp, when it hit the surface, I was a right old mess but thankfully she didn't really do too much and I soon scooped her up in the waiting net! this was on one of the main carp I joined the Wharf for and having already caught Ebz it's just the big fully to go to complete the "big 3".....that being said although the lake is full of incredible carp so I'm hoping the big fully eludes me so I can carry on fishing the concrete jungle!

Two amazing Fullies caught in a few days this one a truly mind-blowing carp with more than a few stories to tell, I'm sure! When I joined last year, I said to everyone it would be my absolute dream to catch one of the big fullies from the lake, and after seeing it for the first time cruising around during our filming trip in May it made me more determined than ever! These old carp aren't around forever and whilst arriving late and not getting the rods out until the early hours isn't something I would usually do, in this instance I definitely WOULDN'T have caught this carp without putting that extra effort in!



Behind the pages.

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Reel Impact Angling

FROM THE BIVVY

Every great idea starts with one person who refuses to let it go...

Reel Impact Angling didn't happen overnight. Over two years ago, Brad had a vision: to create something completely different. Not fishing lessons. Not just wellbeing. A professional outdoor intervention organisation that genuinely changes lives through angling.

From that idea came hundreds of hours of planning, developing programmes, writing policies, building systems, gaining his Level 2 Angling Trust coaching qualifications, completing safeguarding training, investing in equipment, creating the Reel Impact Method and building the business from the ground up with his partner, Lisa and also input from his mum.

In October 2025, Reel Impact Angling officially launched.

Since then we've secured funding, delivered successful programmes, built trusted partnerships with mainstream schools, alternative provisions, local authorities and community organisations and, most importantly, seen first-hand the difference this work can make.

Now it's time for the next chapter. We're incredibly proud to introduce the next chapter of Brad's original vision...Reel Impact Experiences, a collection of premium angling experiences for families, adults and businesses, built on the same values that have shaped everything we've done from day one.

Whether you're looking to reconnect with nature, spend quality time with family, improve your wellbeing or simply experience angling in a welcoming environment, we're looking forward to welcoming you.

This isn't a new direction. It's the next step in the journey we started over two years ago. And trust us, we're only just getting started.

Reel Impact Experiences.



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Congratulations Mike Nixon! He's just had his 68lb 8oz carp ratified as a record catch by the British Record Fish Committee. Mike's capture took place on 1st May at Waterside Fishery, Chesham in Buckinghamshire. Would you know what to do if you caught a potential record fish? All the info you need can be found here:

<https://anglingtrust.net/get-involved/record-fish/>



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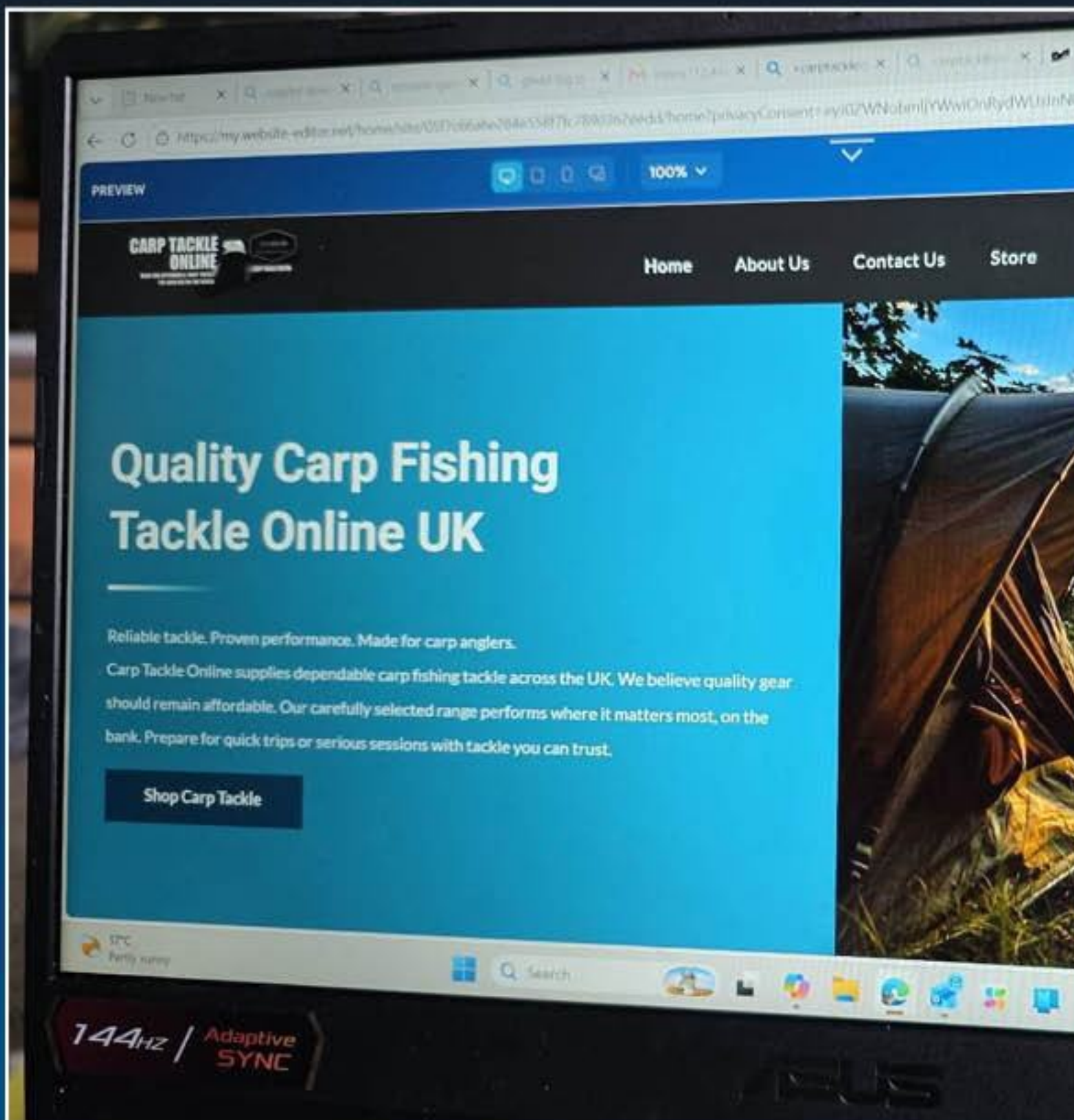
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BRITISH DEAF CARP ANGLING CELEBRATES MILE STONE



IN FOCUS

Wow... 13 years ago! Our very first Deaf carp event at Barston. Hard to believe how quickly the years have gone! We might have a few more wrinkles and silver hairs now , but we're definitely much wiser... well, maybe! Great memories, great people and the beginning of something very special. — with Jonathan Morriss and 6 others.



UNATTENDED RODS ARE AN OFFENCE



IN FOCUS

Unattended rods are an offence We have recently received several reports of anglers leaving rods unattended while fishing. Please remember that under the National Rod Fishing Licence Byelaws, anglers must remain in control of their rod and line at all times. Leaving rods unattended is an offence and may result in enforcement action. Aside from being illegal, unattended rods can cause unnecessary harm to fish and wildlife and create risks for other water users such as boaters and swimmers. Please fish responsibly and ensure your rod is always attended.

2027 CARP MINDS CHARITY EVENTS

IN FOCUS

We are now looking for companies who would like to support our yearly charity events, held to raise money for Mind, the mental health charity. For 2027 we are having a new event banner made, and we're proud to already have support from Horsley of Gainsborough and Talking Carp, who have jumped on board to help what we're doing. If your company would like to get involved and support our fundraising — helping disabled kids, young people, and veterans who struggle with mental health — we would love to hear from you. Sponsors will have their company logo featured on the new banner, and logos will need to be supplied in PDF flf you'd like to support us, please get in touch



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THE SOUTH WEST COUNTY CARP CHAMPIONSHIP: DEVON VS CORNWALL

IN FOCUS

What a great competition it was. It really couldn't have been any closer, but Cornwall edge Devon to take victory! Cornwall ended on 349lb and Devon finished on 343lb 14oz . In the individual pairs, George West and Andy Woon came first with 99lb 4oz. 2nd place was Steven Whitworth and Kevin Hicks with 95lb 7oz. 3rd place was Dan Hole and Jack Chillingworth with 81lb 7oz. David Pennington took the biggest fish prize with a 28lb 10oz mirror. Dan Hole won the first fish prize. I would like to say thank you to all the sponsors: Mirage Baits , Nash Tackle , Fishing leads UK, Barnstaple Bait & Tackle , Homeleigh Angling Centre and RG Baits . The competition wouldn't have been what it was without you. Big thank you to Jamie Rusling , Michael Toms and Jordan John Coleman for the help and photography





FRIMLEY CHARITY EVENT 2026



IN FOCUS

What a fantastic weekend at the Frimley 2026 charity event. Everyone has said what a great time they had, which is testament to the hard work that everyone involved puts in. A lot of the work is done way before the event as well as on the weekend. I doff my cap to all of you that made it the success it was. Huge thanks to Mark and Rain Frimley for out doing themselves yet again. The event just keeps getting better. The weather held and smiles for miles all around. Curry night , to pizza and chips delivered to swims. All the amazing food that was at the bbq and buffet was talked about by those in attendance to how good it was. Just to say a massive thank you from all of us , to all the companies that donated to the event again this year. Without you, the raffle and auctions wouldn't be possible. Well, that's my final event for the year now until next year. Time to get a bit of my own fishing in again. After a little trip back to Frimley with an auction winner at the end of this month.

Then back on the big pit for some more camping with the hope that the biggun pays me a visit. I will have a few auctions going up between now and the next event, so keep an eye out. Thank you again to all of you. X



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RIP ALAN GREEN

IN FOCUS

Dear friends and family, It hurts our hearts to share the news that Alan passed away on Friday 18th September, following a short but courageous battle with a terminal illness. We know this will be a shock and incredibly hard to hear. He has loved and been loved by so many throughout his many walks of life, his ripples span far and wide. We have set up an email address to collate his adventures. We would love to hear from you, any videos, stories, photos, what you loved about Alan etc. Nothing is too much, inappropriate or too random. We know what he was like! Alan-greeny@outlook.com Details of his Celebration of Life will follow when arranged. Rest peacefully Alan/Greeny/ Dad. Until we meet again. Love Marie & Callum (wife & son) XXX



ATOMIC TACKLE'S NEW SALES DIRECTOR



IN FOCUS

Introducing the new atomic tackle sales director, Nigel Woodcock We would like to give a very warm welcome to nigel woodcock who has come on board at #atomictackle stepping into the sales director role leading the charge with the trade side of atomic. Wasting no time what so ever nige has already opened his atomic account with a quick overnighter down his syndicate with 4 fish landed to upper 20s these being the best of the bunch. Its amazing to have you onboard mate & look forward to seeing some more from you very soon!

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THE DETAIL

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THE DETAIL

There are baits that catch carp. Then there are baits that seem to have a habit of producing the really big, special carp! Complex-T has quietly built an incredible big-fish track record. The images in this post are a just small sample we've gathered over the past few months! When you look at what's inside it, perhaps it's no surprise... Highly-soluble fishmeals including LT94 along with a host a proven big carp magnets such as liver, fenugreek, yeast, garlic powder as well as a few more little secrets...it's one of the most nutritionally complete food-source baits in our range. The result is a soft, open-textured and highly-soluble boilie designed to be fed with confidence year-round that keeps carp coming back for more and performs season after season. Complex-T... Built for Big Carp. • www.dynamitebaits.co.uk • RRP £12.95/kg

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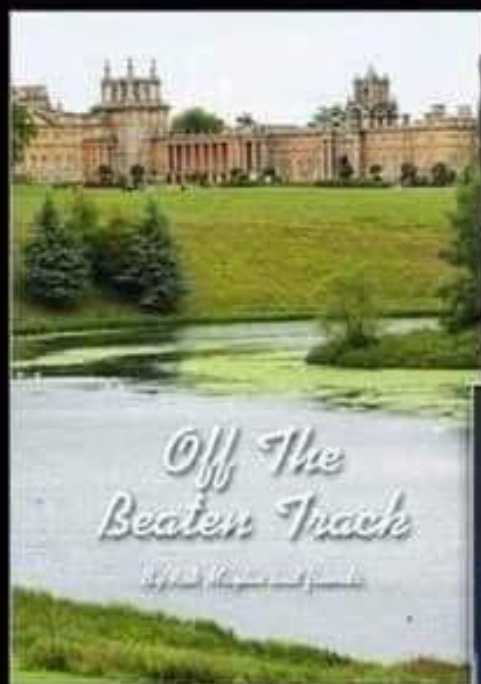
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A TALE OF TWO FORTIES

Lewis North



FIELD NOTES

The Common

On the Friday night after work, I arrived at Old Mill Lakes to fish Birch for the bank holiday weekend. Once I got to the lakes, I took a walk around and spoke to a few lads to see how they were getting on and if they had seen anything. By this time darkness was a few hours away, and I was setting up in a swim called No Carp Corner, which suited the weather what was coming up over the weekend after not seeing anything to go on. As I was setting up my gear, I saw numerous shows at the other end of the lake. I packed my gear up and moved in there so I could be on fish from the off. Fish were still showing in the swim I moved into, and I sat back and had a think of where to position the rods near to the fish without spooking them.





FIELD NOTES

The fish were showing near a big band of onion weed, so the cast had to be perfect first time, as the fish were clearly liking it around there. Three rods were positioned with only a handful of casts, and there was the odd show still and a few liners. I gave it an hour fishing single hook baits to try and get a quick fish in the net. That didn't happen, so I put roughly half a kilo of Sticky Baits Krill over each rod, which was covered in Cloudy Krill Glug and Himalayan rock salt, leaking loads of attraction. I was awake most of that night, hearing a lot of fish show in the area and expecting a fish, if I was honest.

First light came, and I was chatting to a few lads saying, "I'm surprised it didn't happen." The morning was dragging out waiting for that R3 to go in meltdown, and at 9.30, it did.

Not knowing what was going to be on the end, after a powerful and heavy fight, the big common surfaced about three rod lengths away from the net.





I'm enjoying my fishing at the minute. I ended up back on Birch for a night and was rewarded with these two – a 17lb 14oz future lump, and then shortly after, I moved on some fizzers and was rewarded with this 34lb 4oz mirror.

FIELD NOTES

It was in my head that it could be one of only two fish – the Mean Bean and the Big Common. After a few more powerful runs, the Big Common rolled across the spreader block, and it soon hit me which carp it was just from its sheer size! I was absolutely blown away and lost for words. The weight was 49lb 14oz.

Not much fishing went down that day, so I put some more Krill over the spots. I got my rigs back out in the evening, and the same rod was away again with a 30lb mirror, which topped me off if I was honest. It couldn't have been going any better.



A 30lb mirror to start the weekend with hopefully a few more to come.

FIELD NOTES

The Mirror

I arrived at the lake on the Friday night.

I had some thinking to do about swim choice, as I knew the lake was going to be busy at the weekend, so I was trying to predict where the fish were going to end up. I opted for a swim called Doubles for the weekend, which controls a nice far margin and a few channels that the fish like to sit in when the lake gets pressured. I clipped two rods in each channel along the back margin and a rod short to have all my options covered for whichever way the fish moved through.

On the first night, I put hardly any bait out because I knew everyone else would be and causing disturbance.

The fish moved over me on the Saturday morning, and I saw a few feeding signs. The morning moved on, and none of the rods went off in the end, which I was surprised at. The reason I was surprised I didn't get a bite the first morning is because I don't think I put enough bait out in the swim to start with to get the fish properly on the munch and finding the food.

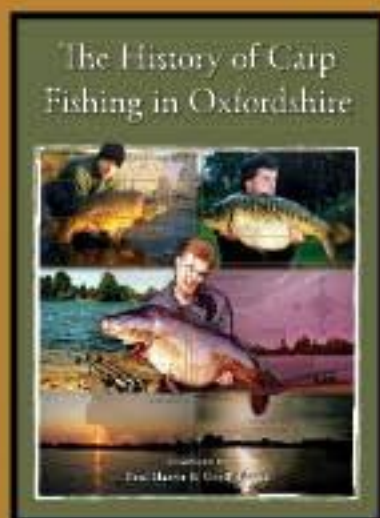
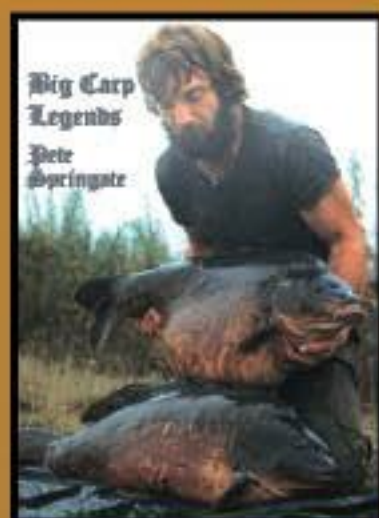
FIELD NOTES

The temperature was rising to 28 and 30 degrees in the daytime, and a lot of the fish weren't interested, so I decided to put 15kg of boilie and pellet out into the swim and to rest it all day. I may as well do while it's warm, eh? The rods went back out perfectly in the evening, ready for that night time and morning period.

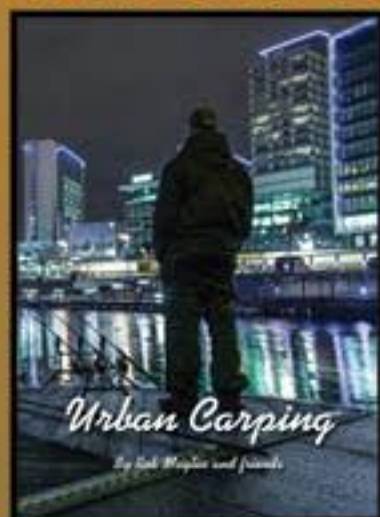
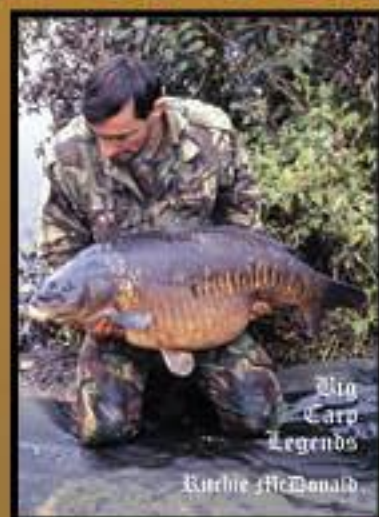
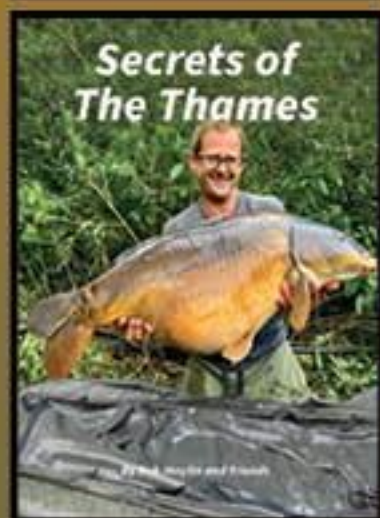
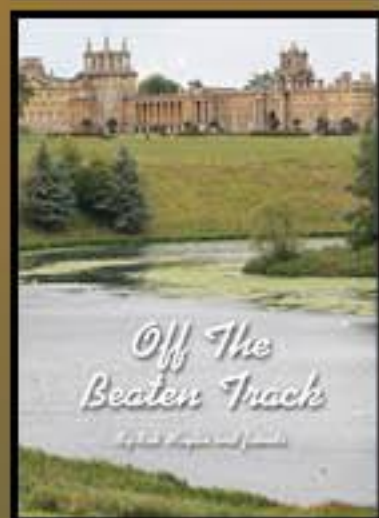
I woke up at first light after a silent night to look out over my spots and to see one of them fizzing away like mad, which was the right hand channel rod. One hour later, that rod went, and after a heavy fight, I had a hook pull near the net. It seemed to look like a very big common! I was mega deflated and gutted, as I knew it was a good fish and probably my only chance on the Sunday morning because I make the journey home. But 15 minutes later, the other channel rod bent around, and I was into my second bite of the morning. My legs were like jelly as I saw the fish early on, and I knew it was a chunk. After a hectic and very powerful fight, my good mate Ben Sellers netted the big mirror, and I was back on cloud nine after being on a big low. Ben verified the name of the fish, which Powers, and the weight, which went 40lb 4oz. The fish certainly fought by its name! I was using simple blowback rigs with size 4 Curve Shanks, semi-stiff braided hook link and a Krill hardened hook bait with a pink topper.



AUTUMNAL

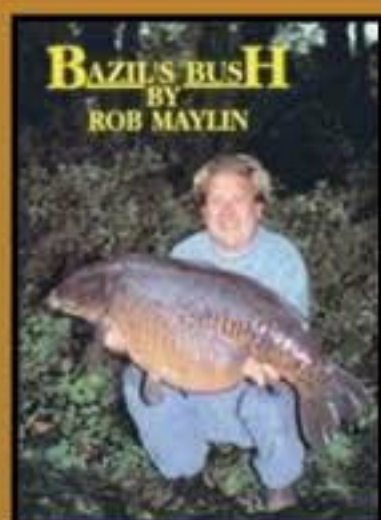
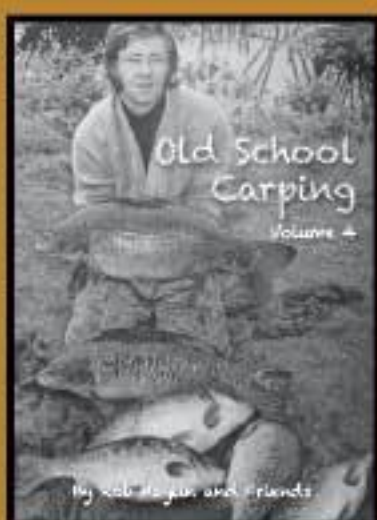


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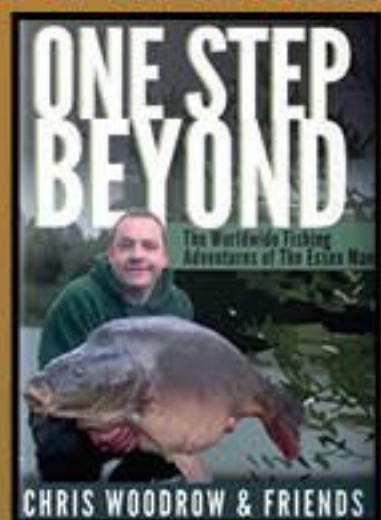
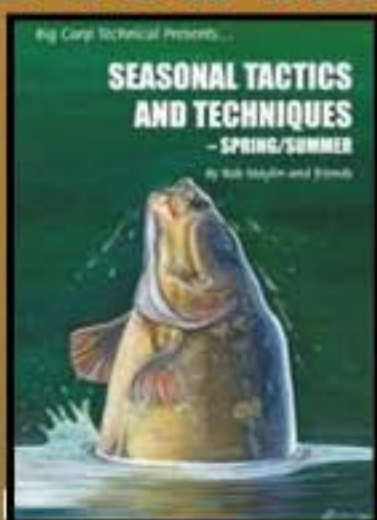
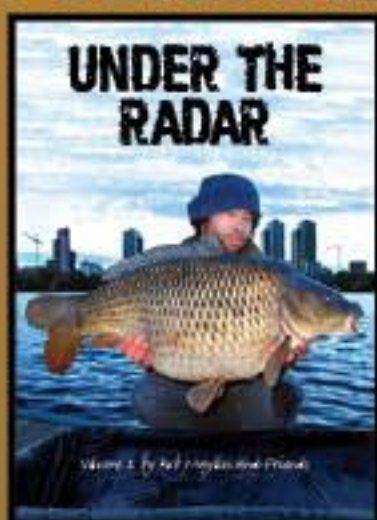
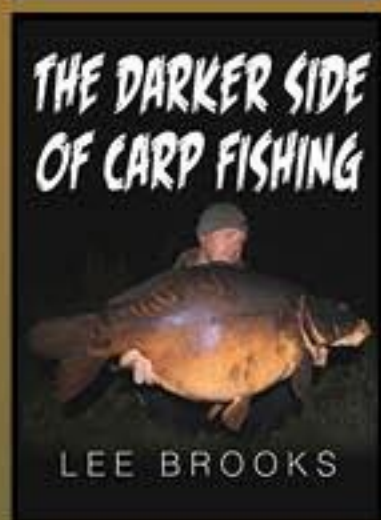
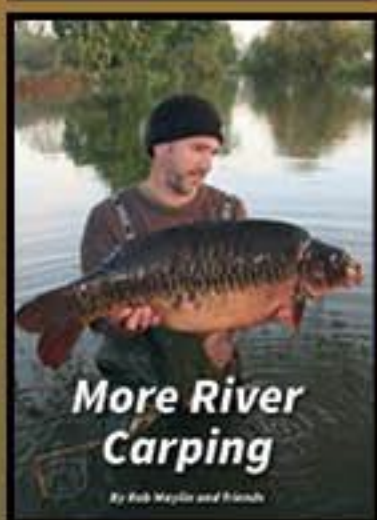


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L READING



AND BE PREPARED FOR THIS SEASON



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YATELEY PADS LAKE: IF CARLSBERG DID SOCIALS...

Paul Oxenham

FREE LINE



FIELD NOTES

WhatsApp: Boxing Day, 2018

[You Created group “Wills Visit 24/03-01/04”]

“Hi Chaps, mega-social for Will’s visit to the UK, end of March. The Pads could be free – anyone fancy it?”

I’d mentioned to Will during my last angling trip in Canada that if he could stretch to the airfare for the UK, I would arrange a trip to a “proper” UK carp water. As Will and friends had done the same for me in Canada on the last two epic visits, it was great to have the opportunity to reciprocate.

Fortunately, I managed to book three nights on the iconic Yateley Pads Lake, a place that’s always been on my bucket list and containing some of the finest looking carp in the UK. We would have exclusive fishing on The Pads for the entire 72 hours of our stay.

FIELD NOTES

Our party would eventually be made up of me, Will Muschett, my brother-in-law Phill Webb and longtime fishing buddy, Andrew Conradi.

The Pads Lake has a special place in carp angling history. It was home to the legendary Yateley monsters of yesteryear, a rock-hard and ultra low-stocked water. It is a mature four-acre, feature-rich gravel pit, and in its current iteration, contains a stock of around 100 carp, introduced in 1998. Today it contains around thirty 30s to a top weight of low 40s, average weight in the 20s. Even with the relatively high stocking density, these fish are very switched on, and the clear, weedy waters and close-range fishing are a test of one's experience and watercraft.

Excitement built during the dark days of winter in a flurry of WhatsApp messages during which Phill and I continued our impressive run of blanks on the Cotswold Water Park, Andy bagged up on Horseshoe and Will cleared snow from his drive in deepest Ontario. However, before long we were messaging Will "Safe flight" as he boarded the plane in Toronto.

The first of three alarms woke me at 4:45am, and within 30 minutes, the car was loaded and I was heading the 80 miles north to Birmingham airport.

Surprisingly for me, there were no dramas on the way, and I arrived in plenty of time for Will's inbound flight. I greeted Will with a "Noddy Muschett" sign at arrivals, and we were off back down the country – next stop Yateley.

Naturally, the first stop had to be the awesome Yateley Angling Centre. We were welcomed by the YAC team and over a gratefully received coffee, discussed the current Pads form. Meanwhile, Will wandered the shop in a state of total amazement at the vast range of products available to UK carp anglers.

As we assembled in Yateley North Lake complex car park, we were met by the bailiff, Ray Varndell. Ray told us that 21 fish had been out the previous week, including a number of the big girls. With the sudden arrival of spring over the weekend, we were understandably champing at the bit to get on the lake.

FIELD NOTES

Several laps later, we all had an idea of where we'd like to start. To make swim selection fair, I suggested we draw straws for our choices. I immediately regretted this, as I got the short straw!

Phill went in Pole Position, Will in Waiting Man's, Andy on the causeway between the Pads and the Split lakes, and I went on the Point. We felt we had the lake well covered, and it allowed us good visibility if the fish started moving in the warm weather, although very little had shown so far.

The afternoon flew by, and we all wound in early evening for a lovely bankside curry in Phill's swim, Phill being our "volunteer chef" for the trip...well, volunteered by the rest of the group anyway! We wandered back to our respective swims a little later than we had planned, and I wasn't totally convinced that my rods were 100% on the spots, but after such an early start, I was just glad they were out there and gratefully hit the sack.

Ray came by for a chat on his morning rounds. As we stood talking to the right of my swim, Ray pointed out some very subtle bubbles in the Weedy Corner bay, which, in all honesty, I had earlier dismissed. Now Ray knows his stuff, and if he says that's a fish, then a fish it is! As he left me, I wound in my right-hand rod, moving the single banksticks and alarm under the canopy of trees.



FIELD NOTES

Cursing my selection of longer rods for this trip, and with an awkward side-swipe of a cast across my left side, I just about managed to flick a 2oz running lead and baited rig out to the general vicinity. It certainly felt like a soft, silty drop, and I didn't feel inspired with confidence. The line was carefully sunk, the indicator laid on the floor, and I wandered back to the Point, thinking I'd better put the net between the two rods in the Point and the rod now in the little hideaway to my right. As I laid the net down, the old Delkim gave a series of "quacks", and the indicator pulled tight to the rod. Before the line had even released from the clip, I had given the rod a sideways wallop and was connected to a very heavy feeling fish.

With a shout of "Fish on!" I struggled to keep the fish from getting under the marginal overhanging bushes to my right. As it lunged for the snags, large vortexes were being sent up in the deep margin with plumes of leaves and clouds of silt spreading over a wide area. Minutes before, I was kicking myself for the choice of long rods, but now the extra reach and power allowed me to get a good angle and just about keep control over the still unseen fish.

I slowly gained the upper hand, and eventually it swung around in front.

As it took a gulp of air, Will slid the net under an obviously sizeable fish. At the bottom of the bank, Will peered into the net with a comment of "Holy s**t! Look at the size of THAT!" I'd bagged a special one.

I was in a complete daze, but thankfully Ray, Andy and Will helped me weigh her, a new PB for me and first UK forty at 4lb 8oz. I'd achieved my lifetime ambition and captured a proper lump, and what a fish it was. Everything felt slightly unreal... "an out of body experience", I later wrote in my diary. After I'd jumped fully clothed into the margins to gently return her and the back-slapping, handshakes and congratulations were done, everyone drifted off, and I was left alone with my thoughts. It was difficult to take in the enormity of achieving what I'd dreamed of for so long.



FIELD NOTES

For an angler adept at pulling a double from a shoal of twenties, it wasn't lost on me that of all the fish in the lake, I'd had one bite and bagged one of the three known forties. Luck? I guess every dog has his day.

The sun came out, and the temperature rose steadily. My swim looked like a bomb site with clothes drying and rods and mats strewn about the place. I hadn't bothered to recast and so wandered around to see Phill, who did a magnificent celebratory full English for us all as we just sat chatting away. The carping jungle-drums beat their way back to Gloucestershire, and I had a succession of calls and texts from friends congratulating me on my capture.

Afternoon crept into evening, and still we sat in Pole Position with Phill, enjoying the banter, camaraderie and nice drop of plonk that comes with a significant capture with friends. By midnight we were ready to return to our respective swims.

I had pre-clipped my middle and left-hand rods to two of the well-known spots out in front of the Point. Lining up with the silhouettes of the trees opposite, I was reasonably happy that the solid PVA bags and little wafers were where I wanted them. Whilst I was still awake, I thought I'd flick the right-hand rod back out to the spot to my right for an hour, so with another tricky side-cast, it went "out there somewhere" in the gloom.



FIELD NOTES

Line slackened off, indicator on the floor, I nipped back to the brolly and sat back listening to the night sounds, head nodding trying not to fall asleep... “Quack ...quack-quack-quack...” The low-tone Delkim under the tree signalled another take.

Again, I hit it before the line had pulled from the clip and felt solid, slow-moving resistance. This one just felt like I’d hooked a slow-moving sack of cement. It circled in front of me, and I just couldn’t lift it from the bottom. I had my phone on me, and said “Hey Siri! Call Andrew Conradi!” It rang and rang – nothing. No support on this one! I managed to shuffle the old Fox Trigger-Lock net down the steep bank, although I snagged pretty much every bramble on the way down.

Thankfully, I’d had the wherewithal to keep my headtorch around my neck, so I had no need to panic.

FIELD NOTES

A few minutes later, Andy arrived in the swim. He'd not quite got to the phone in time but had guessed I had one on. We stood on the bank as the unseen lump stayed deep, circling until slowly but surely, I gained the upper hand. Over the cord she came, and we flicked the torches on to see what on Earth had given me so much trouble. We were greeted by massive thick grey shoulders and the bulk of what was plainly another very large fish. I don't recall what was said, but as we hobbled up the bank with the net between us and laid her on the mat, we just giggled like girls. The fish was bloody enormous!

The shout went out to Phill and Will: "Hey, PB on the bank!" and they wound in and popped round for the photos. At 41lb 4oz, she was in top condition with a massive frame and huge rudder. I went in again to return her and was totally soaked to the skin. Did I mind? Did I hell! I was on cloud nine. Two forties in less than twenty-four hours – this is the sort of stuff I'd read about but never imagined it could happen to me.

Sleep didn't come easily after that with so many thoughts and emotions to process. I didn't recast my "banker rod". I'd obviously found a little hotspot so wanted Will to have a chance of a fish off it – after all the guy had travelled 3500 miles for an English carp, and I think I'd had more than my fair share.

As a calm, misty dawn broke over the lakes, I could see a fair amount of activity against the peninsula bank. I wandered round, and there were large patches of bubbles breaking out in several areas. Andy had obviously seen the same through his 'bins and was back round with barrow and rods from his overnight home on the opposite side. As the morning passed, we gathered in Andy's swim to proffer our "helpful" tips and watch events unfold – we were all convinced he was going to get a run. After a bit of discussion, we thought a running lead and stiff rig on a light setup may trip up one of the feeding fish. I nipped back round to my swim and unsheathed the secret weapon – an original Rod Hutchinson Spirolite Mk2 12ft 2lb rod and Abu Cardinal 55 reel.

FIELD NOTES

I'd been dying to use this setup myself, but handed it over to Andy with pleasure. Under pressure from half a dozen blokes, all giving advice, Andy's tricky "cast by committee" was perfect, just on the spot that the biggest patch of bubbles had been coming up with regularity over the past hour.

And with that... absolutely nothing happened! After 15 minutes of high expectation, we all drifted off back to Pole Position to get breakfast on. Wandering into Phill's swim, there was a distant cry of "Fish on!" Phill and I looked at each other, laughed and almost broke into a brisk trot.



FIELD NOTES

As we arrived, we could see that Andy had the old Spirolite under full compression in an effort to tame an obviously large and very angry carp intent on charging up and down the margins.

After a very spirited ten-minute fight, a long fish was drawn over the net cord to a round of back-slaps and “well-dones” for Andy. The Pads had given up another one of its beauties, a golden, long lean fighting-machine of a mirror at 30lb 8oz.

The rest of the sunny afternoon was once again spent in Pole Position with the guys, celebrating the captures with a fine selection of cheese, onion, chutney and cider – a true “Somerset supper”... which reminds me... the Pads have comfortable well-maintained flushing loos near the car park.

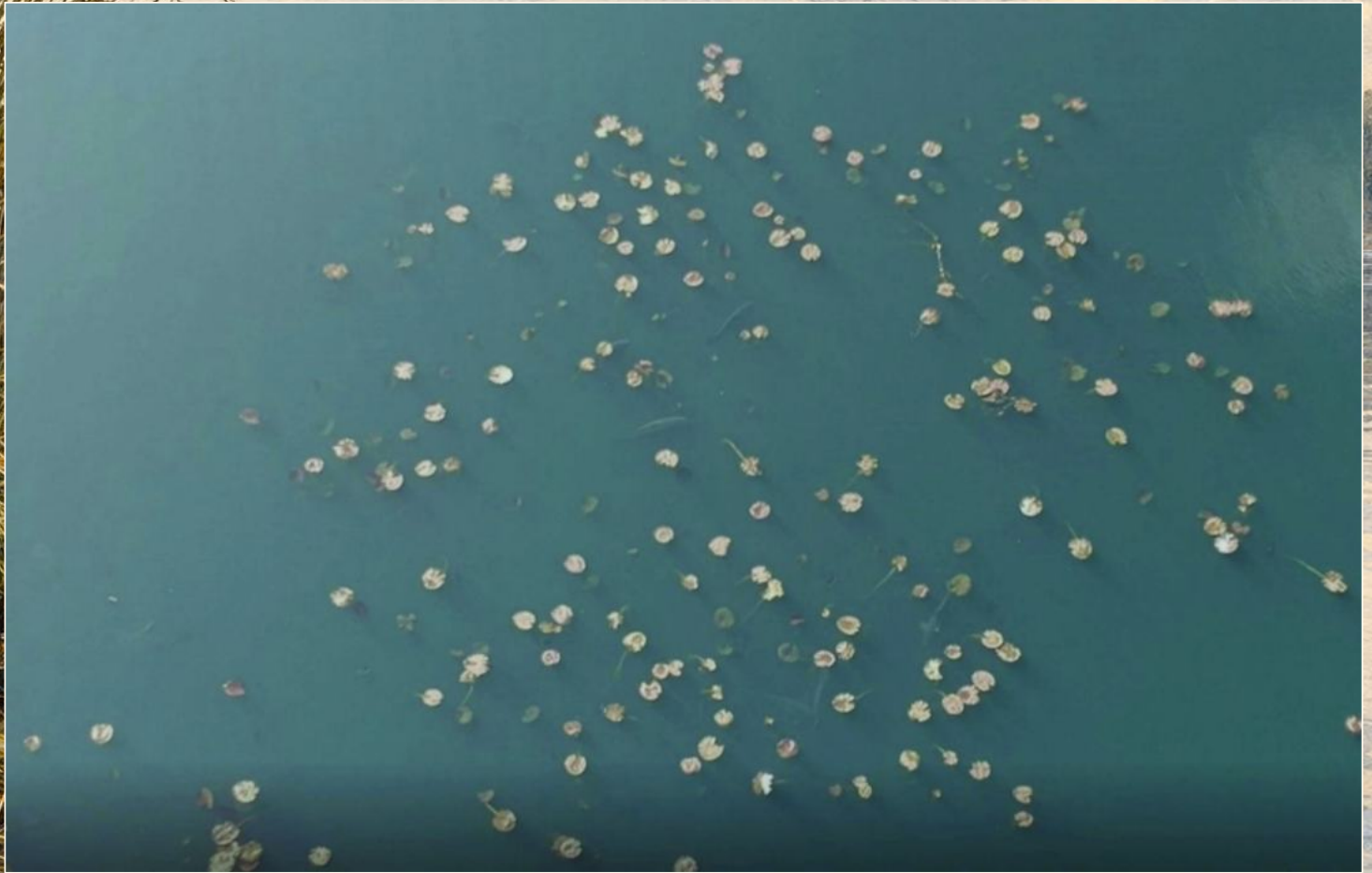
During the day, Will moved around to Weedy Corner to put a bait on the spot that I’d had my two big fish from, but from a more accessible swim.

Phill persisted with Pole Position and Andy returned to Between the Pads for the night. I stayed on the Point, positioning two baits in front and one down the channel to my left. Nothing happened in the night for any of us, and our final full day was surprisingly quiet. We suspected that the sudden increase in temperature would have the carp up and basking in the warm sun.

We gathered in Phill’s swim in the early evening for our final group meal of the trip. With the sun streaming down, it was lovely just sat there. Will’s masterstroke, however, was to bring a rod ‘round with him. Why didn’t I think of that?

Will swung a light lead out to the right from Waiting Man’s where we’d seen a little movement earlier and Phill got his new toy out, A DJI Spark drone, which we’d gained permission to use for Will’s YouTube vlog.

As Phill scanned the water over the lake, it was clear why we’d had a quiet 24 hours... It seemed that virtually every fish in the lake was congregated in the main pads area, all at various depths. Some simply looked big, whilst others looked like immense grey submarines.



FIELD NOTES

We were absolutely mesmerised by the images coming from the little drone. And then it happened, and Will's rod ripped off!

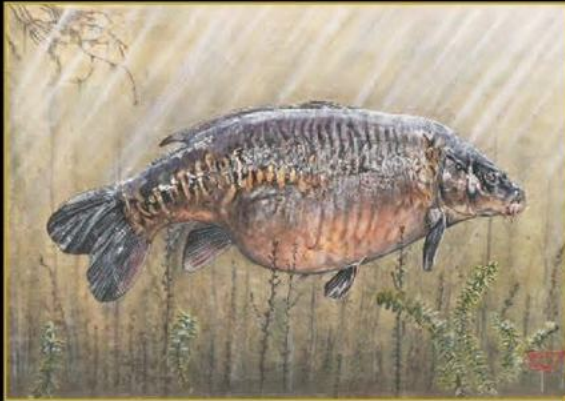
With Phill filming above and me videoing from the bank, Will extracted the fish from a weedbed and guided it to the net. I don't think I've ever seen someone so happy to land a carp, and at 18lb 12oz, the classic looking near-leather made the trip complete for him.

I'd love to say that on the final night, Phill was rewarded for his patience and culinary skills, but unfortunately it wasn't to be on this trip. After photographing several big twenties for him on our next trip, however, I don't feel too guilty! Ray popped round on our final morning to wish us well, and we departed a very happy bunch, Needless to say, we'll be back.

If you are considering booking the Pads, we can thoroughly recommend a trip. From start to finish, it totally exceeded our expectations and is one that will live long in our memories.

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Legendary Carp Paintings



- Basil
- Heather
- The Black Mirror
- The Royal Forty
- The Bishop
- The Burghfield Common
- Jumbo
- Two Tone
- Mary and Mary's Mate



EXCLUSIVE

BLOWN AWAY

Sam Butler

FREE LINE

FIELD NOTES

March the 15th had finally come, which is the start of the season on Monks Pit. The first session didn't go to plan, as the fish were holding up in the deeper water, and with all swims taken at that end of the lake, I had to ride it out in the shallower part in the hope that a straggler would break the pack, but that didn't happen. It was a week later, and I was supposed to go on the Friday, but lying in bed on the Thursday night talking to a mate, he let me know that a swim where the fish had been holding up was empty. Not wanting to risk the Friday morning race, I jumped into the van, getting to the lake around 11.30pm.

I knew I had done the right thing, as there were fish boshing everywhere. I flicked a few bright singles to try and nick a quick bite, but they didn't seem as though they were feeding – more having fun maybe. The water temperature had jumped up a little, and they got excited, like we do when we first see the sun again after a cold winter. With that in mind, I opted to fish two zigs at 11ft in 18ft of water.

After searching the area, I finally got a take, which was a scaly mid-20 mirror. Rod back in the zone, and it was away again... This time the carp won, as she got away, but it wasn't long after putting the rod back out again that I had a couple beeps... As soon as I lifted the rod, I could tell it felt heavier than the last. Gently bringing her home, I netted my second UK 40, which beat my previous by a few ounces at 40lb 4oz – my new PB and a new 40lb fish for the lake.

Fast forward a few weeks, and I was now in my bivvy writing about the previous night's events. I turned up to the lake around midday, and I knew I wanted to be in the shallows before I even got to the lake. I know it goes against the rules of carping, and I should chose once I'm there, but it just made sense.



FIELD NOTES

Anyway, the lads who were already on said they were all showing at the deeper end. Being one to always go with my gut feeling, I chose a swim in the shallows, and I'm glad I did.

A few hours into the trip, I had fish number one in the net, a mid-20 common, and around 11pm, fish number two was in the net – another 20lb common, which was unhooked in the net so I could get the rod back on the spot. After the pics and weighing, I returned her, and just as I sat on my bed, the rod was away again. This time she felt heavy, but after a slow battle I had her. Straight away, I knew she was going to break the 40 mark, which she did... 41lb 6oz, a new PB again and another new 40. I'm blown away with how the season has started, and hopefully there's more to come. A big common would be nice!



EXCLUSIVE



WE ALL LOVE APRIL, RIGHT?

Steve Cartwright

FREE LINE



17lb common



20lb-plus scaly carp

FIELD NOTES

So April comes around, and with it new opportunities: the weather starts to improve, days get longer, and more importantly, we normally start on a new water, whether that be syndicate club or other. For me, it was a chance to reacquaint myself with a water I had fished before, the first time some 12 years back when I moved from Epping in sunny Essex to Corby in Northants. Now I had moved from one prolific carping county to another.

In the past, I had spent my time on the Walthamstow rezzies, Lea Valley Parks and a few local waters, so the move to Northants had sort of left me wondering where I was going to fish. I knew that there was plenty of water, but where? Don't ask me how, but I got talking to some guy locally who put me on to a day ticket water about 15 minutes from where I lived.

I was desperate to get out so gave it a shot. It was August, and it was hot, but it was a nice little water – a bit scruffy with bit of litter but close to home and somewhere to have a few hours. Long story short – just after I found it, it went syndicate. At the time, I was still on Monks Pit in Cambridgeshire but decided to purchase a winter ticket. From what I could gather, the biggest fish was a common that came out at around the 28lb mark. It had a few twenties in and mainly doubles, and as it turned out, that was pretty accurate.

The biggest fish I had was 25lb with some lower twenties and mainly doubles.

FIELD NOTES

I know I got a few strange looks, as I owned a stretch limousine business at the time and did drop in to fish occasionally in a 140" stretch pearlescent pink limo, and some fat bloke got out and started fishing for the night.

Scroll forward 12 years, and here we are again... The fish had been thinned out with not so many in now, and it had been landscaped by the leaseholder Greg, who had totally turned it around. This is a lake you either know about or you don't; I personally call it the Secret Garden – secure, very green and very private.

I had booked three days off work from April 1st, as that's when my ticket started, kinda gagging to get down there for a 60-hour session. The weather, being April, was very up and down. At the time, we were seeing high temperatures in the day, and it was freezing overnight, so unlike the year before when I was wearing shorts and a T-shirt, it was full-on winter gear overnight in the main.

I knew it could be a moody water, and it was proving to be so, the first 36 hours passed without a bleep. I remember I posted on social media "It ain't happening, and when it ain't happening, it's time to go home," as you do.

So we are well into the second day now, clouds are gathering, it is around 10.30am and down it comes! It starts raining... well, actually it was hailstones to begin with, and then the rain, but I am thinking damn, I'm going to have to pack away wet again. I totally hate packing away in the rain.

Here I am sitting there, with it pouring down with rain and thinking to myself, knowing my luck I am going to get a run now... Yep, you guessed it... away went my right hand rod, which had been positioned at the drop-off on the point of the island. It was an aggressive take, and after an interesting few minutes, I saw the fish in question. To be honest, I was very glad, being very wet at that point, as in front of me going in to the net was a fish known as Zippy.

Now, I remember this fish being caught some 12 years back at 17lbs.

FIELD NOTES

It's a very classy looking fish, only this time it pulled the scales round to 29lb 20z – result – certainly a fish I was targeting, and there it was. The rain had certainly made the difference, as had the drop in air pressure, and I was starting to see fish topping around the area.

I noticed a huge patch of bubbles appear at around 70 yards to my left. There was only me on the lake, so no drama. I pulled a rod in quickly, rebaited, applied a mesh bag of crumbed boilies and bang, right on the money. I sat back, waiting for the alarms to scream, made a brew, and nothing... made another brew, etc etc. The weather was fine now with a bit of sun and no clouds, but I thought, sod it, I will do another night. It was approaching 5.30pm now, and it clouds over with rain and it proper comes down. Yep... I had a screamer on the left hand rod... I am going to get wet again!

I knew what it was when I hit in to it... I really hate catfish, especially big catfish that basically do what they want. I knew they were in here so had beefed up line wise, using the ESP Syncro XT Loaded in 15lb. I prefer 12lb if I am honest, but this line I have always found to do what it says on the tin, and it did. 30-ish minutes later, I am trying to net this near-on 6ft beastie... Six attempts later, I manage to get the giant slug in the net. Now, I have caught cats before, but I have never had a photo with one; I never wanted to – usually it is net, remove.



21lb common



21lb mirror

FIELD NOTES

Hook and bye! For reasons beyond me and the constant slagging off one of my mates as to why I do what I do, I weighed it at 50lb 4oz. I even tried to take a picture with it, but as you will see in picture, I am obviously over the moon with the capture, but it is out of the way now – that's my first and last ever picture with a cat. I apologise now to you catfish enthusiasts, but they are not for me... ever.

Night time came and once again, it was freezing with frost on the ground from around 11.30pm, but I had a very nice sleep courtesy of a nice bottle of Cabernet Sauvignon, a racy French brand that enables the taster to sleep well. I do not rebait early hours, and leave the rods out in position with one on an end-of-island drop-off, one to an overhanging tree on the far margin and one to the 70-yard spot.

I sit there with a brew, Yorkshire of course, thinking I will stay and do the third night, as you never know.

At 10.30am, again the rain starts to come down – déjà vu, eh? I sit there thinking, nah, no way, then yes... yes way! The right hand rod melts off again – leave it out! Away we go, get soaked, but whatever now. A few minutes pass, and in the net is another gorgeous, dark fish. This one called Pawprint, and on the scales, round they go to 28lb on the nose, thank you very much – a cracking fish! You know, you do not care being soaked when you are catching, do you? All settled back down, weather gets sunny again and all is good in the world... I have had Zippy, so I was happy as Larry.

For the past five years, I have been using Key Baitsolutions ASM boilies. I have always managed to winkle a few fish out, but I've had so many big hits on this bait, it is incredible. I do tend to smell of ASM when fishing, and for those that have not had the pleasure, it is gross... I totally swear by it, and you still have to fish well to catch, but when they get on it, they seem to stay on it. A good bait for me is an easily digestible, soft bait if you like, and we just love each other – end of discussion – as do the fish. Ok, so a few hours later, I get a run on the 70-yard rod – another scaly devil but a bit smaller at 21lb.



Night-time common



Pawprint, 28lb

FIELD NOTES

Nothing happens overnight, and I pack up early next day and head home for a kip and look forward to my nightshift that night. Most of my fishing tends to be single overnights. It can be hard work sometimes getting the right swim or right area, but it's swings and roundabouts.

I am very relaxed with my fishing – gone are the days when I used to beat myself up if blanked etc. Fortunately the blanks are seldom, but they do happen.

Ten days later, and Friday morning comes around. I work Sunday to Thursday night at the moment... I say I work, but you know, office jockey. Anyway, I say, right, I am leaving at 5am, as I need to get to the lake. They know I fish, as I bore them all the time. We say our fond farewells, and I am off to where I have been dying to get to for the last ten days. I get in the car park, and there are only a couple on. I have a chat with Rick who is fishing the car park end, trying to get the info out of him, but like me, he tells you what you want to hear, so I make my way to other end of the lake, two swims down from where was ten days previously.

I only have 24 hours; I'd had no sleep since the day before, but I knew it would be a no-brainer sleep-wise. The 70-yard chuck from the previous session was now a mere 55ft chuck. It has some nice weed there, and this was the area I baited up. I do use quite a bit of bait if I am honest; it is an expensive hobby, but it is the bait that makes things happen.

FIELD NOTES

If you can totally trust a bait, then for me you are 90% there, and then it is down to your end game to make the magic happen. This is also taken care for me by a very good mate. I've known him for 20-odd years. He runs a start-up business called Carp Tackle Online. Mark is a great guy, but above anything else, he is a carp angler, so the gear he does sell is spot-on. I am probably the fussiest person on the planet, and he knows this. I keep things simple, but I do demand quality gear that does what it says it does. Carp Tackle Online sells great gear at very reasonable prices – too cheap in my opinion – but hey, not my biz. I started using his gear last year probably same time as now – April. I was on Monks Pit and had 27 fish out by June, so I knew it worked well.

I digress... so I baited the far marginal area with around 3kg of boilies. I was going for a boilie-only approach. I used 18mm baits and just spread them over a dinner table size area and fished the three rods spread out over this 6ft area. At 10.30am again, the first fish is 21lb on the nose, and yay – it is a common! That will do nicely!

Bear in mind this is a common water, and all I have had so far is mirrors. We take a few pics, and back she goes. I'm not sure on time now, but the middle rod bangs down, and yet another fish of dead on 21lb is here – a mirror this time, and a nice scaly one too! Two fish – happy days! I can sleep now – pressure off and time to grab a few hours before nightfall – nope!

Bang! Away goes the middle rod, and this one is keeping deep. We have a dance, but line is being recovered, and five minutes later, after fight that's more ploddish than brutal, a nice big old school common lay in the net. Now I knew straight away it was a decent 30-plus, but one has to be sure. I zeroed the sling while the fish was still in the net at the side of the lake, and on the scales, it went 37lb smack-on. I'll have some of that! It's a magical fish that's been in there years, and a true English common carp. Happy as Larry, I am! We take some pictures, and few of the lads shake the hand. That's what it is all about... God, I love fishing. The night passes with no action, and I go home a happy chappy.

FIELD NOTES

Next Friday, I turn up, and the lake is busy. I settle for a swim I'm not entirely happy with and go to sleep, as I've been on nights. I was lazy, never worked my swim, and as a result, I blanked like a pro and went home, but at least I got some sleep!

I booked another three days off, and on the 28th April I am on it for potentially three days – see what happens, eh? The wife has been primed – she is a good'un and has never stopped me going fishing.

I try to deliver a healthy balance, hence why I only do one night a week on the bank. Sometimes it can be longer, but generally speaking, it is once a week for an overnigher. I cast out to spots and have a 17lb common to start with just as it is turning dusk.

It does go cold overnight... no frost but cold and mist on lake – a pea-souper. I cannot see the other bank when casting. The next day it is sunny, and I noticed a fish top in one area twice. I find a close-in marginal spot on the far bank between two weed beds and fire in 100 boilies to the area, and then a bag, and it flies in to the spot – a very tight-to-the-bank cast. Five minutes later, we are cradling a nice 30lb 4oz common – nice one – well happy!

The area I am fishing has some nice weed beds with some very convenient gaps leading to the far bank. The fish can be seen milling around in the weed beds when the sun is out, and accurate casting in between gives good presentation.



37lb common



50lb 4oz catfish

FIELD NOTES

I always stick a PVA mesh bag on pre-casting, as I find with the snowman hookbait, it sits perfectly when the bag starts to break down. Once again, all goes quiet, but I bait the same spots around 7pm with fresh baits on the hairs and cast out once again for the night.

The temperature dropped once again, and a mist developed over the lake from 11.30pm from the cold air hitting the lake water, which was warming up slowly due the sun throughout the daytime hours. I have to be honest; I did not expect anything that night. I got in to my bag, watched a movie on Netflix via my phone and was fast asleep come midnight. I know I must have been fast asleep around this time, as at 00.15hrs, the sounder was blasting out on the middle rod again.

I sort of got up out of the bag eventually, hit into the fish, and with no drama to be honest, I netted a nice common within a couple of minutes. It looked a healthy one, chunky, and my first thoughts were that it could be close to 30lb. I left it in the net while I got the camera gear ready, zeroed the scales and weighed the fish... Nope, not a 30, but a nice, healthy looking 28lb 15oz. One of the guys came round to take some photos for me. They ain't great, but that is another story. I thanked him and back to bed I went for a very uneventful night again.

The next day, the sun pops out, and a few carp started to cruise the lake. I am in Second Point, a great swim to intercept them, as casting is no more than 45 yards. I look around for my controller float, and it has disappeared.



Zippy, 29lb 2oz



Twigs float - supplied photograph



FIELD NOTES

I had used it the day before, so it had to be somewhere, but no, it wasn't, so I constructed a makeshift one. I have to say I was very happy with the resulting vision I had made, and I cast it out. To be honest, it was next to useless, but you have to try at least, right? Yes I really do these daft things. Fish were still cruising, and I was getting annoyed with myself as to where I had put this controller float. I emptied the bivvy twice and had bags and buckets everywhere!

There was a eureka moment as I saw that I had a small marker float in my tackle box. That will do it! Ok, it was the brightest orange that orange could get, but that will do, surely? Out it goes, and I had to put my sunglasses on, as the float was brighter than the sun. A couple of fish passed by the float, and I swear if fish had teeth, they would have been smiling at it going past, but I stuck with it.

The geese were hammering the freebies, so I decided to just cast the single whittled-down ASM pop-up I was using to imitate the dog biscuits. After a good two hours, I cast one out, right over towards the far margin. As the float settled and the bait sat nicely a foot or so from the float, a huge pair of lips came up, and bang – we are in!

It was a battle royale, and I had to get into the lake to land the fish.

FIELD NOTES

I was using my floater rod. 3lb tc was very tippy and ultra forgiving when the fish dive and rattle off at speed, and this fish fought like a demon with loads of powerful lunges, but everything held out. I was now down to my thighs in water, and I landed the fish. I looked as it came over the net, and whilst not a massive fish, the colours and scales were on it were amazing.

I zeroed the scales again, put fish into the retainer sling, and she went just over the 20lb mark by a couple of ounces, but what a magical fish! Steve Seymour was visiting the lake, and he kindly took a few pictures for me, hopefully capturing its glory – an awesome looking creature.

That essentially was my April. The next day was going to be May 1st, so that was all my fishing done and dusted for that month. I love April for many reasons: the fish start to wake up, nature starts doing its thing and days get longer. I had fished every weekend over winter, and it is nice to be sat outside at 9pm... well, in the latter part of the month. It is the beginning of the new season, and you know that soon you will have some nice sunny weather and holidays abroad – I love it! May will be same business as usual on the syndicate, but mainly just weekly overnights. I have a social planned with the Carp Tackle Online team on May 24th for a weekend on East Delph Lakes. I organised this one, so I am sure it will be fun, as we have booked out the back lake exclusively.

Before I go, you will probably notice I always tend to be wearing my black hat. Now this is always a talking point. It has been described as anything from a pair of my wife's old knickers on my head to a plastic bin liner and many other things I cannot say, but it is actually a wax hat by Jaxon just put the record straight!

I hope your April was as good as mine, on a new water maybe, and for some they start going fishing again... But whatever you are doing and wherever you are doing it, I wish you all a successful season, and may monsters be present.

Enjoy, and tight lines...

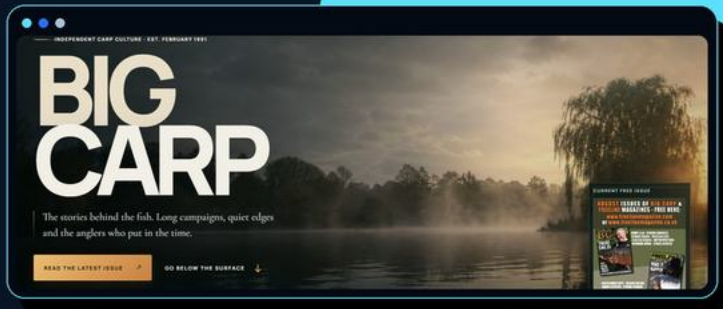
Steve "The Hat" Cartwright.



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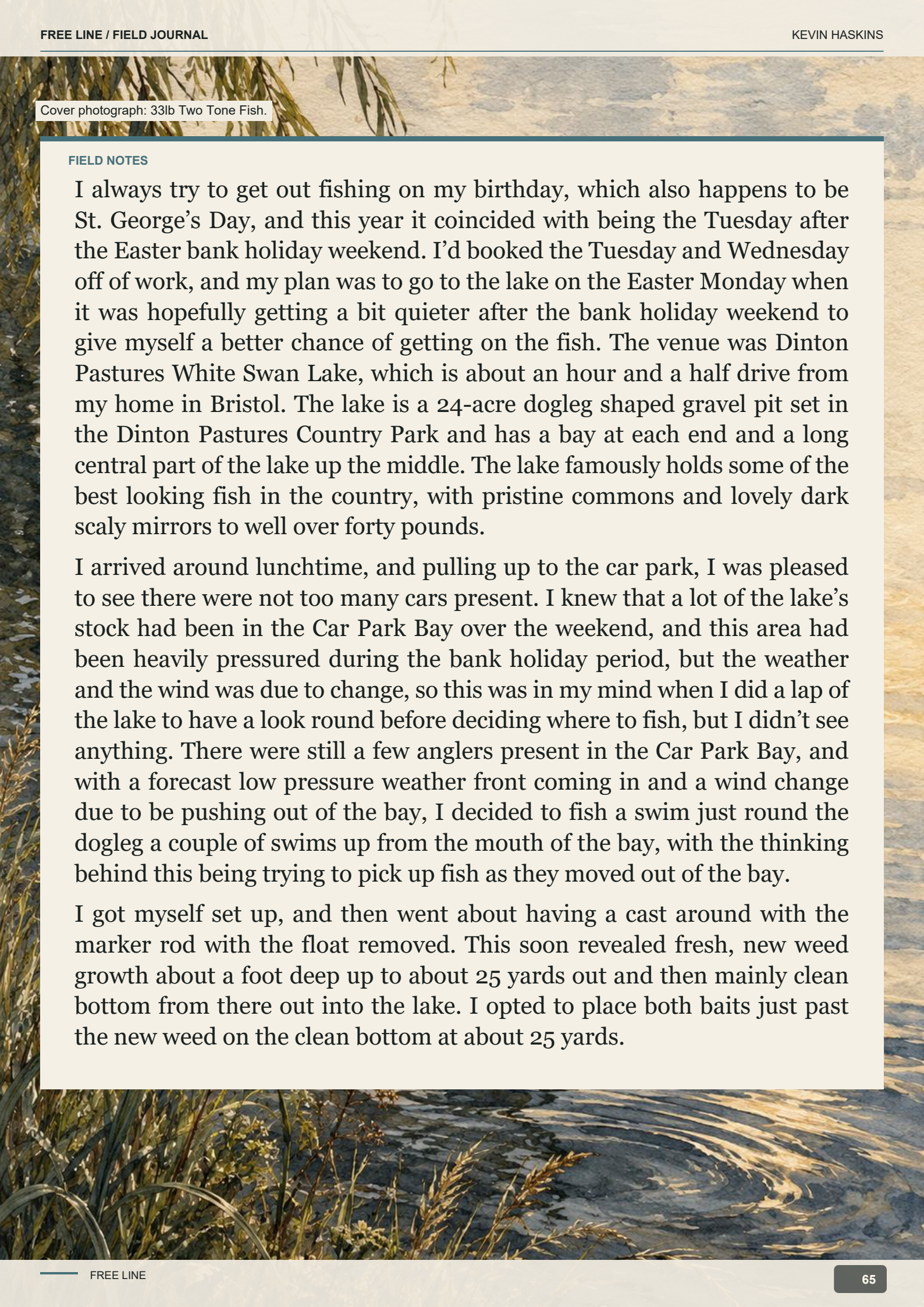
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EXCLUSIVE

ST GEORGE'S DAY DINTON BIRTHDAY BRACE (ALMOST!)

Kevin Haskins

FREE LINE

The background of the page is a large, artistic photograph of a body of water, likely a lake, with reeds and grasses in the foreground. The water is dark with some lighter, swirling patterns. The text is overlaid on a white rectangular area in the upper left.

Cover photograph: 33lb Two Tone Fish.

FIELD NOTES

I always try to get out fishing on my birthday, which also happens to be St. George's Day, and this year it coincided with being the Tuesday after the Easter bank holiday weekend. I'd booked the Tuesday and Wednesday off of work, and my plan was to go to the lake on the Easter Monday when it was hopefully getting a bit quieter after the bank holiday weekend to give myself a better chance of getting on the fish. The venue was Dinton Pastures White Swan Lake, which is about an hour and a half drive from my home in Bristol. The lake is a 24-acre dogleg shaped gravel pit set in the Dinton Pastures Country Park and has a bay at each end and a long central part of the lake up the middle. The lake famously holds some of the best looking fish in the country, with pristine commons and lovely dark scaly mirrors to well over forty pounds.

I arrived around lunchtime, and pulling up to the car park, I was pleased to see there were not too many cars present. I knew that a lot of the lake's stock had been in the Car Park Bay over the weekend, and this area had been heavily pressured during the bank holiday period, but the weather and the wind was due to change, so this was in my mind when I did a lap of the lake to have a look round before deciding where to fish, but I didn't see anything. There were still a few anglers present in the Car Park Bay, and with a forecast low pressure weather front coming in and a wind change due to be pushing out of the bay, I decided to fish a swim just round the dogleg a couple of swims up from the mouth of the bay, with the thinking behind this being trying to pick up fish as they moved out of the bay.

I got myself set up, and then went about having a cast around with the marker rod with the float removed. This soon revealed fresh, new weed growth about a foot deep up to about 25 yards out and then mainly clean bottom from there out into the lake. I opted to place both baits just past the new weed on the clean bottom at about 25 yards.



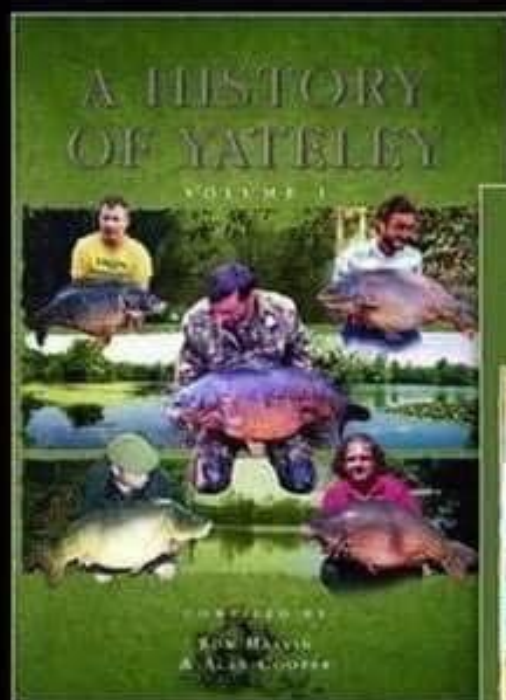
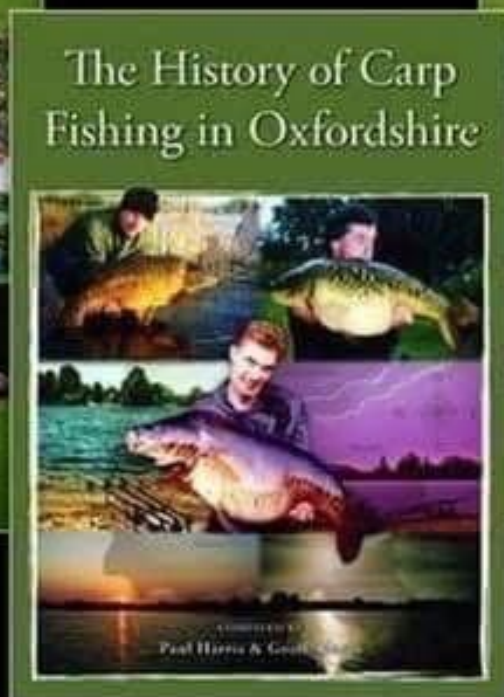
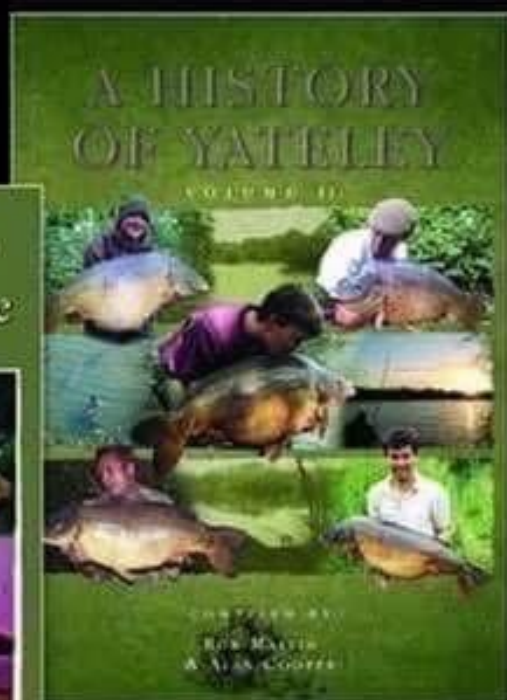
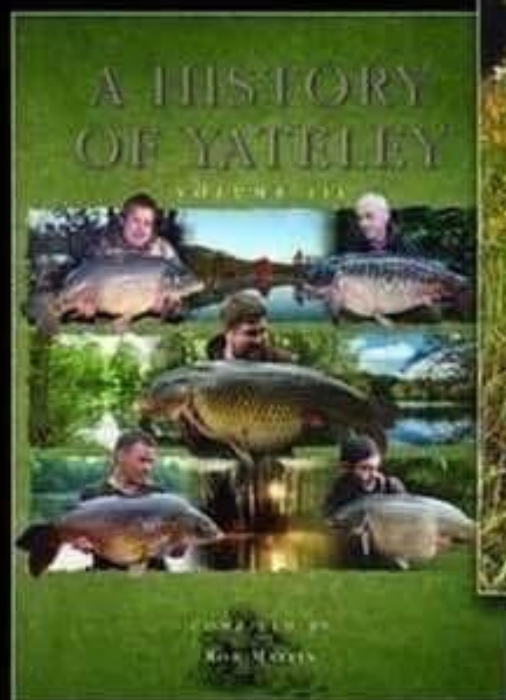
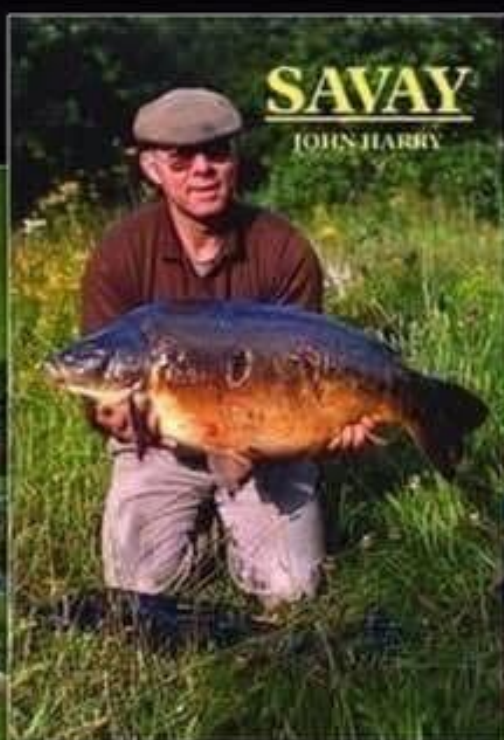
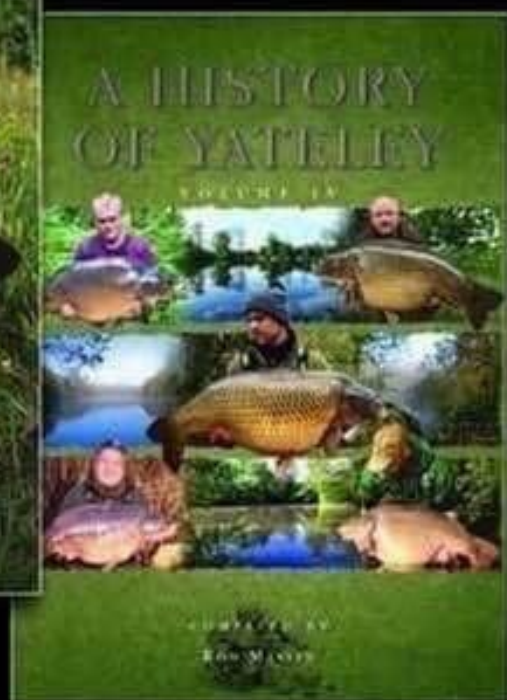
The 35lb linear.

FIELD NOTES

I didn't put too much in, as they'd probably seen a bit of bait over the bank holiday weekend, putting out about half a kilo of Jim Rawcliffe's excellent More Takes Fruit and Nut boilies, both whole and chopped, a tin of corn and a small scattering of carp pellets.

What I also like to do at this time of year is give them a few carp sweets in amongst the food bait, so about a dozen or so bright orange Richworth Tutti Frutties were also introduced. Rig and hook bait wise... on one rod I used a Fruit and Nut snowman on the bottom using a trimmed-down Clone pop-up to create a balanced bottom bait on a blowback rig with a size 6 Curve Shank hook and a 10in coated braid hook length stripped back near the hook to make a hinge.

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FIELD NOTES

On the other rod, I used a multi-rig and a Tutti Frutti pop-up fished just off the bottom. On both rods I used 2.5oz leads on a lead clip system and a lead core leader, and the rods were both positioned amongst the bait about two rod lengths apart.

I cooked a bit of supper and settled down for the evening, listening to the football on the radio, and soon drifted off to sleep, hoping to get some action after midnight on what would then be my birthday and St. George's Day. I was awoken at about 3am by a couple of bleeps on my left hand rod, which had the Fruit and Nut snowman on it.

From the shelter, I shone the head torch onto the bobbin, which hadn't moved, so I thought, liner, and went back to sleep.



First one safely in the sling.

FIELD NOTES

I awoke when it got light, went down to the front of the swim, and noticed the line on that left hand rod was crossing over the right hand line. On picking up the rod, the line was tight into the overhanging trees to the right of the swim, and I could still reel something kicking on the end. Something had picked me up and swum straight towards the bank and into the trees.

I donned the chest waders, and, leaving the rod on the rest with the bait runner on, followed the line out towards the overhanging trees. Luckily the line didn't go too far into the trees, and without too much effort, I freed the line and leader and pulled a tench of about 7lbs out of the snag and into the open water. I dropped the line and went back to the rod, but on picking it up, the tench had dropped off on the slack line, which saved me the job of landing and unhooking it. That was the end of the action for that day, so no birthday and St. George's Dinton carp for me, and I was feeling a bit disappointed that I'd only had one rod fishing on the spot for the majority of the night.

I set the traps exactly the same for the second and last night of my trip.

I soon drifted off to sleep for the second night and was again woken by a couple of bleeps (but this time at about 2am) on the same Fruit and Nut rod, but this time I was straight out there and on it. Shining my head torch on the line, I could see it this time cutting across to the left. I grabbed the rod and wound down as quickly as I could, but it was too late... whatever had picked me up had swum straight into the overhanging trees, but this time to my left! I again donned the chest waders and followed the line by head torch into the darkness along the margin to the overhanging trees.

This time, however, the water was too deep for me to go in far enough to free the line, so I had to give up and leave the rod on the floor with the bait runner on and deal with it in the daylight of the morning, as I didn't want to pull for a break just in case there was still a fish attached, even though I couldn't feel anything on the end this time.



The view from the swim.

FIELD NOTES

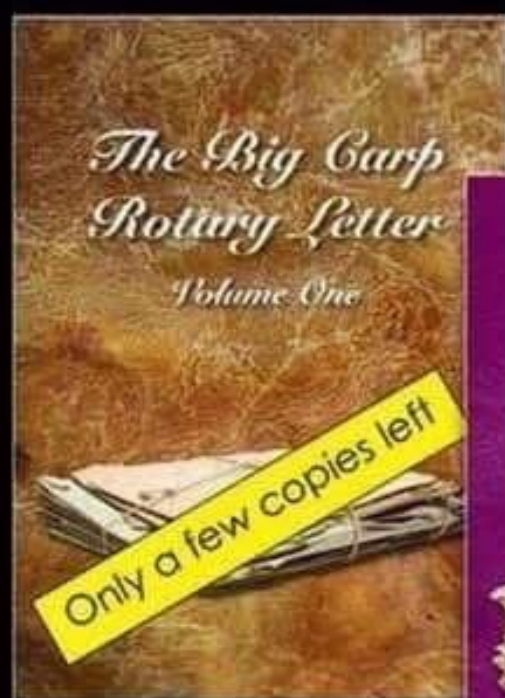
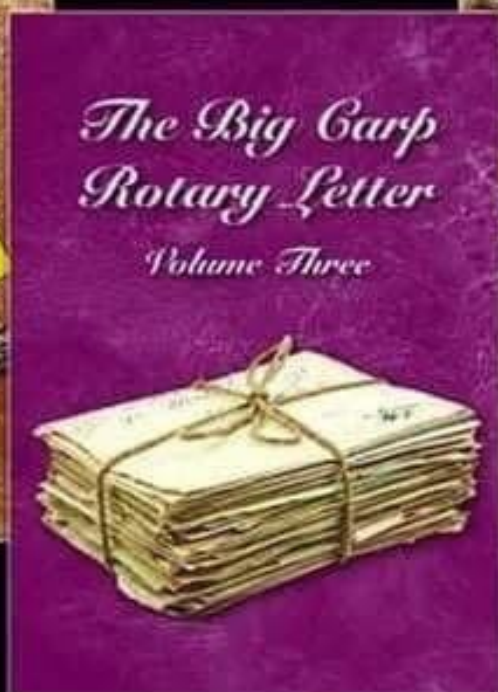
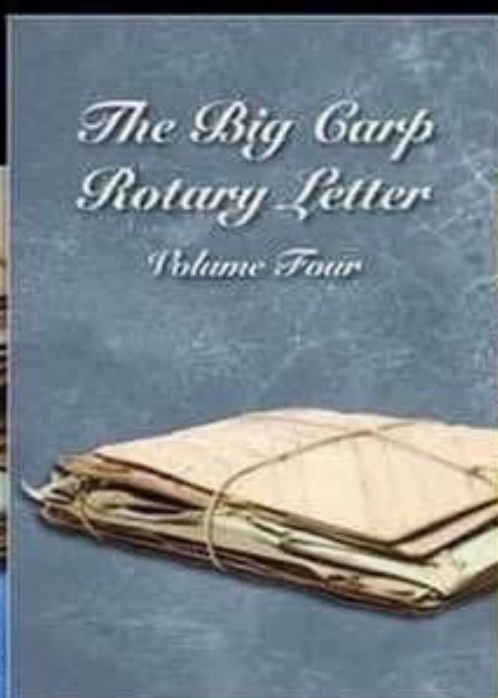
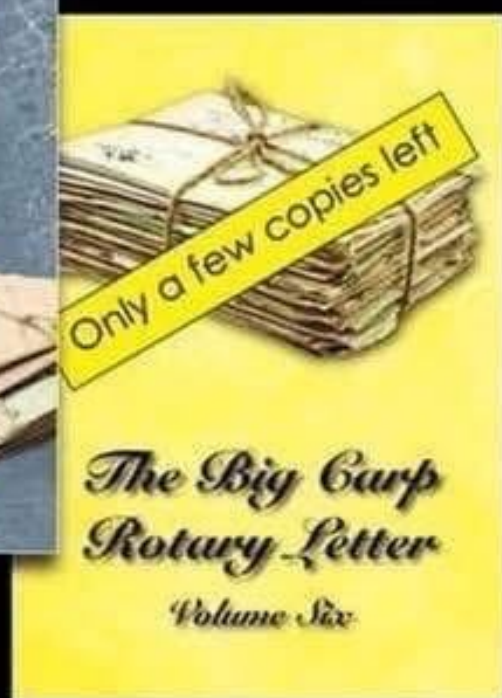
I very nearly just fished with the remaining single rod for the rest of the night, but then I remembered I had a third rod set up in the bag for naked chod fishing so that I could change my fishing method without having to break down one of the other rods. I quickly clipped a Fruit and Nut snowman rig on the quick-change swivel so I could fish it helicopter style. I cast back to the spot using the line clip and topped it up with about 20 Fruit and Nut boilies with the catapult and went back to bed, feeling a little deflated.

The rest of the night passed uneventfully, and I was lying in the bag at about 7.30am looking at the rods and the lake when the bobbin on the recast Fruit and Nut rod smacked to the butt, the bait runner began spinning and the Delkim sang its song. I ran down and bent into it, and the trusty old Nirvana rod hooped over, and a large dark mirror came straight to the surface.

It wallowed on the top a bit, and to be honest, it didn't fight much, and I just led it straight into the waiting net. I unhooked it in the net and got it into the retention sling while I got the scales ready.

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FIELD NOTES

It went 33lb on the nose, and on later inspection turned out to be an old original one called the Two Tone Fish. I popped it back in the water, secured it, got a fresh bait on, popped it back on the spot and topped up with another twenty or so Fruit and Nut boilies.

I already had the chest waders on from the previous fish, so I could bend into it and then walk out almost to the edge of the overhanging trees either side of me to fight it from there. If the first fish didn't fight much, this one more than made up for it, going on numerous heart-stopping runs and trying its hardest to get into the overhanging trees to my left. The tackle did its job and held firm, and after about 15 minutes, I had a lovely long Dinton linear in the net. I now had a bit of a dilemma, as I only had the one retention sling with me, which that was already full, so it looked like it would need to be an immediate self-take with this one and then sort the other one out afterwards. However, luckily, Paul, who was fishing on the opposite side in the Woods, had seen what was going on and appeared in my swim. With his help we weighed the linear, which went 35lb on the nose and photographed and returned both the fish... I was buzzing. Just one more thing to do while Paul was there: sort the rod out that was still in the snags from the take in the night.

With Paul holding the rod, I stripped down to my underpants and went for a fresh morning dip. I managed to get everything back, but whatever was the culprit was gone. Thinking about it, however, it was probably a tench, as it did the same as the other one while both the carp ran straight out into the lake. That's what I'm convincing myself of anyway! Interestingly, the quality Fruit and Nut food bait did all four of the bites while the carp sweet just a couple of rod lengths away did nothing – bait, rig, spot? Food for thought! I missed out on my birthday and St. George's Day carp by about seven hours, but who cares after a result like that?

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EXCLUSIVE



THE QUARRY

James Cottee

FREE LINE

FIELD NOTES

2018 was a rather surprising year for me, I can remember setting up on Springate's Point down at Wraysbury 1 on a lovely spring Friday afternoon when I received a rather shocking yet wonderful phone call from my girlfriend. I could hear in her voice something was up, but I never in my dizziest daydreams expected that she was calling to let me know that she was pregnant. Now I know what you're all thinking and what half of you have already told me – that's it no more fishing, sell the gear, that's the end of that venture. Well you'd be miserably wrong! I consider myself a very lucky man to have such an understanding missus that actually gets why I go fishing, although I knew some things would unfortunately have to change.

It wasn't until later on in the year that an awesome lake close to home that had been a day ticket for a couple of years was taken over by a new owner who was also going to revert it back to a closed syndicate, as it had been for many years previously.

I'd only ever fished the Quarry on a couple of social sessions with friends when it was a day ticket, so when I saw that Stewart had taken over the lake, I just had to send that email and see if I could get myself a space in the syndicate. As luck would have it amongst the thousands of emails Stew received mine had been picked out, and I had been asked for a walk round. Shortly after I had paid my deposit – no questions asked. That had to score me some brownie points for when I was allowed to go fishing – 15 minutes from the house rather than the 80-mile slug around the M25. It was a no brainer.

Obviously going from a day ticket to a syndicate, there was a lot of work to be done, which led to Stewart having lads down there working most days and weekends. It wasn't until he posted about the new track going around the lake inside of the new otter fence that he needed a few extra hands. I jumped at the opportunity to meet some of the new members, and to be honest just get out of the house (although my raking is shocking).



FIELD NOTES

Stew was allowing a handful of people that were helping out with the work to fish the lake. After helping with the track that weekend, and a few other weekends clearing snags and paths around the lake, Stew gave me the nod to do a couple of nights. To be honest, I think it was my leaf blowing skills, if I remember rightly. After going to pick up some scaffolding poles for building swims one afternoon/evening I flicked out a couple of singles from a swim called the Willows towards one of the large islands. That lasted about two hours, as for some reason I really wasn't feeling it and decided to head home.

A couple of months before my daughter was due to arrive, we had the brightest of ideas to go out and get a dog.

FIELD NOTES

I know – crazy. This did give me a great excuse to walk the lake a lot more, so that's what I did. We walked round most weeks just to keep an eye out for signs of fish and also keep seeing the great work that the lads were carrying out down there. It wasn't after too many walks around when we saw our first fish top out from a corner of one of the islands and on the same lap spotted fish mooching about in the shallow warmer water up the other end.

Months of walking went on with still no rod hours going in, and then before we knew it, spring was upon us. I didn't fish in March, as work was busy, and I was also off to France for a week of it. Stew closed the lake for April with only a select few and the odd charity event being allowed to fish the lake.

Thursday after work, when I returned for another lap before I could get down the next day, it was the same, but this time I was armed with a stalking rod. I mooched up to the shallows after seeing so many there the previous day lapping up the afternoon sun. Perfect! There they were in the exact same area as the day before. I stayed right back from the water under the cover of the tree lined-bank whilst I set up the rod. Shortly I was ready to go, and no sooner had I baited the hook and dropped it in close to a couple of fish that were literally under my feet, the clouds had gathered, and it started pissing it down! Typical – soaking bloody wet and lost all sight of any fish! I left shortly after with my tail between my legs, cussing myself for not having the rod in the van the previous day.

I'd left myself a nice little day's work on Friday so I could shoot a little early and get down to the lake, hopefully before the other 45 members turned up. I arrived to only four people fishing on the lake over 18 acres of water – perfect! I sat with a couple of lads, Callum and Nathan, who I had met previously at the lake, watching the lake and talking about which ones we'd like to catch. After leaving them, I headed round to the shallows of course where I had seen the fish the day before. Unfortunately there was someone fishing up that end of the lake not too far away from where I'd seen a load lurking the day before.

FIELD NOTES

With only four or five on by this point, I decided to leave matey boy to it whilst I headed down the other end to a swim called Winter's Point, leaving everyone with plenty of water. I'd seen a few fish roll out towards the corner of a large island at a comfortable range that this swim controlled, and after leading about for a little while off the corner of the island, I found an area where I wanted to anchor a couple of traps.

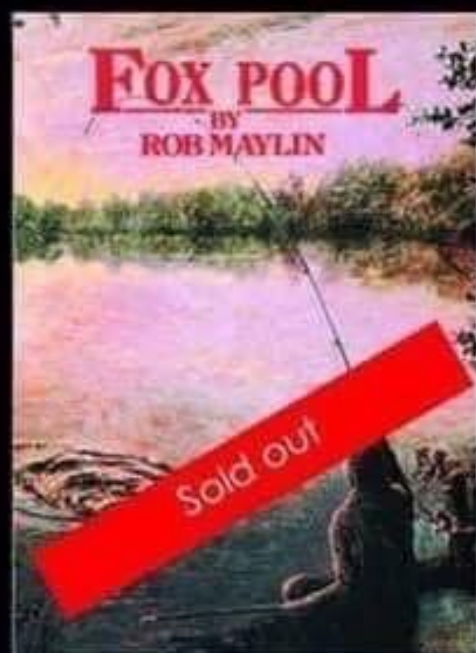
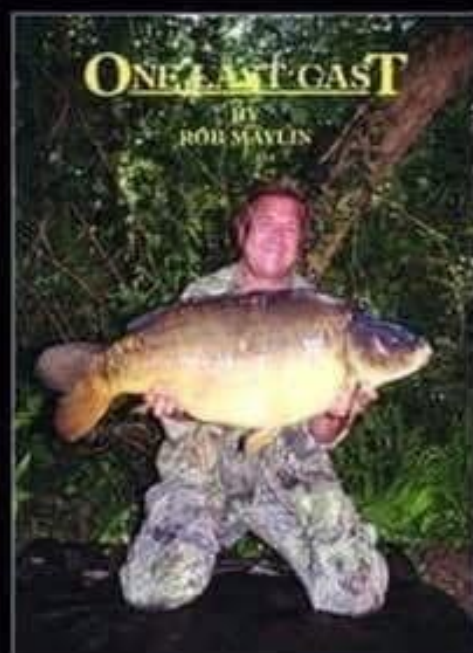
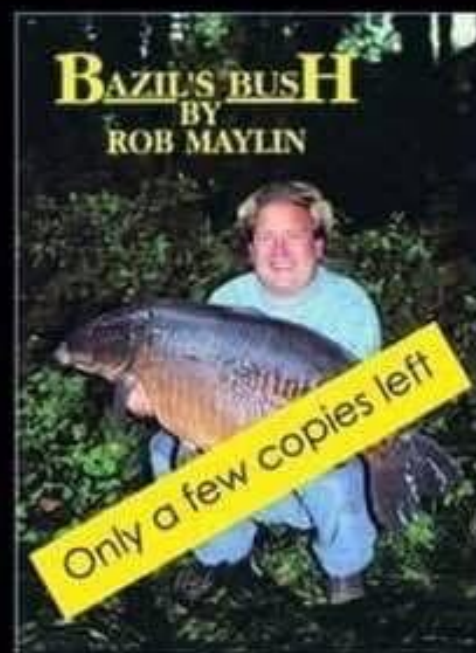
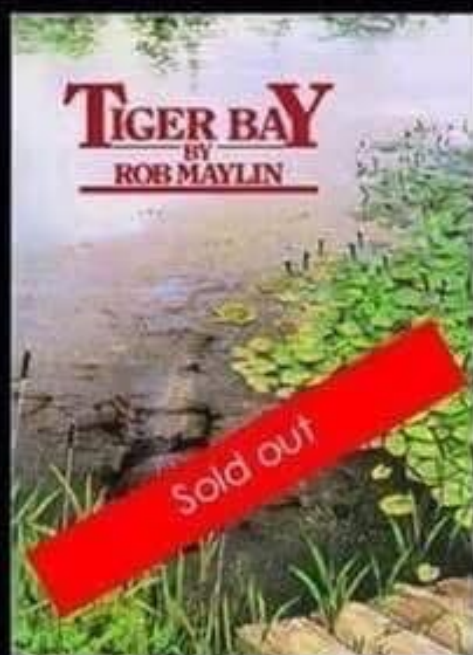
It was clean not solid, but more then presentable, which the pronged lead confirmed after a couple of drags across it – not a bad depth for the lake at 5.5ft deep either, where the swans wouldn't be able to get at me or my bait.

From doing my laps with the dog and just generally watching and speaking to other anglers fishing it, it seemed the norm was to jump in the boat, find a hard spot, tip a bucket of bait on it and sit back. So instead, I decided to stay on the bank and use a Spomb to put my bait out.



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FIELD NOTES

I knew that at 115 yards and baiting in a line over two rods, my bait was going to be a lot more spread out and hopefully keep them in the area a little bit longer as from what I've learnt these carp like a bit of bait. So the spot was sorted. Now just to apply some bait... I ended up mixing up a 5kg bucket of chopped and whole DT baits Supa Fruit boilies, pellet and corn. After putting the bucket in, I sat back watching the lake and tied myself three new slip D-rigs consisting of size 4 Ridgemonkey Curve Shank hooks and 25lb Soft Camo braid tipped off with either an NBlend Match The Hatch wafter or a Yellow Green Water Beast pop-up. Perfect! Two rods on the dancefloor and another stuck into a solid bag at a showing fish.

After seeing a couple of fish show just after dark and not far from the spot, I went to bed feeling quietly confident. I didn't have to wait too long, as at half one, my middle rod's bobbin hit the deck. I ran out to the rod as quickly as any of us do awoken from our slumber at that time in the morning expectant of a tench. I wound down through the slack and made connection, and shortly after, all thoughts of tench were gone as the clutch started to tick. A short, spirited fight saw me land my first fish of the session, a respectable 26lb 8oz mirror, which nearly evaded capture twice after my head torch decided to die on me. I'm really not one for head torches, but sometimes in the pitch black they really do help to see what you're doing.

After a long debate with myself at two o'clock in the morning, I left the rod out of the water, as I couldn't see the island out in the darkness. My thoughts were that if I crossed my other line, either rod could cost me a tangle and even a lost fish, plus I still had one on the dancefloor.

With that done, I wrapped the rod and checked the hook point and rig. She was still good to go, so I put on a fresh hookbait and set my alarm for first light.

It really didn't seem like long after I put my head on the pillow that I was back up and racing down to the rods again.



FIELD NOTES

This time I woke to a really slow, stuttery take on the left hand rod. As I approached, the bobbin dropped back, and once again I wound down into the slack. This time the fish was just slowly plodding to my right but back towards me at the same time. I kept gaining and gaining line; it almost seemed like it didn't know what was going on until it surfaced 15 yards from the swim over the shallow water. With that, there was a big wallow in the water as it powered off, stripping a ton of line from the spool, which took me a further ten minutes to retrieve before finally scooping the net under what looked like a decent fish in the dark.

I anchored up the net and ran back up to the bivvy to grab my phone to get a better look.

I genuinely couldn't believe my eyes when I looked down into that net. There she was, one of the ones I truly wanted from the lake and without doubt one of the oldest ones left from the original stock.

FIELD NOTES

The mighty Shoulders was mine! After a quick sort out of the scales and the sling, I lifted her ashore and got the scores on the doors before zipping her back up in the retainer sling to have a little sulk. Just for the record she pulled the needle round to 41lb 6oz. Pukka! First night and one of the big girls had all ready decided to pay me a visit.

I phoned Nathan to see if I could get him round for some first light shots. I think he thought I was pulling his leg at first, as it was only the evening before that I'd said to him I want to catch Shoulders, but hopefully it doesn't come too early, as over the next few years, the lake is going to produce some seriously awesome fish and I still want to be fishing there. I mean, honestly, what are the chances? Sometimes it's better to be lucky than good, and if you can talk them into the net...

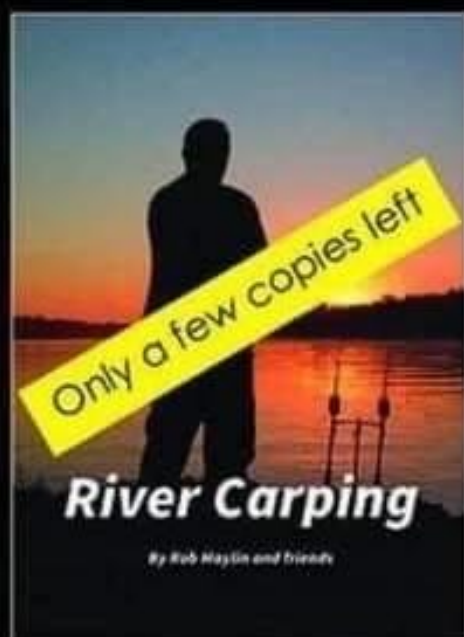
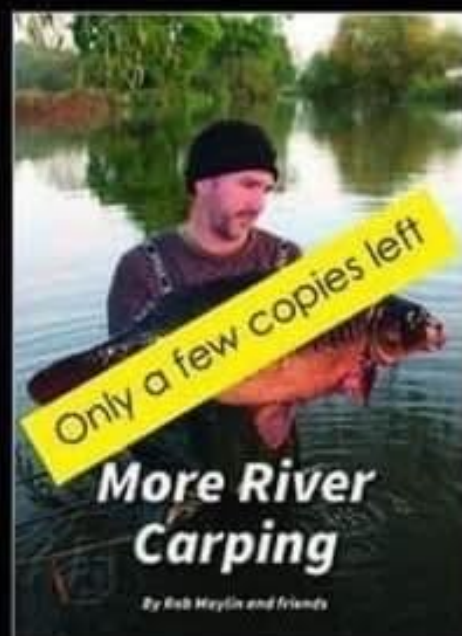
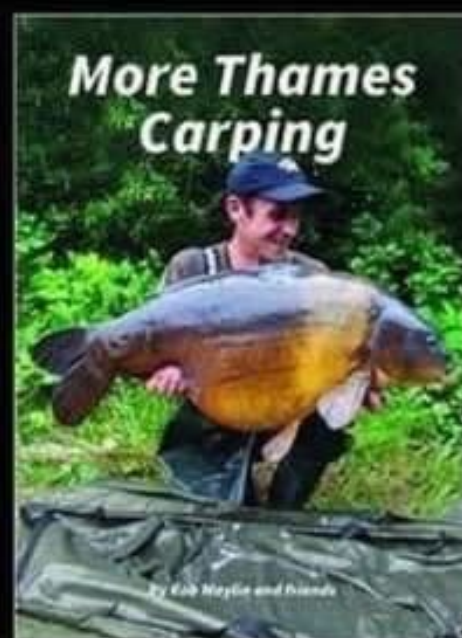
First light quickly arrived, and as soon as it did, I had the two rods positioned back on the area. Nath nailed the photos shortly afterwards, and she went back kicking strong. I left the rods to their own devices throughout the day, but no other bite was to be had even after seeing fish in the area. I left it till late afternoon/early evening before putting another bucket of bait back over the area with the Spomb.

A freshen up of hookbaits and a rechuck was in order shortly after, as I genuinely felt like I should have had a bite. Maybe they had cleaned me out. Maybe the rigs weren't sitting right... who knows? Two rods back on the corner, and a new solid bag was tied and sent out 80 yards into open water where there was a well-known spot and also where I had seen fish showing within the vicinity. Once again, I went to bed confident as any angler could be with fish caught and more rolling over the spot.

1.30am, and once again I was awoken, but this time to an absolute one-toner on the solid bag rod. As soon as I picked up the rod, I knew it was a lot smaller than the previous bites, shaking its head the whole way back to the net.

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FIELD NOTES

I didn't bother weighing that one. I'm guessing it was about 10lbs or maybe 11lbs – a lovely looking linear and definitely one for the future. After a couple of mat shots, she was back in the drink.

The rest of the night passed without any action, not even from the tench, and after sitting through from first light till about nine o'clock, I really felt like I'd been mugged. You know those times when you're super confident of a bite and it just doesn't happen? I left the rods where they were, as I was 1000% happy with the way they had gone out the previous evening. I'm a bit of a 24-hour man, and unless I've seen fish elsewhere and I'm on the move, my rods are staying where they are. I'm glad I did as well, as whilst I was sorting my and the dog's lunch at 1:00, the right hand rod gave off a single bleep as the bobbin pulled up into the NXT-R then dropped to the floor. We were on!



FIELD NOTES

I was on the rod in a heartbeat, and as I picked her up, she hooped straight over as the fish started to flat-rod me and take line, charging up the side of the tree-lined island to my right. She stayed on that line no matter how much side-strain I gave her; she just kept towing. She must have had 30/40 yards of line off me, heading straight towards another swim when I saw her up in the water by the island, and my heart sank as the line pinged off its pec as she turned back towards me in the distance.

She came back to the margin rather quickly after that first good, strong run, but she wasn't done. Callum had come round shortly after seeing me get the bite and offered his assistance with the netting. As she got closer to the shallow water, she did what all carp do in that situation and bolted... but not before we got a good glimpse of her! That's the last thing you want to see – a big common attached to your rig approaching netting territory from 115 yards and then a whining Emblem being stripped of line as it shoots back out into deeper water. My knees were definitely going at this point. Luckily enough, she was nailed though, and shortly after another good run, she was sulking in the net.

After taking a closer look, I realised she wasn't the common I was first thinking of when I saw her in the shallow water. She was about 10lb shy, not that it matters, as she was still absolutely pristine. She swung the needle round to 35lb on the nose! Pukka! After a load of kisses from the dog and some cracking shots being taken by Callum, she was back to her watery home, kicking strong. Buzzing! What a result, and well worth sitting on my hands. Interestingly, after speaking to a good friend of mine, he had caught the same carp two years previously at 27lb. That's some growth rate! Some epic carp are going to be caught from the Quarry in the next few years. Its future is only getting brighter!

The afternoon passed, and there were no more bites to be had for me. Matey opposite to my left had a bite and had got weeded up, so he was out on the boat not too far from where my left hand rod was on the 80-yard spot, which also turned out to be a tench... I tried not to laugh!



LEGENDS, *framed.*

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FIELD NOTES

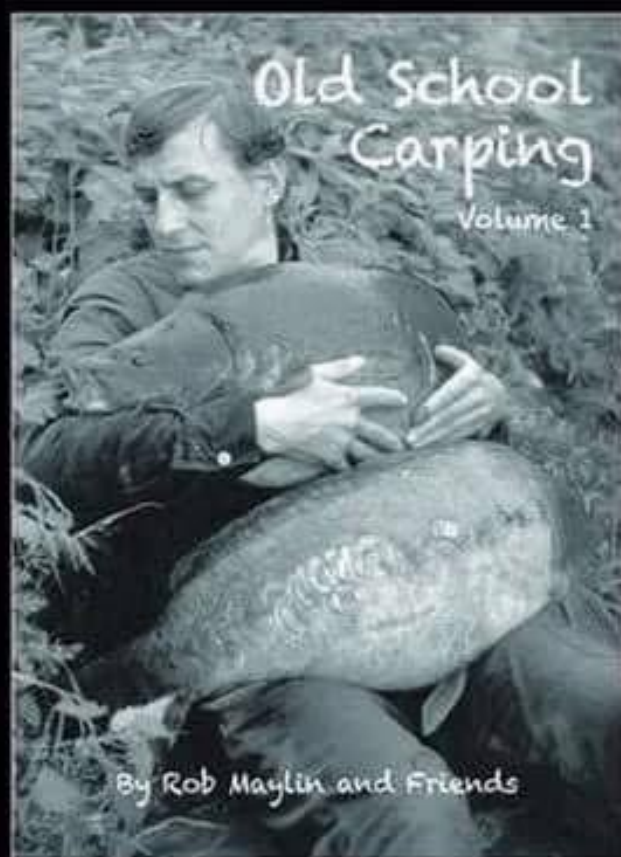
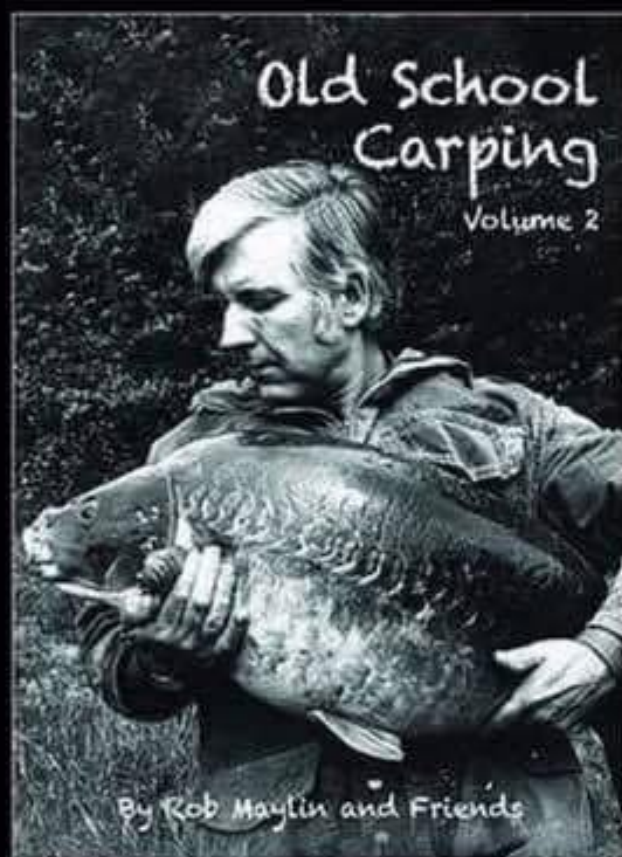
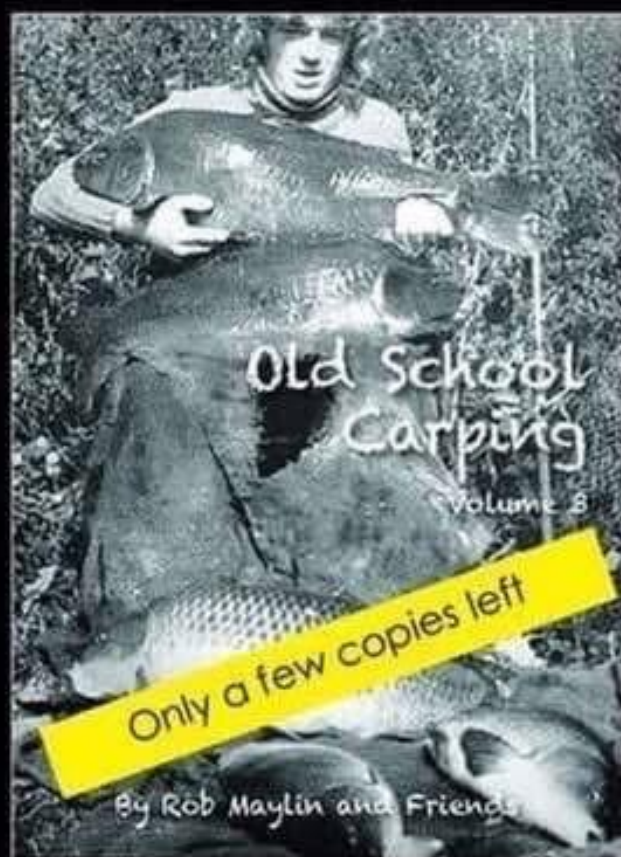
The previous night, another angler had been out on the boat finding a spot and putting bait in on the island past the corner where I was fishing. There were no bites through the night or early morning like the previous night, and the bite didn't come until one o'clock in the afternoon when he had left. That might just be me overthinking, but I really didn't feel confident on that rod for the night ahead. A good fish showing up to the wrist of it's tail in a little alcove amongst the trees on the island was more than enough too see me skip that rod and move it onto it.

After a couple of attempts with the wind coming across me, I managed to sit the solid bag in front of the alcove – not super tight, but close enough. As the evening wound in, and after not seeing much other activity, I decided to top up the spot on the corner of the island, this time just with a kilo of the golden grains and a kilo of the Supa Fruit just in case they had cleared me out.

6am came, and unfortunately the only alarm that was waking me up was the one I had set on my phone after another full night's kip. The morning passed and I hadn't seen any activity in the area, so I decided I was going to sit it out until the afternoon after having a bite at lunchtime the previous day. Luckily I didn't have to wait that long, as at around 11am, the alcove rod sprung into life! Another good strong fighting fish was on, and Callum was walking round to do the honours again. Textbook situation again – the fish came close to the shallow water, and we got a quick look at a lovely, scaly mirror before it was charging at a rate of knots back out into the deep. It didn't take long after that, and Callum had slipped the net under another one of the Quarry's gems. A beautiful 24lb scaly was held up for a couple of shots and then sent on her way!

I was a great way to end my first session on the new syndicate with a double, two 20s, a 30 and a 40. I was absolutely buzzing for the rest of the year. Let's get spawning out the way and get chasing some more chunks! Thanks for reading, and good luck to all on your next adventure. You never do know when you're going to get lucky.

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EXCLUSIVE



WRAYSBURY

Andrew Wescott

FREE LINE



FIELD NOTES

I arrived at Wraysbury on Tuesday evening after work and took a walk around. There wasn't anything showing, so I dropped in a promising looking swim and had a lead around. After an hour of leading around, I found a lovely hard spot. The lead went down with a crack, and the spot was big enough for two rods to be placed.

Using a Ronnie rig coupled with Carp Company Icelandic Red pop-ups on both rods, the traps were set. I spombed out 2kg of Icelandic Red boilies along with a kilo of Carp Company pellets mixed with the matching Advanced Bait Soak.

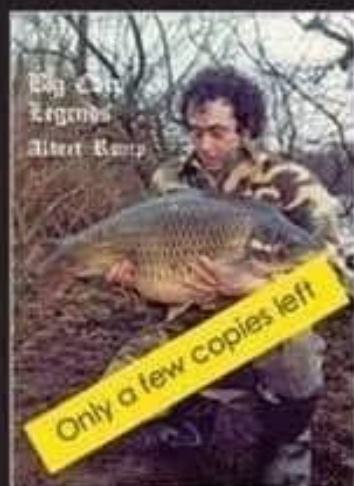
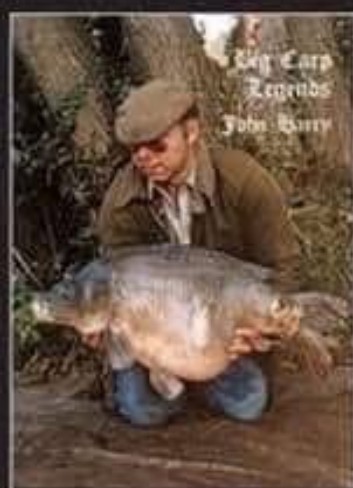
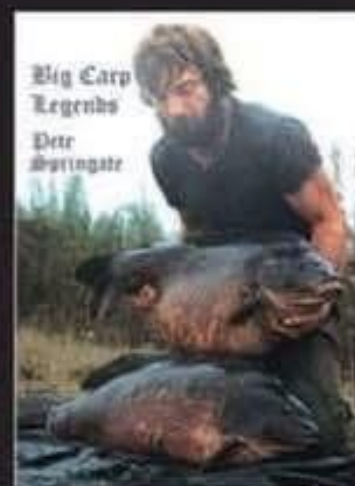
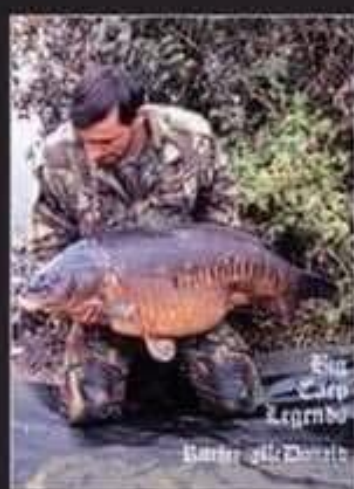
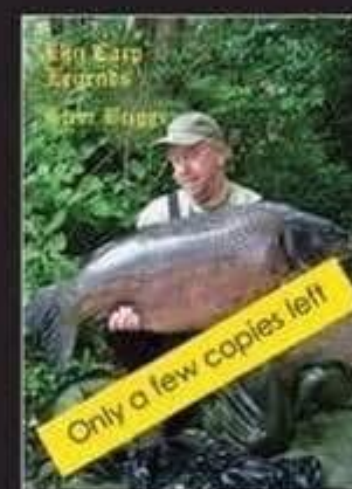
After a short while, my left hand rod ripped off, and I knew I had hit into a hard-fighting carp. After a battle, I guided the fish into the net. I had no idea what weight this fish was going to be until I turned my head torch on and saw there was a Wraysbury original in the net. I then weighed the fish and the needle spun round to 42lb 10z. I was absolutely buzzing. I put the fish in my retainer and found out that this is one of the Wraysbury originals named The Broken Lin.

I asked one of the other lake members to take a few photos, and then I released the Broken Lin back into Wraysbury's gin clear water. I was buzzing and still am now as I'm writing this.



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EXCLUSIVE

WRAYSBURY ONE: NOT MIKE'S PET

Jay Newton

FREE LINE



FIELD NOTES

I got the message early in the year that I had made the cut for membership on Wraysbury 1. As of then the homework on the venue massively increased – YouTube, Google Earth, all the good stuff. I was about to take a journey, which would undoubtedly test all my angling ability and patience.

April 13th, the first day of the season had arrived, and all the sleepless nights and big questions were about to start being answered – I was let loose. 45 acres is a huge expanse of water to me, considering my previous haunt was only five acres, and I knew from the off this was going to be a white knuckle ride.



FIELD NOTES

My plan from the start was simple: find the fish, establish potential patrol routes, rake spots and bait, so this is exactly what I did.

I cleared my diary to get a solid five days on, which comprised of a lot of swim hopping and work in my chosen areas, so it was no wonder why I blanked the opening week with the amount of disruption I was causing. Besides, I wasn't in a massive rush to bag my first specimen, as my thinking was it's a marathon, not a sprint. The work I do at the beginning will hopefully pay off throughout the year. Also it was not a complete waste of time; the raked areas were getting cleared off each night as they began to glow up through the gin clear, deep Wraysbury water, the reaction to my chosen bait was strong and they were getting amongst it in a big way. I left the lake happy and massively confident in my plan.

The next week in work was horrendous, I had a total lack of concentration for everyday activities. All thoughts had been blocked out with the idea of Wraysbury, the beauty of the lake and its residents that reside there.

April 25th, tools down, work done, and I was off again. I hurried back down, weaving between the traffic so eager to pick up where I had left off. I loaded the barrow like a man possessed; it felt like every second counted. Off I went like a racehorse, and much to my delight, my swim was free.

FIELD NOTES

Needless to say, it wasn't long before my rods were out and clipped up with pre-sharpened rigs attached.

One quick run through with the rake just to ensure no weed had reinhabited my spot, and I was away, my leads going down with a tremendous donk, at which I couldn't help but smile. Over the top with the spod with absolute accuracy, and I was away.

Beep, beep, beeeeeeeep! I could not believe it as I hurried to my rod. I was attached to my first Wraysbury carp, and what a sight it was... The sun was just starting to rise, revealing the millpond-like lake, that is before my line tore right through the glass like reflection as the carp kited hard to the left, tucking itself deep into a weed bed, resulting in a stalemate between me and the fish. I felt the line clunking as the weed cut free, allowing me to have contact once again. The weed had formed a hat on top of the fish, and because of this, it glided straight in and across the line – my cherry was popped, and the pressure off. Later that morning, my margin spot also ripped off in violent fashion, landing me an angry yet gorgeous looking mirror. Brilliant! My previous week's hard work had paid off, and both spots produced the goods.

Having scribbled down the location of my spots, I decided to move on and try another area. The North Lake is huge each bay had its own unique characteristics and features, each swim requiring a new pitch. I set up on the south bank for my next session.



FIELD NOTES

This location was ideal for the school night overnights, being close to the car park.

I had a big session coming up, so I'd be dropping on in preparation for this, not to mention the countless shows from the carp breaking the surface I had spotted on early morning walks – no-brainer. Midweek, just as planned, I finished work at 7pm, which saw me lakeside around 8pm. Singles was the plan for the first night almost as if to put the feelers out. I was losing light by the time I was set up, so I would settle with a peaceful night under the stars. At least this way I would be able to stay in tune with the lake and fish movements. The 5am sunrise was perfect for doing just this. That is, of course before I would have to reluctantly pack up and shoot off back to work.

The carp gods must have been watching me as the following morning I was off again, fishing singles at range to showing fish had resulted in another Wraysbury carp. The relevance of this capture was to prove monumental in terms of what it gave away. I was then to build my next big session around this and began to prebait the area.

Friday 3rd of May. The beginning of my three-day session. I managed to get back in my prebaited area where I nicked the overnight fish. Same routine carefully wrapped my rods and get clipped ready to go. The difference to this session was going to be bait – not my normal approach, but I knew the fish were in the area and up for a feed, so I went all out delivering a couple of kilos of bait to the area, which I believe was key to what was to come.

The first night, and it all kicked off. It was an absolute rollercoaster of emotions as I lost two fish on the bounce in quick succession, one to a hook pull, and the other (seemingly bigger fish) lost to a snag in the shape of a fallen tree on the left margin from the swim. The weather that night had really moved in, and wind and heavy rain smashed straight into my face. I sat on the floor filled with negativity as I tried to splice a new leader onto my main line with my hands shaking with the cold.



FIELD NOTES

When all seemed lost, just that moment, one single beep was to restore all faith. I looked up to the one remaining rod on my buzz bar, and the line began to rip off. The third fish of the night was on my line, and there was no way I was going to lose this one. I played the fish so carefully, the gentlest game of give and take I had ever played. Besides the odd small attempt to fight back, it was clear that the 100-yard haul had taken its toll on this one, as she came straight into the net. I had literally cried my consolidation prize into the net, and what a beauty she was – a perfectly proportioned, dark common carp. Blow softened.

That morning, after the standard photographs and celebratory smoke, I was back to it, topping the swim up, running the file over the hooks and steaming the booms on my Ronnies.



FIELD NOTES

Through the day, it was pretty quiet on the fish front, and the wind and rain was blowing a gale. This resulted in me spending a lot of time in the bivvy, contemplating over the lost fish. The big questions lingering over me were, “What was that one that got away?” and “What did I do wrong?”

Going into the second night with confidence high, I was determined to get revenge. The traps were set, the swim was hot, and I was ready. It goes without saying that it wasn't long before the wait was over and bite o'clock arrived. Again, like clockwork, my sirens once again sang away with a beauty of a mirror with a big pot belly and amazing scale pattern, and a really old looking fish, which was a real pleasure to handle, just like the rest, was sulking in my net.

One thing I did notice from both captures is while each fish was being handled, they would be was passing my red fish mix all over the mat, suggesting that they were loving the bait. I literally couldn't get enough in the lake.

So four bites in, and I was contemplating leaving. I'd landed two, and I was happy. My body was emotionally and physically drained after the events over the last two days. While on the phone to a friend, he convinced me to do one more night (it didn't take much), so I set my stall up again to try and get the hat trick. Little did I know what was about to happen... I sat back and enjoyed a relaxed evening chewing the fat with my neighbour until the sun went down.

FIELD NOTES

It was a much calmer night weather wise, which allowed me to accurately spool a load more bait out, another couple of kilos to be precise.

Third morning and bite o'clock was upon me again, but this time the alarm signalled in a way I've never seen before – a few beeps then a steady, almost deliberate slow take, peeling line at a steady pace, not chaotic like the last couple. On lifting into the fish, at first it felt just like the others, but it was hard to tell at that range. I gave a few tightening clicks on my clutch to try slow the pace, but this fish had other ideas. Another 40/50 yards had soon left my reel as I began to panic. It dawned on me that I might just be attached to something special. With the thoughts of the last few lost fish, I was massively careful with all my rod actions and clutch adjustments as I slowly began to retrieve some line, but this fish once again had other ideas...



FIELD NOTES

There was a large weed bed to the right of the swim that the fish ripped right through, sending huge shockwaves up my line and right through my body. My rod fell silent several times whilst it darted from weed bed to weed bed, and each time I was fearing the worst. I held on for dear life whilst the most dramatic game of give and take unfolded until I finally caught a glimpse of her. The large shoulder scales glistened through the gin clear Wraysbury water. Her head broke the surface, taking in a mouthful of air at the same time as making eye contact with me. We both knew it was done, and over the line she went, nose on the Y-piece and tail folded over the net cord. I lifted the net and let out a big sigh as I fell to my knees... I'd done it! My neighbour came over and helped confirm the ID as "Not Mike's Pet". The scales tipped to 40lb 12oz, breaking my personal best, and what a way to do it – my first Wraysbury original.

After all the commotion, I had a very slow pack-up, taking in the moment and trying to control my emotions. Once packed up, standing looking out across the lake having just experienced the true force of Wraysbury and witnessed in the flesh the beauty that resides in the there, I couldn't help think what could be next. My opening weeks have been packed with excitement and emotions. I can't wait to see what 2019 has in store for me!



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EXCLUSIVE



AN AMAZING TRIP TO DINTON

Tony Kingdon

FREE LINE



FIELD NOTES

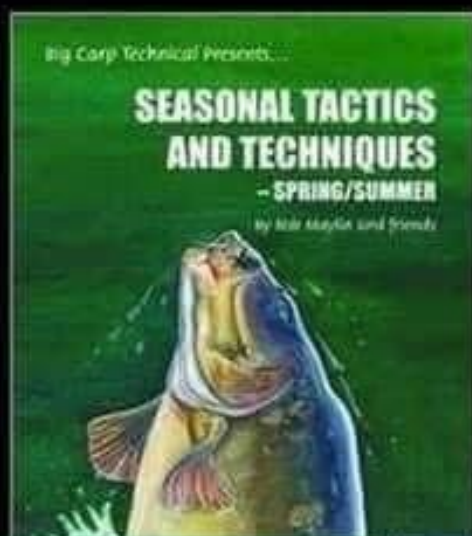
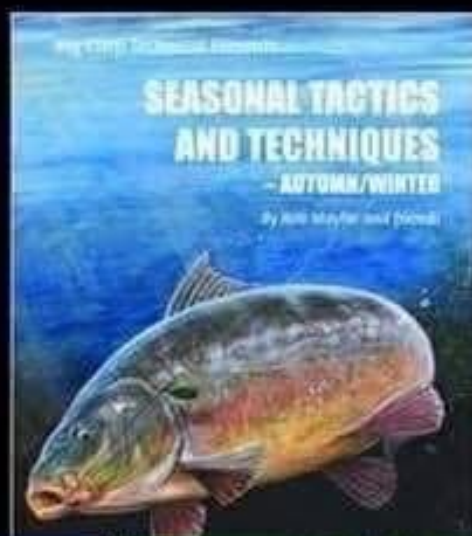
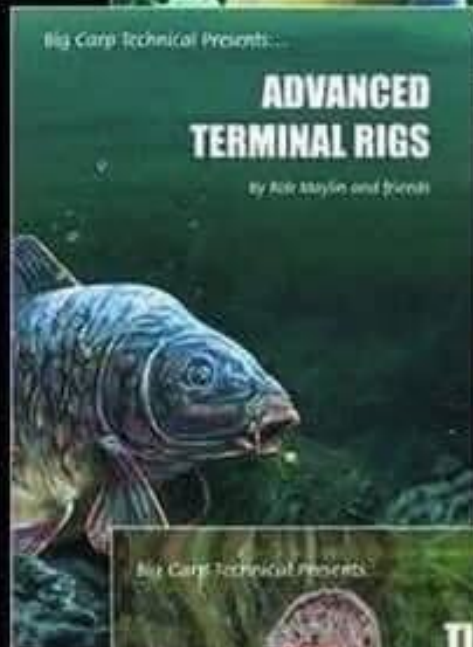
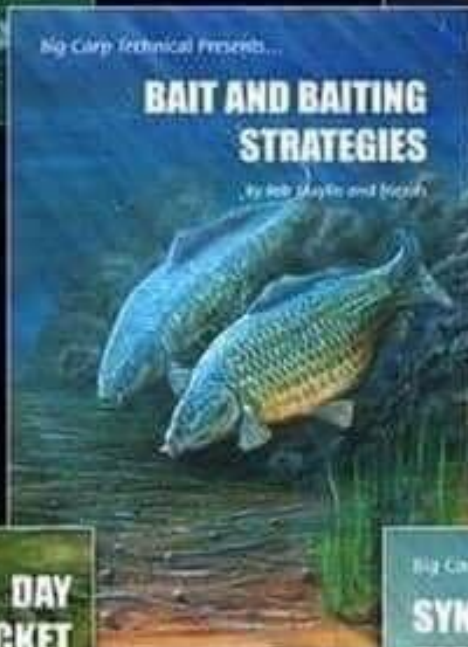
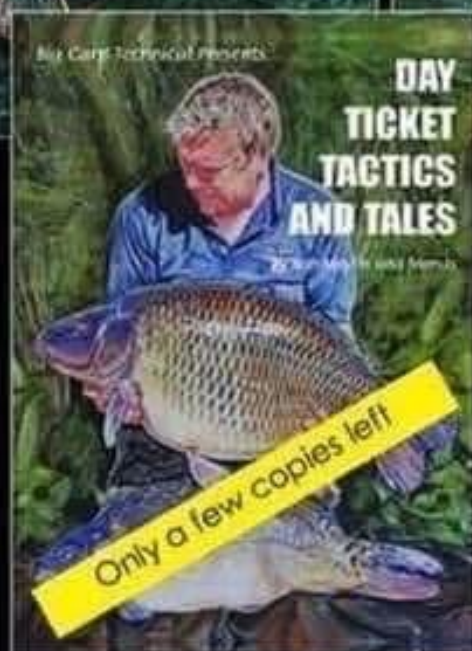
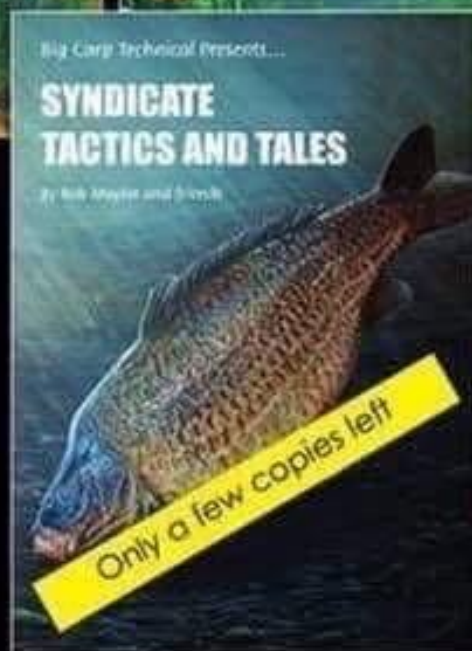
Well, what an amazing trip to Dinton this weekend! With the wife away in Birmingham, it left me with the girls for the weekend, and not being one to miss an opportunity, we headed off for a few days' fishing... We had a mountain of gear, but despite this, I decided to move after the first night, having seen a fair few fish in another area. Well, the move paid off big time when the first fish we landed was the Humpy Back Zip at 35lb 8oz, one I've wanted to catch since joining. That was shortly followed by a nice dark 30-plus common and a small mirror. This has to be one of my favourite fishing trips, being able to share these captures with my girls. Good times! We even had a surprise on the Saturday night when the wife decided to drive down and join us for the last night.

All fish were taken on Dynamite Baits Complex-T freezer baits and CarpSpirit UK end tackle. Big thanks to Chris Beasley for the pics – epic, mate!



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EXCLUSIVE



A SIGNIFICANT CAPTURE

Paul Bennett

FREE LINE

(C) pcb photos



FIELD NOTES

Having secured the area that I was after, it was a case of putting three singles out for the first 24 hours just to get a feel of how the carp were feeding. The following day, I introduced my usual large spread of the Hybrid and Essential Cell in various sizes at range via the Spomb. Now I have to say conditions weren't the best with the pressure rising and the water temps dropping slightly with cold nights combined with north easterlies. Following another fruitless 24 hours, I opted to introduce a little more bait, but not before I rechecked my spots just to make sure I was presented correctly, and I was... I was fishing two rods on the baited area, and my third rod was fished as a rover with bags.

I was now on the fourth day of my four-night session and still carpless. If I was honest, I really didn't think it was going to happen. As my fourth night yet again passed without event, it was time for the dreaded pack down, albeit a slow one.

FIELD NOTES

God, I hate packing up, but at least everything was dry!

With everything packed away... almost, anyway... with just the rods out, I noted a lovely flat spot pretty much right over my baited area, which just had to be fish feeding as it slicked up. After some ten to fifteen minutes or so, I suddenly received a single bleep from my left hand rod, and the bobbin slowly but very deliberately dropped. Finally my perseverance had paid off, as I was into what felt like a decent fish that initially took some line but then just plodded and hung deep as most decent fish tend to do.

However, after things had been going well and the fish was coming to steady pressure, disaster struck, as from nowhere it suddenly dived deep into weed, and I was now well and truly weeded up with no give either way! I put the rod down and slackened off, hoping that my prize would swim out, but after half an hour or so, it was still deadlock, so it was a quick call to my mate Mikee who got hold of Paul who then came over with the boat.

Once he was over the fish, she came out of where I couldn't move her very easily, and after a little bit more of a tussle, she was in the net. She certainly looked a decent fish, but to be honest, I didn't really care, as I was just glad to have got the pick-up, but effort always equals reward in my book, and at 40lb 10oz of real warrior carp, I was over the moon, as it was the last fish of the season and yet another 40 for me falling for the ever-consistent Mainline Baits.

The winning combo of my ever-faithful stiff hinged rig with size 6 JPrecision super sharp Wide Gape baited with my Mainline Baits special did the business yet again.

Big thanks to Mikee for just being there to share the moment – thanks, kid! And of course Paul Ward for creating the phenomenon that is Grenville, The Lake of Dreams! This isn't the biggest carp I've ever caught, but I have to say it is without doubt one of the most significant and emotional captures I've had...



EXCLUSIVE



WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

Kevin Beaumont

FREE LINE

FIELD NOTES

Like so many other anglers, I started my angling journey on the match scene as a young whippersnapper, sitting for hours upon end on local club waters, commercials and various stretches of the River Tees. I would sit all week at school and think of nothing else but getting on the bank of a weekend.

My uncle would pick me up at 0500hrs on the dot. I remember my teeth chattering, not from the cold, but from pure excitement like I used to get on Christmas morning. I remember the smell of the wild garlic beside the rivers and the pungent smell of pig muck, which even today strangely enough makes me feel kind of happy and brings back so many good memories of stretches of rivers alongside pig farms.

At the age of nine, I would happily sit there catching small rudd, roach, perch and the odd skimmer, checking the keepnet every 20 minutes to see if my catch had escaped and admiring my catch.

Looking back now, I was probably a pain in the arse to my uncle, asking so many questions and getting him to unhook deeply hooked perch. As the years went on, I became more confident in the whole process from tying my own knots, using the disgorger and rig presentation in different situations, and my fishing stepped up another level, targeting specimen chub on the rivers. At first the wait and time between bites would drive me nuts, but when you're 11 years old and hooked up to a 6lb chub in some slack water over the back of rapids, wow, does that get the blood pumping. One session we had 14 chub on homemade cheese paste and eight were over 5lb in weight, certainly making the new style of angling with long waits worthwhile.

In June 1999, we moved outside of the town I had grown up in to a little village called Middleton St George. The village contained three reservoirs, which were run by the local parish council. The lakes were once stocked by an angling club run by a local engineering business in the late 70s, mainly tench, bream and carp around 2lb in size.



FIELD NOTES

In 1999, these carp were now good mid doubles with the odd fish touching the 20lb barrier. This style of angling was totally alien to me, seeing lads sat with three rods on pods with alarms (Optonics, I think they were back then) and putting in more bait than I'd probably used all season on match lakes. What really caught my interest was the clarity of the water and watching the big, dark shapes move around the margin amongst the reeds and lily pads, hearing them slurping in dog biscuits that had floated into the margins.

Not being geared up for this new style of angling, I armed myself with my strongest feeder rod, 8lb Ultima line on an old Mitchell reel, landing net and a baby changing mat wrapped in a bin liner as an unhooking mat (white with yellow ducklings wasn't very carpy!), a few bags of scalded mixers and half a loaf of bread, which I'd pinch out of the cupboard. Along with the odd tin of corn, that was pretty much how the next three or four years of my life went outside of school.

I would have a routine, putting in a few handfuls of mashed bread and corn in a few spots around the margins of both reservoir 2 and 3, and while I was waiting for fish to show up, try and get them going on the top with the mixers. These fish were no mugs and had seen a lot of angling pressure over the years, most of it I'm sure a lot slicker than my approach.

FIELD NOTES

Nevertheless, I began to bank a few fish while also making mental notes of key areas of the reservoirs that fish would visit at certain times when the dog walkers and general public would quieten down, which eventually led to me targeting certain fish I witnessed having routes and feeding behaviours. I would sit for hours, laid on my front behind reeds or up trees watching how the fish would approach a bed of bait and how they formed a hierarchy in feeding behaviour in certain groups of fish, often just feeding them to build confidence for the following day. As the years passed, I started to build my carp fishing arsenal from birthdays, Christmas and items I was given by some of the great anglers I would look up to around the reservoirs (surprisingly how long you can keep and reuse pop-ups!).

During my childhood, I must have spent literally thousands of hours and hundreds of days and nights over there, constantly learning from my own mistakes with my only real guidance from a Julian Cundiff and Kev Maddocks book (Beekay guide) I had picked up from car boot sale.

My whole angling approach had changed full circle from match style fishing to now sitting behind several rods targeting carp only and the anticipation of the sound of that bite alarm when it springs to life has had me hooked ever since.

In 2002, I had left school, and like so many others of that age had a lot of distractions, and fishing became secondary, as my focus switched to tracking down another species (women). Angling took a little bit of a step back for me, and later that year my parents split up, so I thought, I'm getting away from all of this and joined the MOD. I was lucky if I hit the bank four or five times a year for the next five years, and it wasn't until I met my now wife in 2006 and moved back to the village and settled down with my own family that the fire for carp fishing burned brightly again. But wow... this style of angling has really taken off from what I had last remembered, and there seem to be so many instant carp anglers with so many heavily stocked commercials, which require very little watercraft, technique or knowledge to crack the code and put fish on the bank.

FIELD NOTES

Upon moving back to the village, as you would expect, my first thoughts (obviously after my family!) were the reservoirs, and to say I was heartbroken was an understatement... They had been hit very hard from otters, the Canadian pond weed had taken over big style and the smell of large decaying carp in the bushes left by the otters was soul destroying. There had been several angling clubs with the lease, however I'm not sure they realised the scale of the task in hand so never had much longevity. There are still fish in there, and I'm sure the thick weed has been a bit of a blessing, giving them refuge, however the weed was so thick, it would not be fair on the carp trying to pull them through it, as it was now 8ft long and on the surface.

In the summer of 2019, Wally Appleton, who also runs a local tackle shop in Darlington, took over the lease for seven years with the option to extend.

Since the takeover, the transformation has been incredible from peg construction, weed boat contractors removing literally hundreds of tons and new laid plans to erect otter fencing around the reservoirs to protect what existing stock is still present but also protect the new stock going in this year.



FIELD NOTES

Surprisingly there is a lot more stock present than I first thought now that the weed has been thinned out drastically.

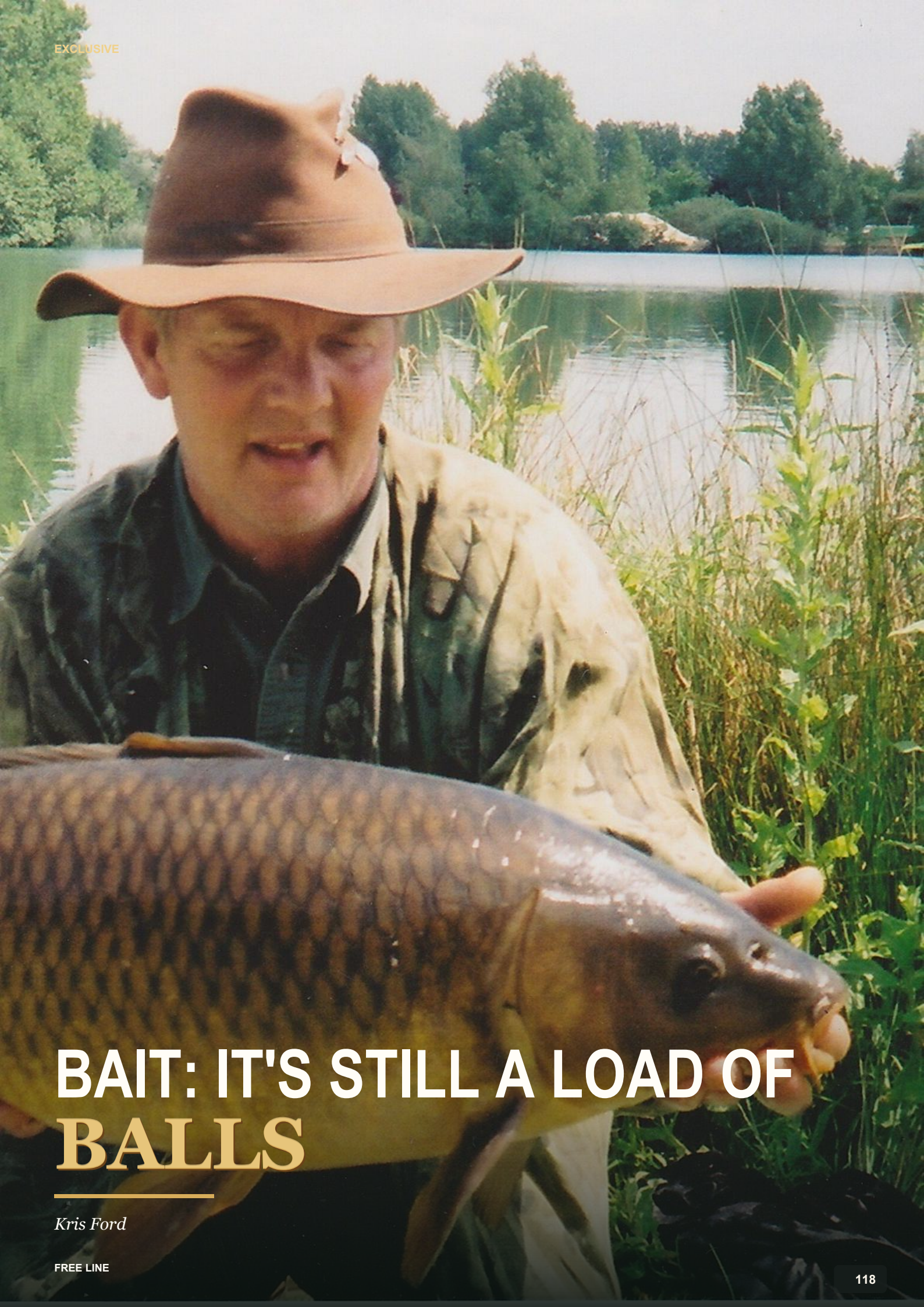
As these fish have not seen lot of bait over the recent years, I began prebaiting in areas I used to catch from many years ago, giving them a mixture of the ever-faithful Rod Hutchinson Ballistic B and KMG chopped and whole scattering up and down the margins not focusing on a single area but more to get them picking up baits and familiarising themselves with bait again. After a few weeks of prebaiting three times a week, I set aside a few hours one evening and was quickly rewarded with a stunning little common as dark as mahogany but fin perfect like a wood carving followed by its big sister at 19lb, a real old warrior, which I'm sure came from the stocking in the late 70s. Both fell to halved baits on the hair back-to-back to match the chops on my simple stripped-back coated braid rig tipped off with Carp Tackle Online Scorpion Curve in size 6.

I'm lucky enough to fish up and down the country and around the globe targeting the biggest of carp backed by a great brand in Rod Hutchinson, however these are just that little bit special for me, and I'm determined throughout 2019 to bank a 20lb fish from this venue which I'd take over a 30lb fish in any other venue in the UK. Since starting to write this article, I have also banked a lovely mid double mirror, again a true old original... You just don't see carp like this anymore.

Thank you for taking the time to read my article, and I hope I've struck a chord with many other like minded anglers of where it all began, and I will be back with that 20-pounder very soon.

Kev Beaumont.

EXCLUSIVE

A man wearing a brown fedora-style hat and a camouflage shirt is holding a large, dark-colored carp by its mouth. The fish is positioned horizontally across the lower half of the frame. The background shows a calm body of water with reeds and trees in the distance.

BAIT: IT'S STILL A LOAD OF BALLS

Kris Ford

FREE LINE

FIELD NOTES

A few years back, I wrote an article “Bait – it’s a load of balls”, and this is the sequel. I do not consider myself a bait aficionado or master-baiter to borrow a pun from Jim Gibbinson, but I do have some serious thoughts based largely on simple logic and much experience. I have been considering writing this article for some time but have now been spurred on by the release of Tim Paisley’s latest book “Carp, bait and nutritional recognition”. Fair to say, I think that most carp anglers just want a bait that works, and there are plenty of those around – a boundless supply. To the minority bait demands a world of exploration.

As I said, my bait theories are based on logic, experience and in addition some technical(?) knowledge. It would be extremely remiss of me to write this article without reading Tim’s new book to see if there was anything within it to change my mind and opinions or anything to be learnt.

This article is not an attempt in any way to slight Tim’s book or his writings, which would be a rather silly thing to do, as he clearly knows far more than me on the scientific/technical side. The same applies to the myriad of pioneers credited by Tim and those contributing to his book.

So, to the history... Carp used to be thought uncatchable, then along came honey paste, cheese paste, then sausage meat, cat food, Bacon Grill etcetera. At the start of the 1970s, the carp world became obsessed in two different directions simultaneously, those being on one hand, particle baits with the king being sweetcorn and on the other hand high nutritional value (HNV) pioneered by Fred Wilton, and the boilie was born. Surely in this day and age, everyone knows about both of these elements, so no further explanation is warranted. My focus is mainly on the boilie and its contents along with the carp and animal behaviours.

My beliefs and baseline theory on bait are very simple: a successful bait should ideally be something that they like and preferably totally new or previously unseen – that’s it, simple, in a nutshell. Now to expand on that statement, let’s look at the parameters and variables. The inference and implication of the HNV innovation was that within its alchemy lay the Holy Grail, an infallible carp bait.



FIELD NOTES

Not only would the carp be unable to resist it, but it would also provide them with all that was needed nutritionally to thrive and survive, this last element reinforcing and supporting the desire (need) for the bait. I do not think that this was necessarily what Fred Wilton envisaged, but I think it fair to say that was how it was perceived.

What let this theory down was the ability (instinct) of carp to smell a rat, so the bait would blow. And so ensued a battle that continues to this day between the bait companies, anglers and the carp. Amino acids, enzymes, betaine and all the myriad of other scientific ingredients discovered and employed to fool and encourage the carp – palatants and attractants etcetera, etcetera... the list is endless.

It is probably true to assume that all of these ingredients certainly do work and for a variety of reasons. I would assert also that they work best when first used, and what its life expectancy may be following that first use, I haven't a clue.

Another of my pet theories on bait I call “continuity of use”. Let us say that a really good bait is developed and is very successful wherever it is used and catches loads of carp. No matter how good the bait, it will eventually blow. So now it's back to the drawing board? Well no, not exactly. If the bait is genuinely that good, why change it? Why not simply change one of its two key indicators (labels), colour and taste (flavour)?

FIELD NOTES

Surely a new lease of life is guaranteed by simply changing the colour, and there are plenty to choose from to ring the changes. Surely any given bait will last for years and years simply by changing the colours, and all this before you need to mess with flavours, which will give you even more years? I was pleased to read via Tim that dear old Rod Hutchinson (Hutchy) held exactly the same view.

That baits blow or lose attractiveness to carp is a well-known fact. Not only have we suffered a drop-off in bites, but when lucky, we also have visual evidence as well, excellently illustrated by Jack Hilton describing seeing a carp “put the brakes on by flaring its pectorals” and seeing it seem to “tremble all over”.

The cause of such alarm was a humble white potato, arguably not the best of baits, but what would have happened if the potato had been dyed red or yellow or purple? We shall never know. Surely most of us have spent countless hours enthralled watching carp and their reactions to many various stimuli.

Carp aren't stupid, but neither do they have degrees in food and nutrition, although they could probably teach it. What they do have is a simple but great and sensitive environmental aware sensory system, a gut and a multi-millenia of refined instinct (aka DNA). Those who know me understand that I tend to think in straight lines, logically and am used to problem solving on a daily basis. I prefer black or white but not both, grey may occasionally enter an equation but only as a maybe or what if. So let's look at two areas of apparent conflict (contradiction) presented by Tim and allow me to provide a possible answer to both.

Tim presents us with the paradoxical facts that carp are more capable physiologically to digest highly nutritious bait in the months of warmer water temperatures. The sting is that because the water is warm, it contains less oxygen, which is an essential requirement to the digestion, so the carp are forced to eat less because of the HNV. However, during the months of colder water temperatures, the oxygen content is much higher, indeed very high, and so aids digestion.

FIELD NOTES

The sting is that because the water is cold and the carp become lethargic as their metabolism slows down, their food requirements reduce dramatically, in many cases so dramatically slow that the fish become dormant and rest on the bottom in a state of torpor, so they need only very little of HNV to satisfy their needs. Indeed some elements of HNV simply cannot be digested in cold-water temperatures.

The other area of conflict is the so-called crap versus HNV bait debate. Tim explains very well how and why a so-called crap bait can in fact be very successful as a standalone or even actually working in concert with HNV. For many years, and maybe still today, bait producers make claims that their bait is the best, highest protein, best combination, most this most that etcetera, etcetera. However, given what I have paraphrased from Tim, it would seem that when using an expensive HNV bait, although better for the carp and perhaps more attractive to them, they are likely, even certainly, going to eat less, which equals fewer bites. Conversely, a bait with a lower nutritional value will be digested easier, and although of less benefit and possibly attraction, will require more to be eaten, which should equal more bites.





FIELD NOTES

Logically!

Now to me, logically, the solution to both issues is simply to revert in the main to my baseline theory “a successful bait should ideally be something that they like and preferably totally new”. Why not a mid-range bait with elements of high digestibility coupled with HNV? Too easy or too hard to achieve? By the way, I was totally ignorant of this issue of high temperature and indigestibility until I read Tim’ book. I thought that the lack of appetite from carp in very warm conditions was akin to our own response to hot conditions – simply a loss of appetite. Although also physiological, I thought it a question of comfort rather than an environmentally imposed disability. The nonsense that a university got paid millions to ascertain that we eat more ice cream and salad in the summer than we do in winter astonished me. I would have produced the paper for a fraction of the cost.

It used to be extolled that it was possible to create a bait (food) that fulfilled all the dietary needs of carp and that by introducing such a bait into a lake regularly and in sufficient quantities that the carp could and would become totally dependent on it, with the inference that this would be to the exclusion of all else. This may well be true of tank raised and held or farmed fish, but this claim, belief, theory or hope, call it what you will, fails to recognise one simple but vital element: DNA.

FIELD NOTES

From the day it hatches, a carp has an innate instinct to explore and forage to find out what is edible, what is good to eat and what is not, where is good and where isn't and what represents danger. Indeed all of this and more goes beyond instinct; it is in their DNA.

None of this is intended to disparage HNV or food source baits – quite the contrary in fact. I make all my own bait and always have done, not to be clever or because I didn't like or trust commercial baits but simply because I want to be different. Back to my baseline theory... I want to know what bait others are using on a lake, but only because I want to be using something different. Based on my logic, if every man and his dog are using Jimbo Jim's Ultra Orgasmic Pineapple Pepperoni yellow 18-millers and catching on it, then no matter how much is going in, I want to be on something very different. Logically, every fish caught on that bait is one less to be caught. I know repeat same bait captures can occur, but I'd rather tilt the odds in my favour. With confidence in my bait and all the other variables, why not? As a matter of course, I do use nourishing ingredients in my baits but customise the ingredients subject to the season of the year. It would be silly to ignore the knowledge and expertise learnt from the gurus and masters in this field.

We are talking alchemy here and must be almost within touching distance of turning lead into gold. However, there are so many variables in this Pandora's box that give rise to a whole host of new questions with almost infinite possibilities.

For instance, apart from the pure science of chemical reactions, what about freezing bait? Freezing anything causes dehydration so what happens to those special ingredients within the freezing and dehydration processes? I know as a plus that the bait can be rehydrated using more liquid goodies, but what else occurs? Also I know that certain elements can be destroyed (denatured) by extreme temperatures, both hot and cold, and also that other ingredients can counter this denaturing. So what happens when your £30 bottle of leusoaminoceprolenzymacarpocine gets boiled or frozen or both? How are we to know?

FIELD NOTES

Also how are we supposed to source, apart from carp companies, this wonderful array of acids and enzymes etcetera and know their limitations, weaknesses and strengths?

Hutchy and Kevin Knight both touch on or allude to another element very briefly – that of a bait starting to turn, going off or starting to decompose, but definitely not fresh. One of my other interests is wine making, often from hedgerow foraging, but frequently from fruit from a greengrocer. It has always fascinated me to see the frothing and bubbling in a demijohn as the enzymes from the yeast frenzy to turn the sugars into alcohol. Maybe this is a clue as to why Philips Yeast Mixture (PYM) was such a good and highly favoured ingredient in early HNV development. I think it is universally agreed that sweetcorn or maize left to ferment for a few days do seem to have a special edge about them as a bait.

Maybe this is the hidden secret within baits like Activ-8 and Key?



FIELD NOTES

Even more variables occur on the lakeside: how big and how deep is it, what is the natural food chain like (biomass), what is the stocking of fish, what season is it, what is the photoperiod (daylight), what is the temperature what is the pH, is it baited a lot and what with, has it rained lately, has it been hot for a long while, is it just warming up... and on and on it goes. Not for the carp. Why not? Simply because they just live with it no matter what. They have no choice; this water is their world, and its subtle and extreme changes are coped with on an hourly and daily basis. They don't have the luxury of thinking or planning ahead; they just have what is and live accordingly. Their DNA (instinct) rules their behaviour coupled with the water itself. I'm fairly sure that the shape of boilies is close to being ingrained in their instincts both for good and bad reasons. Show them a new one, different signal (smell), different colour, different flavour, and all other things being equal, a carp will not be able to resist investigating it, finishing with taking it into its mouth maybe and ultimately swallowing it or trying to. Irresistible bait? No – a brightly coloured piece of balsa wood, a fisherman's float... Not a bait, but certainly irresistible because of DNA, or instinct if you prefer.

During the late 70s, I was for a time head keeper at a zoo. This gave me access to a previously unknown bait source – exotic animal foods and supplements.



FIELD NOTES

One pellet in particular got my attention.

Because of its size, it was capable of being used as is and would also catapult a reasonable distance. It was about the size and vague shape of an unshelled peanut and very dull grey/beige in appearance. The close season was in force in those days, so I could visit the local lakes unimpaired, and carp fishermen were thin on the ground anyway. The results were amazing: the pellet floated, and by and large the reaction from the carp was the same on every lake I visited. I would fire out half a dozen catapult loads of pellets, and before the last one hit the water, the fish were at the first lot... They loved it! For a bottom bait, I didn't want to reconstitute it to create a paste or boilie; I don't like messing, and if it ain't broke etcetera. I just fished the bait on a short link leger (pop-up). I had those fish virtually climbing the banks to get at that bait before I headed off in other directions.

A well-known belief is that carp can actually sense the content within a bait as far as whether it is good for them. There are examples in nature of tuning to a nutritional element. Close to home but not exactly in the wild are salt licks put out for various hoofed animals. I'm not too sure that it is purely instinct, but sheep, cattle, horses and deer to name but a few soon approach and start to taste these licks, or mineral blocks to give them their correct name. In the wild there are a few instances, notably in Australia and South America, of birds parakeets and other Psittaciformes (parrots) visiting mineral deposits on riverbanks and rock faces.

With regard to carp and bait, I would use the analogy of that fresh baked bread smell that permeates supermarkets. If it smells good then it is worthy of a taste test. From the perspective of a carp, since it hatched, it has experienced countless thousands of labels and tastes: mosquito larvae, dragonfly larvae, numerous beetles, bloodworm, fish eggs, tadpoles etcetera, etcetera. What it has learned in spades is that anything new is worthy of investigation as a possible food source – more DNA (instinct) influence.

Actually fish can't smell in the sense that we do.



FIELD NOTES

Smell is an airborne luxury, but fish can sense a signal (label) in the water and find it worthy or unworthy of investigation, as in the previous paragraph. Their taste (gustation) gives them the flavour(s) of the bait while their sensory system gives them the label (signal(s) or indicator(s)). Taste is another element where I wholly agree with Hutchy. What is the point of promising (label/smell/indicator) Strawberry accompanied by a flavour of Brussels sprouts? Why would you? I have always thought that this tricky bit of understanding is like a glass of cordial. Although the visual aspect doesn't apply, imagine a glass of prepared blackcurrant cordial. You lift it and smell it then without hesitation, prepared for refreshment and taste, start to drink only to discover it tastes like vinegar and then hits your stomach. Yuk!

The ingredients in a bait all have their own signals and flavours even before anything extra is added. Sometimes to me anyway a bait smells really good without a need for additional flavouring. The ingredients will be emitting their own unique and combined signals. I suppose you can enhance, stifle or drown those signals with extra additives. The question is, for example, suppose the bait has a large fishmeal content, the fish in our lake have been hammered on fishmeals, and they have effectively blown as a bait. Even to us, it is difficult to mask a fishmeal ingredient. Even if we could drown it, wouldn't the carp still pick up the emitted fishmeal signal from within by chemoreception?

FIELD NOTES

In a run of the mill situation, do the natural labels constantly tell the fish what we are up to, or to put it another way, does the chemoreception of the ingredients remove or see through (detect) the mask of any other flavours/signals?

On the technical (deep) side, much is made of the L (Laevorotatory) property of some ingredients. I know that a lot of bait formulation is based around these elements and recipes constructed assuming this denotation. Only very recently, as far as I can recall, was I made aware of L- Laevorotatory and D- Dextrorotary properties of sugars. (My son John reminds me that this was referred to in Kevin Maddocks' excellent "Carp Fever". So that's where the book disappeared to.) This was prior to my acquisition of Tim's book in a lengthy conversation with Mike Wilson who himself is no mean player in the world of carp baits. One thing Mike did tell me in confidence, with specific reference to one particular bait, was that by overting L to D gave the bait an extremely good success rate – an opening of a door perhaps? On a slightly different note, little reference has been made to MSG. We all know its reputation in the realms of human food, but I have heard next to nothing of its application in the carp bait world. More secrets?

My conclusions on bait remain unchanged if enhanced somewhat with additional logic and knowledge. I just might have some fun playing around with my established recipes, and it will be fun. What won't change are my basic principles of trying to offer something new or different... certainly different to whatever is trending on the lakes that I fish. All of my bait is air dried and kept that way in airflow bags or boxes. I shy away from preservatives, but if a particular batch of bait starts to show signs of deterioration, I will stick it in the freezer. The advantage of dried baits is that they can be rehydrated by soaking in some form of additive prior to use. Alternatively, I believe by just using them as they are, the act of rehydrating in the lake actually helps the signals and tastes leach out to do their work. Whatever the carp like works for me.

Oh yes... by the way, if you have read this far, you should get Tim's book.

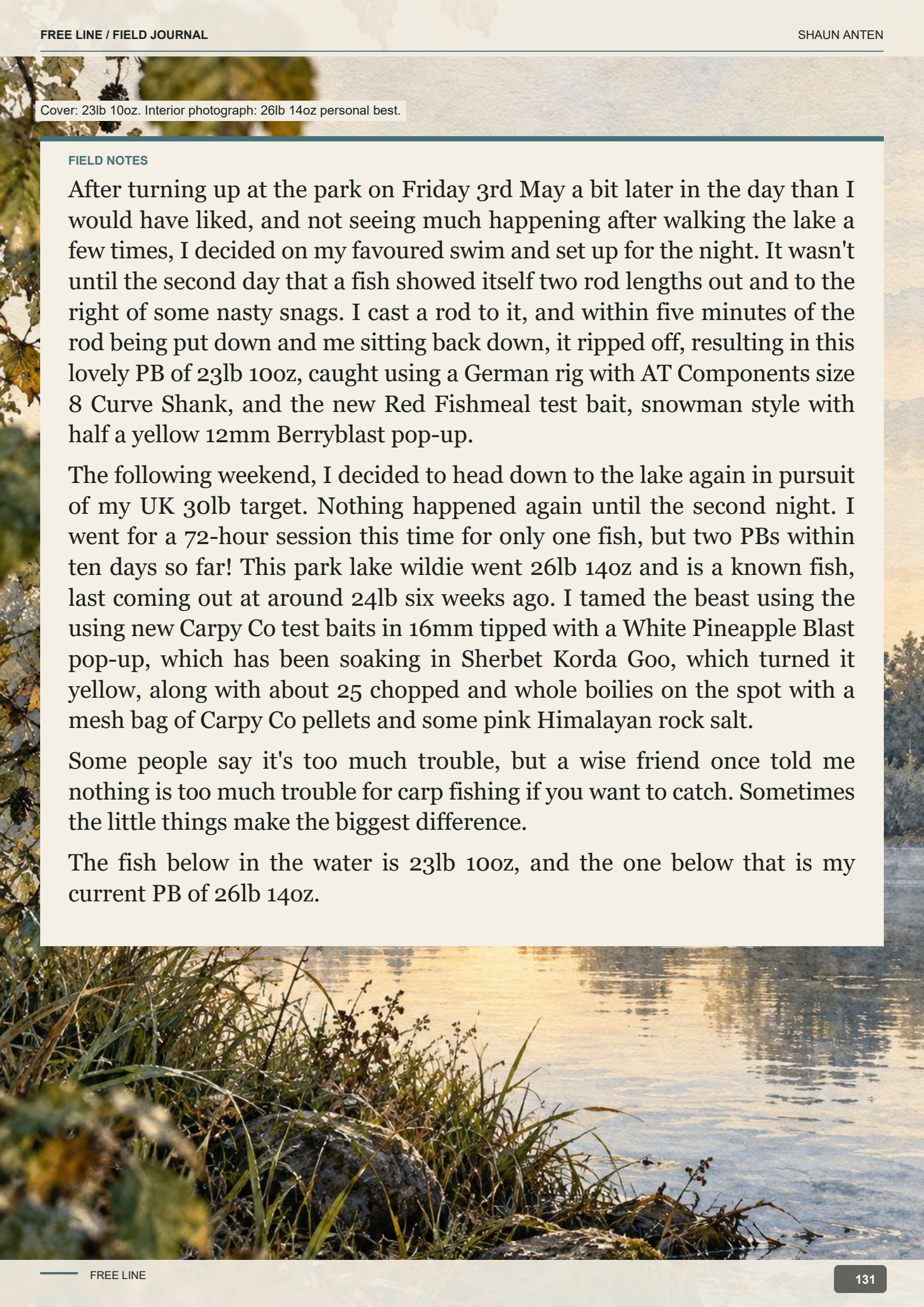
EXCLUSIVE



TWO SESSIONS IN TWO WEEKS

Shaun Anten

FREE LINE



Cover: 23lb 10oz. Interior photograph: 26lb 14oz personal best.

FIELD NOTES

After turning up at the park on Friday 3rd May a bit later in the day than I would have liked, and not seeing much happening after walking the lake a few times, I decided on my favoured swim and set up for the night. It wasn't until the second day that a fish showed itself two rod lengths out and to the right of some nasty snags. I cast a rod to it, and within five minutes of the rod being put down and me sitting back down, it ripped off, resulting in this lovely PB of 23lb 10oz, caught using a German rig with AT Components size 8 Curve Shank, and the new Red Fishmeal test bait, snowman style with half a yellow 12mm Berryblast pop-up.

The following weekend, I decided to head down to the lake again in pursuit of my UK 30lb target. Nothing happened again until the second night. I went for a 72-hour session this time for only one fish, but two PBs within ten days so far! This park lake wildie went 26lb 14oz and is a known fish, last coming out at around 24lb six weeks ago. I tamed the beast using the using new Carpy Co test baits in 16mm tipped with a White Pineapple Blast pop-up, which has been soaking in Sherbet Korda Goo, which turned it yellow, along with about 25 chopped and whole boilies on the spot with a mesh bag of Carpy Co pellets and some pink Himalayan rock salt.

Some people say it's too much trouble, but a wise friend once told me nothing is too much trouble for carp fishing if you want to catch. Sometimes the little things make the biggest difference.

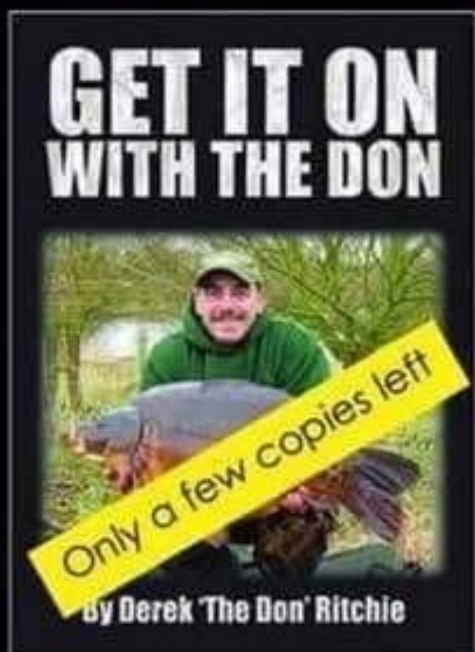
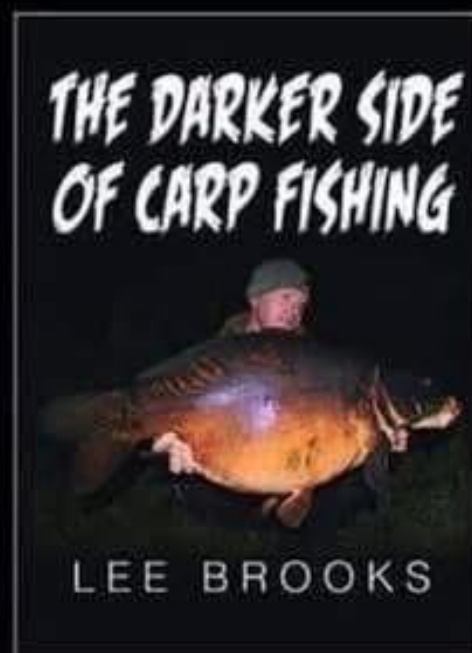
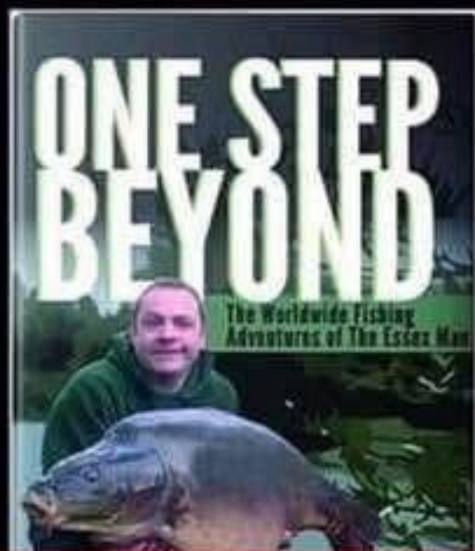
The fish below in the water is 23lb 10oz, and the one below that is my current PB of 26lb 14oz.



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EXCLUSIVE



MISSION FOR THE FIRST 30

Wes Leadbeater

FREE LINE



FIELD NOTES

Well, at the start of the year, I set myself a goal that I will get out and do more fishing in the UK instead of France and try to get myself a UK 30. Since start of this year, I have been to a lot of lakes in the south in search for a 30 with no luck. There was one time I came very close when I was fishing Todber Manor for four nights on Little Hayes and managed to land 22 fish out of 25 bites that resulted in 11 different 20s up to 29lb. When I saw the scales go round and touch 29lb, I was gutted that I was 1lb short of my goal but buzzing at the same time because it was the session of a lifetime. Let's get to the interesting bit why I'm writing this report...

Well, basically, I fish a lovely private lake close to home, pretty much walking distance, but the only problem was there was no publicity on anything you catch, which put me off because if I caught a big fish and couldn't share it, people wouldn't believe me!

Eventually the owner said anything I catch I can put up on Instagram, Facebook and any social media page for people to see as long as I don't tell anyone where the water is, and with that, I was straight down there. This lovely little lake only holds about 30 or maybe 40 carp up to 40lb.



FIELD NOTES

My first session down there, I did a day session with the girlfriend on a windy Saturday, managed four fish up to 18lb and left there pretty happy to be honest after managing four fish in a day session in a lake that holds maybe 30 to 40 carp. The following weekend, I gave the fishing a rest, had a weekend to myself and got some much-needed sleep that I needed with all this fishing and work. The following weekend on Saturday 6th April, I decided to do a few hours on the private lake in the afternoon, and little did I know it would be an afternoon I won't forget for a long time.

During most of afternoon, there was not even a beep, but in the last hour, I got both of my rods and put one on my old baited spots down the margin and the other one on a little gravel spot on the other side margins. I was fishing both rods on a German rig using a size 6 Viper Curve Shank with a DNA Baits Milky Malt Waffer with about ten SLK boilies over each rod, and within about 15 minutes, the first rod was off with a 20lb common. Luckily I had the girlfriend there to do the photos, so I got the pictures done really quickly and got the rod back down my right hand margin.

Unfortunately, that rod went quiet, and with only ten minutes left, I thought it would never happen and I'd still be chasing for my first 30.







FIELD NOTES

I can remember sitting there with the girlfriend and saying to her, “Look at my line – it’s twitching!” All of sudden, a massive swirl came up from my rod that was on the other side margin, and the rod was off. As soon as I lifted into it, it felt like a decent fish. It wasn’t until I saw it come to the surface that I knew straight away what I had. I was begging it would just go over the net cord, and when it did, the buzz was unreal. It resulted in me having my first ever UK 30 at 30lb 5oz, a mint common, and to share the special moment with the girlfriend was amazing. So this year so far I’ve had 82 carp – 16 different 20s, one 30 and my French fish were two 20s five 30s and one 40. My next mission is to get the 30lb mirror... so until next time, tight lines to all.

EXCLUSIVE



THE FLASH'S BIG LIN

Connor Smith

FREE LINE

FIELD NOTES

Hangman's pool, better known as the flash, is a proper headbanger of a lake that perfectly fits in the urban carping category. It's a big park lake with a low stock of fish, dog walkers who let their dogs run through your swim taking out your lines and a few snobby residents who don't particularly like you fishing 'their' lake. If that doesn't put you off then the bird life will. Good luck baiting up in the daylight, as the birds and ducks don't miss a thing; even the sight of a throwing stick gets them going mad.

Now, there is something that would make you look past all these downsides to this lake – it's name, the Big Lin, without a doubt the town's most sought after fish, which makes an appearance once or twice a year. I've even met people who have traveled from Cannock and Dudley to try and catch this old, dark and scaled Leney. I originally wanted to save this campaign for a good while until I felt like there was nothing left to do close to home, but with two lakes very close suffering with KHV and rumours of these KHV fish being moved into the Flash, I knew the time was now.

With a young daughter and a very demanding job in the bait industry, the majority of my angling is night sessions once a week in between work, when I can fit the time in. My first night, I decided to head into a swim where I had seen two catch pictures in the past and decided this would probably be my best bet whilst I try and work out the lake. I got there about 7pm and had an hour to get everything set up before it got dark. The lake is notoriously known for not being easy, so at around midnight, I decided to get my head down and hope for the best during the early morning.

Around 3am, I was awoken by a screaming Nash Siren, and I was into a fish. After a short fight, it was one of the smaller fish that resided in the lake, so it was unhooked in the net and sent off back to its watery home. I was confident as ever, now knowing that even though it was only a baby, everything was working how I hoped.

I got back into bed and got my head down ready for an early pack down in a few hours.

Over the next few sessions, not much changed.



FIELD NOTES

I was fishing in the shallower swims and catching a good number of the fish that had been born and grown in the lake. It was a numbers game now, and I knew the law of averages would have it that if I kept doing what I was doing, eventually one of the bigger fish, hopefully the Big Lin, would slip up.

Another few sessions had passed. Some had been blanks; some had been a bit more progressive with the odd better fish turning up, but still not the one I was after. I decided that on my next session I'd head up to the deeper water where I could fish up to an island. Now this probably would have been an area most people would have started at, but the bigger fish have learnt over the years that the island means danger. Anyway, I decided not to fish close up to the island but about 3-5 rod lengths away from it, as I figured that the carp must eat the food that anglers put there, but they must also be very cautious close to the island, so maybe having my hookbait away from the island they'd drop their guard feeding there but be cautious close up to the island.

So the night had come when I decided to put my plan to action. I pushed my heavy barrow into the swim whilst thinking about my game plan. I was confident that tonight would be the night it all came together. I got to my chosen swim and it was empty. This made me even more confident. I decided to spread my rods out, one in the open water to my left, my middle rod towards the island like I planned and my third rod out in the open to the right. I managed to get my rods where I wanted them and got a bit of bait out around my chosen areas before the birds dive-bombed the life out of it. Up went the bivvy and on went the kettle. I sat there hoping and hoping as I waited for the dark to come in so I could get some bait out without the birds disturbing the areas.

Around 9pm, it was dark enough to put a good head of bait out, so now was the time to go ahead with my baiting plan. I put around half a kilogram of Priority Baits Supreme Marine boilies as close to the island as I could and then around 20 boilies about three to five rod lengths back where my hookbait was.

FIELD NOTES

I was hoping this would look like boilies that hadn't quite reached the spot, which I was hoping the wiser carp would feed on whilst the younger fish would be having a good grub around the baited spot close to the island.

Midnight came, and I still had nothing to report on. I had a text off my girlfriend asking how I was getting on, and I replied with the words, "What do you think?" Just as I pressed send, my alarm absolutely went into meltdown – a screaming Siren letting off a one-toner. I ran out of my bivvy to see the middle rod bouncing all over the place with the fish I was connected to ripping line off the reel. I grabbed my rod, and it felt like I was hooked onto a train. My bait plan had worked because this was definitely one of the bigger fish in the lake. I couldn't do a thing with it. After a few minutes I managed to get a bit of control over the fish, but it was still giving me the runaround.

The fight was immense, but I was starting to gain a bit of line back now, and I could see it was going to come up in the water at any moment. I could see a few ripples on the surface, which was lit up from the streetlights, and that's when I noticed it was a big fish – the Big Lin.





FIELD NOTES

My heart dropped and the nerves really kicked in now. I loosened the clutch up a considerable amount. I did not want the hook to pull on this fish because I might never get the chance to catch it again, and there's not a chance anyone would believe me if I told them I lost it at the net. The fight went on with my loose clutch, but the fish was beaten by now, and it wasn't too hard to guide this old warrior over the net cord.

In it went. I couldn't believe it! I'd caught the big Lin in under ten sessions! I unhooked the fish and got him in the sling to have a little rest. I needed one too. The adrenaline was crazy, and first thing I did was call my brother-in-law to come have a look and take a few pics for me. No answer... I thought, you're going to have to miss out on this one, mate, and I got straight on the phone to my girlfriend. She answered the phone, and before she could even say anything, I said, "Babe, I've got the Big Lin!" She thought I was joking and told me to shut up! I said, "No, really, I've got the big Lin in the net!" She was as gobsmacked as me.

My missus ain't no angler, but she knows a fair bit and knows what's what, as all I do is talk about carp fishing 24/7, as she always reminds me.



FIELD NOTES

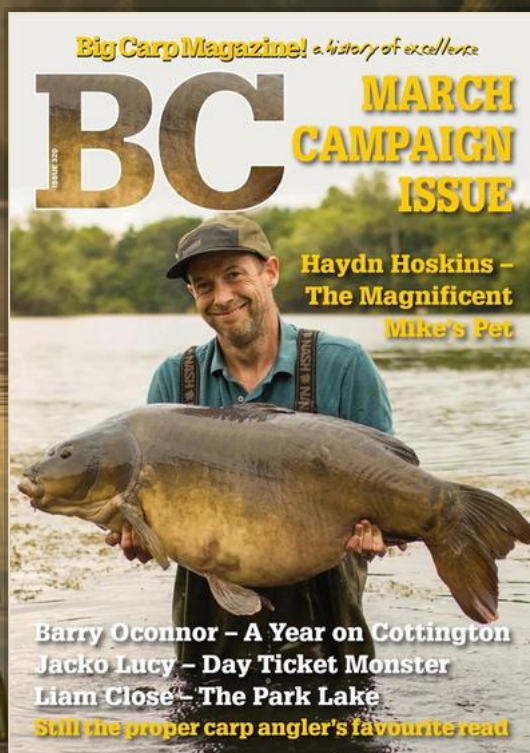
She asked if I'd called Aaron, her brother, and I explained to her that his phone was off. I didn't even need to ask her; she said she'd come and do the pictures for me – what a good'un. She came down straight away, and I got the fish out on the mat. I hadn't even weighed it yet. I got the scales out, and they bounced round to 33lbs 9oz – the biggest fish in the lake and a new PB for me. It wasn't at its top weight, but I really didn't mind! I know lads who have spent years after this fish, many of them even giving up on it. I took a few pictures on the bank and even had a few water shots with it. I was still over the moon.

After taking a few water shots, I let my prize swim out of my arms and watched as this magnificent old creature swam away. Now that's a carp that could tell you some tales, as it's watched the environment build up around it over the years. Since that capture, I've done a few sessions on the lake, but I feel like my goal's been completed on there now. I'm also happy to say that so far the lake is KHV free, and hopefully it stays that way, so the fish that reside in this headbanger of a lake can live the rest of their lives, and the big Lin can make someone else's dreams come true too!

Connor Smith.

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