

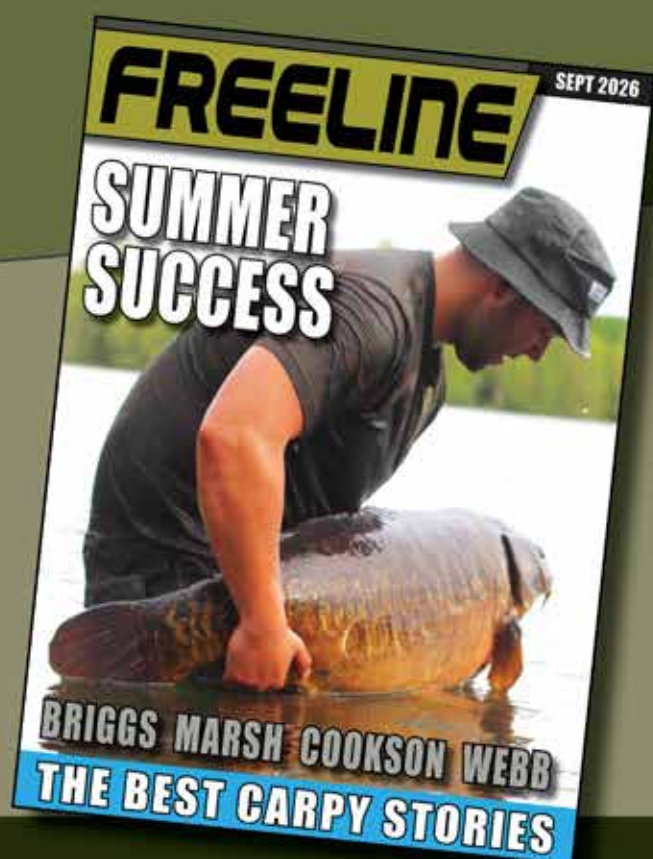
SEPTEMBER ISSUES OF **BIG CARP** & **FREELINE** MAGAZINES - FREE HERE:

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OSCAR THORNTON - SUMMER SESSIONS

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3	SANDHURST
4	FARLOWS LAKE
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
10	AVID

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

BIG CARP: 362 SEPT 2026

CRAZY CARP

OVER
100 PAGES
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THORNTON
SWEETMAN

ROSE
HOGG
RARES

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CUSTOMER REVIEWS

Big shoutout to the lads at Digger Boats Ltd
I've been living onsite at Carthagena Fisheries for
23 years now, and we've had plenty of work done
over the years... but this one tops the lot!

We've been fighting a losing battle with reeds tak-
ing over the entrance to one of our bays for a few
years now. Even tried getting in ourselves with dry
suits and pulling them out by hand absolutely brutal
work and getting nowhere fast... was starting to
think we'd lose the bay completely.

On top of that, the carp were loving it — hiding in
the reeds and becoming a nightmare to catch
We'd had other companies in before with weed boats,
but if I'm honest, the results just weren't great.

Got James from Digger Boats in, he came down,
had a proper look and got stuck in... and what a job
they've done!

3 days later and the place has been completely
transformed it's something I've wanted sorted for
years and it's finally done.

Already this spring we've had over 22 fish out —
including a few we haven't seen in years! Normal-
ly we'd only see a handful by now. Can't recommend
them enough — top lads, proper job done

Thanks again boys — Jerry Hammond

“

A massive thank you to Digger Boats you did
an amazing job on our lake 🙌

Anyone reading this, these guys are 10/10
very professional and didn't stop for 2 days
solid.

Estimated amount of debris recovered
60tons, they did a fantastic job and I would
highly recommend 🙌

★★★★★

Stuart Stockton
Chesterton Community Angling Club



Neil Ellis 📌 recommends Digger Boats.

39m · 🌐

diggerboats.com has just completed some norfolk reed
removal on one of our club lakes. The diggerboats team
worked their socks off and done a great job giving great
value for money, going well beyond what was the basic
requirement, feedback from members has been really
positive with how the lake is now looking.
If you are a club or commercial fishery looking for a
professional fishery management/ maintenance company then
give diggerboats a call, we at Colchester Piscatorial Society
are already looking at more fallen tree removal work for the
diggerboat team to undertake !



Mark Turrell

Great job done, can't believe the difference, thank you guys at Digger boat 🙌🍷



Top fan

Stuart Stockton

Fantastic company highly recommend these guys they did a fantastic job on our lake
Highly knowledgeable and didn't stop for 2 days
A very professional service 🙌

The company can carry out any aquatic projects on Rivers, Canals, Lakes,
Ponds and Marinas. Weed removal, dredging, water deepening, reed and
rush removal, aquatic tree works and much more.

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Publications 2026



Front Cover:
Tintisan Rares with the
new Linear Big Fully.



Well how hot has the last month or so been - Jesus!! Those that have braved the record breaking temperatures have been treated to some excellent fishing despite the rapidly falling water levels.

Someone who is on a roll recently is young Amelia Rose. She's back after another exciting trip to Yateley. Gaz Fareham has been searching the canals of Europe for a big carp and comes up trumps. Ever consistent Oscar Thornton has been enjoying the summer sessions. Follow his tips to make the best of the current conditions. Rich Hogg continues his ventures on the local canals. Scott Sweetman has some great tips for maximising your marker game. Then lastly it's cover star Tintisan Rares with an epic capture of Linear's new Big Fully.

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Paintings of the carp that became part of angling history.



RIP SIR PETE SPRINGATE



“Very sad news with the passing of Sir Pete Springate, one of the genuine legends and pioneers of British carp fishing.

Pete’s place in carp-fishing history is unquestionable. From the famous Yeoveney brace of 36½lb and 38½lb in 1978, to his extraordinary captures from Wraysbury, his name became associated with some of the most memorable moments and most iconic carp in British angling.

In July 1991, Pete caught Mary from Wraysbury at 45lb 6oz. The following

year he produced one of the great moments in carp-fishing history when he caught Mary again at 47lb and Mary's Mate at 37lb 8oz within just three hours of each other. His remarkable list of captures also included fish such as Basil, Heather and the Sonning Eye. Pete's ability wasn't confined to pursuing famous big carp. His extraordinary consistency and watercraft were demonstrated when he caught a carp from the surface in 48 consecutive calendar months — four complete years, including through the winter months.

In 2010, Pete was inducted into the Carp Fishing Hall of Fame, recognition of an angling career that had already inspired generations of carp anglers.

Despite those achievements, Pete was renowned for being understated and for keeping himself away from the limelight. His reputation

was built on his angling, his watercraft and the respect he earned from fellow anglers. British carp fishing has lost one of its truly great figures. Thoughts are with Pete's family, friends and all those who knew him.

Rest in peace, Sir Pete Springate. A pioneering angler whose name will forever be part of British carp-fishing history"

Martin Wake



RIP PAUL HUNT



"Bit of bad news im afraid... our dear old friend Paul Hunt, best known to us us all , as the guy from Canadian Carping on the mighty St Lawrence river, and our early exploits over Darenth, as part of the Mainline team, a long time friend of Steve and Kevs, from before the start of

of thought in those early days, as to how many anglers would make that mighty trek across the pond to carp fish in Canada.. well Paul spotted something we all missed.. and he guided countless English anglers on those exploits on the enormous river..

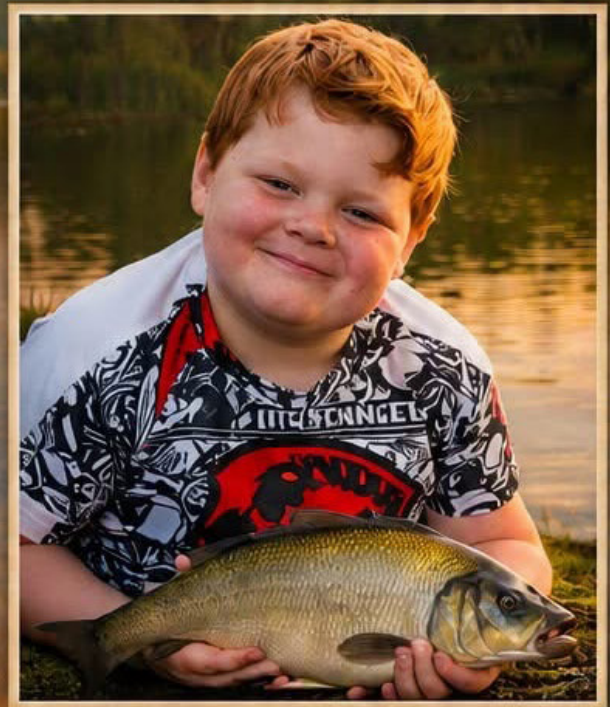
Mainline...was such a happy ..i only just found out Paul had go lucky guy, we had a great sadly passed when i saw this time, he even got on really well post from Pauls wife Lisa... Paul with young Rael.. lol.. always had not long retired, sold all the plotting and planning what tackle, and went on a few well to try next... did love my time deserved holidays... over Darenth.. and had a great RIP.. my old friend..." laugh, as did we all.....who'd Zenon Bojko



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LEWIS SMITH



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Neil Fallows

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DREAM COME TRUE FOR BCAC PAIR



“Still feels a little surreal writing this... After drawing a really good peg for the final, we knew we were going to be in with a great chance of winning, as long as the fish turned up.

Thankfully, the fish did turn up! From there, it was all about sticking to the plan and working together throughout the final. The first 24 hours were a little tight at times, but we managed to keep ticking fish off and putting ourselves in a strong position. Going into the second night, we knew it was going to come

down to that last morning when the fish hopefully rocked up on the surface. Thankfully, they did, and we managed to make the most of it, landing 15 fish on the final morning.

That was enough to secure 1st place and become British Carp Angling Champions 2026!

When the final hooter sounded and we knew we'd done enough, it was an unbelievable feeling. All the preparation, long hours and hard work had finally paid off,” reported Lewis Brown and Blaise Price.

ALBURY & HERON LAKES CHALLENGE CUP 2026



Well what a fantastic weekend had by all and an equally great amount of money raised for Prostate Cancer UK. We are currently standing at £2,002.70 (Including gift aid) on our Just Giving Page! https://www.justgiving.com/page/lindsey-humphrey-4?utm_medium=FA&utm_source=CL Well done to the winning pair Kenny and Andy whose 3 fish combined weight of 81lbs 14ozs won them the match. Also too for their generosity in donating the £110 prize money to the charity as well, well done guys A weekend full of banter and laughs and a great time had by all. PB buckets at the end as well. Great social BBQ on Saturday afternoon, and most importantly the point of the weekend was opening up the conversation of talking about



men getting checked early for prostate cancer! Go get your PSA test from your GP! We are always blown away by the generosity of our members especially giving up a weekend to take part, and all those that couldn't but donating through the just giving page and sending messages of support, it means a lot!! Big thanks to our weighing stewards Dave Carter David Chamberlain and

Anthony Gubler and most of all, to all members of the syndicate, you never let us down for this annual event. Also thanks to Stephen Dean for the flags. Thanks to donations of raffle prizes from Innovate Baits Mainline Baits St Ives Tackle Cambs @Polepositiontackle Dates for your diary for next year, 6th - 8th August. 2027 for the Albury & Heron Lakes Challenge Cup 2027.

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Head to our website & check out our Official Bluebell Lakes magazine packed with lake information, rules and tackle shop offerings. Downloadable for free! Our magazine includes the scenes information on how our iconic Bluebell Lakes began and has evolved into the complex you see today. Our team are available 7days a week, 12hrs a day to help make your visit to Bluebell Lakes an unforgettable experience. When is your next visit to Bluebell Lakes?



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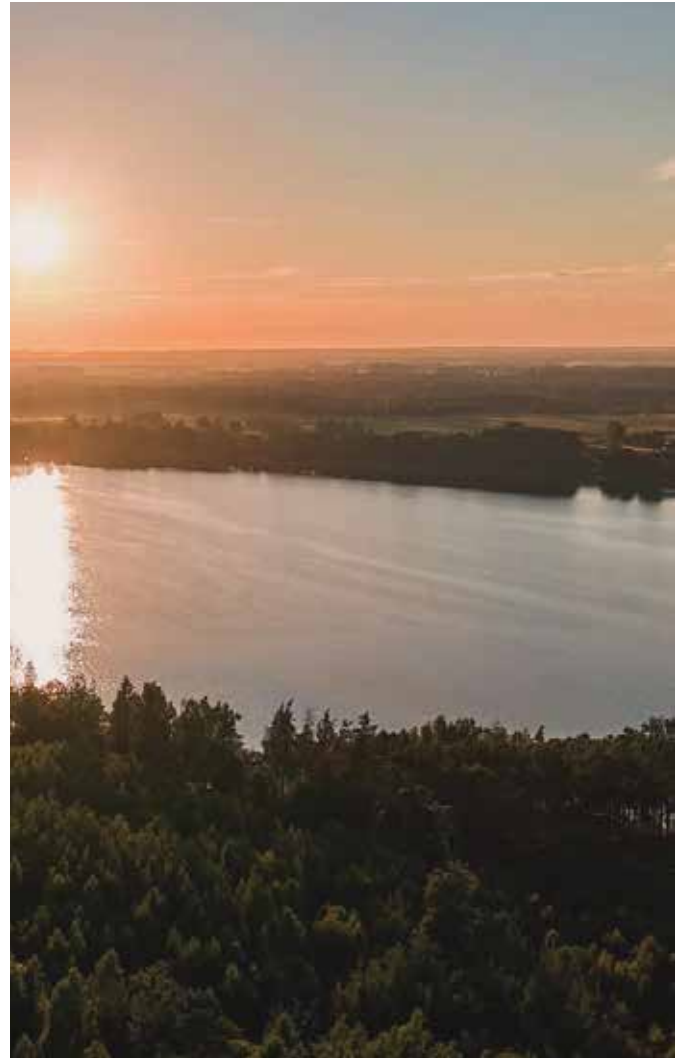


ENGLAND WIN: KAYLEIGH WORLD CHAMP



Huge congratulations to Kayleigh Dowd . In July she WON Individual Gold and Team Silver in the Ladies Carp World Championships in Latvia... However, returning this year, we had a new plan in place and felt confident as a team.

Here's her story: "This year's World Championships were held in Latvia on Lake Balote, a lake of approximately 450 acres with depths of up to 10 feet and a very silty lakebed. We also competed on the same lake at the 2024 World Championships, where we didn't perform as well as we had hoped. My partner, Ellen Beedham, and I drew peg B1, which we were pleased with as it was an end peg. The first 24 hours were fairly slow, but after making a few adjustments, the swim



continued to improve and got stronger as the competition progressed. In the end, we caught 37 fish for a total weight of 165kg, which was enough to make us Individual World Champions.

It was an incredible experience and something I have always wanted to achieve at international level. As a team, we're already looking ahead to South Africa in 2027 and feeling

confident about our chances. Hopefully, we'll be able to go one better and bring home the team title."

The final result is super impressive: 37 fish for 165kg meant she dominated the field, enough to crown herself and Ellen Beedham individual champions of the world!

Kayleigh is back in the UK now... but was straight back out on the bank. Well done

REEL IMPACT ANGLING



Not every young person thrives in busy, noisy environments.

For many, the biggest difference isn't simply being outdoors. It's having the space to breathe. That's one of the reasons Reel Impact delivers its sessions at OAK LAKES FISHERIES. Nestled within the peaceful countryside of Southminster, away from the noise and distractions of busy activity centres, Oak Lakes provides a calm, structured environment where young people can slow down, focus and reconnect with themselves, with nature and with others.

From September 2026, we're opening a limited number of additional funded places for young people aged 14+ and Ellen Beedham individual champions of the world!

If you support a young person who would benefit from a calm, supportive outdoor environment, we'd love to hear from you.

Referrals officially open on Monday 10th August. Keep an eye on our social media and website for full referral information.

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SANDOWN WINTER CARP SHOW RETURNS



The Sandown Winter Show is back again this November and it promises to be another fantastic weekend

Vince Davies, who created and established 'The Big One' fishing show as, arguably, the biggest angling show in Europe, brings you The Winter Carp show 2026.

2026 brings Vince Davies and Stuart Berrie back together in an inspired partnership. Vince's vast experience of the angling industry and building successful shows and Stuart's unparalleled expertise in Exhibition installation and operations is the perfect and complementary match. One thing is certain: they



understand, in depth, the needs of exhibitors and consumers alike.

The award-winning venue is highly accessible, boasts a brand new exhibition floor and, importantly, provides ample free parking for all.

It will also allow for a highly interactive show which will include talks, demonstrations

and tutorials.

Meet up with friends again this year, see all the big brands, all the latest gear will be on show and there's sure to be lots of special show bargains available as usual.

Plus you can meet the stars, get a selfie and an autograph, it's a great weekend for all the family.

TAC-TIE

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



0250 delkim screaming with this mirror slipping over the net chord for the 3rd time this season



27lb day ticket common



Beauty of 31lb 12oz



One of the oldest fish



One of the new stockies



24lb 5oz very long fish from Pipe Lake



Lean mirror



Nice long common

Oak Lakes Fisheries

www.oaklakesfisheries.co.uk



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



35lb 8oz

Another of the A Team - Micky at 35lb 8oz



Lovely mirror for Clayton.
Part of a 3 fish haul



28lb 8oz

The big ghosty



20lb 2oz

20lb 2oz



20lb 2oz



21lb 5oz



20lb

Oak Lakes Fisheries

www.oaklakesfisheries.co.uk



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



16lb 4oz

Gary with a long scaly



28 lbs



Cracking carp 22lb 8oz



19 lb 4 oz



28lb 14oz

A familiar 28lb



15 lb



17lb



15lb



14lb



"Gary's Linear"



16lb



16lb

Oak Lakes Fisheries

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



17 lb 2 oz



Well done Clayton



Nice one



25 lb 2 oz



20lb 2oz



22lb 8oz

One of the new stock



16lb



Early morning hard fighting common



18lb stockie



A perfect common

CATCH REPORTS

Scott Parry with the unmistakable 'Bert' at a very nice weight of 45lb+

BERNER'S BEAST



Mike Deakin with Doc's Fish at 45lb, caught from Kingsmead One

DOCTOR DOCTOR



Andrew Bennett
with a recent
classic mirror

BIG PIT BRUTE



NOT SO COMMON

Alan Jackson said “
new uk pb at 50.10oz,
buzzing!”



SO CLOSE



Dan Coffey has just returned from a trip to Combley Main lake on the Isle of Wight where he managed to bank not only the lakes largest resident, but also the island's largest weighing an impressive 59lb 8oz



Sat 1st August

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Ralf Wilkinson,
well happy with
this mid-forty
stunner.



Lee Plant breaks
a long standing PB
with this incredible

BRONZE BEAUTY



LONDON LUMP



Farley Clark caught this 36lb from a London park lake.

CATCH REPORTS

YES SIR SARGEANT SIR



Alan Harper with The Sergeant at 43.14 from Long Lake.



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NIFTY FIFTY

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in applesMatt
Cammack.



SPELL BINDING

'Hagrid' makes
an appearance



SADDLE UP

George Benos
with the saddle
back common from
Burghfield at 44+



GRENVILLE'S MOST WANTED



Robert Higgins landing arguably one of the most sort after fish in Grenville and doing it on his birthday.. Brown 15 at a top weight of 57.01 and smashing his PB.

NOT THE UNIT

Adam Rawlings
and a 49lb



HELLO MATE



Charlie's Mate from Frimley Pit 3 — one of the UK's most sought-after carp and a fish that's been firmly on Dan Winfield's hit list.



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CATCH REPORTS

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OZZIE
OZZIE**

A bucket load of Legacy and The Big Linear lay in Oz's net



**DAY TICKET
DELIGHT**



Alan Clarke with another absolute unit, but this time fully scaled too 45lb 7oz from his local day ticket lake

Tom Stokes and a
Self-take of a Pit 4 forty
from this week

STOKED



**LINEAR
LUMP**



James Holtom Fished St John's landing 8 fish from 22lb to his
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RIVER RESULT



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SYNDICATE SUCCESS



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AMELIA ROSE

RETURN TO YATELEY

After catching my first ever 30lb carp from Yateley Pads Lake back in March, I couldn't wait to return. That first trip was already one of my favourite fishing memories, so when my dad told me I was going back to Yateley, I was absolutely made up. This time it was going to be even more special because my mum was coming too. She's watched me and my dad go fishing loads of times, but now I wanted to show her how much I'd learned, how I'd been doing and hopefully teach her a few things too. I didn't know it yet, but this was going to turn into one of the best sessions I've ever had.

Back at the Pads: We arrived at Yateley at around 9:30am and I was so excited to be back. Straight away the lake looked completely different from when I'd last seen it in March. The lily pads had come right up, there was weed everywhere and the whole



lake looked really carpy. Before getting any tackle out, we walked a full lap of the lake looking for signs of fish. When we got around to Peg 11, The Reeds, I saw a couple of fish showing in the area. I already knew a little bit about the swim because our friend Michael had fished it when we were there I March and caught the Redmire Common from it. That was enough for

me. Before my dad could claim it, my rods were going in Peg 11! Dad had to settle for Peg 12 next door.

If It Isn't Broken...: I decided to stick with exactly what had been working for me all year. Solid bags, Or as I call them, my Rob Burgess Specials! I'd learned loads about solid bag fishing from watching Rob's videos, and when I met him at the Fish N Show he showed me

even more little tricks about how he prepares them. They'd caught me fish everywhere I'd been this year, so there was absolutely no chance I was changing now. I got the rods fishing at around 12 wraps and settled into the swim. Now we just needed a carp.

Meet Benny: The first action finally came at around 6pm.

The alarm sounded and I picked up the rod, but it didn't take long before we realised this wasn't quite the Yateley original I had been hoping for.

It was a bream, We were told it was actually an old bream known as Benny, supposedly one of the oldest bream in the lake My dad thought this was hilarious and has been



winding me up about Benny ever since. Apparently, Benny is Lumpy's best friend, and usually gets caught together. At the time, none of us knew this or realised how funny that joke was going to become later in the session.

Mum's Turn: Not long afterwards my left-hand rod was away. This time I decided to let my Mum take it. I wanted her to experience catching a Yateley carp for herself, so I handed her the rod and talked her through playing the fish. Eventually, we slipped the net underneath a lovely little 9lb zip linear. It was Mum's first ever mirror carp and her first Yateley carp. I was really happy for her...But that was enough. I told her she'd had her turn and she wasn't getting any more of my fish! It was my turn again.

Getting Ready for the Night: As darkness arrived, I wanted everything perfect for the night. I tied two fresh solid

bags and this time gave them a dip in Bloodworm Liquid before casting them back onto the spots. The lake went dark, everyone settled down and eventually we climbed into bed. Then at around 12:45am, one of my alarms went. I jumped up and soon had a small mirror of around 8lb in the net. We quickly took a photograph and video before slipping it back. I was absolutely shattered. I tied another solid bag on, cast it back out and pretty much climbed straight back into bed. I didn't stay there for very long. Something Much Bigger, Suddenly I was woken by another alarm. This one was different. The alarm was absolutely melting off and line was ripping from the spool. I grabbed the rod and as soon as I connected with the fish, I knew it was better. It felt heavy the fish powered away and started taking me through the weed beds. Every

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time I thought I was gaining some line, it seemed to find another patch of weed. I was nervous but also really excited. More than anything, I wanted to land it because Mum was there. She'd heard about all the fish I'd caught this year, but now she was actually there watching me battle what felt like a really big carp. Eventually we managed to get it moving towards us. Then it rolled, Dad got the net underneath it and we looked down. Bosh! It was an absolute chunk. I knew straight away this was the fish we'd been waiting for. When we weighed it, the scales settled at... 35.8lb! A NEW PB!

I couldn't believe it. Another 30lb-plus carp and another incredible old Yateley fish. We took our photographs and videos before carefully returning her to the lake. This time I didn't even bother putting the rods back out. I was

exhausted. I'd had enough for one night and went straight back to bed!

It Was Lumpy!: The following morning things got even better. We managed to confirm the identity of the fish. I'd caught Lumpy, one of the old Yateley originals. I couldn't believe it. We learned that Lumpy is one of the oldest carp in the lake and can normally reach around 42lb, although she was down in weight after spawning. And then we learned something else... Lumpy is known for sometimes getting caught around the same time as Benny the bream! Dad couldn't believe it. So after all his jokes the night before about me catching Lumpy's best mate Benny, I'd actually gone and caught Lumpy as well. I'm never going to hear the end of that one. More importantly, Lumpy at 35.8lb became my new personal best and my fourth carp over 30lb of the year.



Dad Was Getting Worried: By the next morning, Dad was starting to feel the pressure. Mum had caught, I'd caught. I'd also just landed the biggest fish of the trip and Dad still hadn't had one! He kept trying and eventually, at around 9:30am, his alarm finally sounded. He landed a lovely little fully scaled mirror. Then he admitted something. While I'd been asleep, he'd changed over to solid bags... MY solid bags! He'd been stealing the bags I'd made while I was asleep! He might be a good teacher, but apparently the student is starting to teach him a few things now.

Doing My Homework: The fishing slowed down during the day, but I didn't want to waste the opportunity of being at Yateley. I got the rods out and spent some time practising in different swims. I used the lead to feel the lakebed, looked for different spots and practised my casting

and spodding. I also made notes about what I found in the different areas, Yateley is somewhere I definitely want to keep coming back to, so everything I learn now could help me on a future session. Even when I'm not catching, I love learning.

Son of Black Spot: At around 7pm, we sat down for our tea. Mum was cooking and we were all talking about the session when suddenly... The rod absolutely screamed off, Dinner would have to wait! I grabbed the rod and was into another carp. After another great fight we slipped the net underneath a beautiful old-looking fish. We soon found out this wasn't just any carp either. It was another known Yateley fish... The Son of Black Spot. At 27.5lb, it was another incredible carp to add to the session. First Lumpy at 35.8lb and now Son of Black Spot at 27.5lb. I couldn't believe the session I was having, While



we were taking photographs, suddenly Dad's alarm went as well. He ran back to his swim and managed to land a little common. That meant we could get something I'd really wanted from the trip – a photograph together with my mum & dad holding a carp. That moment is one of my favourites from the whole session. It wasn't about which fish was biggest. It was me and my dad, sitting together at Yateley Pads Lake, both holding carp we'd caught at exactly the same time.

One Last Morning: That night everything finally went quiet. For once, I actually managed to get a proper night's sleep! The following morning it was time to start packing away. We slowly began loading everything up but, like all carp anglers do, we left the rods out until the very last minute. You never know. There might always be one more bite. And there was. Unfortunately...



Dad's rod went! Then it went again. He managed a 18lb mirror, followed by another mirror of 19.7lb. And just when we thought the session was finished, he even added a tench. Dad was suddenly catching everything! By the end he'd managed to beat me on the number of fish caught. But there was one small problem for him... Every single one of his carp was under 20lb! So I've agreed he can have the numbers. I'll keep the big ones.

More Than Just a PB: Looking back, this session wasn't special just because I caught my new PB. Of course, catching Lumpy at 35.8lb is something I'll remember forever. Finding out afterwards that she was one of the old Yateley originals made it even more incredible. Then adding The Son of Black Spot at 27.5lb made an already unbelievable trip even better. But my favourite thing about the session was being able to

experience it with both my mum and dad. I got to help Mum catch her first ever mirror carp. I got to show her some of the things Dad has taught me. I got to fish alongside Dad, even though he kept stealing my solid bags. And we got our first proper family-catch photograph together. I also came away knowing more about the lake than when I arrived. I practised my watercraft, found new spots and made notes ready for the next time I'm lucky enough to return. That's one of the things I love most about carp fishing. Every session teaches you something. And sometimes, if everything goes right, you get to meet a very special old carp along the way. Lumpy – 35.8lb. My new personal best. My fourth 30lb-plus carp of the year. And definitely a night at Yateley Pads Lake that I'll never forget. Until next time, Yateley...





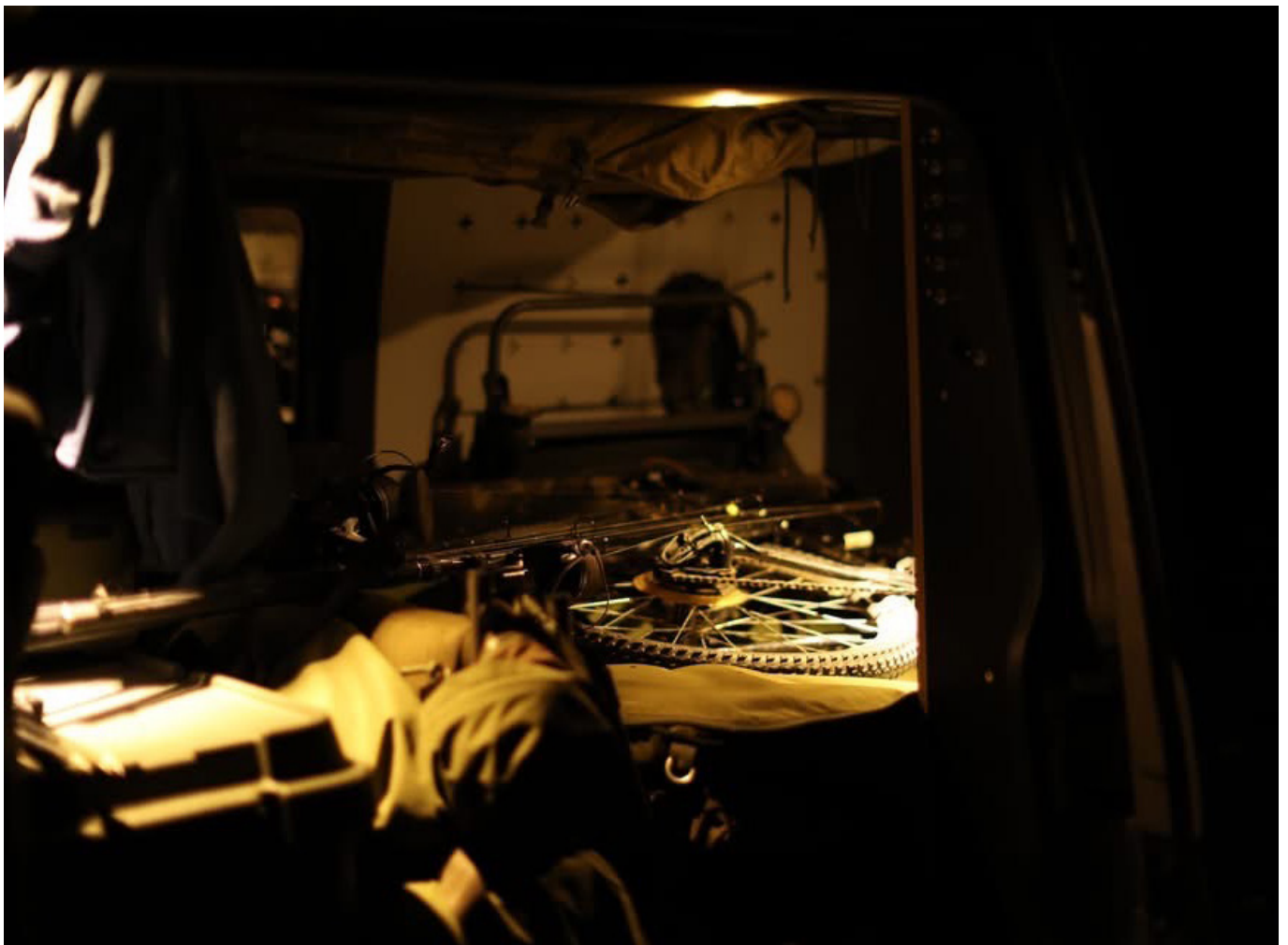
GAZ FAREHAM

BIG CANAL CARP

Last Spring's canal trip through the following years was a pretty special one. I'd done a similar trip the year before and managed just two bites, admittedly one was a whisker under fifty and the other a goodun too, but I'd worked ridiculously hard and been stung by severe weather. I'd done the legwork though and knew I needed to get back. Halfway

trip, I was beginning to think it was going to be another wild goose chase, resulting in nothing other than a stack of calories burned walking and looking. The European canals can be cruel and unforgiving places to angle - savage flow, massively weedy, boat traffic, public and often hugely

nomadic carp and literally proper old canal giant.
miles and miles for them I couldn't tell you how
to hide in. Finally though, big it was, for once I wish
a couple of sightings gave I'd weighed it but all my
the game away, serendipity rods were out of the game,
played its hand - I made the I'd just done self-takes of
right choices a few days of another mega brace including
big bait ups primed the areas another mirror around forty
and everything came together pound, the light was fading
in a few unbelievable days by the minute, there was
angling. This turned out to be public everywhere and to
my last bite of the spell, the be honest, I was blissful by
fifth or sixth that day, and a this point and couldn't really



have cared less. Either way I was leaving, and that was it wasn't small, but was still that, I headed off happy to the smallest of the best three, pastures new.

Tactics were simple - size and was probably ten pound smaller than the biggest of 4 Choddy hooks, whipped to them at just under 60. The Mouthtrap and fished long self takes were a poorly 25lb Dark Matter soft boom executed rush, but captured hinges on Heli safes with 3oz the moment perfectly - she leads. Prototype Baitworks was big, and old, and I'd pop ups fished over big had my fill. The bubble was spreads of Creamino did the burst that evening as another business amongst the fresh couple of anglers asked when spring weed growth.'





OSCAR THORNTON

SUMMER CARPING

We spend months in morning periods. Where I'm the winter craving warm evenings, barbeques and first light are the areas I'm nomadic big carp in search of looking to target.

food. Summer no doubt offers Lake and stock dependant, some of the best fishing you I generally like to give them can get, and quite often, I some bait – Hemp, seed, nuts find lakes can be really quiet and boilies, usually put on one through this period during spot with a few rods fished the lead up to autumn. over the top would be my go to

For me, summer angling is – Looking for clean channels about putting rigs and bait with decent line lay alongside into areas I know they are the weedbeds. Big hookbaits spending the nights and early over the top, snowman style

is my go-to approach, giving them a big blatant hookbait to home in on.

I've always got my stalking kit ready to go, as often, you just need a few hours before or after work to create an opportunity. You don't need to do loads of hours in the summer, just fishing for chances and seeking opportunities will often bring consistent results







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RICH HOGG

CANAL SESSIONS

PART 7

11th January 2018

So, this is how I'm starting 2018 on the canals, with a colourfull little koi which has brightened up an otherwise dull day.

On the way home from what would have been a blank, I took a de-tour to another spot for a quick look

(with a rod of course) and this little fella was sticking out like a sore thumb, so it seemed only right to have a few casts free-lining a small chunk of VNF boilie as I had no bread.

Luck was finally on my side as it half-heartedly took the bait as it sank.

**10th February 2018**

First time out today in a few weeks and it was my first time targeting river carp.

Anticipation was high and the thought of the rod ripping round with a hard fighting wild fish from the river was enough for me but unfortunately, luck wasn't on my side and the result was a blank.

Hopefully il get chance for another river session before they close in a few weeks' time.

10th March 2018

It's been a long and quite honestly crap winter and iv only put in a handful of half-hearted sessions since Christmas, but now that spring is finally starting to show its face, I thought it felt right to jump back on the tow path this morning so I set up in the pouring rain.

I chose a stretch that's always proved a bit difficult in the past and expected to blank but it was great to



be back out and as long as there is no more snow in the forecast, it should be a more regular thing.

1st April 2018

So yesterday, the curse of the new fishing gear finally came to an end with this stunning 20lb warrior of a canal common, which fell to a yellow #VNF pop up with matching freebies close by.

The rod ripped off literally minutes into a short and freezing cold afternoon sesh

and after initially snagging me up, she somehow ended up in the net resulting in me just about scraping a 'march carp'! Buzzin'.

17th April 2018

After a quiet couple of weeks I decided to do my first staffs worcs session of the year. Only a quick couple of hours at first light so I wasn't expecting too much, but this hard fighting little mirror stumbled across the boilie crumb just in the nick of time





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and picked out the matching bright yellow #VNF pop up.

A couple of photos later and I'm off to work.

25th April 2018

I managed to get the rods out for a couple of hours at just gone 4 this morning, in hope of a quick result. As I clipped the last bobbin on, I caught I glimpse of a shooting star in the reflection of the water. I made my wish, sat back and waited, did it come true?... well, no I wanted the biggest

fish in the stretch but this mint common showed up right at last knockings so I was made up! A few crumbed up #vnf boilies and a couple of whole ones along with matching pop up was its downfall, all cupped out to the boats on the far bank.

1st June 2018

Back on it this weekend and I've gotta say, what a massive buzz it was to watch this stunning canal fully stumble over the net cord.





Just a quick couple of hours at first light needed to trip her up and what better way to kick June off! Genuinely doesn't matter how big they are when they look like this.

7th June 2018

I popped out this morning for an hour or so to flick a bit of bread about in hope of a quick result, but after a while it became clear they weren't up for taking off the top and after spotting a few carp

feeding on the bottom it made sense to run back to the van and grab a made up rod and sit it out.

I placed a rig with a #VNF wafter right down the edge where I previously saw the fish and only had to wait 20 minutes before spotting a dark grey shape on the far bank.

My luck was obviously in as it slowly cruised over and dropped down right on top of the bait.



There's absolutely no way to describe how awesome it is to watch all the action up close and personal including the moment the fish picks up the hookbait and tears off to the far bank again! Love it, and what a little gem too!

10th June 2018

A couple of hours on the tow path this weekend produced this mint canal common, not a monster but a beautiful dark

old fish in perfect condition and fighting fit. Again bursting off from under the rod tip and another one falling to a #VNF wafter on a short session.

12th June 2018

Over the moon with this scaly character from this morning. I turned up at half 6, saw the fish jump clean out the water so I semi - spooked it with a handful of #vnf half baits before under-arming a rig close to the



reeds on the far bank.

Half hour later the left-hand rod tears off and I find myself doing battle with this stunning old canal warrior!

15th June 2018

From scaly old warriors to leathery characters like this, the reason I love canals so much is because of the variety they have to offer and the 'not knowing' what will come along next. This mint leather carp burst out of the water like

a dolphin after tripping up on one of this morning's traps.

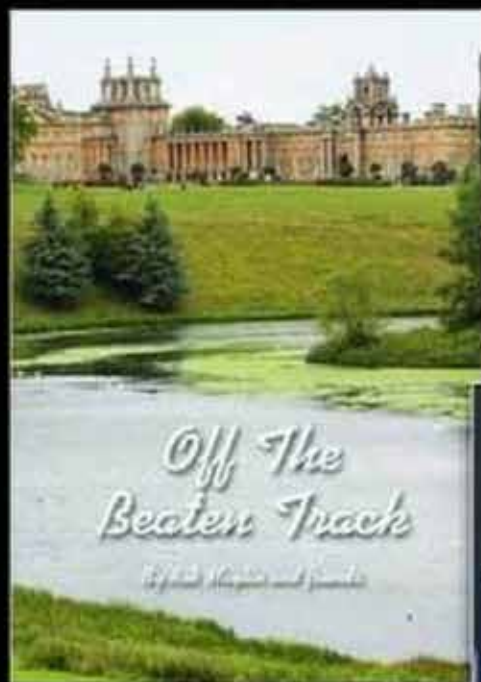
17th June 2018

Another mega quick sesh this morning dropping on showing fish. After about half an hour of watching and waiting, the rod burst in to action and this was the result, a hard fighting angry looking common. Absolutely loving the takes from under the rod tip off these beautiful wild fish.



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12th July 2018

Absolutely buzzing with this leathery old character from this morning. After losing 1 just minutes before, this stunner more than made up for it! Our paths actually crossed a few years ago so I'm really happy to see her still going strong and this time, on the bank as 20 plus fish. Fingers crossed she's got some years left in her.

20th July 2018

A lovely little brace of mirrors from this morning.

After stumbling across a couple of fish the night before, I thought it would be a good idea to head back to the spot this morning just as it was getting light.

After half an hour or so of waiting, the flat calm water was disturbed by a carp barging its way through the lilies which was followed up by a 1 toner off the margin spot. Just as the fish found the back of the net, the other rod flew off too... happy days!







SCOTT SWEETMAN

SPOT FINDING

Knowing what you're fishing over is IMPORTANT! Pronged leads have been a huge part of my armoury for years, and when it comes to understanding exactly what the carp are feeding over, I don't think there's anything better.

One of the biggest advantages is being able to bring back a sample of the lakebed on the lead. I've had carp fizzing over areas that felt terrible on a bare lead – soft drops, no clean drag – but after pulling a pronged lead back, it's come in covered in thick red bloodworm. That tells you everything you need to know; a deep silty area packed with natural food and an absolute money spot.

Another reason I rely so

heavily on pronged leads is for spot finding. With complete confidence in my IQ2 D-Rig, I'm always looking to fish directly on the bottom, and the only way to be absolutely sure a spot is clean is to run a pronged lead across it after locating it with a bare lead.

I've had plenty of occasions where a spot has felt great on the cast, only for the pronged lead to come back tangled in

silkweed. The same applies to gravel. Some areas can feel fantastic through a bare lead but turn out to be mussel beds or really rough, lumpy gravel. If a pronged lead glides effortlessly across a gravel spot, that's exactly the type of area I'm looking for.

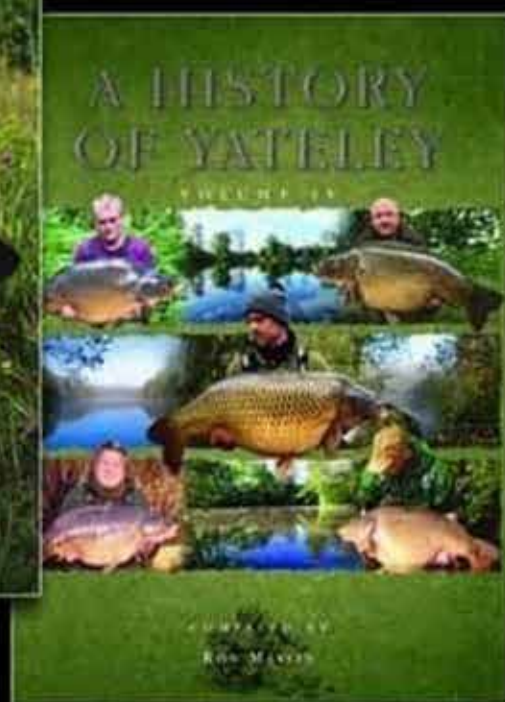
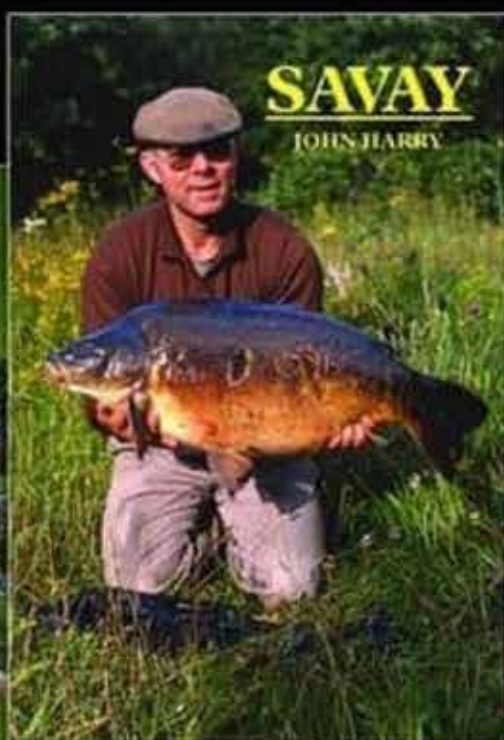
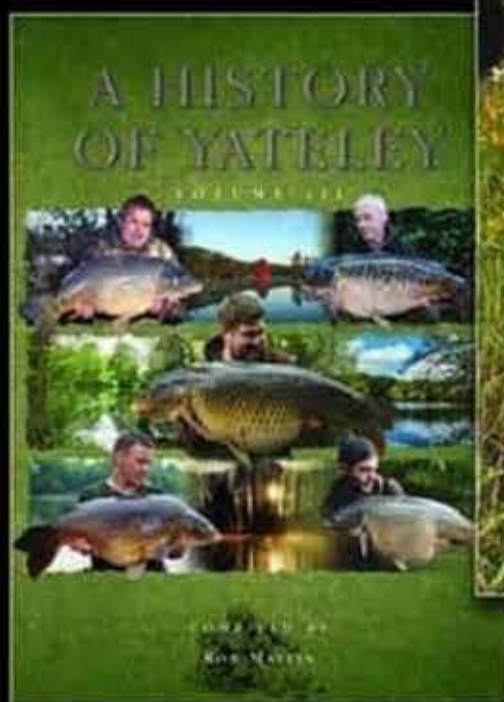
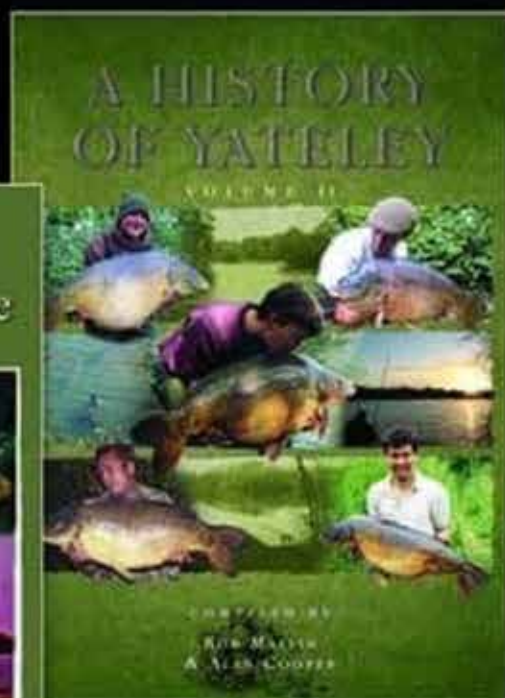
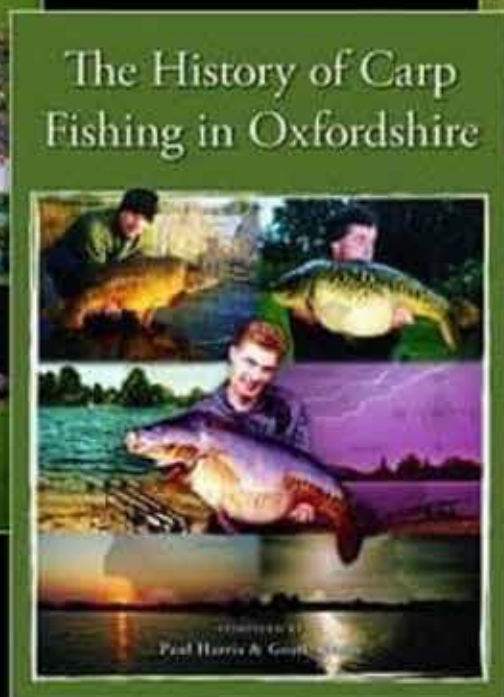
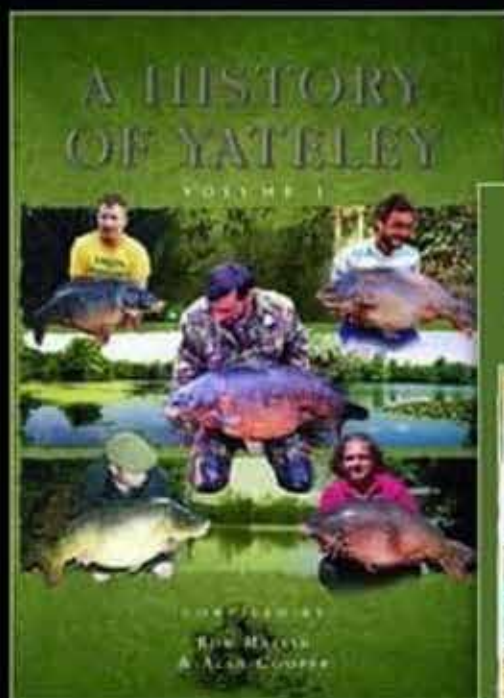
For me, pronged leads are more than just a lead – they're one of the best fish-finding tools you can have.







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TINTISAN RARES

A SESSION TO REMEMBER

How a casual joke turned into a front-cover reality on only my second session at Linear Fisheries.

Every carp angler carries a bucket list. For some, it's a milestone weight; for others, it's the historical aura of a legendary venue. But for me, it has always been about a specific look. I wanted a "fully"—one of those breathtaking, heavily scaled mirror carp that looks more like a gallery painting than a fish.

Exactly one month ago, during my blank debut session on Manor Farm at the famous Linear Fisheries complex, I was winding up a few of my mates. I jokingly sent them a message claiming I'd landed Manor's finest: the legendary "Big Fully." We had a laugh, packed up, and went home.

Little did I know, the angling gods were listening. On only my second-ever session on the venue, the joke became a reality. I still haven't quite

processed it. A genuine fish of a lifetime.

The Mid-Session Reset: The day hadn't exactly gone to plan. After a quiet morning, my spot was gatecrashed by a catfish. Dejected, I sat in my bivvy convinced the heavy predator had completely cleared out the zone and spooked any feeding carp. It felt like a mountain to climb.

At 3:00 PM, I decided it was time to re-prime the area and create some competition. I prepped a 5kg mix of my go-to ingredients: pre-soaked 10mm Mainline Cell, crunchy tiger nuts, and mixed particles, all heavily laced and boosted with Mainline Smart Liquid. By 4:00 PM, half a bucket of bait was perfectly distributed over the dancefloor.

The response was almost instant. Just 40 minutes later, the rod wrapped round—but it was just a small, lively common.

Knowing the main baiting

trick had drawn fish but might now be a bit chaotic, I made a tactical audible. Instead of dropping another rig right back in the middle of the bait, I tied up a tight solid bag and cast it just off the edge of the spot, fishing for a clever bite.

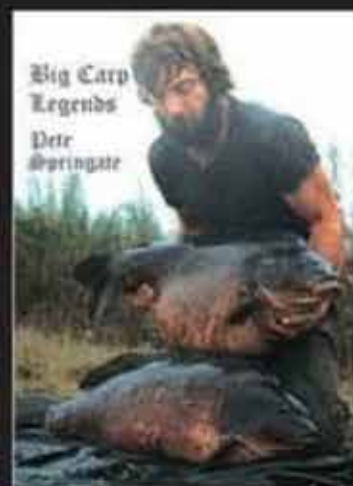
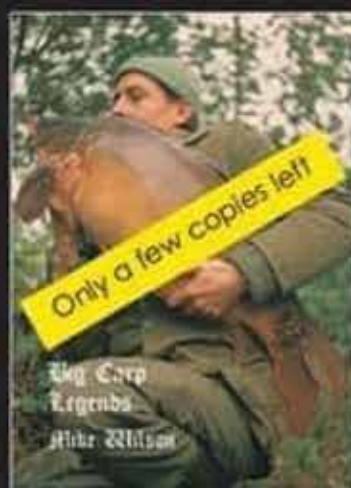
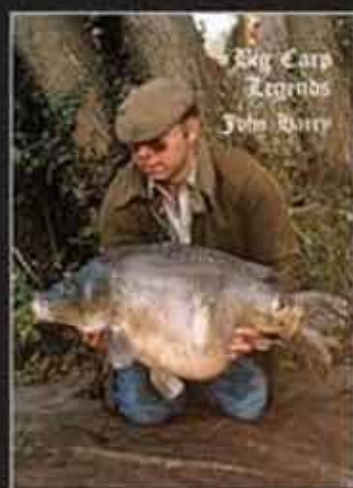
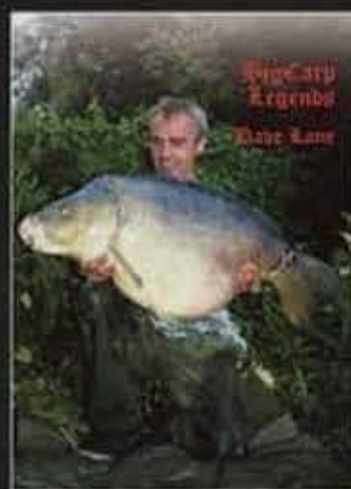
Heavy Plodders and Heartaches: At 6:30 PM, the trap sprung. The bobbin didn't fly to the rod top; instead, it lifted slowly, deliberately, and locked up.

The moment I lifted the rod, the blank doubled over and the compression went right into the butt. This was no small resident. A heavy, unstoppable, plodding weight anchored itself in the deep water. My heart was in my mouth as the line grated against thick weed beds. I took my time, breathing through the panic, slowly gaining inch after inch of precious line.

As the fish finally neared the margins and broke the

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surface, the afternoon light caught her side. My jaw hit the floor.

I recognized her instantly. It was her. "Please don't pop out. Please don't lose this one," I repeated like a mantra. The agonizing tension only evaporated when she gave one final roll, right over the drawstring and into the safety of the mesh.

Front Cover Material: Lifting

her onto the unhooking mat, the sheer, majestic beauty of the fish took my breath away. Every single scale was flawless—a textbook specimen, a prehistoric-looking creature, and an absolute unit of a carp.

My good friend Thomas Riches was on the bank with me, and honestly, I think he was just as buzzing as I was. Seeing her safely on the



mat, any remaining angling composure went completely out the window. The two of us were jumping around the swim like absolute schoolkids, cheering into the afternoon air. completely shell-shocked, nursing a brew with a smile that money couldn't buy. It was a session I knew I'd carry with me forever. But as it turns out, I won't be the only one admiring

We nailed the photography, slipped her safely back into the margins, and watched her strong tail swipe fade into the depths of Manor. I sat back in my bivvy, those scales—from a casual joke with the lads to the front cover of a national magazine, the Big Fully is officially in the history books.







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Big shoutout to the lads at Digger Boats Ltd
I've been living onsite at Carthage Fisheries for
23 years now, and we've had plenty of work done
over the years... but this one tops the lot!

We've been fighting a losing battle with reeds tak-
ing over the entrance to one of our bays for a few
years now. Even tried getting in ourselves with dry
suits and pulling them out by hand absolutely brutal
work and getting nowhere fast... was starting to
think we'd lose the bay completely.

On top of that, the carp were loving it — hiding in
the reeds and becoming a nightmare to catch
We'd had other companies in before with weed boats,
but if I'm honest, the results just weren't great.

Got James from Digger Boats in, he came down,
had a proper look and got stuck in... and what a job
they've done!

3 days later and the place has been completely
transformed it's something I've wanted sorted for
years and it's finally done.

Already this spring we've had over 22 fish out —
including a few we haven't seen in years! Normal-
ly we'd only see a handful by now. Can't recommend
them enough — top lads, proper job done

Thanks again boys — Jerry Hammond

“

A massive thank you to Digger Boats you did
an amazing job on our lake 🙌

Anyone reading this, these guys are 10/10
very professional and didn't stop for 2 days
solid.

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60tons, they did a fantastic job and I would
highly recommend 🙌

★★★★★

Stuart Stockton
Chesterton Community Angling Club



Neil Ellis recommends Digger Boats.

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diggerboats.com has just completed some norfolk reed
removal on one of our club lakes. The diggerboats team
worked their socks off and done a great job giving great
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are already looking at more fallen tree removal work for the
diggerboat team to undertake !



Mark Turrell

Great job done, can't believe the difference, thank you guys at Digger boat 🙌🍷



Top fan

Stuart Stockton

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Design & Production
James Harrison

Also available this
month Big Carp issue
362



Front Cover:
Mark Cookson with a
Stoneacres resident



Another brilliant day on the bank with our young anglers with Reel Healing! Yesterday's carp session was packed with action, smiles, and plenty of fish on the bank! It's amazing to see the confidence and skills of these young anglers growing every week. From learning how to safely handle fish to landing some fantastic carp, every session is another step forward. Fishing is about so much more than catching fish—it's about patience, teamwork, respect for nature, building confidence, and making lifelong memories.

If you'd like your child to get involved in our sessions, we'd love to hear from you. Whether they're complete beginners or already enjoy fishing, everyone is welcome. Just send us a message for more information and upcoming session dates.

8. CARP CHAT

18. CARP SCENE

24. JON BOTTING



28. JON COLLINS

34. JORDON MARSH

40. MARK COOKSON

48. MICHAEL WEBB



60. PAUL BENNETT

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Paintings of the carp that became part of angling history.



LANE CHATENDEN RIP



It is with great sadness that the Tubemonkeys Team shares the heartbreaking news of the passing of one of the greatest gentlemen we have ever had the privilege to know, Mr Lane Chittenden.

We have lost a dear friend, a valued member of our team, and someone who will be deeply missed by everyone who knew him. Our thoughts and heartfelt condolences are with Lane's wife, Tina, and all of his family during this incredibly difficult time. Please bear with us over the next few days as we come to terms with this devastating loss. Thank you for your understanding. "Rest easy, Lane. You'll always be part of the Tubemonkeys family

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Our Get Fishing sessions are designed for children who are new to angling or want to build confidence and learn the basics in a fun, safe, and supportive environment.

From setting up a rod and tying knots to safely handling fish, casting, and water safety, our qualified coaches guide every young angler step by step. Along the way, they can work towards their Get Fishing Awards, celebrating their progress and achievements. It's about so much more than catching fish—it's about building confidence, making new friends, spending time outdoors, and creating memories that last a lifetime. All equipment is provided, so there's no need to own any fishing gear—just come along and give it a try!

If you'd like your child to get involved, send us a message to find out more about our upcoming Get Fishing sessions. We'd love to welcome you to the bank!

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EDDIE LUCIA RIP BY MATHEW HART



A total of 20 students from the College's Level 3 Land & Wildlife and Agriculture Diploma courses took part in a day of practical learning at the College's impressive onsite fish farm and lakes. A further eight students attended a follow-up visit to Embryo's Baston fishery near Peterborough. The project offered students a rare opportunity to work directly within a professional fishery environment and gain real insight into the industry.

This fantastic learning event was captured in a new film that brings the students work in fisheries management and conservation to life. Produced for the Embryo YouTube channel, the film follows the full journey of fish from rearing through to stocking, highlighting the strong connection between Embryo and Shuttleworth College.

The film begins at the College's fish farm, where students took part in netting ponds and learning the foundations of fish husbandry, before progressing to real-world experiences at Embryo's Baston site.

Neil Sampson, Land and Wildlife Technician at Shuttleworth College, said:

"It's real industry experience. They're out there getting wet, getting cold and fully involved in the work. The students absolutely love it and don't stop talking about the experience for weeks afterwards."

"Without partners like Embryo, they simply wouldn't get these opportunities as regularly. It's been fantastic to see the partnership grow over the past five years, and long may it continue."

The partnership forms part of Shuttleworth College's ongoing work with Embryo Angling, part of the wider Korda Group, which includes providing a growing-on facility for fish supplied to the Shuttleworth Fish Farm and giving students direct access to industry expertise.

Matt Pettitt, Director of Embryo Angling Habitats, said: "This project is something we are very proud of, creating meaningful real-world opportunities for education and engagement. Working with Shuttleworth College is a great example of how we can support both the environment and future careers within the industry."

The film concludes by showcasing the finished fishery and what it offers to visiting anglers, demonstrating the full journey from fish rearing through to stocking and sustainable fishery management.

The film is now available to watch on the Embryo YouTube channel



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NEMO, TEMPLE BURY HILL

After a gruelling first season back in 2017, last year I started to work it all out, catching all of the A-team. I only had Nemo, the lake's biggest fish, to snag. On the fourth session back, conditions looked perfect with big winds pushing right into the corner of the lake where I decided to set the traps. I found numbers of the lake's decent residents deep in the pads, and I waded along the margin, placing the rig on a clear patch I'd found, and baited heavily and waited. This was about 3 o'clock on the Friday afternoon, and I left it until I baited again at 3am. At 9.30am, I had a couple of bleeps on the Neville, and the rod arced round – I was in! After an incredible battle of 40 minutes, I was buzzing to see it was Nemo in my net, weighing in at 45lb 1oz and caught on A2 baits CT over chops and particles. Job done!







ZIGS FOR PIGS

I decided to go for a day session and that I would fish zigs, as I was down the previous day and new they were up in the layers. After marking all three rods and the Spomb to the same distance, I went about making my first cast, only for my tip to crack off some how. After five minutes of anger, I managed to calm myself down. Next I began putting out my sloppy spod mix, which consisted of garlic hemp, 2mm hemp

pellet, porridge oats, sweetcorn soaked in Isotonic Goo, dog biscuits, which I turned to dust, and about 3kg of Maxinut boilies, which I had crushed up the night before.

30 minutes later, I had a drop back, so I picked the rod up and lifted into to it – fish on! After a nervous battle playing the fish on a 18ft rig, I slipped it in the net. I looked into the net and thought to myself, look at the size of those shoulders! I quickly asked my mate and bait supplier if he would do some pics for me, which he said yes to. Once in my swim, I lifted the fish out of the water and my mate said, “What’s your PB?” I replied, “34lb 4oz.” He then replied, “You’ve definitely beat that!” I weighed it, and at 40lb 12oz, I was over the moon. A few pics were then taken, and then I released it. That was all for me for the day...

Until next time, tight lines!









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FURZEBURY PART 2

Well, it all started on the 9th of January when my friend and I planned a 48-hour session on Island Lake at Furzebray Lakes in South Molton! That week I was counting down the days and preparing my fishing gear! The 16th of January couldn't have come around any quicker. We left Bude at the crack of dawn and were on the way to Furzebray Lakes! We arrived at Furzebray at 7:30am and had a walk around the venue. Island Lake itself is only three acres with ten swims on the lake! There are a maximum of seven anglers on the lake at a time, so there are good swim options!

Around the lake you have white marker posts to your left, and to your right are your fishing boundaries. I decided to go in the Inlet swim because there were signs of carp around the area and there's an island. As we all know, carp like swimming around islands. I had three casts with my new Kodex KX-i carp rods with a bare lead towards the island and found a cracking feature – a gravel bar – so I decided to place my right rod off the back of it! The middle rod I placed towards the far margin off

the marginal shelf and the left rod against the far margin tight to a reedy corner. On all of my rigs I had a Monster Ice coated wafter and a PVA stick with crushed and crumbed Monster Ice boilies to protect the hook points. The rigs I was using are my go-to blowback rigs, consisting of 15lb Micro Strip hooklink, a rig ring, a size 4 Genomic Wide Gape hook and a line aligner. I scattered 20 Monster Ice boilies over each of the spots, and that was my traps set!

As the daylight faded away and the night drew in, there was a lot of fish activity around the lake. There were fish rolling and bubbling all over the place, and that put my confidence right up! From 10pm and all through the night, I was getting liners on my right and left rod! At 1:30am, my receiver let out a load of bleeps, so I put my shoes on quickly and checked the rods. Little did I know I was in, and the fish was slowly kiting to the right. I picked the rod up and started playing this fish. For a minute, I thought I'd lost it, as I was just reeling line in! All of a sudden it was underneath the rod tip and darted off again! It looked a good fish, so I was playing it with caution! After a ten-minute battle, the carp surfaced, and into the net it went. I rang my friend who was in the Lawn swim, and he quickly popped over to take photos and weigh it! The culprit that slipped up weighed 21lb 12oz. After I released that fish, I got the rod straight back out on the spot immediately! The rest of the night was uneventful, but I was very pleased to have bagged my first fish from Furzebray.

The morning came around, but there was no more action! I left the rods out until about 11am and brought them in to put fresh baits on! I left the rods in for ten minutes and had a walk around the lake to see if anyone had caught anything!

No one else had caught anything, so I walked back to my swim to cast the rods back out. The rods went back out on the same area, but unfortunately it was uneventful through out the day and the night. I woke up on the last day at 9am and had a look out at the lake to Swim Ten and saw some guy playing a fish! I grabbed my receiver and wandered around there... As I got around there, it seemed he had a good fish on, so I stayed there to watch him land it! After a 20-minute fight, the fish finally went into the net and the pressure was off for him! He weighed the fish, and it went 31lb 2oz. As he retained the fish in the margin, my receiver let out a few single bleeps, so I started to run back around to my swim.

As I was getting closer to my swim, the bleeps on the receiver started turning in to a run, and before I knew it, I was in! I got to my swim to see that my island rod was away, and line was peeling off the spool. As soon as I picked up the rod, I knew it was a decent fish! It was really slow and felt reasonably heavy. I kept the rod high to get the fish over the gravel bar, but it had other intentions! I could tell straight away it was trying to snap me up on the gravel bar! I felt the line grating along the bar, and that was a really hairy moment, but it certainly put the new Kodex K-Pulse line to the test! I kept the rod high, and with constant pressure, the fish eventually came over the bar!

To the right of the island, there is an old tree stump that comes out of the water. The fish tried taking me around the tree stump, but I managed to turn her away from it. She swam back up towards me and rolled on the surface right in front of me. I had the shakes then, as it looked a really decent fish, so I concentrated on landing it. She darted off back towards the island, but I wasn't letting her go anywhere near that

gravel bar again! I was playing it with real care for another five minutes, and finally she surfaced and went straight in the net. I rang my friend Chris up to come and help me with the weighing and photos, and up he came! I unhooked her in the net and exchanged her over to the retention sling. Before I lifted her out the water, I checked if her pectoral fins were all tucked in and she was ready to lift. At the beginning of this year, I set myself a target to break my personal best and catch a 30lb carp. One of the first things that popped into my mind when I lifted her out of the water was that she could be a 30lb-plus fish. We hoisted her up on the scales, and she went 30lb 4oz! Get in! My challenge of the year was complete... and in January.



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STONEACRES

BI arrived at Stoneacres at first light Tuesday morning after the bank holiday weekend to find the lake busy. After a lap of the lake, I then decided to set up in a swim called Big Point after spotting a noticeable amount of fish activity near the vicinity. With this trip only being a 48-hour session I thought not to use the boat on this occasion and stay mobile and follow the fish.

The weather was due to change for the better after a blistering hot weekend with a drop in pressure and south westerlies arriving at some point in the afternoon. After finding some areas to fish for the upcoming night using a few casts with a bare lead, I was soon doing more laps of the lake and climbing trees on the lookout for any signs of feeding fish, eventually finding a group of them right on the end of the warm south westerly, quite textbook on big gravel pits really. I approached them with a single yellow single Signature pop-up, surprisingly not spooking them as I lowered my rig in. These Stoneacres carp are very finicky – one slight wrong move and they will be gone.

Standing back behind this tree with my eyes peeled, what I saw next was totally mind blowing. I picked out the No. 9 Bus with a common that looked around low 30 patrolling the





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margin, literally taking it in turns at what I thought looked like one of them was going to pick the hookbait instantly. A couple of hours passed and they sussed out whether it was a trap or not. I found them hovering over my rig and then trying to move or tangle it with their tail and fins, which they did, and then in a flash they had disappeared, and my chance had gone. Walking back to my peg, feeling defeated but determined not to give up, I knew if they came back again tomorrow I had to tweak a few things, so I started with scattering 16mm and 20mm Krill along the margins. The night passed with nothing more than a couple of tench

Around half five, I flicked the kettle on, watching out across the lake thinking of what happened the previous day. Bite





time had passed, so I quickly wound in and then found myself searching for those elusive Stoneacres carp. Going back to the area, I tried to pursue one the day before. Nothing much was occurring, but I did notice the fish were more off the wind now, twenty to thirty yards say. This time, instead of using a bright pop-up, I switched to a Krill wafter and placed it perfectly on this little gravel patch while nothing was there. Instead of standing up trying to watch them take my hookbait messing with my brain, I decided to sit back and patiently wait.

About an hour passed, and out of the blue my rod went into meltdown. My heart raced as I quickly jumped up to grab my rod, the carp stripping 50/60 yards of line going left towards some overhanging trees, so I went straight in the lake with no hesitation. After a ten-minute battle, which felt like a hour, I got the fish about twenty yards away from the bank. It head and tailed, trying everything to ditch the rig. It looked big, and I saw its heavily plated scales, and then I knew which fish this was. Staying calm, I slowly walked out further in the lake, as now the fish's head was up, and it looked ready for the net. At the first time of asking, it went over the cord _ GET IN!

As looked down, it took my breath away. There was the No. 9 Bus! I couldn't believe it, after coming close to catching it the day before. A quick phone call to Myles, who informed Dan, he was soon round with Scott and Pete to give me hand and take some ridiculously good photos. It tipped the scales at 43lb 4oz and was a new PB for me just to put the icing on the cake. It was time to get her back, so we took a couple of water shots, and I got a traditional Linch soaking. I watched her drift off into the depths to fight again and make somebody else's dream come true.

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GRACIES

A couple of years ago, I was offered a ticket for the Manor, a well-known circuit water in Essex. Over the years, from being a youngster, I have seen numerous photos in the magazines of fish that one day I hoped I would have a chance to have in my album – some well known carp that are part of the Manor's history such as Stella, the Northern Linear, The Anchor and

the Bream to name a few. The lake holds an incredible stock, which currently is in the region of 25 40s and three 50s.

On the 14th February, I had two nights planned, arriving at the lake just before first light to find I had the lake to myself – a rare thing, but I certainly wasn't going to complain. I set off for a couple of laps in the hope that something might give me a clue as to their location. I have tried to do the odd night through the winter to keep in touch with the lake. Things have been very quiet with nothing seen or caught since the end of December.

I opted to do my first night in a swim known as the Garden, situated in the middle of the lake. Three rods were positioned at varying depths on Tails Up pop-ups, two on the Stinky Squidz, which have done most of my previous captures and one on a trusty yellow pineapple, the Solar Flarez. I scattered



around 10-15 baits over each, my usual mix of the Pro Marine and the Pro Seed. The night passed uneventfully, with nothing seen to go on.

We seem to have escaped a harsh winter this year. The weather has been quite warm recently with some good periods of sunshine. I had heard through friends of some lake nettings that had been happening and that one had been very successful. It was done on the shallowest area of a lake, which is around 4ft. I decided to have a good look in the corners of the Manor... maybe they had been holding up in the shallower corners of the One or the End Pads. I kept an eye on these areas, but it didn't seem to me that this was the right move.

With another mild day forecast with high pressure, day temps of 14 degrees and eight hours of sunshine, I decided to get on the zigs. I had a move to a swim known as the Rope. This swim gives access to quite a lot of water in comparison to others. It's an area out in the middle that the carp love to spend a lot of their time in throughout the year. They are often seen here away from the angling pressure and soaking up the sun.

I missed a massive opportunity last spring, which most definitely cost me fish. There were bites to be had, but, in my stubbornness, I didn't get involved. The previous year I had done well fishing on the bottom and managed to catch consistently. I stuck with it this season, expecting the bites would eventually come. Although I managed a few, the zigs outfished the bottom by far. Not only that, but a few of the lake's trickier residents slipped up once or twice on the zigs.

I think the weather played a massive part in the success of the zigs last year. We seemed to go from a long, cold winter with the Beast from The East in March to pretty much summer like



temperatures. With the depths of the Manor and the current water level being around 20ft those upper layers warmed up very quickly, and the carp made the most of it. I had decided at the end of last year I wasn't going to make the same mistake, so I kitted myself out with a dedicated zig setup – three rods set up and ready to go in the van if needed.

I have had some good results on zigs over the years. I recalled a time on a lake quite similar in topography, the Top Lake on the Cleverley Fisheries ticket. I learnt a lot about my zig fishing there and enjoyed a good spell of fish from late February through to May. Depths there were around 16ft in the middle, and I was able to fish zigs straight of the lead. I began to get



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an understanding on the depths and colours, which seemed to work coming out of the winter in to late spring.

The depths of the Manor meant that I was going to get used to the adjustable zig. The rods were set up with 12lb Ridgemonkey mono mainline to an adjustable zig float, then a 3ft hook link to a size 8 Ridgemonkey straight point. Two rods had a small piece of black foam, which had been soaked in the Solar Flarez bait spray. The was other on a Black Flyz small dumbbell pop-up, again boosted with the bait spray.

At this time of year, I have found that it's always been about the middle third of the water column, so in 18ft, I'd be looking at exploring the 6-12ft zone. With the temperatures and long periods of sunshine we'd had the last few days and forecast



for the day ahead, I had a feeling that the carp just maybe were making the most of this. To start with, I stuck them all out at the same depth at the top of this zone and 6ft under the surface. The plan was to leave them there for a couple hours and then start to explore the depths a little more. Moving into spring, say from April, I would be looking to be in the top third, and this is when I have had my best results, anywhere from just under the surface to 4/5ft under. The carp are then in depths you can hopefully see from a higher viewpoint. I have found bite indication to be very interesting, with a single bleep 90% of the time meaning that the hook is in a carp's mouth. The length of line between the hook and the lead give the carp a lot of scope for movement without us even knowing.

Another member came around for a chat, and we sat there talking about what we thought was going on. I remember saying to him that I felt like I was fishing for them today and not spending another night behind motionless rods. For some reason, I just felt confident and excited to see what the day held in store.

It was about three hours after the rods were put out that I had a single bleep on the middle rod. As I glanced over, the rod tip bounced on the tight line, and then as I walked down, it did it again. I lifted the rod up and felt the resistance. The fish slowly kited around out in the middle, and it wasn't until I got it within 20 yards that it really woke up. The other member noticed the activity and came around to assist. We caught a glimpse of the fish as it rolled under the surface, and it was clearly visible that it was a big fish. Thoughts of a size 8 and 7lb hook link were now playing on my mind, and the fish didn't want to give in.

Finally, the fish turned and was heading straight towards me. Over the net, and it was panic over. We both looked at each other as we recognised it to be a fish known as Gracie's, last out at over 50lb. The chances were that this was not only going to be my first zig-caught carp out of the Manor but my first ever UK 50lb'er.

I got myself together, and we set about doing the weighing and photos. Something I have always liked about the other members here is that they are always there, happy to help and share the moment with you. The scales settled on 51lb 2oz, a new UK PB, and in February! A massive thanks goes to Jay for doing a perfect job on the photos of a capture that I certainly won't forget.





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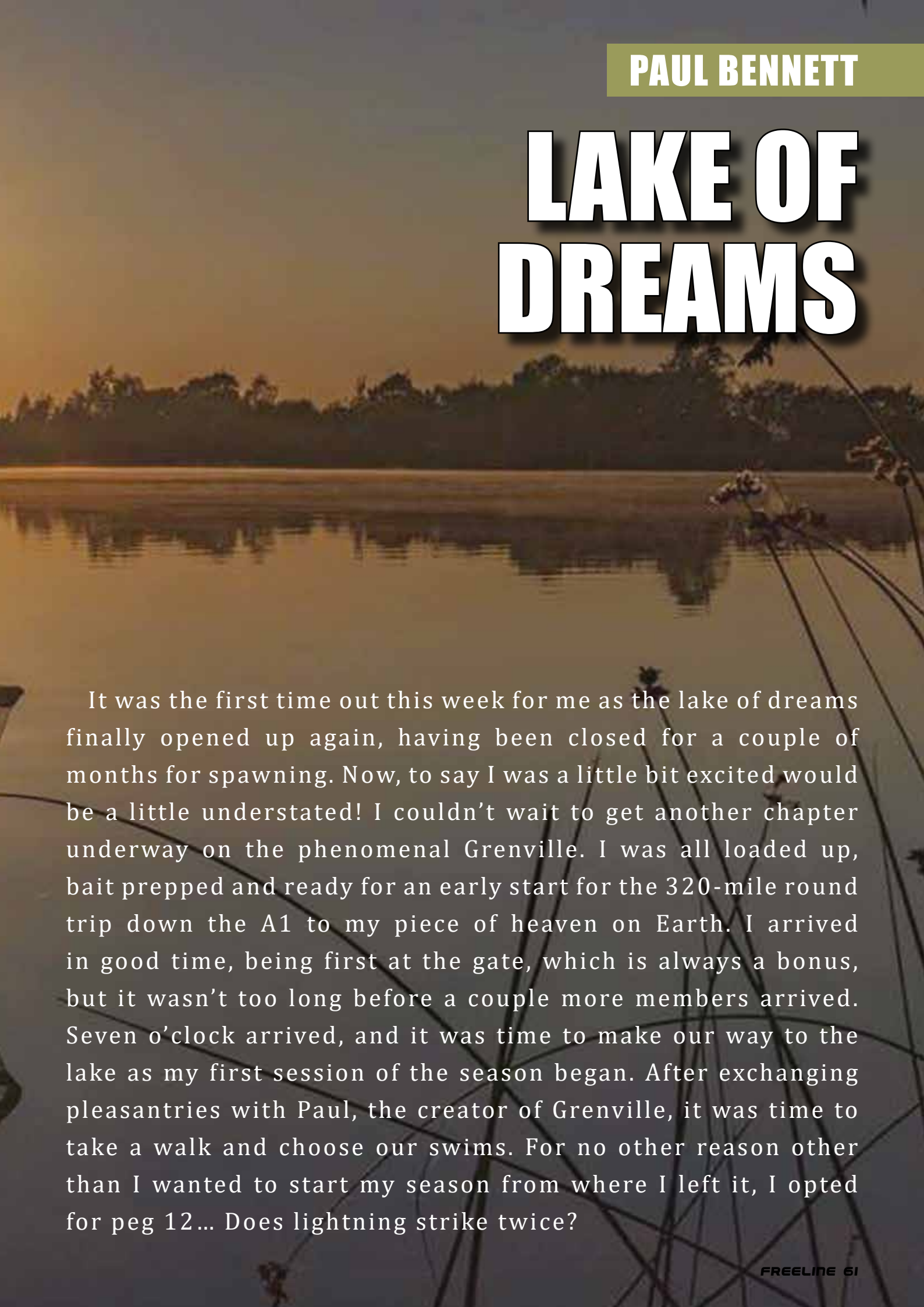
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FREELINE 60

A serene sunset over a calm lake. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and soft blue. The water is still, reflecting the colors of the sky and the silhouettes of trees on the far shore. In the foreground, several thin, dark reeds or grass stalks are visible, some with small white flowers. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

PAUL BENNETT

LAKE OF DREAMS

It was the first time out this week for me as the lake of dreams finally opened up again, having been closed for a couple of months for spawning. Now, to say I was a little bit excited would be a little understated! I couldn't wait to get another chapter underway on the phenomenal Grenville. I was all loaded up, bait prepped and ready for an early start for the 320-mile round trip down the A1 to my piece of heaven on Earth. I arrived in good time, being first at the gate, which is always a bonus, but it wasn't too long before a couple more members arrived. Seven o'clock arrived, and it was time to make our way to the lake as my first session of the season began. After exchanging pleasantries with Paul, the creator of Grenville, it was time to take a walk and choose our swims. For no other reason other than I wanted to start my season from where I left it, I opted for peg 12... Does lightning strike twice?

Well, to say I was rusty is putting it mildly, but after a few minor hiccups and lots of leading around, I eventually found an area that I was happy with and proceeded to introduce a good spread of Mainline Hybrid and Essential Cell boilies at range. With two rods on the baited area, I opted for my third rod to be a rover and placed this in my left hand margin where there was a light covering of weed over which I catapulted a little bait. The first night of my 72-hour session came and went with nothing to show for my efforts until lunchtime on my second day, when after a spirited fight and a weed bed, I finally slipped my net under my first Grenville gold of the new season, and at 37lb 6oz I couldn't be happier. Photos were done, and it was time to introduce a little more bait to



hopefully entice one or two more. I had to wait until the early hours for more action, but sadly the weed beat me this time, as it simply dropped off! Grrrr! Don't you just hate it when that happens? I didn't bother putting the rod back out until the morning.

The following day, more bait was introduced, again with no further action until the early hours of my last day when my middle rod went into meltdown, and again, after a solid tussle but thankfully no weed this time, another piece of Grenville gold graced my net, certainly bigger than the last one, and at 41lb 12oz it wasn't a bad start to a new chapter on the lake of dreams! My usual and ever-faithful multi-combi rigs combined with Deception Angling size 6 SWG hooks baited with my Mainline Baits specials did the do again... God, I love this place. Well, what can I say, as the lake of dreams delivers once more for me?

On arriving at the lake of dreams for another of my fortnightly sessions, I opted to head to the shallowest part of the lake for no other reason apart from the fact that there was nobody else in this area and that I'd managed a couple of fish out of the same area on my last trip. Now I knew where my spots were, so it was a simple case of starting where I'd left off. Once I'd got set up, it was time to introduce some bait with an initial 8kg of Mainline Baits Hybrid and Essential Cell boilies mixed roughly 70/30 in various sizes and chops to my chosen area and keeping it topped up little and often, working the swim.

The first 24 hours came and went with not so much as a liner, but then well into my second day, I received my first pick-up only to suffer the dreaded hook pull! Gutted would be an understatement, but taking the positives from a negative,



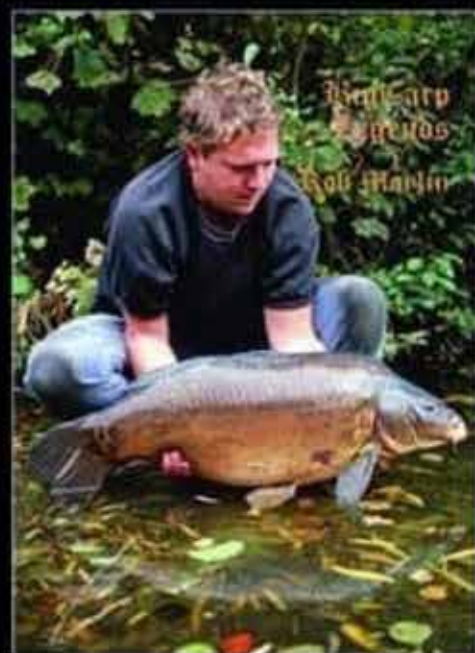
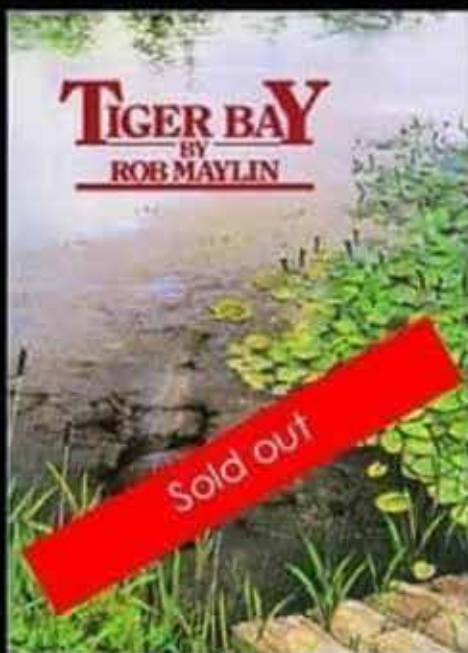
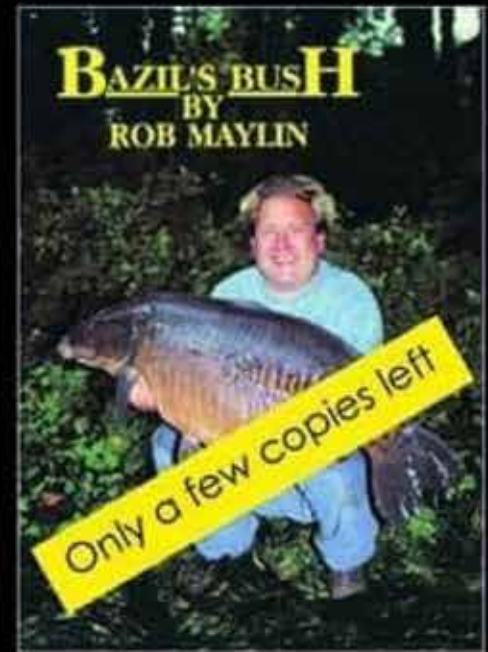
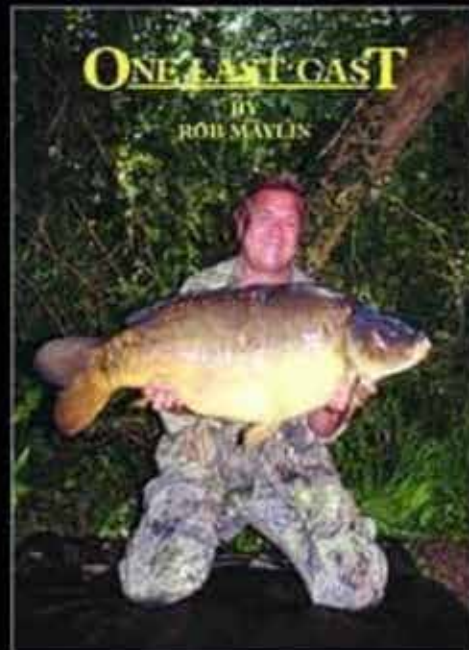
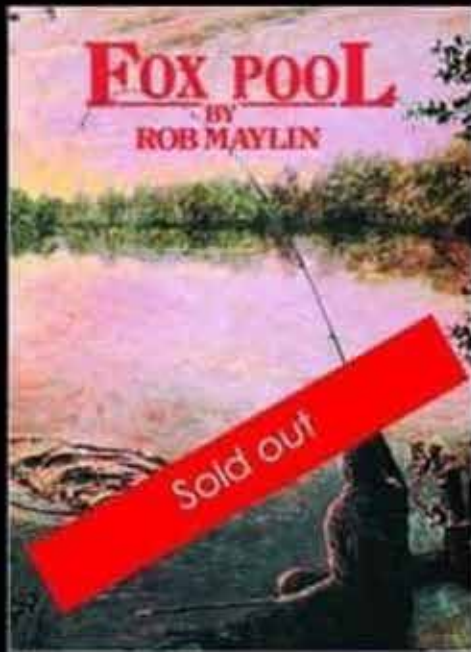
it was a pick-up, so I quickly rebaited the rod and introduced more bait, and within a couple of hours, it was away again, but again I suffered the same outcome! How unlucky is that?

I got the rod back in the hope that I could redeem things with another chance, and indeed in the early hours of the following morning, I got my chance, as my right hand rod melted away. Following a spirited fight, I finally had a carp in my net, a lovely scaly at that, going 27lb 8oz! Needless to say, I was very happy, as it's always nice to get off the mark, especially having lost a couple earlier in the session.

With no further action, more bait was introduced at first light, and then midmorning, out of the blue so to speak, my

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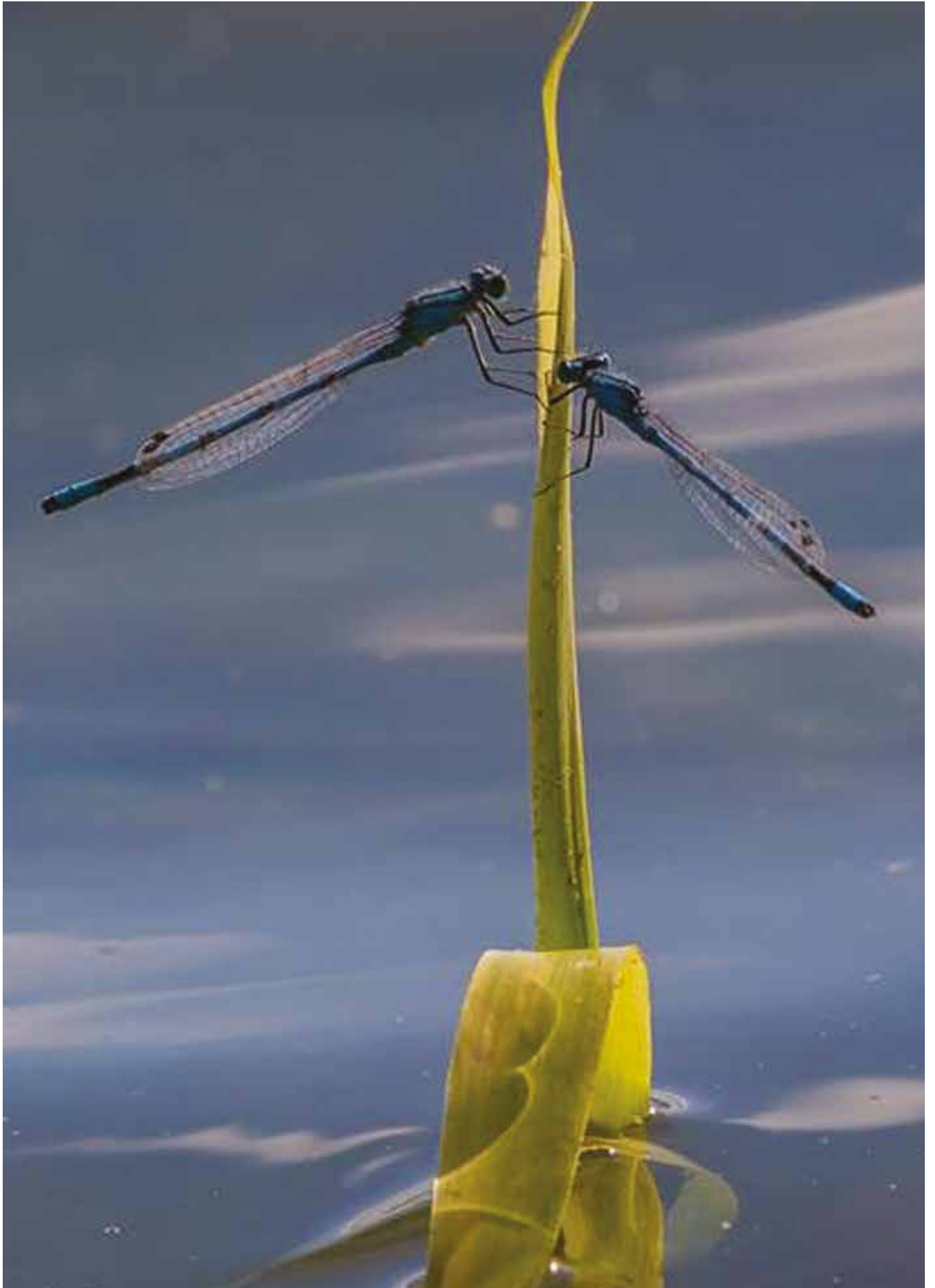
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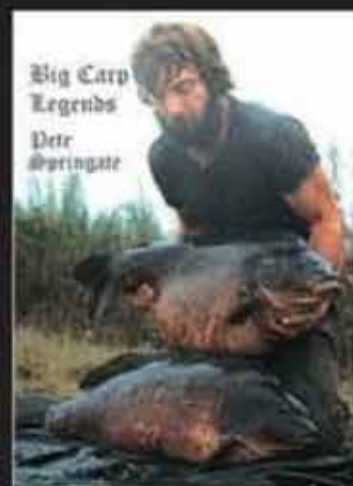
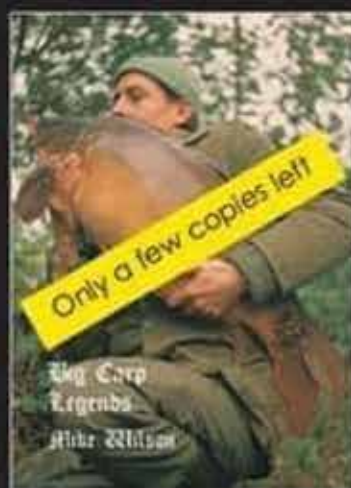
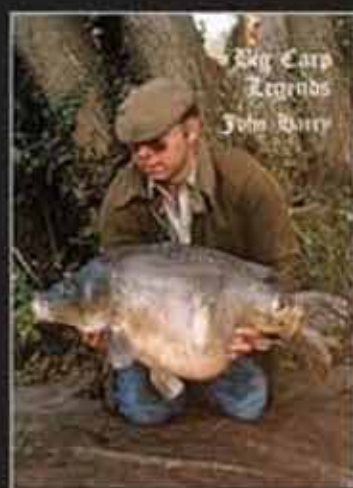
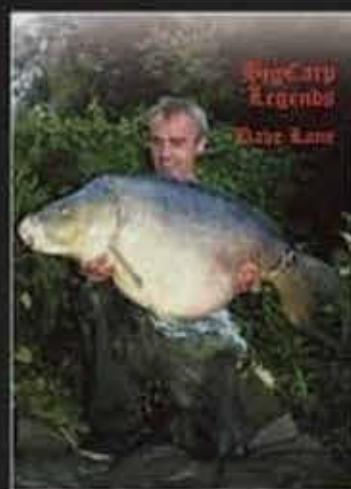
left hand rod screamed into action. Now this was a different beast, as it took line off a tight clutch on several powerful runs, doing its level best to get into the weed. However, with steady pressure, I was able to gain the upper hand and got my first glimpse of a very nice common, but it was by no means ready for the net just yet, as it tried in vain to get into the marginal reeds, but again with steady pressure, I soon had it in the net.

On closer inspection, it was a good fish, easily a thirty, I was thinking, and so it proved to be, as she went 36lb 9oz on the scales, which signalled a new UK PB for me and a stunning bar of Grenville gold. I went on to net another scaly of 25lb 2oz, and yet again the lake of dreams had delivered with another fabulous session full of highs, lows, spectacular sunrises and another special moment.



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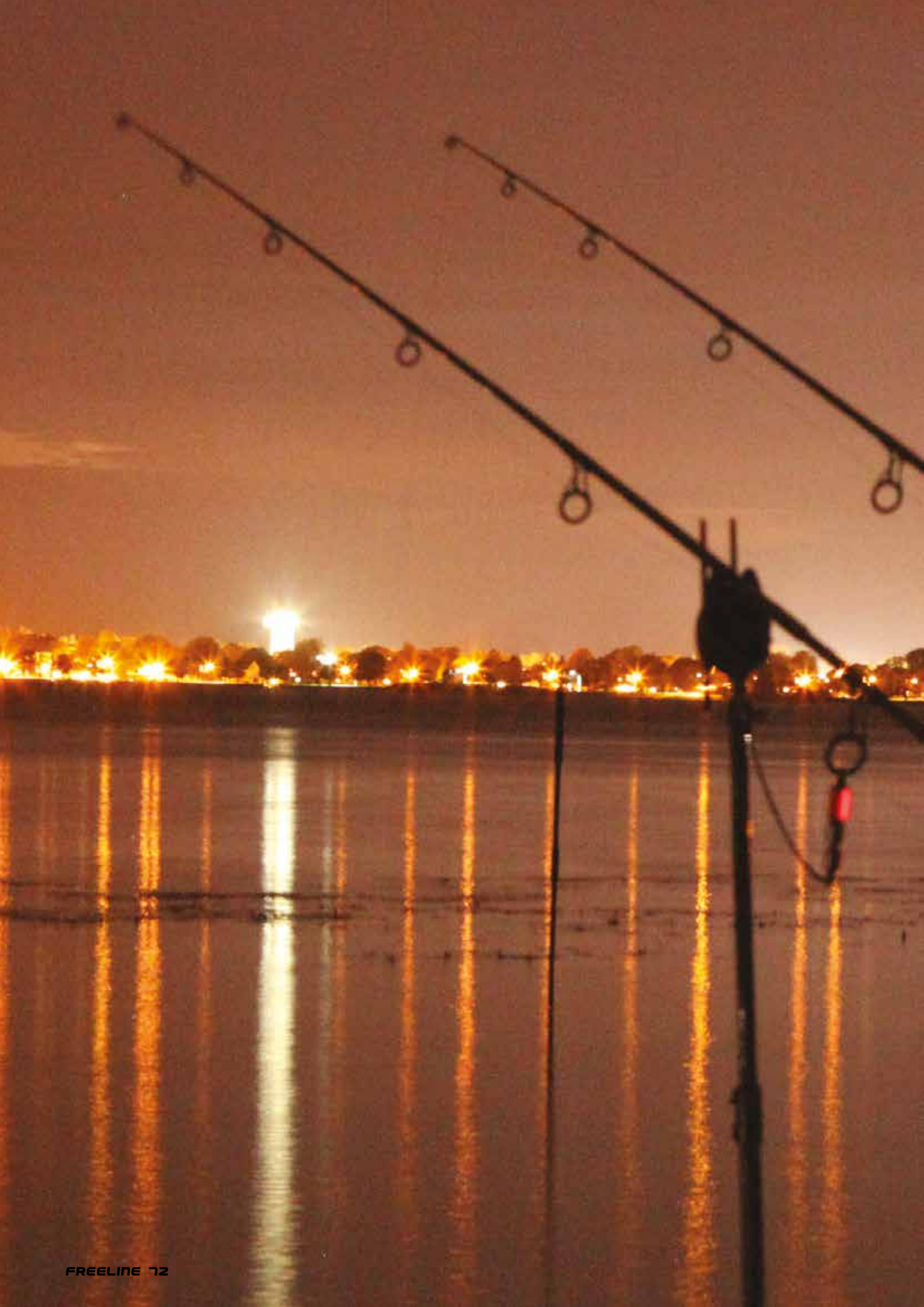


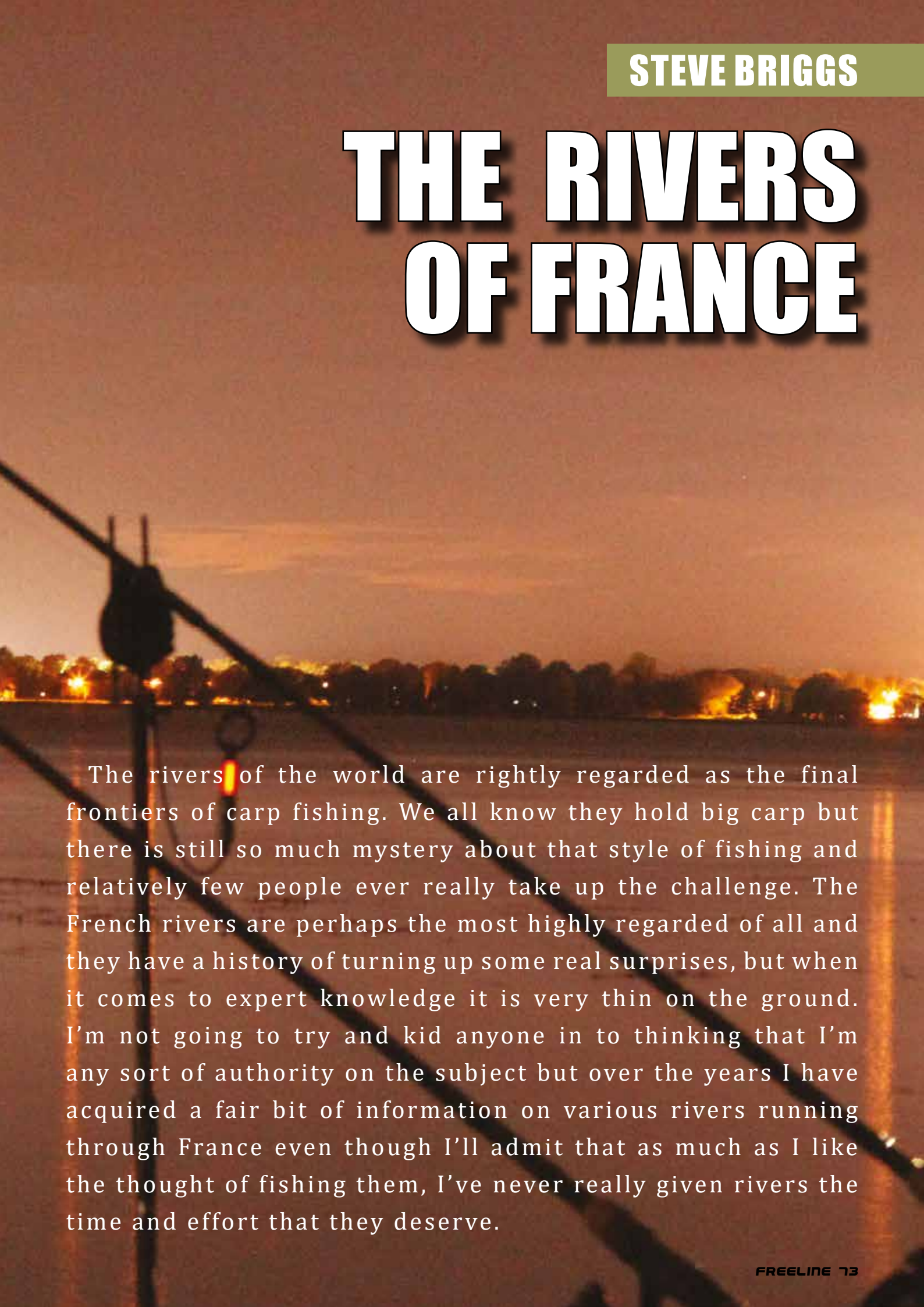
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A night photograph of a river with city lights in the background and a fishing rod in the foreground. The sky is dark with some light clouds. The river is calm, reflecting the lights. A fishing rod is visible in the foreground, with a lure attached. The city lights are visible in the distance, creating a bokeh effect.

STEVE BRIGGS

THE RIVERS OF FRANCE

The rivers of the world are rightly regarded as the final frontiers of carp fishing. We all know they hold big carp but there is still so much mystery about that style of fishing and relatively few people ever really take up the challenge. The French rivers are perhaps the most highly regarded of all and they have a history of turning up some real surprises, but when it comes to expert knowledge it is very thin on the ground. I'm not going to try and kid anyone in to thinking that I'm any sort of authority on the subject but over the years I have acquired a fair bit of information on various rivers running through France even though I'll admit that as much as I like the thought of fishing them, I've never really given rivers the time and effort that they deserve.

It's only when you start to list the French rivers that you start to realize just how many there are! Of course we all know the big ones such as the Seine and the Rhone but really there are enough to keep anyone going for a lifetime. They don't have to be big rivers either, smaller ones like the Sarthe or the Cher all hold carp – in fact the majority of French rivers will hold carp of some description, many of which rarely get fished for.

The rivers remain generally unpressured for good reasons, they can be very difficult unless you have good knowledge and the fish can be very mobile. Location is obviously very important and it would be very unwise just to turn up on the banks of any river and just expect to catch – as the chances are you won't! This obviously puts many people off but the



fact remains that the rewards are there to be caught if you are prepared to work for them. Rivers of course carry moving water and conditions can change very quickly making them very unpredictable. Low water can put the fish off feeding whereas high water levels can make fishing very difficult so timing can be very important.

Features will vary greatly but where rivers join, where boats are moored, barrages, industrial areas with warm water outlets and areas that vary in depth or flow are all worth investigating. Many people approach river fishing by baiting well in advance and that is one thing which makes it very difficult for the travelling angler when time is restricted. It's fair to say that for much of the time you need to look for sections of river that hold carp rather than just individual swims, but baiting over a period of days or even weeks is a way of getting the fish to regularly visit the spots you intend to fish. Most river carp are opportunist feeders and will take a wide variety of baits. Boilies and pellets will work most times even when the fish haven't seen them before, but maize is the most fail-safe bait of the lot and of course it is also very cheap and I would certainly use maize as the bulk of my feed when baiting up along with a sprinkling of any other bait you intend to use.

Rules and regulations need to be checked first as although most rivers appear to be almost deserted at times, they are normally controlled quite strictly by the French authorities. Many sections won't allow night fishing, whereas others will have allocated night fishing areas. Of course the fish could be anywhere so I wouldn't just look at the night sections as I've often found that river carp are more day feeders than anything – but that can vary so homework needs to be done



in advance. All of the public stretches of river will require a national permit, or Carte-de-Pêche. They will cost somewhere around €130 for a yearly version but often shorter versions are available which cost less.

When talking about tackle, strong and durable is the way forward. Of course rivers will vary greatly in size and conditions so it's impossible to give proper advice which will cover all events. But in general there will be snags, mussel-strewn ledges as well as the flow itself to contend with and so it would be foolhardy to go in with tackle that is too light. Strong braid is a reliable mainline but there are times such as when fishing across a strong flow that it works against you having near zero stretch. It would still be my first choice in most cases though. Big leads may be needed to hold bottom if

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the flow is strong enough and I would certainly go for fairly large hooks of size 4 and upwards.

The type of river you want to fish will vary greatly and will depend on a lot of things. For some people the thrill of fishing a tiny river and catching completely virgin fish will be their driving force, while for others it will be the buzz of tackling one of the huge waterways with no idea what will pick their bait up next – on many rivers there is the potential for something tiny or indeed of record-breaking proportions and so the best thing is to go through some of the options and a little bit of what they have to offer.

River Seine

I'll start with what is obviously the most famous of all the French rivers. The Seine is the second longest French river after the Loire. It rises 18 miles (30 kilometres) northwest of Dijon and flows in a northwesterly direction through Paris before emptying into the English Channel at Le Havre. The river is 485 miles (780 kilometres) long and with its tributaries drains an area of about 30,400 square miles (78,700 square kilometres).

Carp can be found virtually through its entire length but it is the areas around Paris which attract most of the attention. It was the section where the River Yonne joins the Seine where the worlds first 80lb carp was landed by Marcel Rouviere back in the early 1980's and although there have been some reservations about the weight of that fish, there's no doubt it was a huge fish for the time. The areas of Fontainebleau and Montereau have always been very popular, especially with many British anglers from the late 1980's.

In more recent years it is the centre of Paris which has

really been producing numbers of big fish. It has produced a whole new group of urban carpers who are prepared to put up with the hustle and bustle of city life in order to get their big carp fix. For many the big prize is to get a trophy shot with the Eiffel Tower in the background! Fishing can be difficult and night fishing may be restricted but some people have got around that by renting house boats and fishing from them. My good friend Xavier Paolozzi has caught some good Seine carp fishing that way right in the centre of Paris.

River Lot

It was one of the first French rivers to come to our attention when fished by well-known names such as Rod Hutchinson and Geoff Shaw. Cabanac and St. Geniez D'Olt have been a famous names ever since those days, it was never know for big carp in back then but it did provide plenty of action from mainly long,



lean commons between mid doubles and mid 20's. Of course people just aimed for that section of the river without looking further afield but it's fair to say that there is much more to the River Lot than Cabanac and the river is actually around 100 miles long. Carp have grown on well over the years and also other sections are more lightly-stocked and I've certainly heard reports and seen pictures of fish weighing more than 30kg in recent years.

The river is also a lot more accessible than it once was, which could be seen as a good or bad thing. Most of the time in the past you had to take to the boat to head off for a quiet swim out of the way, but now much of the better known sections are reachable by car. The national rod license will cover you for most areas and the many bars in the regions may be able to help when it comes to night sections and areas for action or bigger fish.

River Loire

The Loire is the longest river in France with a length of 629 miles (1,012 km). It drains an area of 45,195 square miles, or more than a fifth of France's land area. It rises in the highlands of the southeastern quarter of the Massif Central in the Cévennes range. It flows northward for over 1,000 km (620 mi) through Nevers to Orléans, then west through Tours and Nantes until it reaches the Bay of Biscay (Atlantic Ocean) at St Nazaire. Its main tributaries include the Nièvre, Maine and the Erdre rivers on its right bank, and the Allier, Cher, Indre, Vienne, and the Sèvre Nantaise rivers to the left bank.

It contains carp throughout much of its length although the average size is said to be around 20lb, but the record stands at over 60lb. There are legal night areas in some sections,

with the most popular being Angers right in the city centre. Some other good areas include: close to Deciz, Fourchambault and Gien. There are also several power stations which run alongside this river, which can result in good winter action.

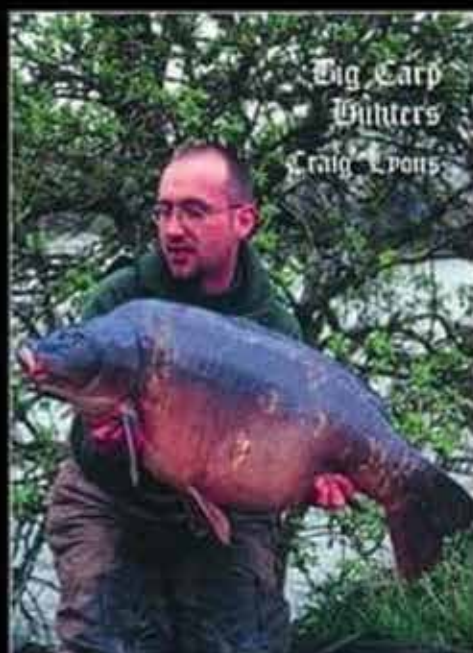
River Mosselle

The River Mosselle is a picturesque slow moving river starting its life at the base of the Alps in Mid Eastern France. Flowing through France and into Germany where it joins forces with the Rhine. The Lorraine region is famous for its rolling hills and meandering waterways. This part of France is a haven for carp fishing. During March, April and May the river tends to hold more water due to the melting snow from the Alps running into the Mosselle and on into the Rhine.

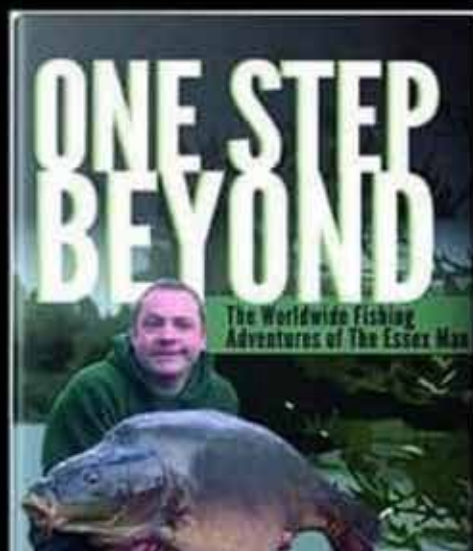
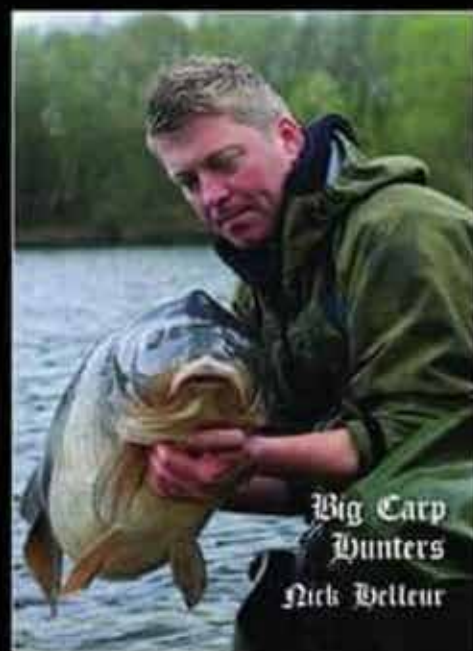
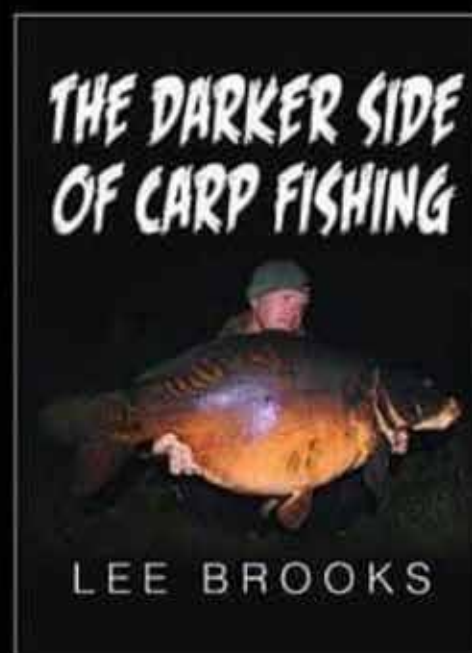
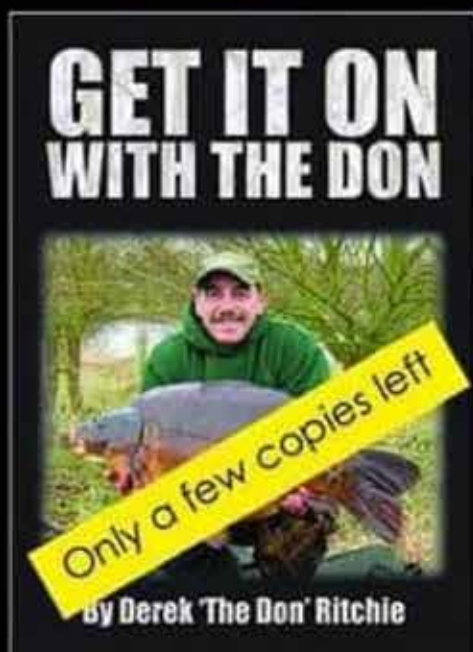
The areas between Thionville and Nancy are best known for a better stamp of carp. Fish of over 40lbs are fairly common.



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The average size and stock differs between sections, some producing fewer but bigger carp, others producing a lot of smaller carp with the odd better fish. Most of the zones have one thing in common in that they have all produced carp over 55lb! As usual not all areas can be night fished, but there are night zones both north and south of Metz. The areas north of Metz hold plenty of carp with an average size of between 15 to 30 lbs. Thionville is one place to check out as it is know for good catches, especially close to the industrial areas.

The sections immediately below Metz are among the best sections throughout the Mosselle with the sluice at Ay Sur Mosselle separating the river into two of the best-known stretches. Immediately South of the sluice the second night zone begins, approximately 200 yards in length with widths



of up to 250 yards. Moving south along the N57 you will come to the small village of Corny Sur Moselle. Here lies a section around 1km long with varying widths. At the Southern end, the river splits. This is the most productive swim in the zone and some very big fish have come from this swim. Information on these and all other night sections can be sought from the Tackle shops in Nancy or Toul.

This river has produced some huge carp in the past including a 78lb mirror for Emanuelle Walt, which was actually the second biggest carp from France at the time, but his account of the session sums up how hard river fishing can be as he fished for 40 consecutive nights and it is the only known capture of that fish – although he did catch others to over 60lb. There are also stories of the Mosselle producing even larger fish in more recent years so there might be more surprises to come in the future!

River Saone

The River Saone rises southwest of Épinal, in the Lorraine region, eastern France. It flows southward to join the Rhône River at Lyon after a course of about 300 miles. I guess most people will first think of the Saone as primarily a catfish river and while it does produce many and very large cats through the year, it also has a growing reputation as a carp water too.

Carp can be caught through much of its length, most being long, wild looking commons between 20lb and 30lb, although several over 50lb have been caught from various sections. The main areas to look at to begin with are between Macon and Lyon and further up around Chalon. Famous angler Leon Hoogendijk lives in Chalon and has caught many good fish from that area. He firmly believes that the Saone is capable of

producing a French record or even a world record. In periods of high water in the spring he reports to have seen some very big commons which have never been caught! Many stretches are open for day fishing only although some night areas are available. I do know that some anglers have been successful by staying on campsites bordering the river, baiting the river in the evening and then fishing during the days.

River Rhone

The Rhône is 505 miles long and has a drainage basin of some 37,750 square miles. The course of the river can be divided into three sectors lying, respectively, in the Alps, between the Alps and the Jura Mountains and through the latter, and finally running from the city of Lyon to the Mediterranean sea. The river is mostly wide and deep and the locks are big. Large ships and cruise liners use the river at all times. Outside the



main boat channel however, for example on the inside of a bend, depths may reduce dramatically from 15m to 2m.

The size and flow of the river obviously makes it a daunting prospect but undoubtedly there are carp throughout much of the river and some of them very large. Although I've not fished the Rhone myself I know that some time ago Roman Buczynski and Sam Rob spent some time on the Rhone in search of carp and they were successful. Their findings showed that feeding times would vary between day and night depending on the section they fished! They also found that the fish were feeding naturally on small food items but using small baits was made difficult due to the numbers of nuisance species, especially chub. However, the pair caught mirrors and commons to over 40lb. As mentioned near the start of this feature, the sheer conditions of the river proved to be very testing on the tackle and strong leaders had to be replaced often and heavy leads were needed to hold bottom in the flow.

River Pau

I've included this one, which is correctly called the Gave de Pau and it is situated right down in the south west corner of France running through the famous town of Lourdes. This is a fast-flowing and generally shallow river and more known for its trout and barbel than its carp. But in the spring of 2014 the river burst its banks in to an 80 acre lake which borders the river. The lake held numbers of big carp to almost 80lb and in the floods many of the carp entered the river, including most of the bigger ones. Until now none of those carp have been located but they are in the river somewhere and quite possibly they have found a deeper stretch or barrage area to settle and if someone could locate those missing monsters

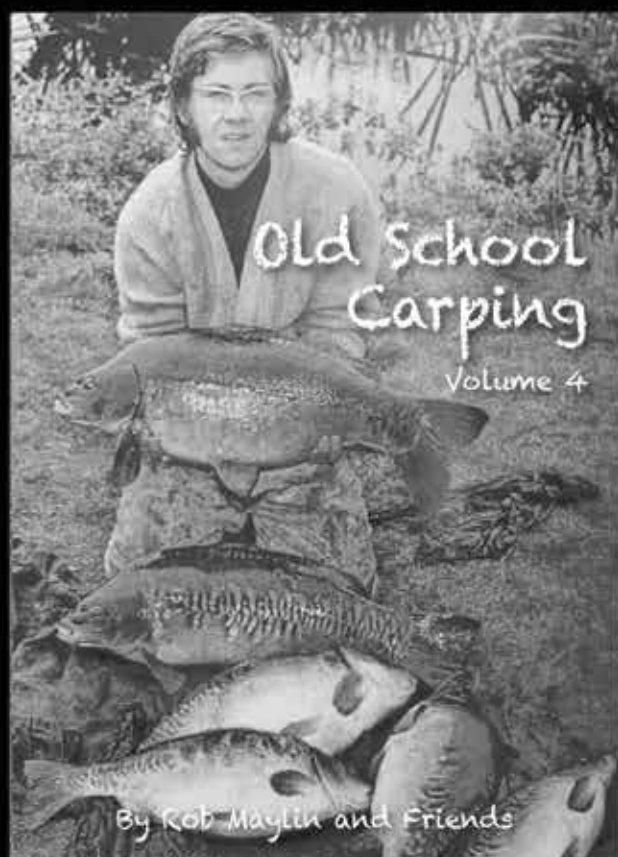
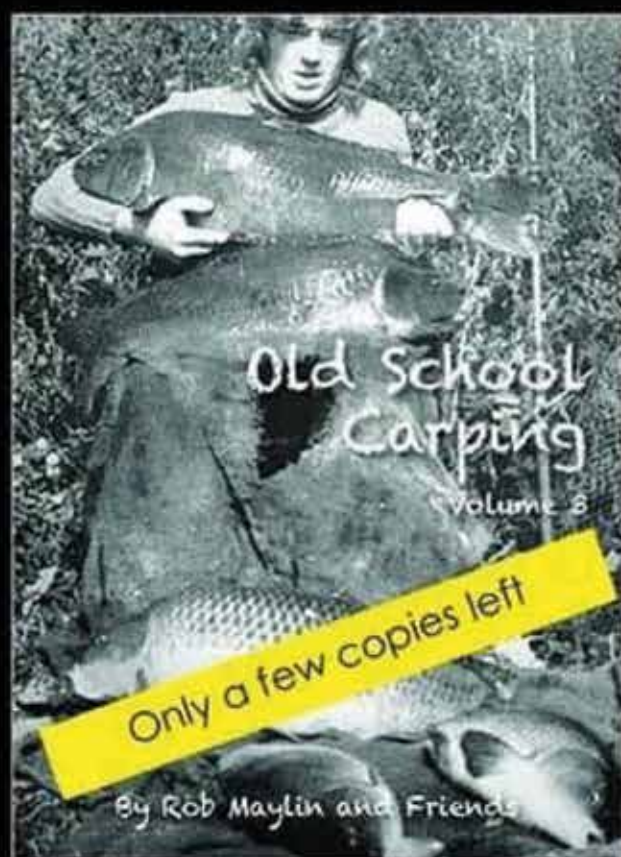
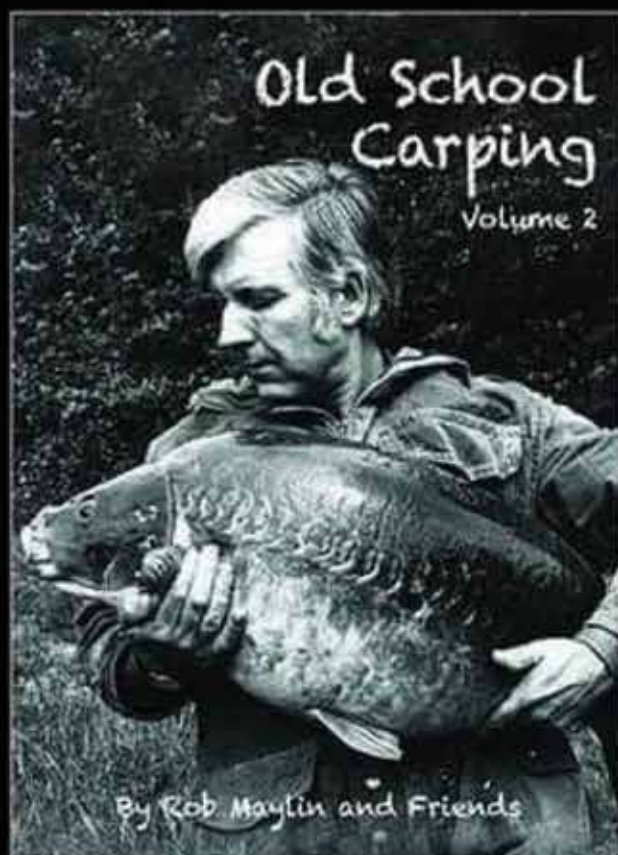
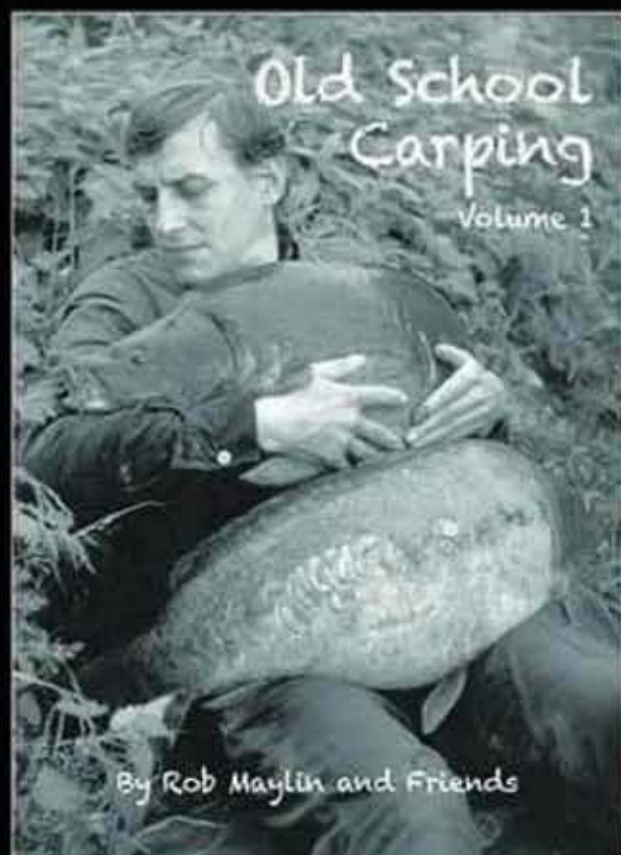
they could be in for something special!

In closing

Of course this feature only really scratches the surface of French river carp fishing. After all these years there is still relatively little known about any of the rivers mentioned, let alone the lesser-known ones. But what is for sure is that the rivers do hold literally stacks of carp for anyone who has the pioneering spirit to go and find. It requires a bit of work and the fishing itself might not be easy but who wouldn't want a big carp from one of those rivers on their CV? The rivers are rightly called the final frontiers as they are still very much under-fished and yet we all know that they hold carp that we can only dream of holding. Perhaps there will come a time when rivers become the main target and more becomes known about those waters and what they hold. But until then they will remain the mysterious flowing waterways that hide so many secrets and so many big fish!



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THAMES CARPER

My Thames love affair started eight years ago after getting bored with match fishing and the same day ticket waters. I have always been fascinated with lakes and rivers ever since I was a young boy so knew the river was *the* challenge... and what a challenge it was and still is. I started fishing with my mate Dan who was already starting to do well. After a few sessions, I hooked into my first Thames carp. I was buzzing – it went 18lb 4oz on the scales, a common with a stubbed face. Now I wanted more. I ended that season with one more common of 17lb. Now I couldn't wait for the next season. The next couple of seasons I didn't do much, as at the time I didn't drive. I did get three new PBs, well if I can count myself that is. The first was a 26lb mirror, and the second was from a new

spot... and this is how I caught it as well as me...

I was rowing out my rig when it came out of where it was stored. Being about a metre off my spot, I don't know why, but I decided to put the rig in my mouth by the swivel. Well, seconds later I was hooked, with my mate holding the rod on the other side. I cut the line, rowed back and got my mate to get ice from a shop. I numbed my mouth and pulled the hook through, as the micro barbed hook did not come out the other side, so it had to come out of a new hole, which I made. So that was my second PB... or does my mate claim it? I put on





a new rig and rowed back out. A few hours later the same rod screamed off with a new PB common of 21lb 5oz. It was definitely worth the rig in the mouth that night.

The next season got a lot better with eight carp in total. I got my first one two days into the season, an 18lb 15oz common, followed by a dark 18lb 2oz common. A couple of nights later, I had a new PB mirror topping the scales at 29lb 7oz. Now I started to think about a Thames 30, but as long as I got one in the net each season, I wasn't bothered. It is all about that moment when the alarm screams, the reels go mad and the rod is bent around, never knowing what is on the end – the joys of the Thames! I also had a PB barbel that season at 13lb.

The following season, I got my driving licence, and I caught six carp: the biggest two were 22lb 9oz, a common and a 22lb 12oz mirror. It was at this time that I got the nickname *Thames*



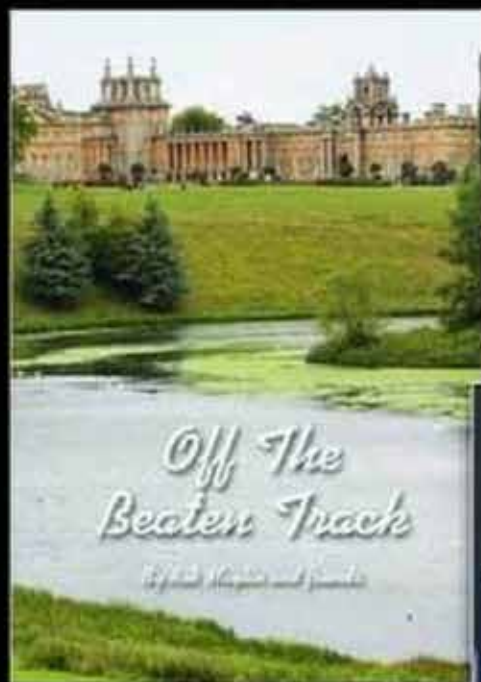
Tony from a Facebook page.

So now on to the 2017/2018 season. The first two fish came hours apart, the biggest a Linear at 28lb 14oz, a proper stunning fish. I was playing this fish around 2.30am and could hear a car alarm going off in the background. I looked around, and my mate's van was being broken into. To cut a long story short, he lost over £1000 worth of tools, so it was hard to be happy that night.

After that eventful night, I moved on to a new spot with my mate Elliot, or Alkaline as I know him. He fishes for barbel but has had some decent carp. A quick story on Alkaline: I met him up the river a year before. The funny thing is he knew my younger brother through pirate radio and my brother had

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said that I would probably bump into Alkaline down at the river sometime, which I did, and now he is my good mate and fishing partner. He smashes the barbel and I smash the carp out. Happy days.

Alkaline tipped me off about a new spot. The only problem was it was a two-mile walk from parking up, which isn't a problem, but all my fishing is straight from work and straight to work the next morning with a 30-minute drive. In the winter that is a long, dark walk, and even worse if it's raining! The first night I did was two days after the van tool robbery. At 6am the rod was off with a small, old Thames warrior common of 13lb 2oz. A half hour later my rod was off again with another old looking carp – a snub nosed mirror of 14lb 10oz. I had four more small doubles over the next few nights. After that I didn't fish for a couple of weeks, as I was off to Jamaica with



my fiancée, Sam.

Three days after getting back, I was on the spot. About one hour in, the first one was in the net followed by another a few hours later, the biggest going 17lb 2oz. Over the next sessions, I was catching every time, the best weighing 22lb 2oz, a crazy marble pattern mirror. I also had a 13lb 9oz fully scaled mirror. I also went fishing on my birthday and got a birthday present from the Thames – a wonky-back common of 15lb 2oz.

A week on, I was back there, and twenty minutes later, I had



a perfectly conditioned 21lb 13oz common. Winter Thames carping now, -1°C, mid-November, and a couple of blanks followed. Now we are in December, and I was walking down thinking something wasn't right. I got to the spot and realised that I had forgotten my bivvy, and there was no way that I was going back to get it. A night under the stars it was. It got down to -2°C that night, and I got woken up to a screamer. The fish went 19lb 10oz – well worth staying that night! That was also my last night of the season, as the Thames had started to rise. I finished that season with eighteen carp – my best season so far.



The next season I got straight on my spot and had two the first night, both commons. The next session, I had another two-toned common of 13lb 1oz. After a couple of blanks, I got near my spot and found that it was a camp for someone who was homeless, so I tried somewhere else. A couple more walks up there, and the camp was still there... I was gutted, as I knew the fish were there also. I had somewhere I always thought about trying, so I thought I would give this a go, plus I could park nearby and gain an extra hour's fishing before work. The first night could not have gone better considering that I had not prebaited. The rod screamed off, and I was about to land

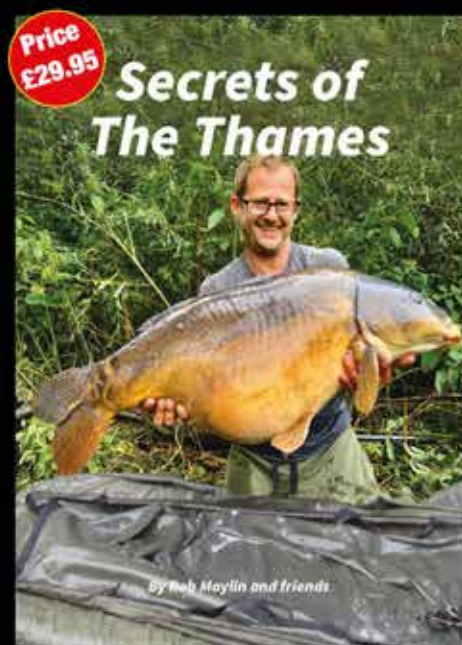
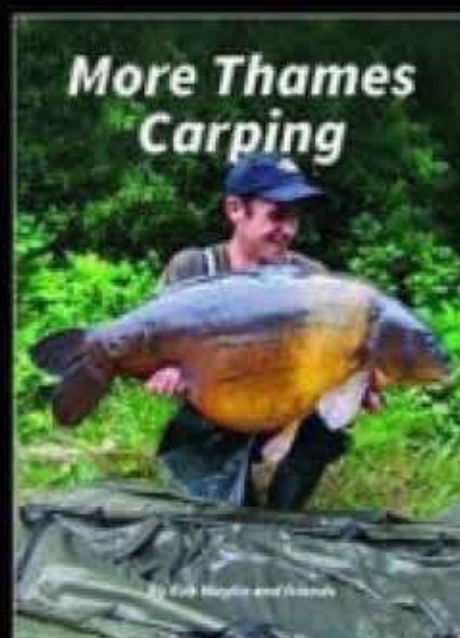
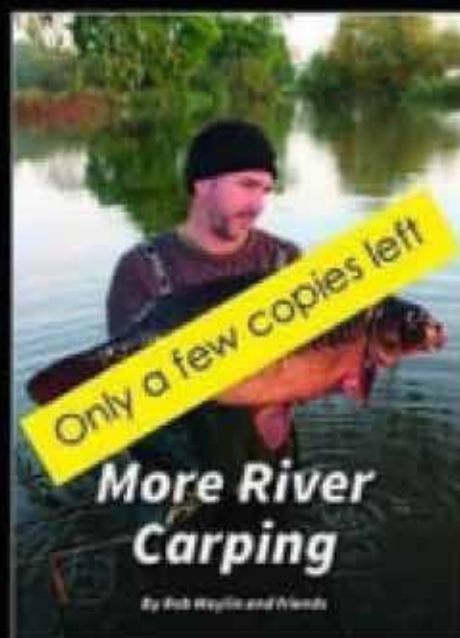
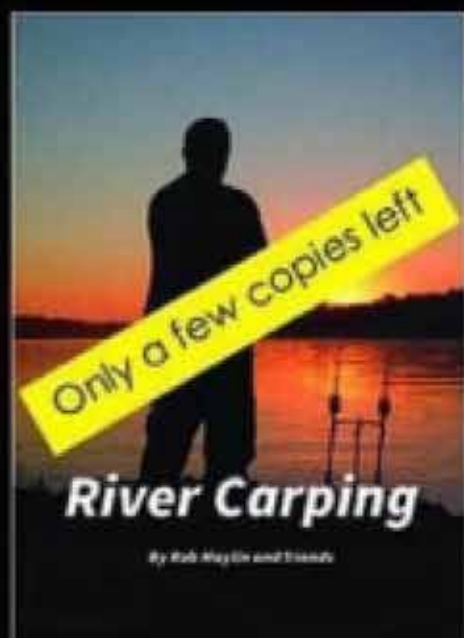
TONY SWEETAPPLE



it when the other rod ripped off. I landed the first one, and Alkaline set up his net and landed the other one for me. It was a brace of mirrors of 25lb 7oz and 22lb bang-on. Three days later, I was back on my new spot, and twenty minutes in, a 16lb 6oz mirror was in my hands. A few hours later, I

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had another brace: a 22lb 6oz leather and a 26lb 2oz mirror, which was properly dark and scaly. A couple of days later, I had a 25lb 1oz common.

The next session, a couple of days later, the rod was off... and I mean off. A good 25-minute battle and the fish was in the net. I looked down and thought this could be that Thames 30. It was – 31lb 1oz! I didn't sleep the last couple of hours, just checking it was okay in the retainer and buzzing that I'd got a Thames 30. I got another four 20lb-plus fish and a couple of doubles over as many sessions. This spot was just getting started. My next trip, I had four: a brace in the evening comprising a 28lb 7oz common (a new PB common) and a 23lb 3oz mirror. Then in the morning the first rod went off. I had the fish in the net and the other rod went. They were – a 22lb 5oz mirror and a 21lb 12oz common.

The next couple of sessions it continued: a 21lb 7oz common, a 21lb 2oz mirror, a PB Koi of 15lb 2oz, a perfect ghost carp







of 16lb 13oz, a 25lb 2oz mirror, then another brace with a 15lb 3oz common and a 24lb 14oz snub-nosed mirror. I was catching every time I went. My last session I did was on the 1st of December. I signed off with yet another brace of 20s, this time 24lb 12oz and 24lb 6oz. What a season in total! I had 29 carp, all different fish, with twenty different 20s and my first 30. I won't be forgetting this one for a while. Roll on next season. That is why I love the Thames – the people you meet and the places you fish, many a towpath and car park, fishing in -5 and no bivvy, in storms when I've lost my bivvy – the stories could just keep going. Most people think I'm mad. I think I would be mad not to go especially when you can catch







a Thames gem, but believe me, it's not easy.

I just want to say a big thanks to my dad for getting me into fishing all those years ago. As the pun goes, *you're hooked!* Also, stay safe out there, especially in the winter. Good luck and tight lines!

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