

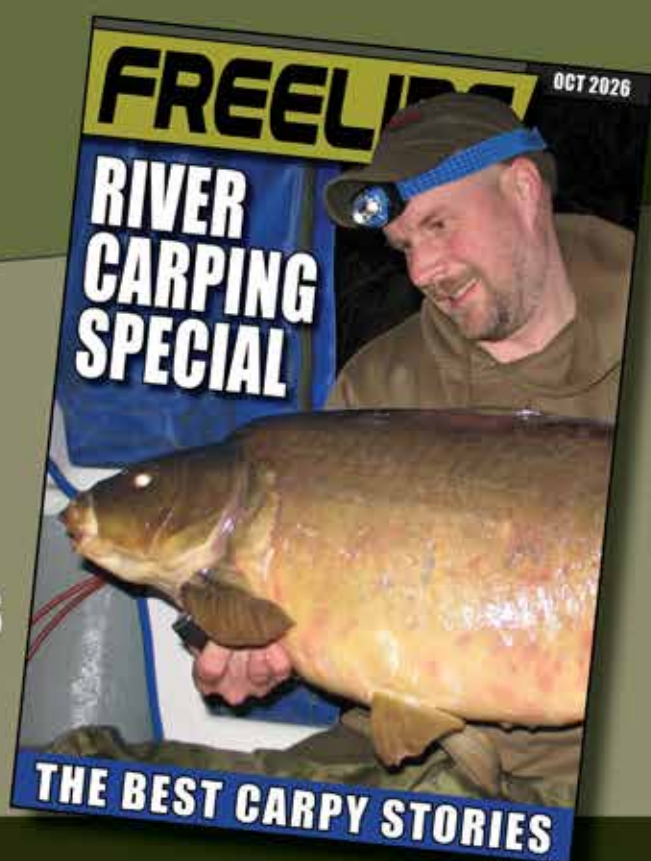
OCTOBER ISSUES OF BIG CARP & FREELINE MAGAZINES - FREE HERE:

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SCOTT LARMAN - WRAYSBURY
RICH HOGG - CANAL DIARIES
MILES GIBSON - LONGREACH FULLY
GAZ FAREHAM - COTSWOLD RETURN

ALEX HANSON - MEDWAY MONSTERS
STEVEN GRAHAM - THAMES TITANS



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BIG CARP READERS TOP TENS !!

TOP 10 DAY TICKET CARP WATERS

1	BLUEBELL LAKES
2	LINEAR FISHERIES
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

A fisherman with a beard and a bucket hat is holding a large carp in a pond. The fisherman is wearing a green jacket with 'trakker' written on the straps. The carp is large and has a mottled brown and yellow pattern. The background is a bright blue sky.

BC

BIG CARP: 363 OCT 2026

AUTUMN ACTION

HOGG
LARMAN
FAREHAM

FULL OF UK STORIES, TIPS AND CATCH REPORTS

CARP TACKLE ONLINE

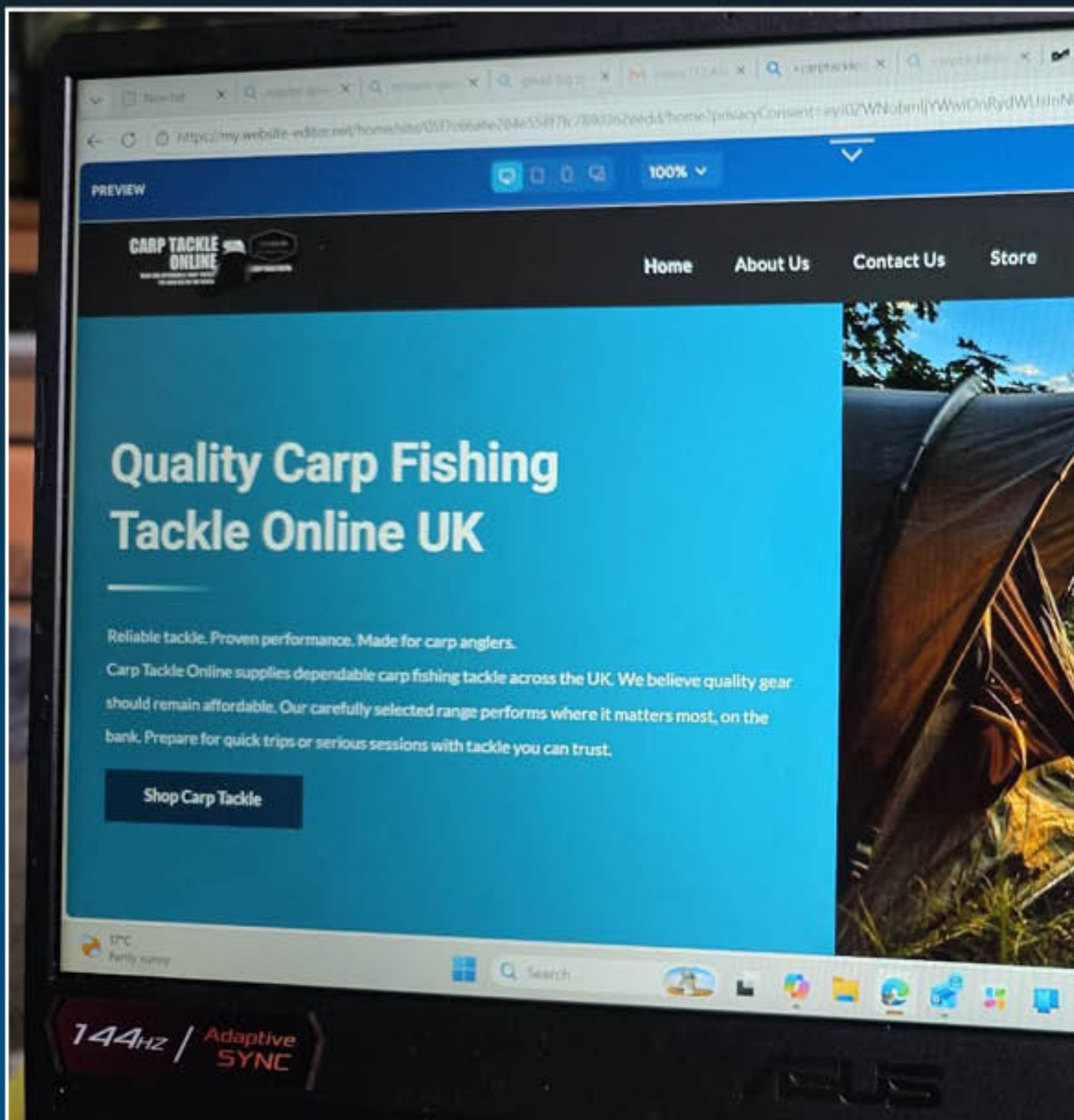
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- Catch of the month page.
- Fast and efficient navigation.
- Quality gear at reasonable prices.
- New team members required
- Contact us sales.
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CONTENTS

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

07768 731425
info@bigcarpmagazine.
co.uk

Design & Production
James Harrison

Advertising Sales
Bountyhunter
Publications
mobile 07768 731425

BIG CARP 363:
October 2026
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Publications 2026



Front Cover:
Scott Larman with one
of Wraysbury's finest



So we finally have a new British record carp of 68lb 8oz from Waterside. Well done to the capture Mike Nixon. Unfortunately we heard this week that the Waterside Common as it was known died. It had been under tremendous pressure for some time and was being caught almost every week recently. This is a pattern we often see before fish die. A part of me can't help feeling a bit sorry for the fish that find themselves in this position. I have heard of carp being 'retired' to non-fishing lakes. On small venues there's no where for the carp to retreat to. Should we be a little more respectful of our carp when they get into this dying pattern or is there too much money involved in removing your lake's biggest carp to let it retire in peace?

CONTENTS

8. SHOCKLEADER

30.TAC-TEC

38. CATCH REPORTS

56. CHRIS JERVIS

66. DAVE FINN

72. GAZ FAREHAM

80. MILES GIBSON

84. RICH HOGG

98. SCOTT LARMAN



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Paintings of the carp that became part of angling history.



SHOCKLEADER

THE NEW BRITISH RECORD



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



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BRITISH DEAF CARP ANGLING CELEBRATES MILE STONE



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

EVENING OF CARP

WITH

ANDY GOULSBRA

A ONE-OFF NIGHT FOR CARP ANGLERS



THE TYRWHITT ARMS • LINCOLN

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RAFFLE • BAR • LIVE Q&A

PROCEEDS AFTER OVERHEADS TO CHARITY

SATURDAY 23RD JAN

DOORS OPEN 6.30



BRITISH CARP ANGLING CHAMPIONSHIPS QUALIFIERS



LINE UP!

2027

LINE UP!

ROUTE TO THE FINAL

Q1-BRASENOSE 2
Q4-NASEBY RES
Q5-BROADLANDS

Q7-LOGGIES LAKE
Q9-BILLY'S LAKE
Q10-BERNERS HALL

Q2- TURNERS LAKE
Q3- WILLOW PARK

Q6- WYRESIDE
Q8- ORCHARD PLACE

SEMI FINAL A
BARSTON LAKE
16-18 JULY

SEMI FINAL B
BILLY'S LAKE
30 JULY -1 AUG

FINAL
BROADLANDS
24-26 SEPT



@munemushi_carp_

JAPAN 🇯🇵

CARP
FISHING
BEYOND
BORDERS

SAME
WATERS
SAME
PASSION

*Different
Waters
Same Passion.*

From Japan to the UK, carp anglers speak the same language. A love for the outdoors, great locations and reliable tackle. Thanks to @munemushi_carp_ for the support and for putting our Rogue rods to use in some amazing locations.

URBANATOR



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If Carlsberg did backdrops...

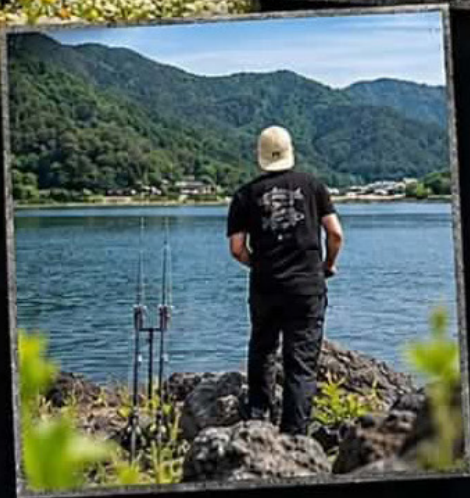


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Sessions*

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ANGLERS

ALL FOR ONLY
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28 Anglers



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Lakeside Houses



Luxury Stay



Airport Transfers



Boat Included



Outboard Engine



Battery



Life Jacket



Free Spirit Rods



Solar Tackle

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



CARP MINDS



FISHING TOGETHER. MAKING A DIFFERENCE.

RAISING
MONEY FOR



CHARITY FUNDRAISING EVENT

AUGUST 2027

We're proud to announce our Charity Fundraising Event at
Linear Fisheries – Tar Farm Lakes 5, 6 & 7,
running from **Friday 27th August** to
Sunday 29th August 2027.



EVENT SCHEDULE

- ✓ Fishing starts: 11am Friday
- ✓ Fishing ends: 10am Sunday
- ✓ Spaces available:
32 anglers
(first come, first served)



CATERING

CASUAL CATERING TOURS

- Saturday Breakfast
- Saturday Evening
Hog Roast



TROPHIES & PRIZES

- Biggest Common Carp
- Biggest Mirror Carp
- Most Weight overall
- Plus raffle prizes
throughout the weekend



PRICE & PAYMENTS

£160 PER PERSON

- ✓ Non-refundable deposit required
to secure your place
- ✓ If you pull out and cannot attend,
your deposit will go directly
to the charity **Mind**
- ✓ Final balance due by **June 2027**



IMPORTANT TRAVEL NOTICE

To reach Tar Farm Lakes, you must travel
via **Cogges Lane**.

This is a single-track road with:

- Limited passing places
- Blind bends
- Residential cottages nearby

Please drive slowly and carefully.
There's no rush – your peg is pre-booked,
and the lakes aren't going anywhere.
Arrive safely and start the weekend right.

COGGES LANE
SINGLE TRACK ROAD
PLEASE DRIVE
SLOWLY



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Help with upkeep of the lake, banks, and facilities.



SAFETY & COMPLIANCE

Work with the club to ensure rules are followed and the lake remains safe for all.



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Be a visible presence and support fellow anglers.



PLEASE CONTACT THE SECRETARY

secretary@allianceao.co.uk

IF INTERESTED

ABINGDON & OXFORD
ANGLERS ALLIANCE

*Together we keep
our lake thriving*

2027 CARP MINDS CHARITY EVENTS



We are now looking for companies who would like to support our yearly charity events, held to raise money for Mind, the mental health charity.

For 2027 we are having a new event banner made, and we're proud to already have support from Horsley of Gainsborough and Talking Carp, who have jumped on board to help what we're doing.

If your company would like to get involved and support our fundraising — helping disabled kids, young people, and veterans who struggle with mental health — we would love to hear from you. Sponsors will have their company logo featured on the new banner, and logos will need to be supplied in PDF. If you'd like to support us, please get in touch.



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THE SOUTH WEST COUNTY CARP CHAMPIONSHIP: DEVON VS CORNWALL



What a great competition it was. It really couldn't have been any closer, but Cornwall edge Devon to take victory! Cornwall ended on 349lb and Devon finished on 343lb 14oz. In the individual pairs, George West and Andy Woon came first with 99lb 4oz. 2nd place was Steven Whitworth and Kevin Hicks with 95lb 7oz. 3rd place was Dan Hole and Jack Chillingworth with 81lb 7oz. David Pennington took the biggest fish prize with a 28lb 10oz mirror. Dan Hole won the first fish prize. I would like to say thank you to all the sponsors: Mirage Baits, Nash Tackle, Fishing leads UK, Barnstaple Bait & Tackle, Homeleigh Angling

Centre and RG Baits . The competition wouldn't have been what it was without you.

Big thank you to Jamie Rusling , Michael Toms and Jordan John Coleman for the help and photography



FRIMLEY CHARITY EVENT 2026



What a fantastic weekend Mark and Rain Frimley for out at the Frimley 2026 charity doing themselves yet again. event. Everyone has said what The event just keeps getting a great time they had, which better.

is testament to the hard work The weather held and that everyone involved puts in. smiles for miles all around. A lot of the work is done way Curry night , to pizza and before the event as well as on chips delivered to swims. All the weekend. I doff my cap the amazing food that was at to all of you that made it the the bbq and buffet was talked success it was. Huge thanks to about by those in attendance



to how good it was.

Just to say a massive thank you from all of us , to all the companies that donated to the event again this year. Without you, the raffle and auctions wouldn't be possible.

Well, that's my final event for the year now until next year. Time to get a bit of my own fishing in again. After

a little trip back to Frimley with an auction winner at the end of this month. Then back on the big pit for some more camping with the hope that the biggun pays me a visit.

I will have a few auctions going up between now and the next event, so keep an eye out. Thank you again to all of you. X

LINEAR

FISHERIES 2026



CARP FISHING AT ITS BEST!



DAY-TICKET WATERS | SYNDICATE LAKES | BAIT & TACKLE SHOP

BIG CARP

fine arts

WATERCOLOUR CARP PAINTINGS

The Legendary Big Carp Series



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

At the very modest price of £25, this is a collection not to be missed.

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www.carpbooksonline.com

RIP ALAN GREEN



Dear friends and family, It hurts our hearts to share the news that Alan passed away on Friday 18th September, following a short but courageous battle with a terminal illness. We know this will be a shock and incredibly hard to hear. He has loved and been loved by so many throughout his many walks of life, his ripples span far and wide.

to hear from you, any videos, stories, photos, what you loved about Alan etc. Nothing is too much, inappropriate or too random. We know what he was like! Alan-greeny@outlook.com

Details of his Celebration of Life will follow when arranged. Rest peacefully Alan/Greeny/Dad. Until we meet again.

We have set up an email address to collate his son) XXX Love Marie & Callum (wife &

ATOMIC TACKLE'S NEW SALES DIRECTOR



Introducing the new atomic tackle sales director, Nigel Woodcock

We would like to give a very warm welcome to nigel woodcock who has come on board at #atomictackle stepping into the sales director role leading the charge with the trade side of atomic. Wasting no time

what so ever nige has already opened his atomic account with a quick overnighter down his syndicate with 4 fish landed to upper 20s these being the best of the bunch.

Its amazing to have you onboard mate & look forward to seeing some more from you very soon!

AQUA LILIUM CLOTHING

AUTUMN 2026 COLLECTION

AQUA LILIUM CLOTHING — NEW BIB & BRACE SET REVIEW

Aqua Lilium Clothing have stepped things up with their brand-new Bib & Brace set, designed specifically with anglers and the realities of being on the bank in mind.

The first thing that stands out is the protection. The set is 100% waterproof and windproof, giving you the confidence to stay out when the British weather decides to throw everything at you. Rain, cold winds and long sessions are exactly where this clothing is intended to earn its keep.

What's equally impressive is the comfort. Heavy-duty fishing clothing can sometimes feel bulky and restrictive, but the Aqua Lilium set has been designed to remain extremely comfortable to wear, whether you're casting, setting up camp, walking the lake or sitting behind the rods for hours.

Attention has also been paid to the details. All of the zips are waterproof, helping keep the weather on the outside where it belongs, while the Bib & Brace features strong, robust clips designed to cope with regular use on the bank. The distinctive olive-green finish with Aqua Lilium's orange detailing gives the whole outfit a smart, unmistakable look.

AND THERE'S MORE — NEW AQUA LILIUM POLARISED SUNGLASSES

Aqua Lilium Clothing are also launching their brand-new polarised sunglasses — and to celebrate, a pair will be FREE when you purchase a Bib & Brace set.

For carp anglers, polarised glasses aren't simply about looking good. Cutting surface glare can make a huge difference when you're trying to spot fish, investigate margins or find subtle features beneath the surface.

So, you're getting a 100% waterproof and windproof Bib & Brace set, waterproof zips, robust clips, excellent comfort AND a FREE pair of Aqua Lilium polarised sunglasses.

SEE IT AT THE WINTER CARP SHOW

You'll also be able to come and see Aqua Lilium Clothing at the Winter Carp Show at Sandown Racecourse on 28th & 29th November.

It's the perfect opportunity to come along, see the new clothing in person, check out the quality and detailing, and get a first look at the new polarised sunglasses.

Aqua Lilium Clothing
Built for the bank. Built for
the weather. Built for anglers



**POLARISED
SUNGLASSES**



Website: www.aqualiliumclothing.com

Email: aqualiliumclothing@hotmail.com

Tel: 07854629130

You can also reach us through or Facebook or insta gram pages



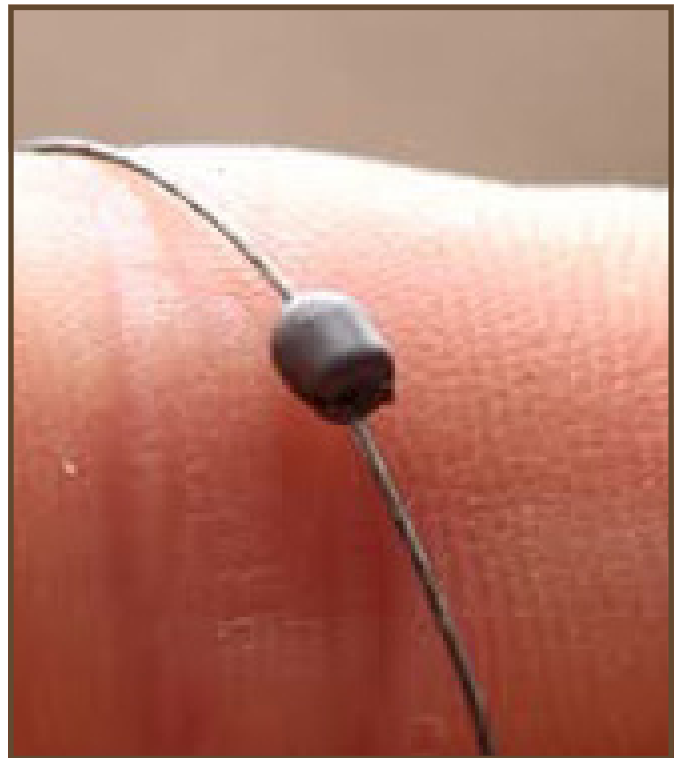
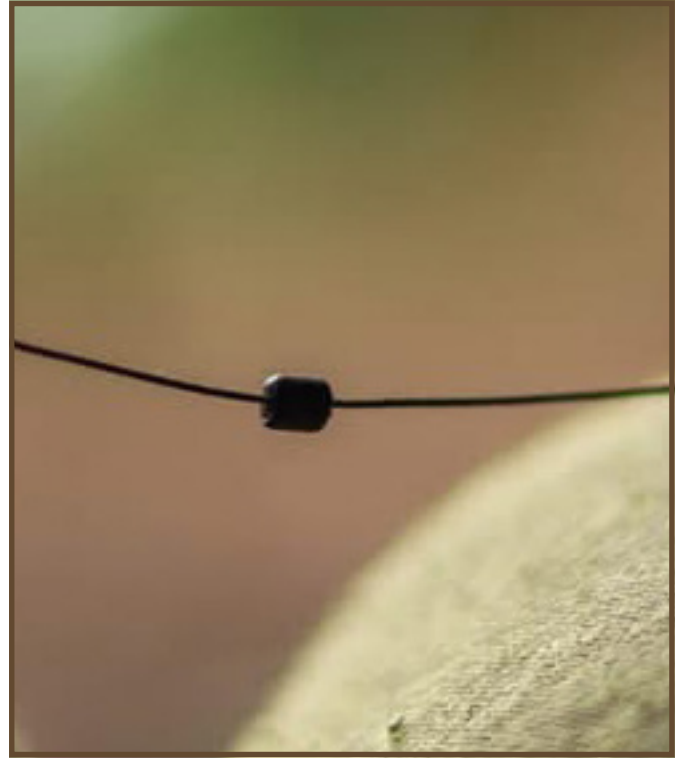
TACKLE

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Heavier then normal tungsten products



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- RRP £2.50

DYNAMITE BAITS COMPLEX-T



There are baits that catch carp. Then there are baits that seem to have a habit of producing the really big, special carp! Complex-T has quietly built an incredible big-fish track record. The images in this post are a just small sample

we've gathered over the past few months! When you look at what's inside it, perhaps it's no surprise... Highly-soluble fishmeals including LT94 an incredible big-fish track along with a host a proven record. The images in this big carp magnets such as liver, fenugreek, yeast, garlic



powder as well as a few more confidence year-round that little secrets...it's one of the keeps carp coming back for most nutritionally complete more and performs season food-source baits in our range. after season. Complex-T... The result is a soft, open- Built for Big Carp. textured and highly-soluble

- www.dynamitebaits.co.uk
- RRP £12.95/kg

boilie designed to be fed with

Oak Lakes Fisheries

www.oaklakesfisheries.co.uk



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



35 lb 6 oz the carp known as "Micky" - well in Dean Paffey good angling on the full moon



22 lb



17lb



16lb

Oak Lakes Fisheries

www.oaklakesfisheries.co.uk



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



Chipped in with these two - 10lb and 17.4



Henley had new pb of 10lb



The Long Common 31 lb 6 oz for Dean Paffey



18lbs and 2x14lbs



A lovely 30 common



15 lb new stockie



19 lb 4 oz

Oak Lakes Fisheries



www.oaklakesfisheries.co.uk

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



The big mirror, 29.10



The big ghosty 29



Pipe lake 20lb



22 lb for Kiera



23 lb 10 oz on sunrise



16 lb 8 oz



21 lb 8oz Pipe lake



17 lb



16 lb 2oz



14 lb 8 oz



Gary Linear 22 lb 10 oz



27.10



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



18 lb 6 oz



24 lb



21 lb 4 oz



18 lb



Lovely 24 hours on swim 20' the bay' I had 7 takes and lost 2, biggest was 16.7lb



24lb 8oz ghostie



Great stay, 36 hours, Monday/Tuesday this week. Me and my 13 year old son had a great time, with a good few carp banked

Stuart Higgs
with Jon's
Common at
44.1

SOUTHERN STUNNER



Dave Levy was Buzzing to
see this big old fully come
over the net. Proper old
Essex carp

MONKEY MAGIC



Jason Ford was blessed recently with a proper Lee Valley matriarch

VALLEY BRUTE



Alan Cooper with The Mighty Sovereign at 45lb

COOPS COLLECTS



CATCH REPORTS

NOT SO GRIM



Matt Grimwood with his second 50+ common of the year, and a pb equalling 50.08



Sat 1st August

ON SALE WINTER MEMBERSHIP £299*



* Valid at Bluebell Lakes stays from Monday 9th November 2026 until Friday 12th March 2027.

**BRACE!!
BRACE!!**



Colin Tiller managed 14 fish in 4 nights including 'Cruise' to 47lb, as well as 'Sid' at 43lb 12oz!



YOU RANG!!



Chemo's Sutton for Aaron Butler at 43

CATCH REPORTS

KING OF THE POND



What a session for Adrian Brown — 3 nights, 5 carp and a new PB of 53lb 6oz!



The Winter Carp Show

28-29 NOV | 2026

Sandown Racecourse, Esher

EXPERT TALKS & SHOWS

FREE PARKING

**BLACK FRIDAY
DEALS**

FOOD & DRINK

**CHRISTMAS
GIFTS**

MASSIVE LINE UP OF EXHIBITORS

**MEET THE
STARS**

**VIP
TICKETS**

**INDUSTRY
GIANTS**



& SO MANY MORE

DAN'S THE MAN

Dan with One
of Glebe Lake's
largest residents
at 46lb 8oz



MAGIC MATT

'Matthew Fagg
nuff said



MEMORY MAKER



A special fish for Glenn The Parrot from the Nirvana Syndicate at 50.8 caught in memory of Glenn's Dad

TARR VERY MUCH

The Big Lin came as part of a five bite hit for Garry Tarr.



LUCKY LUKE



The Scattered Linear graces the bank at a very creditable 46lbs! for Luke Brindley



ULTRALOCK

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CATCH REPORTS

SOLID OAK

Curtis with an
Oak stunner



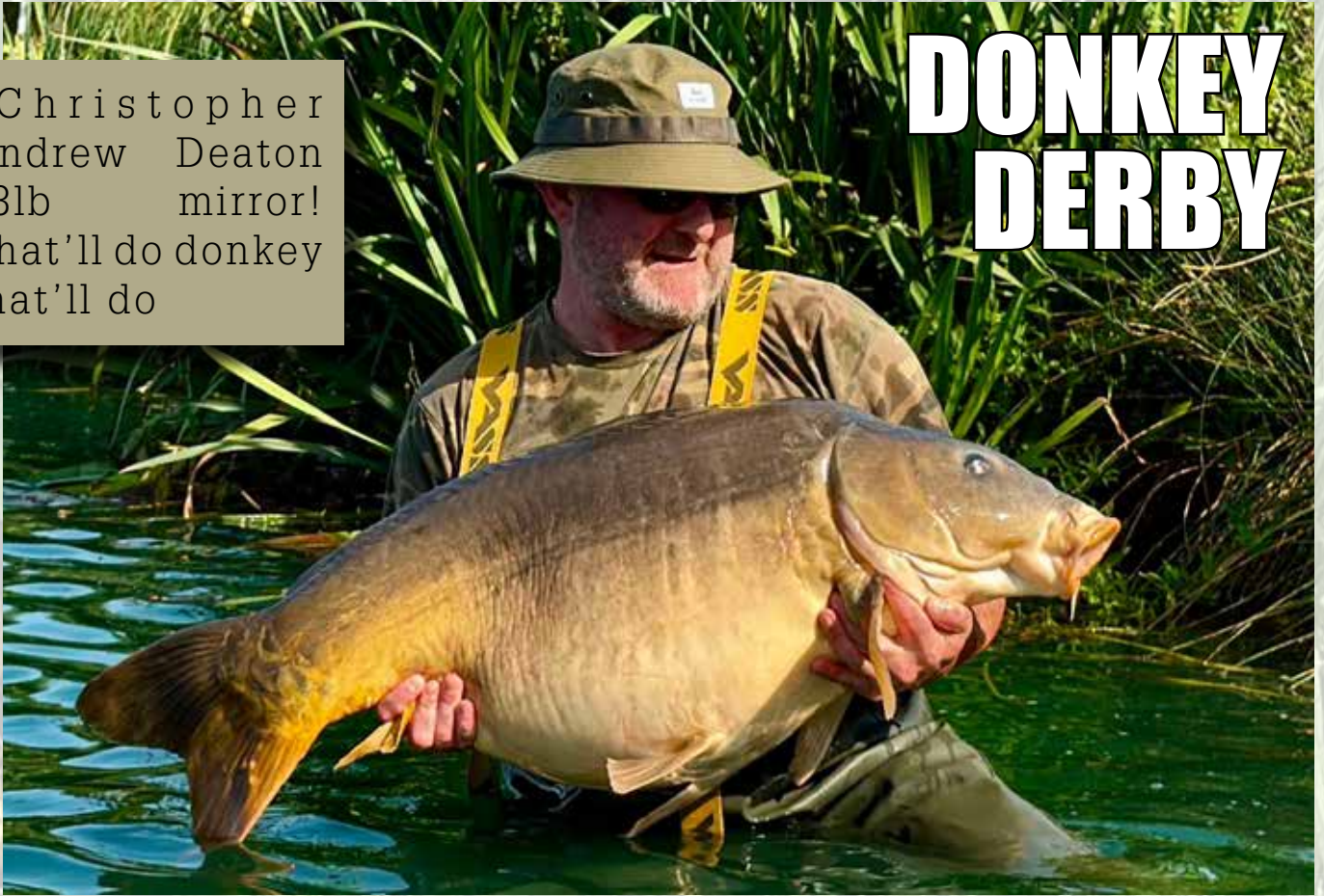
IAN'S BIG ONE



Ian Asher cemented his name in concrete on his syndicate this morning when the big one at 53.14

Christopher
Andrew Deaton
53lb mirror!
That'll do donkey
that'll do

DONKEY DERBY



BIG BERT



Here's Jack with 'Bert' at 44

LINING UP



Fishing B1, Grigore Trohin had 2 carp of 35lb and his new PB of 46lb!!

MR BURNS



MR BURNS - 44LB!
What a carp.



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SCARILY GOOD



Keith Innes first fish from St Johns - the Big Ghosty at 45lb 11oz!!

COOKING AT COKING



Timothy Fry with a Cokin 48lb 8oz



CHRIS JERVIS

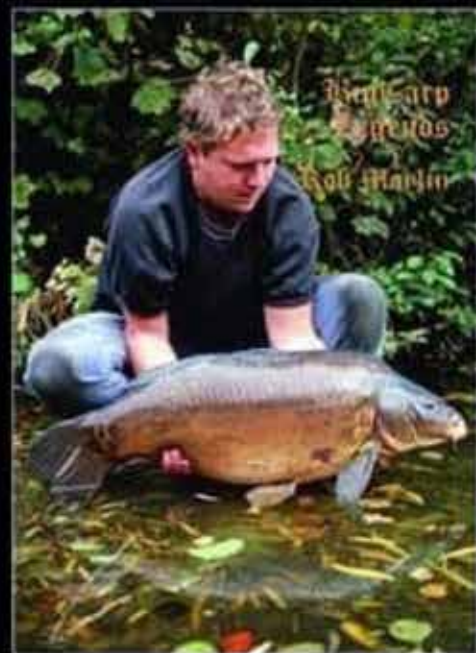
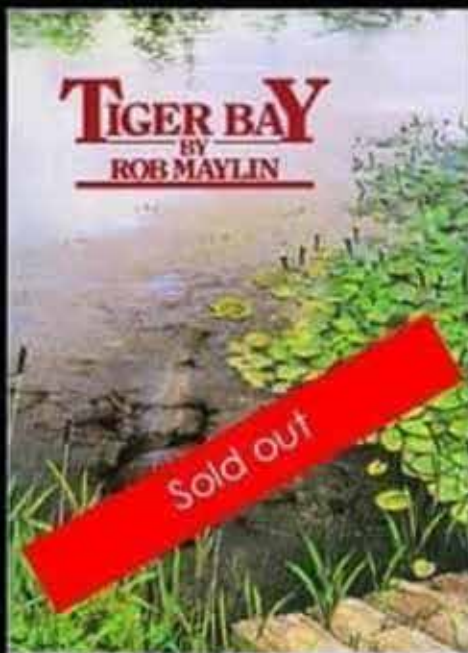
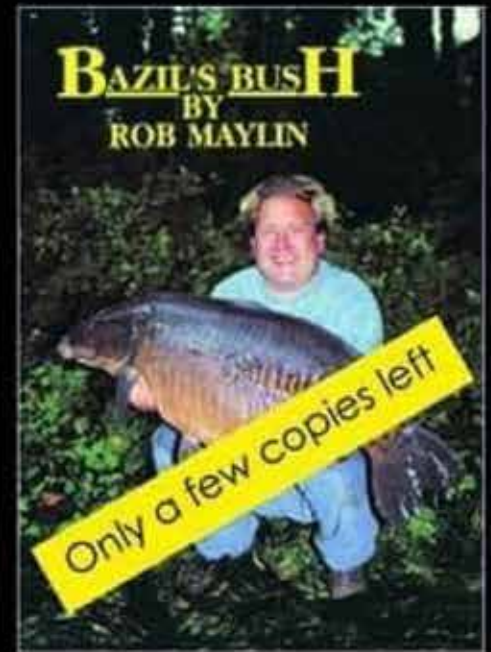
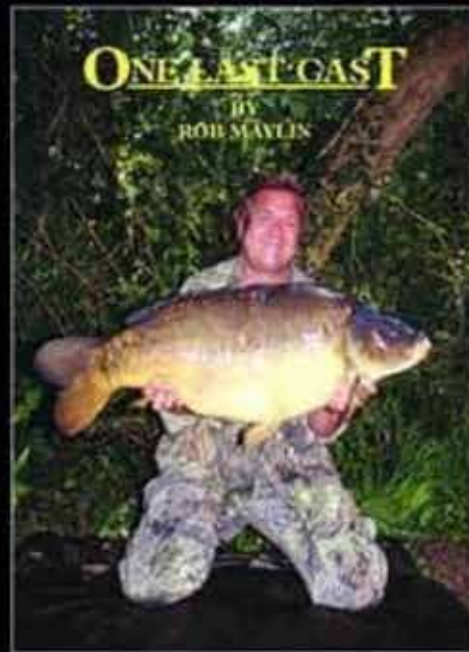
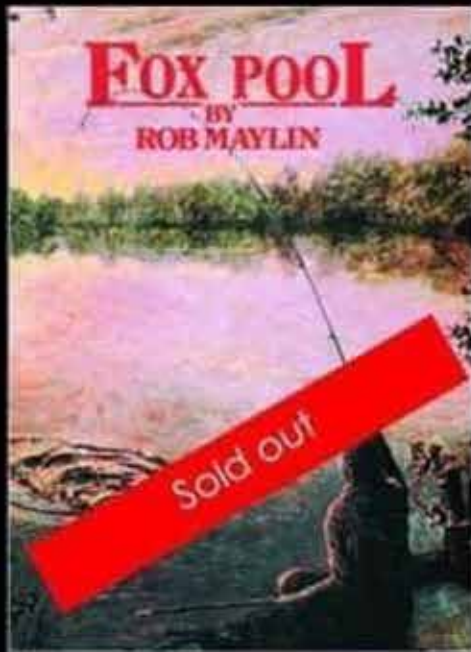
PRIMAL MENTALITY CHAMPIONSHIP

What an incredible weekend at the Primal Mentality CIC Carp Championship, delivered in partnership with Hurlston Hall Fishery Ormskirk. Over 180lb of carp were banked in 24 hours, showing just how well the fish are feeding with the recent change in weather and water pressure. Our third qualifier saw 12 fantastic young anglers compete for a place in the Grand Final. Congratulations to our top three: Riley – 1st



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Place Harry – 2nd Place Zak
– 3rd Place

Every single young angler should be incredibly proud. The standard of watercraft, fish care, respect and sportsmanship throughout the weekend was outstanding. This competition is about much more than catching fish—it's





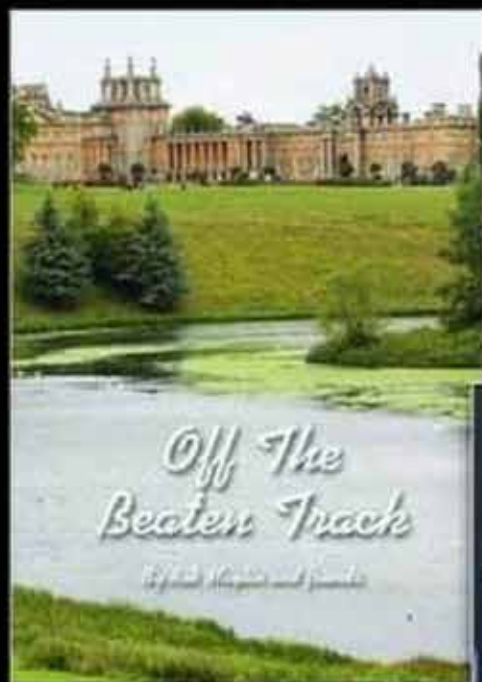


about developing the next generation of responsible anglers, building confidence, creating friendships and making memories that will last a lifetime. for organising and delivering the competition, providing the qualified coaching team and volunteers, and to Hurlston Hall Fishery for supporting the event

A huge thank you to the Primal Mentality CIC Team and helping create such a fantastic venue for these

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK SERIES

For lovers of the unknown, unnamed and uncaught



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young anglers.

We'd also like to say thank you to all the companies who help out by supporting us and donating prizes and all of the parents and grandparents whose continued support helps make these competitions possible.

We can't wait to see you all on the bank again soon

Together, we're building something special for the next generation of anglers.

Primal Mentality CIC -Reel Healing Team

Hurlston Hall Fishery Team
Tight Lines - Only Takes One Bite





DAVE FINN

THERE'S ALWAYS A CHANCE

'I'm sure you'll all agree, the last couple of weeks in terms of temperatures have been unbearable, but I've been using my time wisely sorting kit, sharpening spare hooks, prepping seed etc, just making sure that I'm ready for windows of opportunity.

By windows of opportunity, I mean weather front and the moon phases. In recent times, I've had some fantastic results based around these summer moons.

I knew we were coming up to the new moon as well as the solar eclipses, so despite the current heatwave, I made the effort to get down the lake. Soon, three spinners were out to good areas with a bucket of salty seed spread over the rigs - classic summer tactics.

The night passed quietly and then at 5:20am, my right-hand rod was away. After a decent fight, I slipped the net under this old-looking mirror - At 43lb 12oz, I was absolutely buzzing.

Sometimes when the odds are stacked against you or you think they stacked against you, there's always a window of opportunity and chance to be had'.

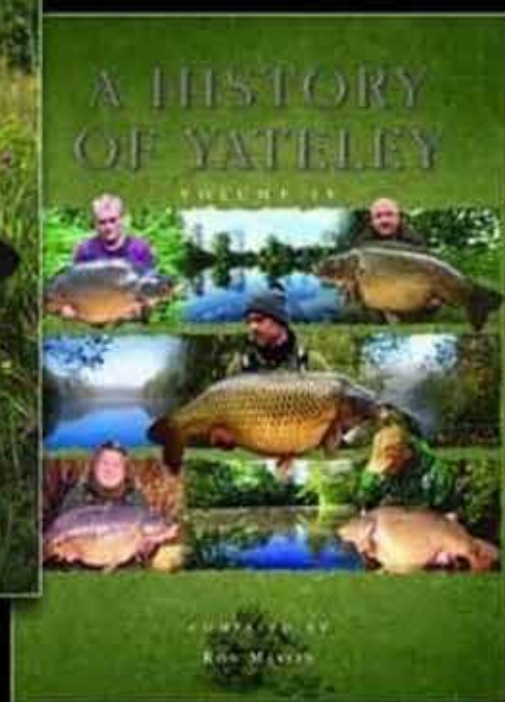
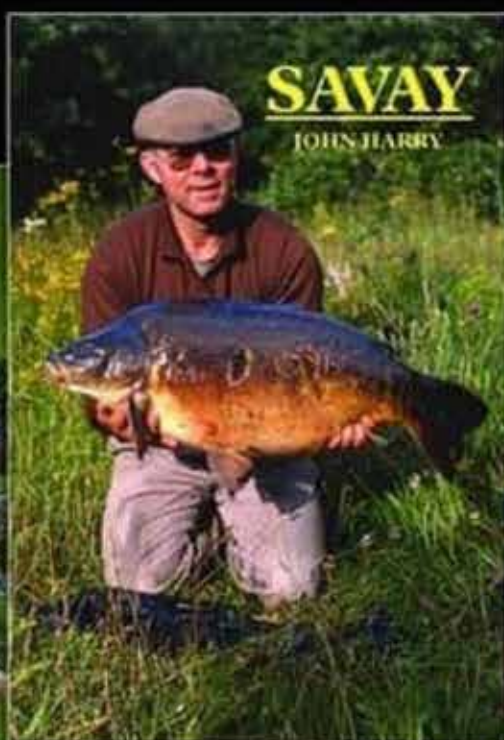
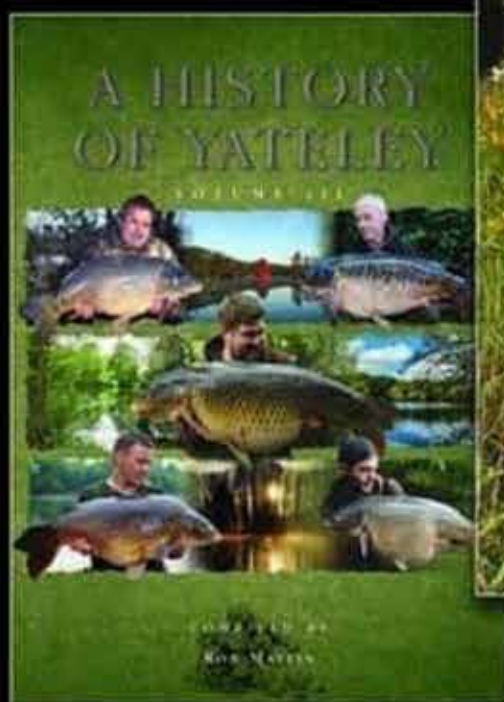
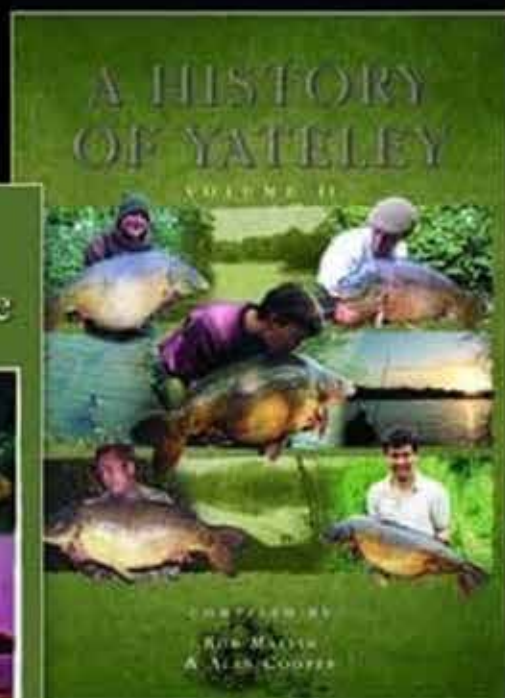
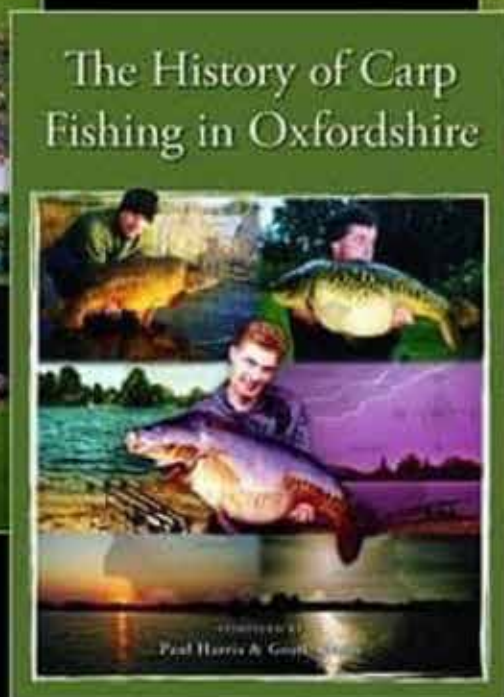
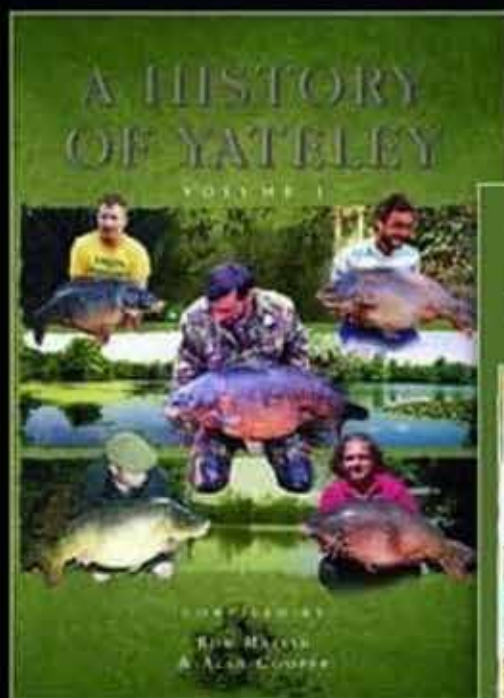




EXCLUSIVE



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GAZ FAREHAM

RETURN TO THE COTSWOLDS

To be totally honest, I've never been a huge fan of mid-summer angling, but this year I've fully embraced it and with the prospects of a few months' work on some lovely new gardens up in Cotswolds, I figured I could work some fishing in as well - a well calculated bonus! I'd only done one night since last autumn on the syndicate so was looking forward to getting back up there in search of a few of the big 'uns I didn't manage in the spell last summer, and despite the forecast temperatures in the high 30's, I was still mad keen to get after them. After finding them in the edge on the end of the fresh wind,

ome little dinner plate spots were pinpointed when the coast was clear, and it didn't take too long.

Little traps of hemp, chopped tiger, peanut and caster did the trick, literally

just half a handful of each, and a shortened version of my usual Combi Multi lowered in, the link cut right down to 3 inches, and a Ring Swivel Hybrid Lead Clip used instead

of my usual QC and anti tangle sleeve version that I use for casting - just to allow a little more free movement on such small spots and over a tight spread of fine, smaller food items.

I managed five, the best being a rare 33 pounder that was last out 3 or 4 years ago and one that only has less than a handful of captures to its name - Top buzz!

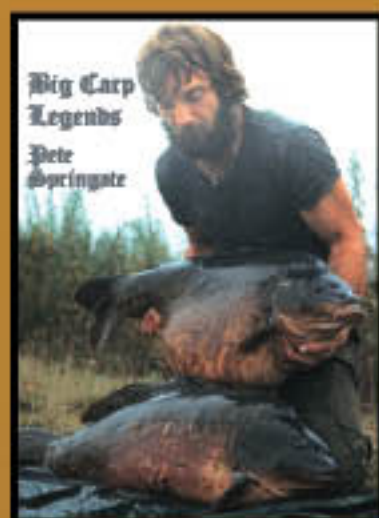
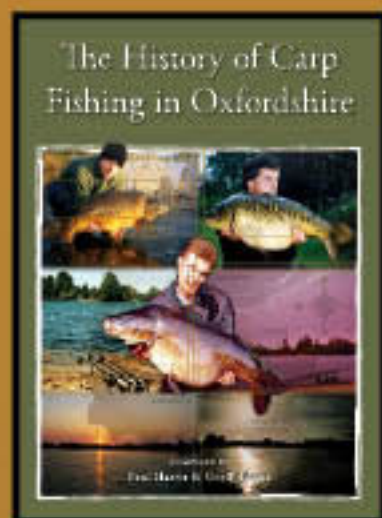




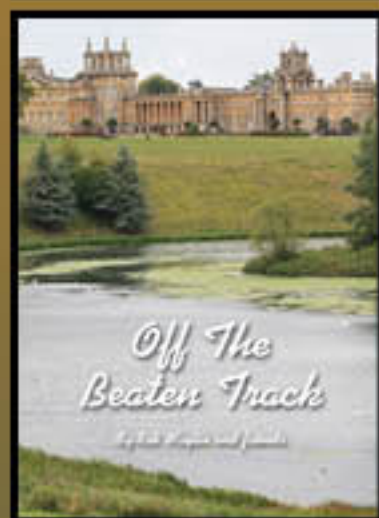
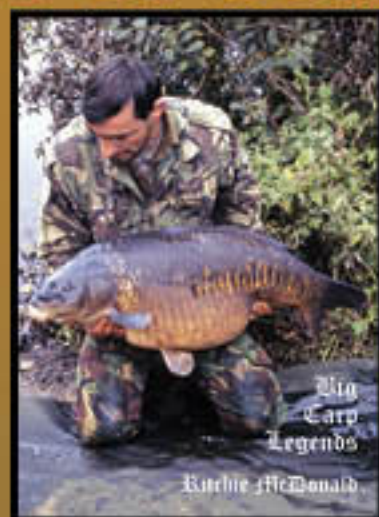




AUTUMNAL

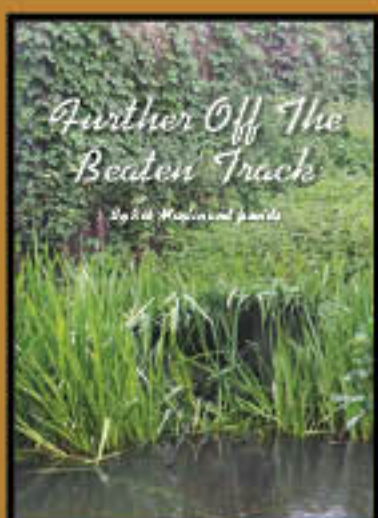
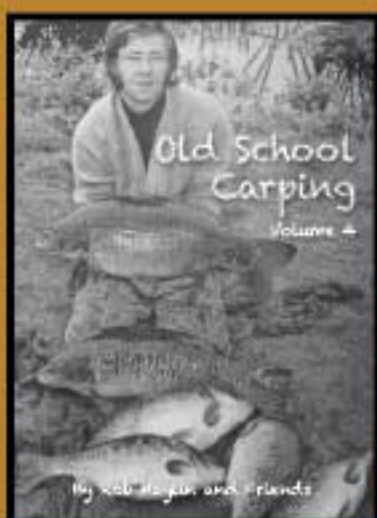
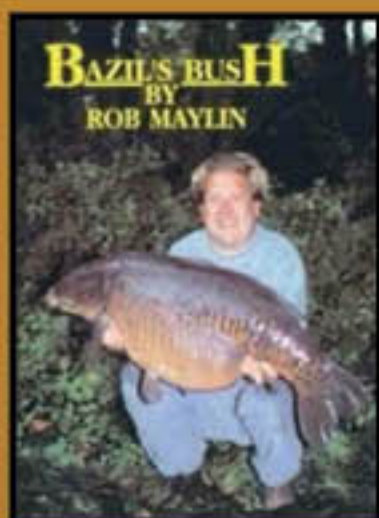


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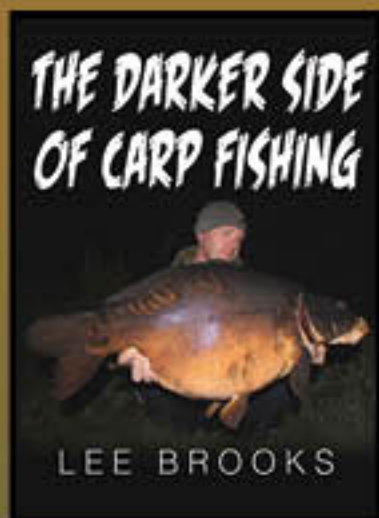
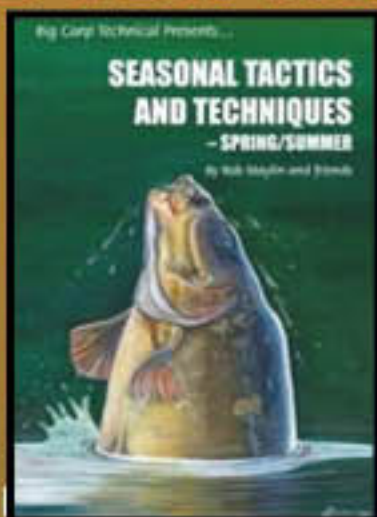


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MILES GIBSON

THE LONGREACH FULLY

I first went to Longreach at the end of April last year with one carp in mind, that being the classic looking mirror "Mutleys". A few trips in and a good friend of mine ol Cheesy boi had a royal result lading a midd 20 common, starburst at over 50 and the big fully. Well once that sling was zipped back revealing that big old fully scaled, I just knew I wasn't going anywhere till I'd caught that one.

Yesterday morning everything fell into place and

a dream was achieved the big fully was mine, looked every bit incredible as I'd imagined her too and at a big summer weight of 47.6, to top it all off. Just after we slipped her back one of the rods still fishing busted off and after a bit off a tussle the lakes big common rolled over the cord. Loved my time over there, a Propa pit that place, test any man to there limits.

Big thanks to the two Dans for coming down to do pics and share the moment Dan Yeomans Daniel Wildbore







RICH HOGG

CANAL SESSIONS PART 8

22nd July 2018

Over the moon with this fully from this weekend.

It's gotta be up there as one of the best-looking canal carp I've caught. I dropped onto a stretch I haven't fished in quite some time, spotted a couple of fish and once they moved away from

the spot it gave me chance to put out a couple of baits.

The rigs must have only been in for 20 mins before the fish returned and the right-hand rod ripped into action.

What a special fish it is too. Made up

29th July 2018



A rocket of a common that tripped up yesterday morning.

I got the rods out just as it was starting to get light quietly placing both rigs right in the edge, around half 5 the right-hand rod ripped off with the fish powering from the margin to the far bank within seconds.

This mint, dark common putting an end to a run of recent mirrors.

31st July 2018

My last session of July and what a way to end with this stunning common.

I was beginning to regret leaving the comfort of my own bed though this morning, as it absolutely chucked it down soon after getting the rods out, but any regret soon vanished when this hard fighting common eventually ended up in the net.

12th August 2018



At the start of the summer, I spotted a little 2 tone cruising up and down the canal, a very recognisable fish that I only ever saw the once.

Anyway about 3 months on and here it is. Tripping up yesterday on a little morning sesh tearing off from under the rod tip just as the sun was coming up.

Not a monster but what a little character and a great way to start the day.

13th August 2018

Made up with this one! I popped out for a quick couple of hours again before work this morning, and I'm glad I did.

Though I was beginning to think it wasn't my day after losing a very small common and catching a bream early on. But what a way to save session at the very end with a right banger of a mirror... that'll do nicely.

15th August 2018





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These quick morning sessions are really doing it for me at the moment with another quick bite coming at 1st light. Again, ripping off from a foot or so from the bank, these margin takes are savage! Think it may be a recapture from quite a few years back as-well.

18th August 2018

Tucked away on the far bank with a couple of sneaky rigs placed down the edge.

21st August 2018

Mint little canal gem from this morning. My usual spots seem to have gone quiet for now so a little walk with a loaf of bread seemed the best bet, especially as I only had about an hour spare.

Again all seemed quiet until a group of 3 fish popped out from the weeds. This one being the unlucky one. Couple of photos later and I'm off to work.

27th August 2018

Little bit gutted about





losing a fish at the net this morning, even if it was tiny. There's only one way to get over it though, and that's to make sure the next 1 goes in the net. Fortunately, the next opportunity came no more than 10 minutes after the last but this time after what felt like an eternity, she rolled over the cord and was safely netted, and this 1 was more than double the

size so il take that!

29th August 2018

A nice little morning walk ending up with this lovely urban character. All angry and tensed up throughout its short time on the bank. Got this one in the net just in the nick of time before the boats started coming through.

9th September 2018

Absolutely buzzin with this one. It's been a bit of



a slow start to one of my favourite months of the year but yesterday, after a couple of hours blanking on my first stretch of canal, I stopped off on the way home for an hour or so on a stretch where I had seen fish the day before.

This scaly old warrior stumbled across my rig and handful of bait right in the edge. Another savage margin take and a crackin fish to

end a few hours fishing.

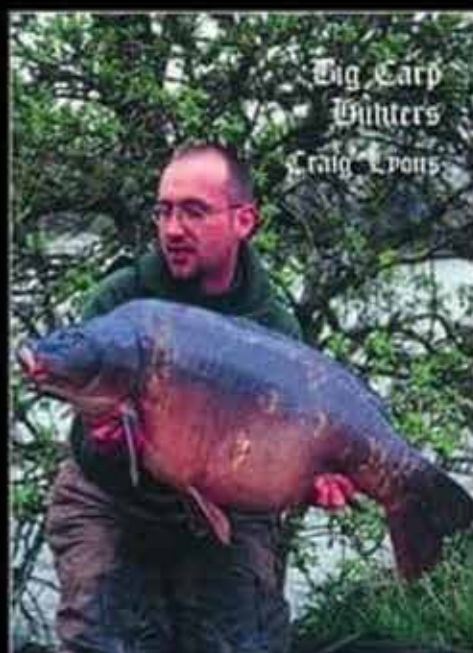
30th September 2018

It's been a quiet end to the month for me, a handful of little morning sessions not quite coming up with a result other than bream and Tench.

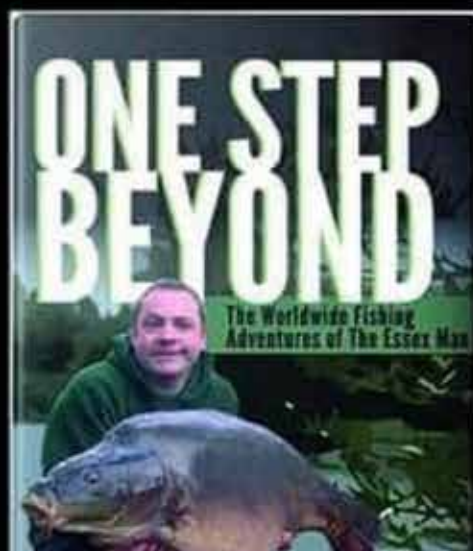
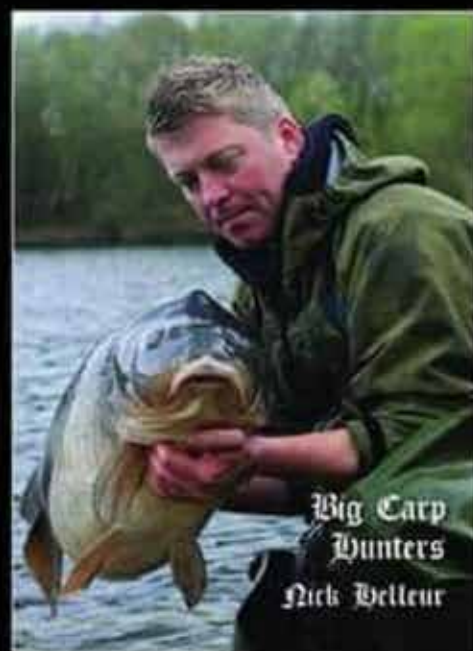
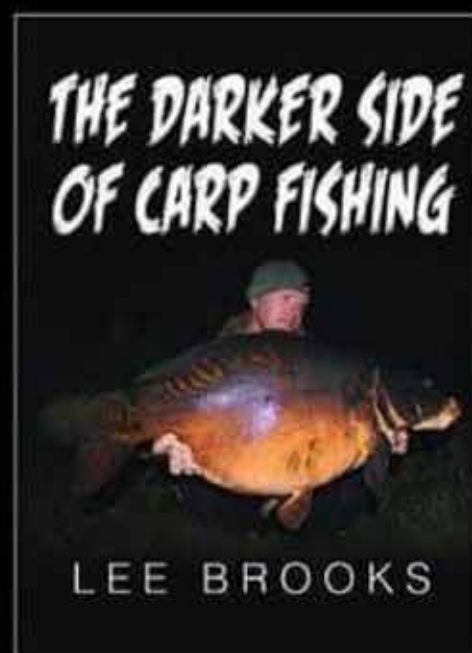
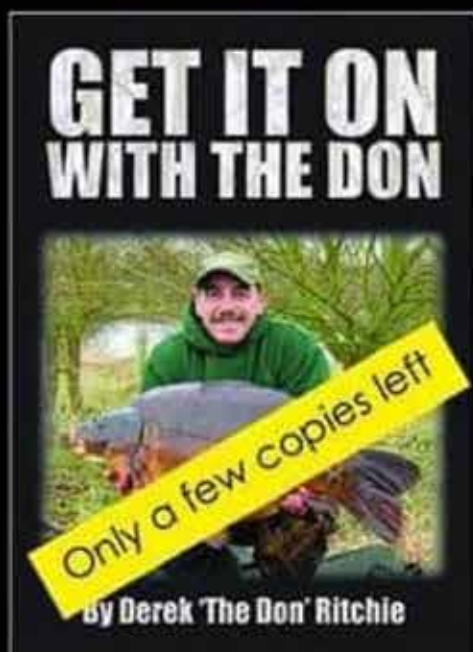
But here's one from back in August I didn't put up at the time. My second ever fish off the Shropshire union coming 3 years after the last one, crazy thing is it's the same



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fish! What are the chances of that?! so, I guess I've still only caught the one ;

Still, it's a stunner and il be back in the future.

2nd October 2018

After a mad, unexpected take followed by a tense



battle through the weed, there could only be 1 winner. Luckily this time it was me... only just though!!!

2nd October 2018

First little morning of the month and I'm chuffed to be kicking off October with this chap! Absolutely ripped off from the margin taking me through every weed bed along the way, I wasn't sure she was going to end up slipping over the cord but fortunately, luck was on my side.

4th October 2018

This mint common came in the dying seconds of this morning's pre-work sesh. No need for alarms this time as it didn't scream off, instead it was doing acrobatics in mid water above my baited area, I wasn't sure what was going on at first, until it turned to face me and I saw my rig in its mouth. Not sure even the fish knew it was hooked at first but it soon came to life.





SCOTT LARMAN

WRAYSBURY NORTH LAKE

There are certain lakes that stand above all others. Waters that have built a reputation through history, incredible carp and unforgettable captures. Wraysbury North Lake is undoubtedly one of them. Simply walking through the gates feels different. You immediately sense that you are standing on one of the most iconic carp fisheries in the country, a place where dreams are realised and legends are made.

My campaign began in the depths of winter. For three months I fished relentlessly, enduring long cold sessions with very little reward. Looking back, those blank trips were never a waste of time. They gave me the opportunity to study the lake, learn its moods and prepare for the spring campaign that I knew would eventually come.

By the time spring arrived, I had identified several areas and swims that suited the

way I like to fish. Confidence slowly began to grow and, little by little, I found myself getting amongst the stock.

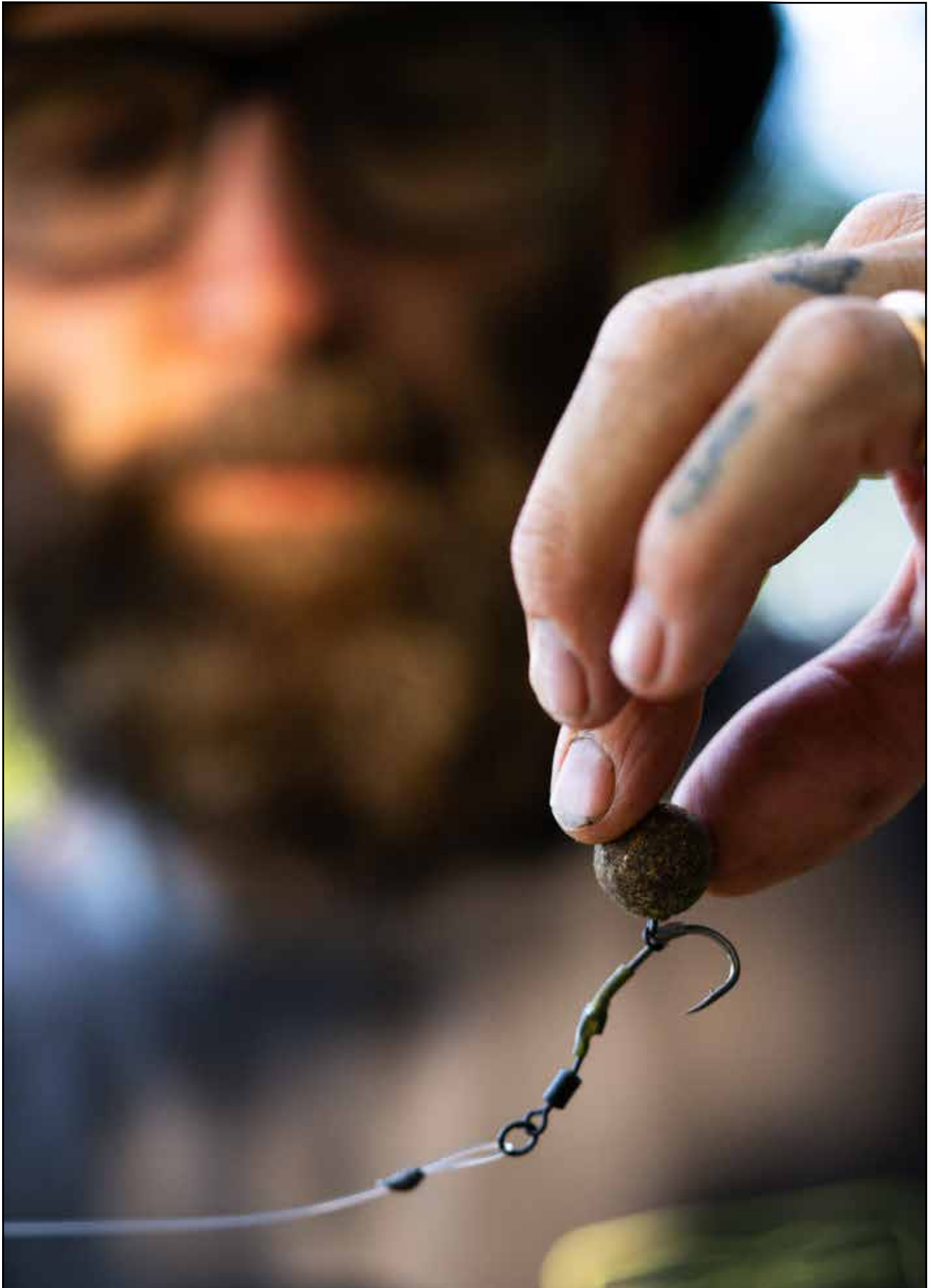
Wraysbury holds an incredible head of carp, with some truly special old residents swimming beneath its surface. The biggest challenge is not finding fish, it is finding opportunities. The lake is one of the busiest in the country, and understanding the movements of the anglers became almost as important as understanding the movements of the carp. Once I recognised those patterns, I knew when certain swims would become available and that knowledge proved invaluable.

As spring turned into summer, the weed exploded. Fishing effectively meant changing my approach, so I switched to a braided main line. I had been testing a new braid from Atomic Tackle, and it proved to be exactly what the situation demanded,

allowing me to fish confidently amongst the heavy weed.

As the campaign progressed and the weed reached its peak, another subtle but significant change was made to my approach. The lead clip arrangement was replaced with a helicopter setup, a decision driven entirely by the conditions in front of me. Not only did it offer far greater confidence when presenting over dense weed, but it also allowed me to fine tune the position of the top bead in seconds, ensuring the rig settled perfectly, no matter what lay beneath it.

When it came to the end tackle, I had complete faith in just two presentations. Rather than constantly chopping and changing, I relied on rigs that have consistently proven themselves time and time again. For bottom baits, my choice was the Combi Multi Rig. For pop ups, it was the ever dependable Ronnie



Rig. Two presentations that complement each other perfectly and, between them, cover almost every situation I encounter.

Both rigs are tied exclusively with components from ATOMIC TACKLE. At the heart of each is the Size 4 Grabba Hook, a pattern that has become a permanent fixture in my tackle box. The subtle beaked point is perfectly suited to fishing in heavy weed, maintaining exceptional hooking potential while providing the confidence needed to fish demanding venues such as Wraysbury.

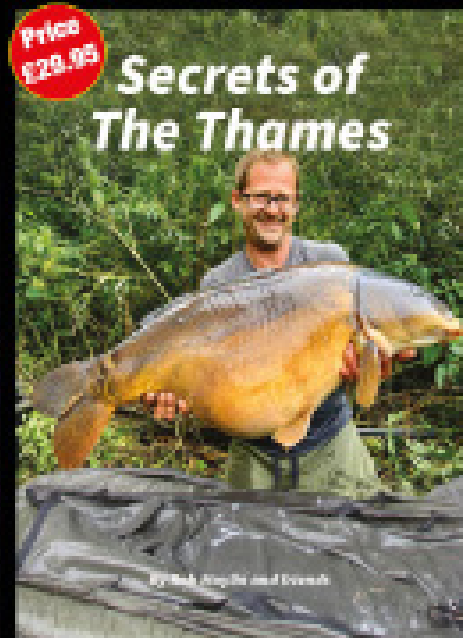
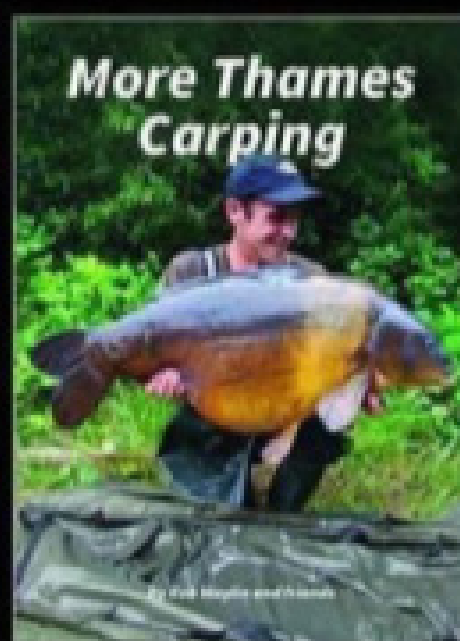
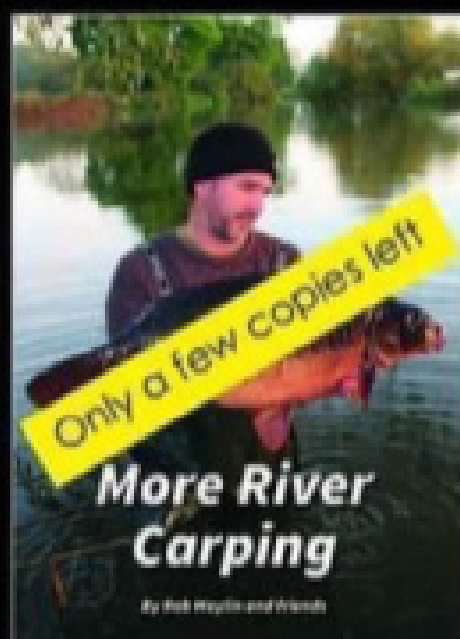
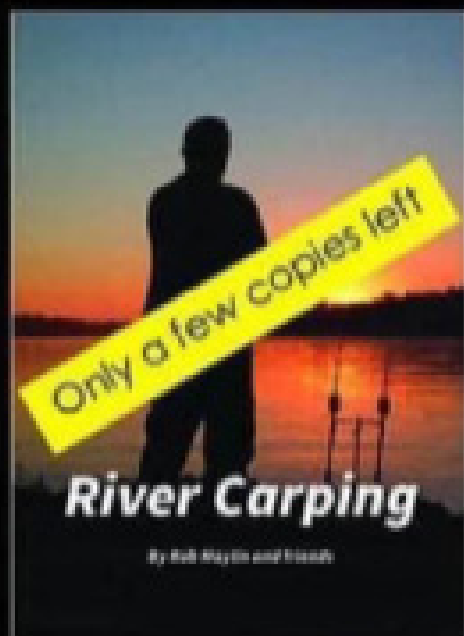
The hooklink material of choice was 25lb Fluro Wyre Soft, a beautifully supple fluorocarbon that all but disappears beneath the surface, creating an incredibly discreet presentation. The Combi Multi Rig is then finished with JEL-E-WYRE Bare-Bak, adding just the right amount of stiffness while still allowing the hookbait to behave naturally over the lakebed.

I'm a firm believer that confidence catches carp, and these are two rigs that have earned mine completely. They travel with me on every campaign and have accounted for some of my most memorable captures. When everything else around you is changing, having absolute faith in what lies at the business end is worth more than any new trend or gimmick.

One of the defining edges throughout this campaign has undoubtedly been my hookbaits. For the past 18 months I have relied exclusively on Blackspots Hookbaits, and they have played a pivotal role in the capture of some truly special carp, both at home and abroad. In a game where the smallest details often separate success from failure, absolute confidence in every component of your approach is priceless.

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A hookbait is the final piece of the puzzle, the one element every fish must commit to, so it has to inspire complete belief. When you cast out knowing your presentation is right and your hookbait has proven itself time and time again, it frees your mind to concentrate on the things that really make the difference: watercraft, observation and making the right decisions at the right time.

That level of confidence is impossible to put a price on, and throughout this campaign it has been one less variable to think about, allowing me to focus entirely on staying one step ahead of the fish.

From that point onwards





the campaign really began to gather momentum. What struck me more than anything was the unbelievable quality of the fish. I was catching unnamed mirrors that would easily be A-Team fish on the majority of waters across the country.

The first truly memorable capture was The Snake. A long, dark, ancient mirror carrying well over forty years of history. It was one of those carp that instantly leaves an impression. For many anglers it would have been the fish of a lifetime. For me, it simply fuelled the desire to keep pushing. One fish, however, dominated my thoughts above all others. The long Sutton. In my opinion it is the finest mirror in the Colne Valley and arguably one of the best carp in the country. In more than forty years of carp fishing, I had never singled out one individual fish to target. This was the first time. I warned

my wife that I was about to dedicate as much time as possible to the challenge, and thankfully she understood exactly what it meant to me.

As the weeks passed, one particular area of the lake continued to draw my attention. I had seen The Long Sutton there on several occasions, often alongside Mike's Pet and Single Scale. Everything pointed towards that area being the place to be. The next session coincided perfectly with the full moon. Arriving before first light, my plans immediately changed when I discovered another angler had already bucketed the swim I intended to fish. Rather than letting it knock my confidence, I quickly adapted and moved into another swim overlooking the same area. Two clean spots were located in a deep channel only forty yards from the bank. From the moment the lead hit the lakebed, everything felt



right. It was one of those rare occasions where instinct tells you something special is about to happen.

The first bite produced a lovely upper twenty mirror. It was quickly unhooked and returned. A beautiful carp, but not the one I was after. The following morning, at around nine o'clock, another rod burst into life. This time an immaculate upper thirty mirror slid over the net cord. It deserved a few photographs before swimming away, another stunning Wraysbury carp added to an already memorable campaign. As evening arrived, the full moon climbed into the sky and once again everything felt perfect. The rods were positioned and the traps were set.

Less than an hour later my phone rang. It was my good friend Carl. He asked if I could bring my camera round and then apologised. He had caught The Long Sutton. It is

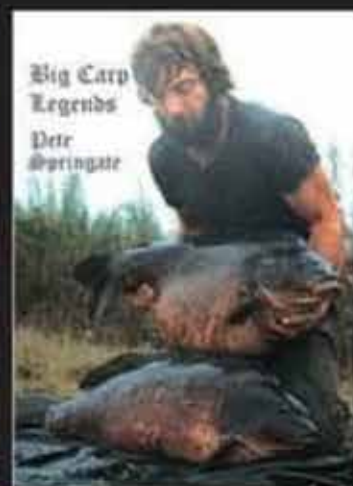
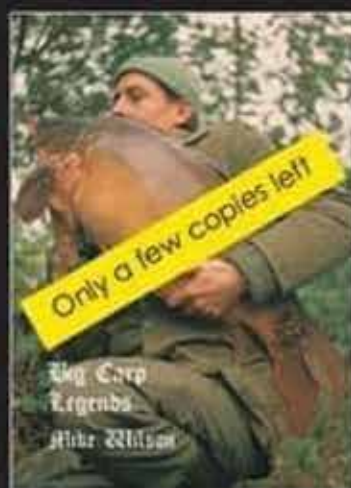
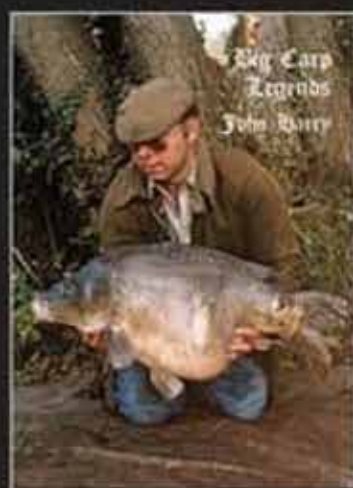
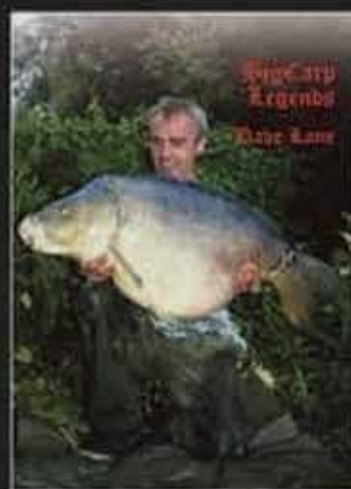
difficult to describe exactly how I felt. I was genuinely delighted for Carl because moments like that deserve to be shared, but naturally there was disappointment too. After months of effort, hearing those words was hard to take. I wound the rods in, picked up my camera and made my way around the lake. Carl even said I did not have to come if I did not want to see it, but there was never any chance of that. Friendships in carp fishing are built around moments like these, and I wanted to share the occasion with him.

There was another positive to take from it. The fish had been caught only yards from where I had been fishing. It confirmed everything. The location. The timing. The homework. I knew I was in exactly the right place.

Later that evening the rods went back onto the same spots. The night passed in complete silence. Not a single bleep

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disturbed the darkness. Then, completely out of nowhere, the right hand rod tore off. After a short but powerful battle, a huge mirror rolled over the waiting net cord. I looked into the mesh and simply stood there in disbelief. It was Mike's Pet. One of Wraysbury's true icons. Not only had I landed one of the lake's most sought after carp, I had also achieved a new personal best and caught my very first UK fifty. At that moment every sacrifice made throughout the campaign suddenly became worthwhile. The freezing winter mornings, the countless hours of observation, the blank sessions and the unwavering belief had all led to one unforgettable capture. The Long Sutton may have slipped through my fingers on this occasion, but Wraysbury had rewarded me with one of its greatest treasures.

Some stories have an ending - this one's just the beginning



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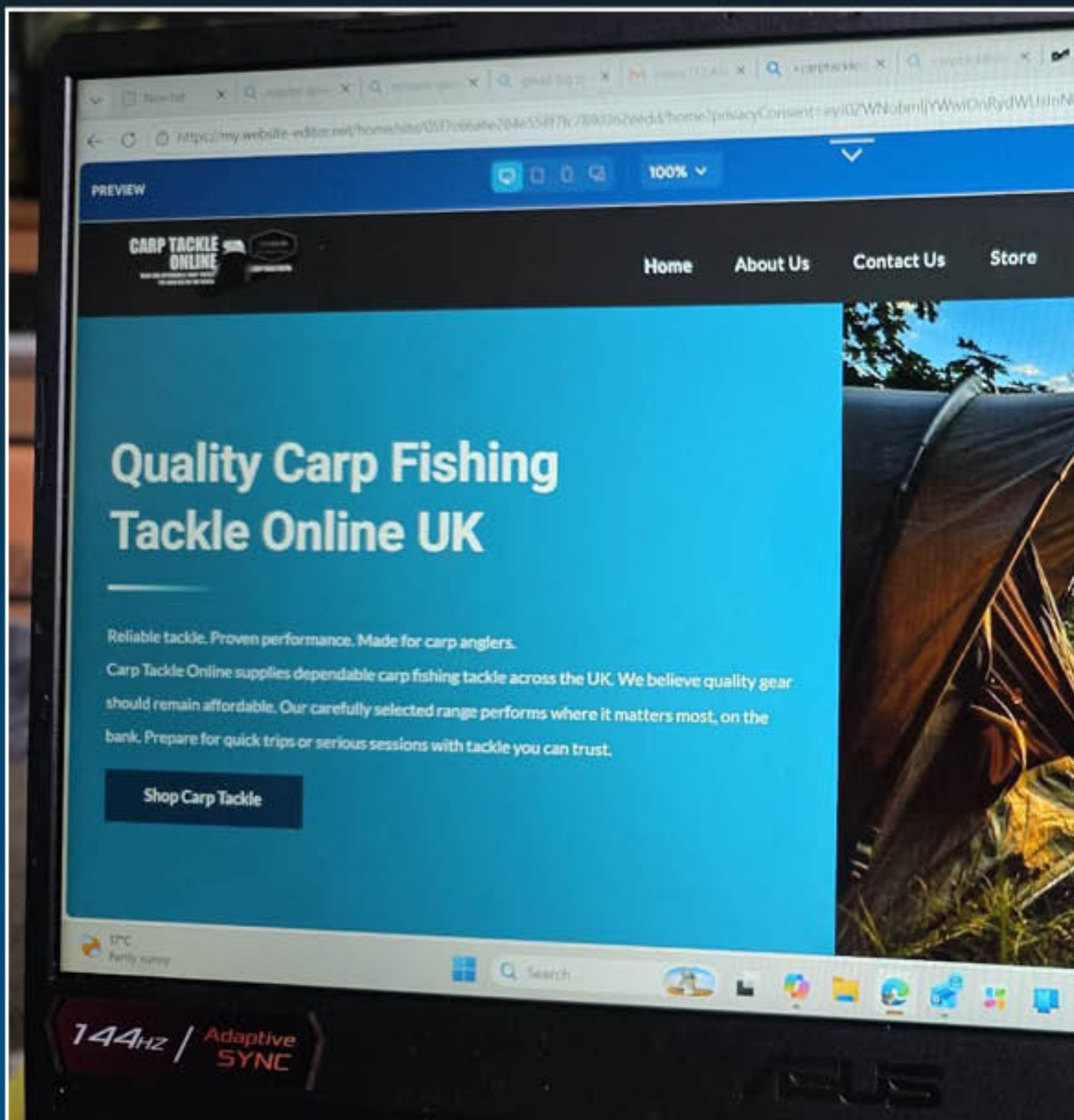
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Editor/Publisher
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Publications
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Graham Stevens with a
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We are incredibly proud to officially announce that Primal Mentality CIC – Reel Healing are now Proud Sponsors of the England Ladies Carp Team.

This partnership is about so much more than fishing. It represents our shared passion for inspiring the next generation, breaking down barriers, championing women in angling, and using fishing as a powerful tool to improve wellbeing, confidence and resilience. At Primal Mentality CIC, our mission has always been to create opportunities through angling. Partnering with the England Ladies Carp Team allows us to inspire even more children and young people to believe in themselves, develop lifelong skills, and discover just how much fishing can change lives.

8. CARP CHAT



18. CARP SCENE



32. ALEX HANSON

72. GRAHAM STEVENS



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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"



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 Mainline...was such a happy go lucky guy, we had a great time, he even got on really well with young Rael.. lol.. always plotting and planning what to try next... did love my time over Darenth.. and had a great laugh, as did we all.....who'd 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..

..i only just found out Paul had sadly passed when i saw this post from Pauls wife Lisa... Paul had not long retired, sold all the tackle, and went on a few well deserved holidays...

RIP.. my old friend...”

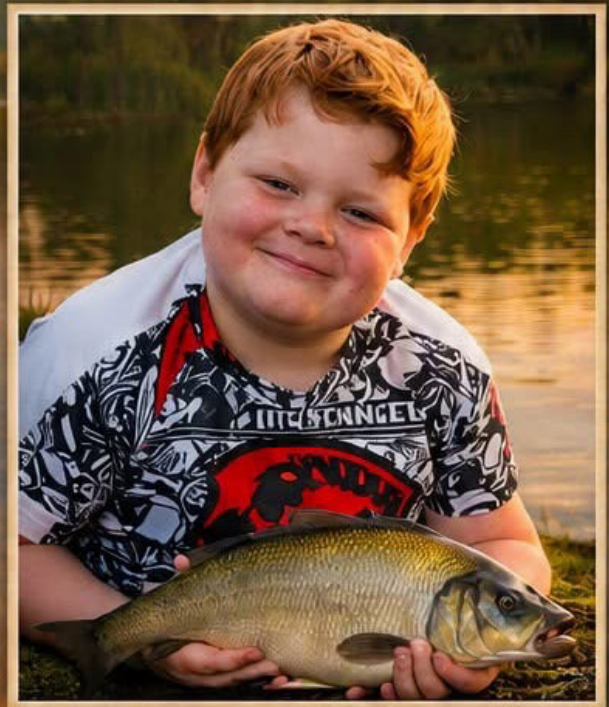
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ALBURY & HERON LAKES CHALLENGE CUP 2026



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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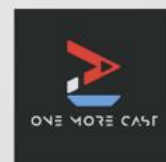
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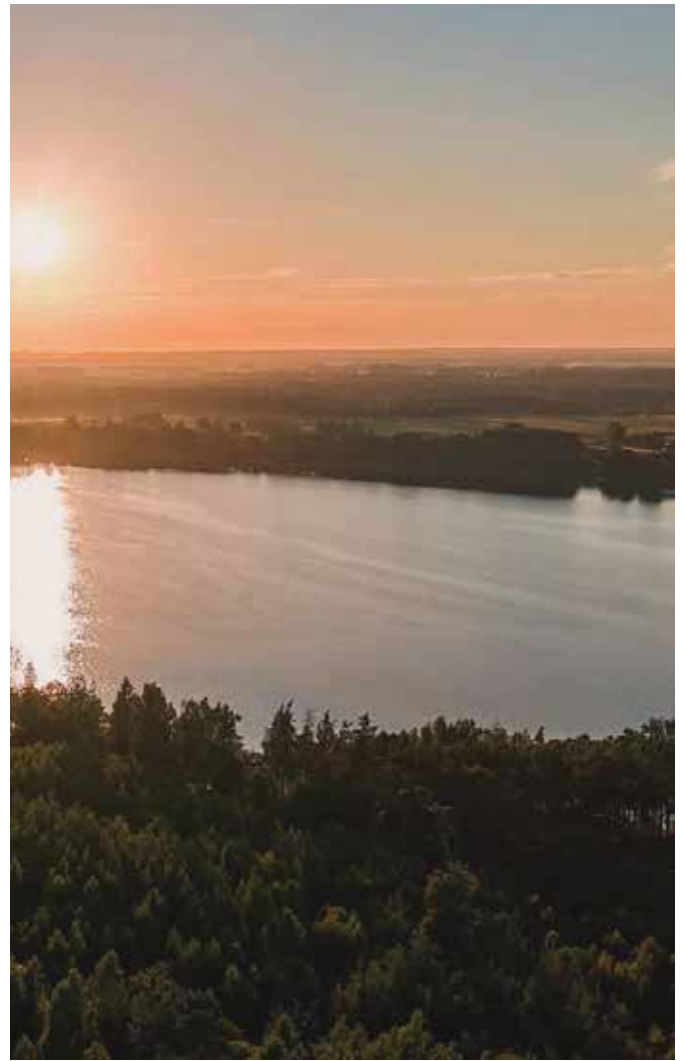


& SO MANY MORE

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... Bringing it home for England 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. However, returning this year, we had a new plan in place and felt confident as a team. 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

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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!

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

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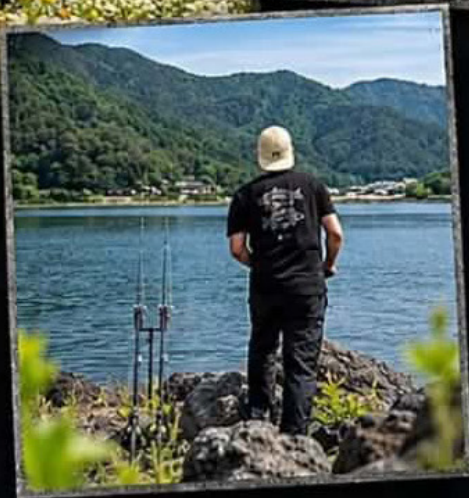


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launch The Winter Carp Show 2026 brings Vince Davies and Stuart Berrie back together in an inspired partnership. Vince's vast experience of the angling industry and building successful shows and Stuart's unparalleled expertise in Exhibition installation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



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

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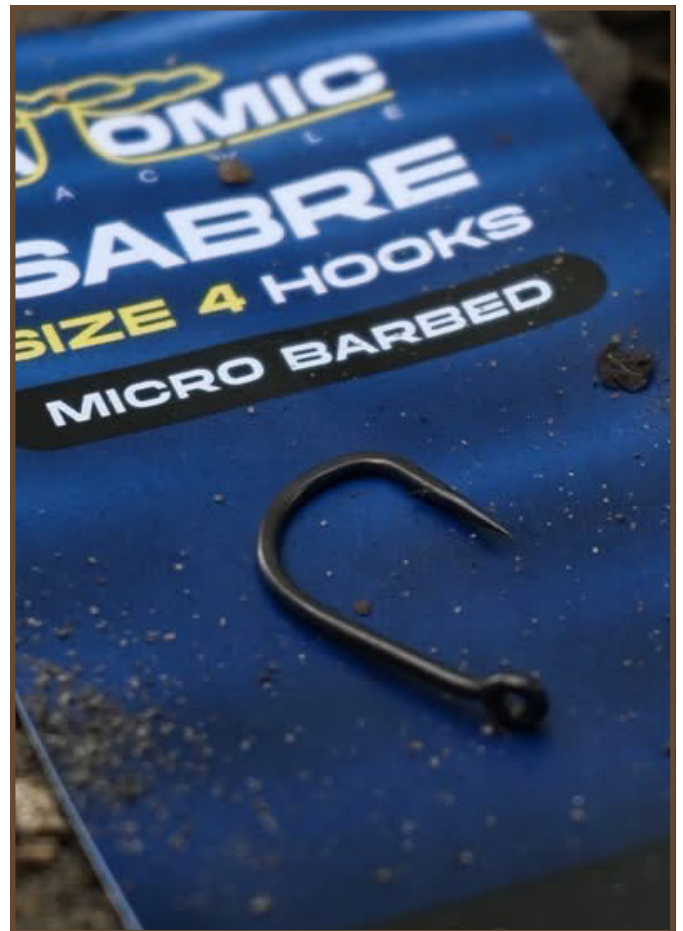
Meet up with friends again this year, see all the big brands, all the latest gear will be on show and there's sure to be lots of special show bargains available as usual.

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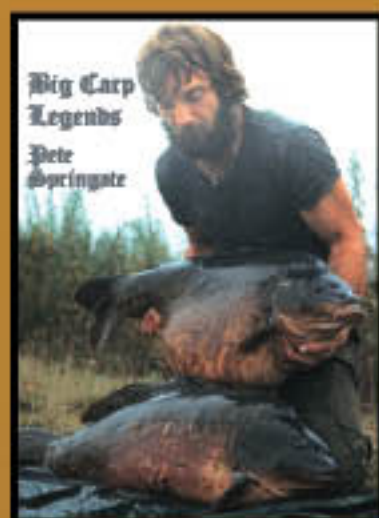
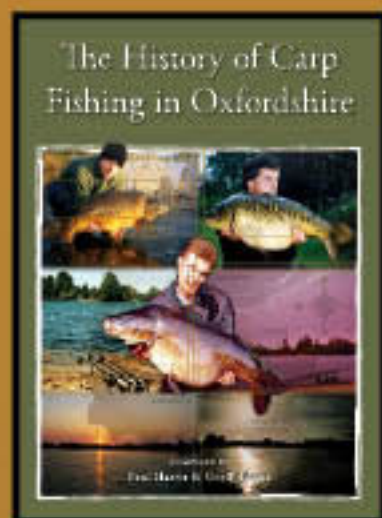
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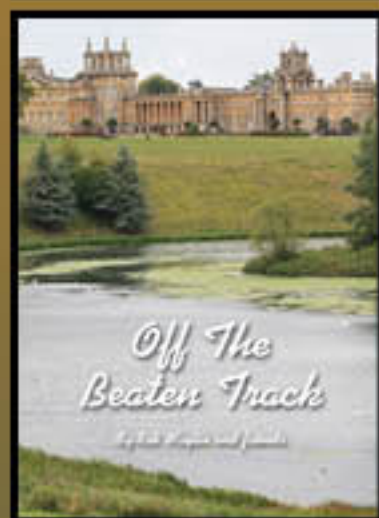
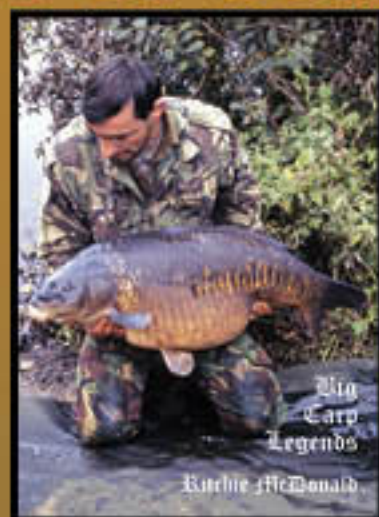
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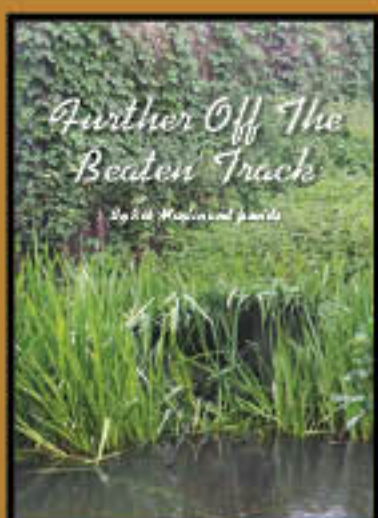
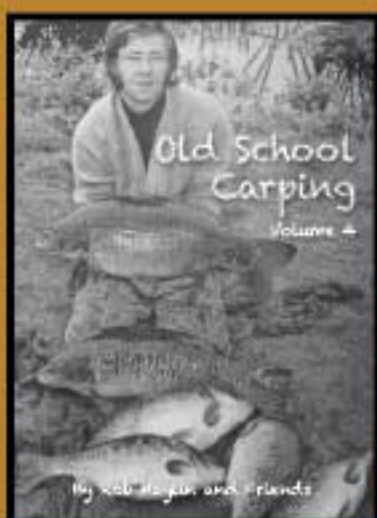
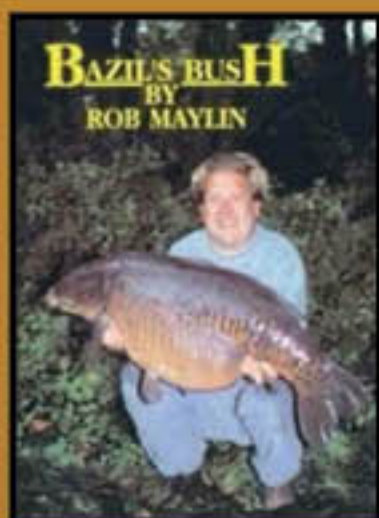


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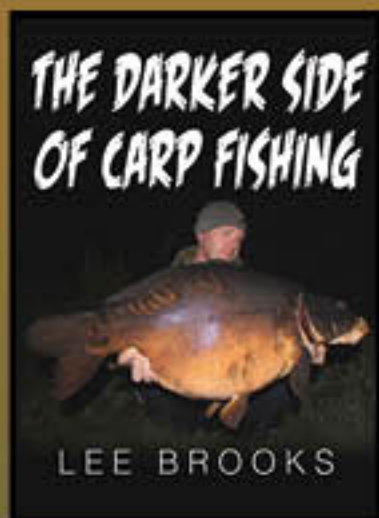
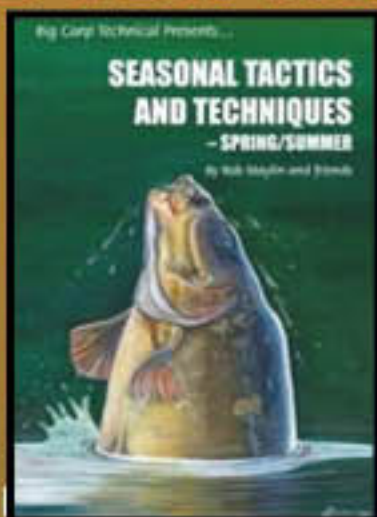


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THE LIFE OF A BOAT CARPER

I am Alex Hanson, and I started fishing the River Medway over nine years ago for the simple fact that it was on my doorstep. This is my first published article put together at short notice with a little help from a fishing friend, Pete Blackett.

The Medway has had carp in it for many years with angling writers such as Neil Waite who wrote River Carping sharing his experiences on the river. There were historically a few areas that were carp hotspots such as the old Trebor sweet factory in Maidstone town centre, which released warm and possibly



sweet effluent back into the river. The Aylesford paper mill used to pump red warm water back into the river, which in previous years I had seen carp and cock salmon basking in. Both of these are no more.

There is another commercial water outlet in the tidal stretch near New Hythe, which is only fishable from boat; this can be a risky adventure for even seasoned boaters and fishermen, so not advisable for the inexperienced.

I remember there were big floods in December 2013, which caused mass damage to properties in Yalding village. This, collectively with floods from previous years, is likely to be responsible for adding huge stocks of carp and other species escaping from stock ponds and fisheries into Medway and its tributaries around the Staplehurst, Tonbridge and Hadlow areas.

I believe that the River Medway experienced fish kills in the past from the introduction of KHV, possibly from these lakes or private ponds. There were sadly hundreds of dead carp seen at the last lock section of the river by the Malta Inn pub in Allington with some of the old school carp anglers classing these as “the original stock”.

Personally I would estimate there to be about 100 carp in Maidstone town stretch, 50 carp in Farleigh to Teston and 150 carp in Teston to Yalding stretch. I can only comment from photos I have seen from other anglers and fish I’ve seen in other sections, but there are plenty of carp in the upper stretches. The upper stretches are much shorter due to the number of locks. Fish stocks in a stretch might temporarily decline when the EA drop stretches by opening up the sluices in preparation for future floods. I believe the carp quickly can



find their way back into upper sections again despite locks and weirs to combat.

Where to start if tackling the river:

Do not be intimidated in attempting to catch river carp if you are an experienced carp angler and want to reap the unknown rewards that the river has to offer. If you are new to carp fishing, the river may not be the best place to start, but please do not let me discourage you. Many blanks can be experienced between sessions that do produce, so mentally prepare yourself for this. Consider which sections of river you want to target and do your homework as to which sections belong to which clubs and whether they are day tickets or free to fish.

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much water as possible at sunny times of year can be a good starter in finding your first carp fishing spots. Do not be fooled by believing that if you see a carp in the day that they will be there in the night, as they could well be around the next bend of the river where they may move to for other food sources.

Once you've found the fish, prebaiting can help hold them. If you find the fish, try to keep track of them over the weeks in case they move up or downstream. Sometimes I prebait 300 yards up and downstream of my spots that are producing to create new areas to trap the carp as they move. This pays off well if you have the time, energy and bait to do so. Some of my best years have come from this tactic.

How to locate the carp on a river:

Carp are extremely nomadic. During the summer, the carp are pretty spread out over the sections of the river; you can't guarantee that you'll catch a large amount of fish from the same area. In my experience, to get more bites, you are better off spreading your time out over different times of the year to gauge how the fish respond to angling pressure, work on the locks, floods and low water conditions. In low water conditions, fish seem to work their way up the sections to more oxygenated water by weirs, or freshwater springs.

How the weather affects the carp on the river

Heavy rain seems to make the carp group up in larger numbers. After a few weeks of feeding after summer floods, the fish will seem to move back to the mid-stretches again and get back to feeding on natural foods. The Medway carp have been witnessed holding up in the weedy areas by my boat for a number of reasons such as vast numbers of snails covering everything (snails all the way up my anchor rope for example).

Tiger nuts seem to mimic the natural foods in the river (maybe to do with the size of them and the crunch factor). They are also left alone by other nuisance species. Fishing with tiger nuts under sections of river with oak trees in my view has had been productive. This could possibly to do with the acorns dropping and the food gathering in deep holes caused by root systems on the bank.

How the flow affects the carp behaviour:

In low water conditions in the summer, the carp begin to act like chub or barbel and can quite often act in the opposite way to which most anglers would have thought. Moving towards weirs and natural springs seems to be a priority for the carp, as this latest summer proved. Every season comes with different conditions, making the current season prove particularly harder than others. As soon as fish have spawned,



I have noticed carp seem to switch off the feed and bask. (Tip: get out and look for this fish during this period).

I tend to find there are different groups of carp that can be very different in appearance and which congregate together at the same time. For example, old scaly mirrors can be caught in quick succession from a spot one week and that's all you'll catch, then another week a shoal of typical lake stock carp may move in. These shoals do not seem to mix other than when they spawn.

I have noticed that some of the oriental koi that had made their way into the river seem to be seen in pairs continuously



through the year as if they are a couple, and a shoal of small commons are often nearby the two koi.

Tactics:

Close range fishing – for some reason this is my favourite. When close range fishing, I generally know whether the carp are there from a number actual observations (such as fish topping) than if I were fishing at distance where guesswork would come into it. Landing a 30lb river carp at close range is much more likely to be landed successfully when fished five yards off of the boat when compared to lower odds when hooking fish at over 20 yards away due to snags. I think carp almost stick to areas as narrow as a footpath. When I have found an area where carp hold up, I will aim to place two baits close to each other to increase my odds. I am a firm believer that the carp stick to routes in the river that hold or harvest natural foods.

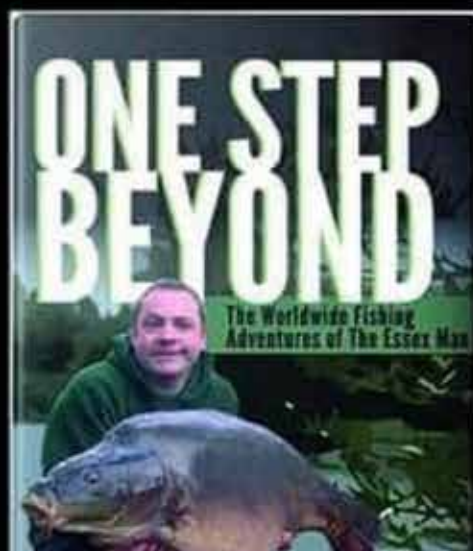
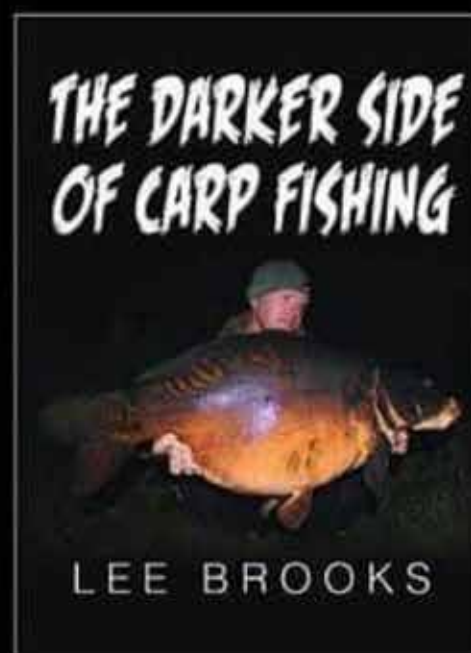
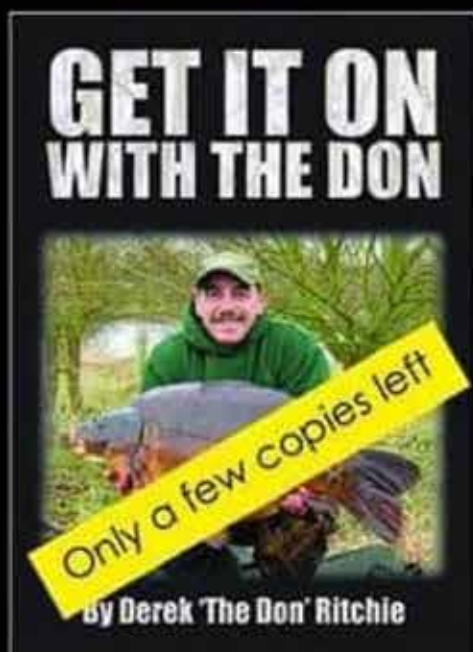
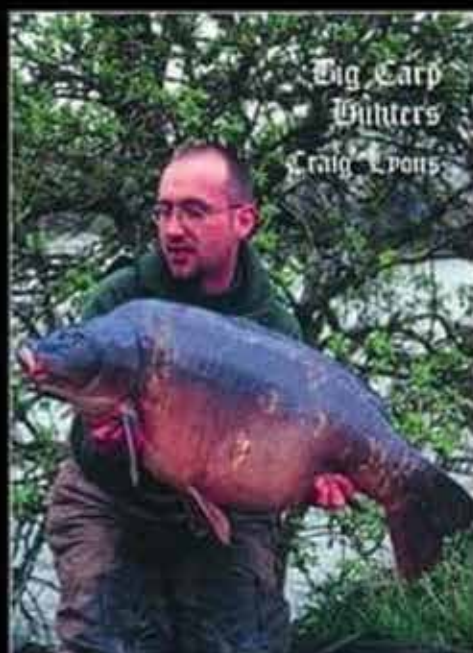
Rig wise, I keep it simple with hair rigs, 5oz grippa leads and leadcore. I really do not think the fish are that riggy compared to pressured lakes. Back leads are used when fishing the opposite side of the bank. Snowman rigs are often what I use, sometimes with a bright pop-up. Birdlife generally isn't a problem on the Medway for picking up baits, as most of the spots are deep, and the water is usually coloured up.

Bait wise, I believe most things catch whether it is particle, boilies, pellets etc. There are a few brands, colours and flavours that have obviously caught me more fish than others, but don't overthink which baits to use. Shop bought cheap shelf life baits can do as well as the leading brands frozen ranges. Location is everything in comparison!

How to avoid spooking fish and maximising multiple

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captures:

Avoid spooking the carp when night fishing by keeping casting to a minimum and keeping head torches off of the water. Carp on the river are used to lights in some areas. Passing boat traffic and rowers don't affect the carp for long during the day, but I find fishing at night can be better when the river traffic has ceased.

Another top tip I will share is that sacking a fish most definitely helps you to have multiple catches. I believe once a fish is caught and released it can leave the area and potentially cause the other carp to follow it. Big hits are unusual on the river, but in previous years I have had up to four fish in one night with three fish sacked and one in the landing net.

Pre-baiting spots:



It seems only a few fish would be caught from a prebaited spot before they would move on (aka the spot has blown) – this happens all too much! For this reason I spread my efforts into prebaiting more than one section to keep my options open. If you find fish on the river on the top, you'd be wise to fish for them that night. You can occasionally leave empty handed if the fish are preoccupied with feeding on natural foods in the swim or holding up in the area ready to spawn.

Prebaiting a spot for a long period of time can on occasion lead you into a false sense of security, allowing you to fall into the trap of fishing an area you've committed a lot of effort to and subsequently miss opportunities elsewhere. This happened to me at the beginning of one season when I baited up heavily by my mooring for weeks before the season started. Fish were boshing so much it was keeping me awake at night, and then as soon as the season started, the weather conditions changed and the fish seemed to thank me for feeding them up prior to spawning and disappeared upstream! This wasn't a waste of time in my book, as the feeding meant my mooring had three areas that remained clear of weed for the rest of the season, and these spots managed to produce several carp in coming months.

You can always draw fish upstream, but due to the flow, it is impossible to attract fish downstream. If you want fish to come downstream, you will need to wait for the fish to do this naturally or be pushed down by strong flood waters or drops in pressure. Try changing from particles to boilies (and vice versa) if you are seeing signs of carp on or near the spots without a run.

Line lay:

If fishing the bank, line lay is not often good unless you're fishing under your rod tips. If fishing from the boat, you can often manoeuvre to a spot for the session where you can be upstream of snags such as weed beds, whereas fishing from the bank you may be faced with no other choice but to fish over weed beds and ultimately have to negotiate landing a carp back through it again! I often feel the leads hit the bottom as I cast to feel what type of bottom is there. Putting a piece of PVA foam nugget on the hook can help improve the way the rig presents on the bottom.

Where to fish from a boat:

Fishing by boat allows you to easily fish areas that other anglers cannot get to and present bait with better line lay compared to bank swims located in a less optimal location. In my view (which does differ somewhat from other professional river carpers), you want to be fishing directly opposite the bank you're moored up on or casting downstream. Nine times out of ten, the fish swim downstream on a take. I have fished



upstream and woken up to very slack lines and on a number of occasions a possible fish snagged up in weed (or lost!).

There is generally a far side and a slack side wherever you fish (the far side being on the outside above the upstream bend or inside of the bend when downstream). This can be used as the main tactics for watercraft in knowing where hard gravel spots would be with passing food and where slower water may drop passing food to the bottom. In the winter months, the carp seem to lurk in the slack, more silty areas where you wouldn't find them in the summer.

The River Medway is almost like a river inside a river. The original contour of the river is dated back to pre-lock times (possibly well before 1800 in some areas), which has left a deep trough in the central channel with shallower wide margins. In some stretches the margin shelves can span a third of the width of the river. Some shelves can be extremely productive all year round – for instance, the faster flowing ones in the summer and slower moving shelves can be good in the winter.

Big tree lines can hold big boulders. The tree lined banks do not get as much natural food due to the shade, but can often hold fish looking for passing food dropping in underwater dips caused by the roots etc. Low grassy banks are generally not as snaggy, but can be weedier due to the amount of sun - which can hold fish for weeks at a time during the summer.

Lily pads are always a sign of a silty area and pockets of gravel. (A good type of nutritious silt compared). Fish may spawn in lily pads if the stretch does not have Canadian pondweed. This is typical of Teston Country Park on the Medway. The Canadian pondweed seems to grow in the shallow areas that receive more sun, and again I believe it is more preferable for



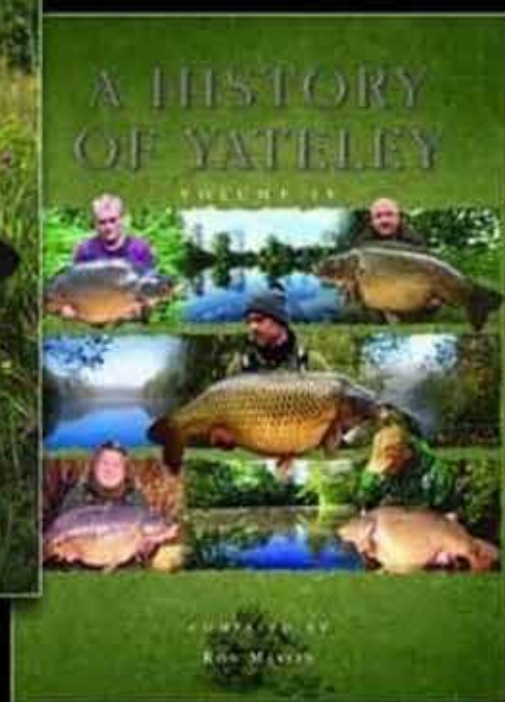
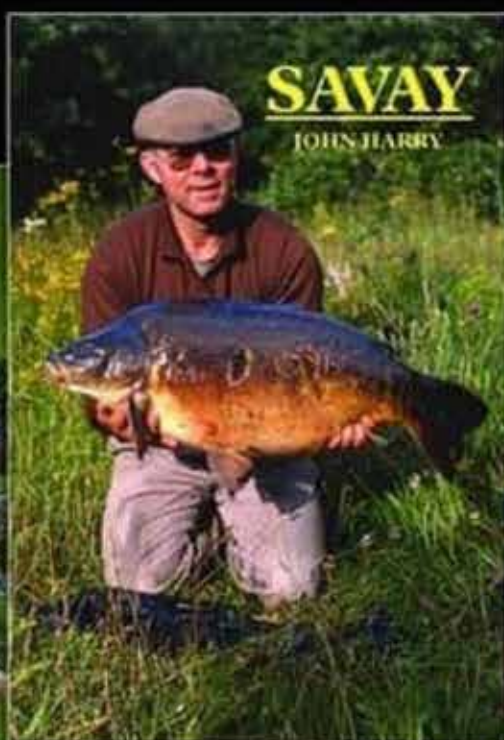
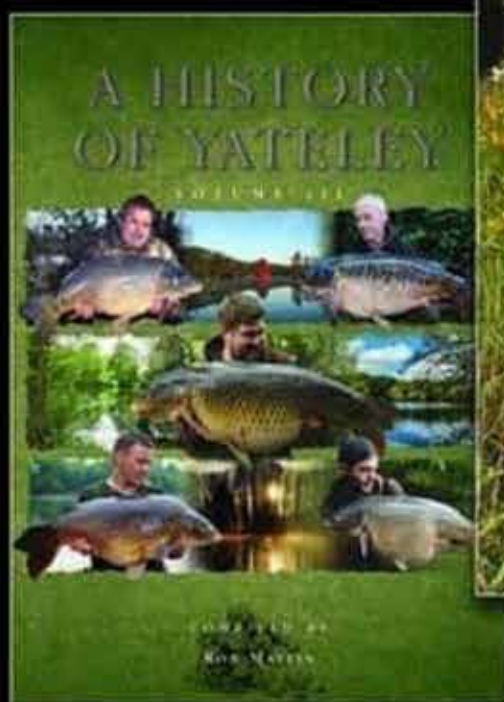
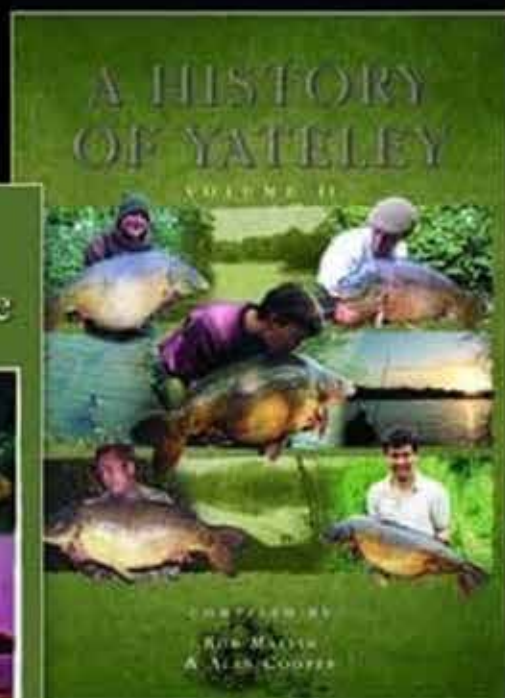
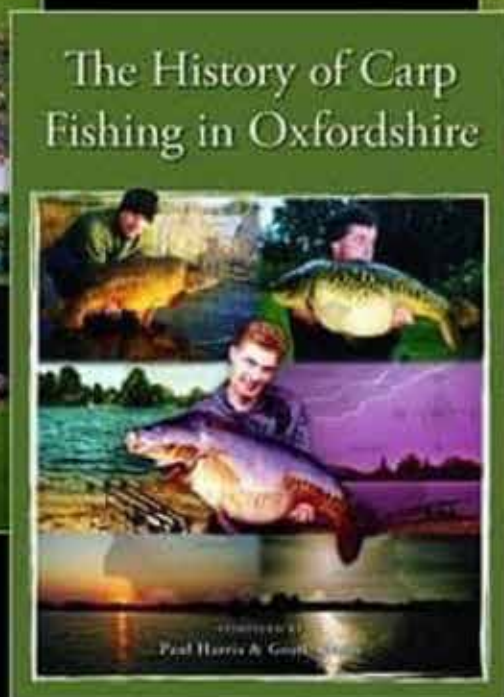
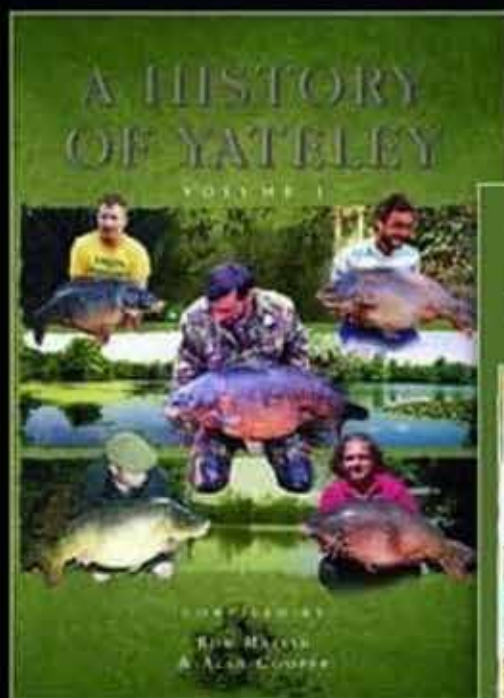
the fish to spawn in these areas around June –July.

Bends and deep holes:

I have often favoured bends due to the slack water, and I have often witnessed large shoals of carp here. This could also be due to the way the depth varies by the way the river flow drops food, silt and other deposits. During September and October, these areas can produce a lot of fish with ease. In the summer, the lower ends of the stretch can produce bites, as the water above the lock can be highly oxygenated as the surface water moves.

There are a few spots on the River Medway near the last bends of a section before the lock where very deep holes can be located. Two such examples are found upstream of East Farleigh and Teston locks. I think these were created naturally, but I have been informed that East Farleigh's deep spot may have been caused by bomb testing in WWII. Fishing on these spots has been known to produce carp consistently in the past.

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However, lock construction works have affected the carp in these areas in recent years.

How the stretches change:

Maidstone town stretch averages 9-10ft through the lower stretches with large shallow areas running the whole way through the town. The top of the stretch averages 5-6ft, which is very rocky and has often caught me out with huge snags.

Swims can change from one year to another. For instance, I fished a swim at the end of the season with good success. It had a nice gravelly bottom and had a spring feeding it as a main feature. The following year there were a large number of foreign objects such as a keep net and lots of large branches. This could well be why some anglers struggle to get a bite in the same swim from one season to another. If you've ever looked into the Medway from the Maidstone bridges, you may



well spot a car tyre, shopping trolley or even an old bike at the bottom! I think I counted nearly 20 shopping trolleys near TK Maxx car park. Avoid casting anywhere near that bank, as your bait may only be 1ft below the surface sat upon a trolley or two!

The EA does seem to have invested in introducing salmon runs and repairing lock structures on the Medway over the last few years. This has impacted on the barbel and the carp due to noise pollution and changes in flow, making prime gravel feeding areas silty and causing the fish to migrate upstream (possibly below Yalding). This, along with sluices being opened up in flood, can force carp in some stretches to move downstream into the next section. (although many carp do hold up in their preferred areas for many years). There could be a large number of carp in the tidal section after Allington lock, which gets a lot less angling pressure due to being difficult, dangerous and unorthodox fishing conditions.

The tidal stretch:

Carp can be caught at high tide and low tide in the tidal sections depending on how determined you are. Fishing whilst the tide is coming in or out is almost a waste of time, as a lead rarely holds the bottom or your lines get taken out by an insane amount of debris.

Rainy summers:

Flash floods during the summer have been known to keep the fish feeding for longer during the warmer months giving me and others bigger hits during what could normally be a hard time of year. Try getting out on the river in these conditions to try for yourself!

Fishing in the winter:



I live on the boat and through the winter, so I have to prioritise keeping warm over carp fishing at times, but carp can still be found and caught in between floods (occasionally in floods). There is something very satisfying about fishing in the snow from the boat or the bank, and I am yet to bank myself a “snow carp”. I have been known to push my luck in previous years on the boat by getting stranded in one spot as the floodwaters come down.

Grass carp:

I believe the grass carp on the Medway to be territorial, and I have seen a group of six shoaled up. If regular carp are in the area, catching grass carp can be difficult (maybe the others bully them away). I believe there are two grass carp in the Farleigh stretch around 8lbs and 11lbs, and six grass carp in the Maidstone stretch averaging between 19 and 25lbs with

two pushing high 20s to low 30s. They do not feed as heavily on the bottom when the river levels or depths are low. I do not seem to get as good hook holds on grass carp when shallow (3-6ft) as when catching them from deeper water.

Caution should be taken with Grass carp, as they seem to be particularly delicate. They can go belly up in the net before they've even been lifted out the water, so take care not to keep them out of the water long and certainly do not sack them. Grass carp can act strangely when in the net before weighing them and spin like a pike before stopping belly up. I have witnessed burst blood vessels under the scales of the grass carp, which can give them a red tinge.

Don't be fooled by what everyone else is doing (or at least saying):

On occasion, once the word gets out that I've caught somewhere on the river or my wet unhooking mat is spotted on my boat, I can return back to my spot later that day after a shower and supplies only to find the local yob sitting on the bank with his rods out and mates next to him where my lines were hours before. As I fish certain spots from the boat, which are often hard to fish from high banks, I have been concerned over the ability of such anglers if they were to hook a river carp and attempt to land it without causing damage to themselves, their tackle or even worse, the carp.

As a new angler trying to get into river carping (no matter what river), you might be misled by anglers when asking what they caught or what tactics they are using. If what you've been told sounds silly or unlikely, it may be the carper is playing his cards close to his chest. Tip: look out for wet mats or sacked fish.

Crabs:

One of the hazards of fishing for carp on the Medway is crabs! There tend to be crabs in the Maidstone stretch that come up from the tidal section and plague you if you are presenting fishmeal boilies. Fishing with particle when the crabs are at their peak can be detrimental; you may reel in your line to discover it has been damaged severely or even cut through by the crabs feeding intensely.

Pop-ups 6in off the bottom can help combat this, and is ideal for fishing above underwater cabbages trying to mimic snails. Another tip is to fish tiger nuts to avoid crab troubles. Using Armowrap has helped me to fish boilies amongst crab when all else fails. Towards the end of October, as the weather gets colder and the rains come, the crabs seem to disappear.

Leaves and debris:

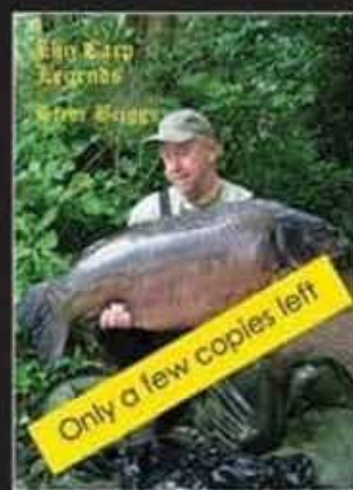
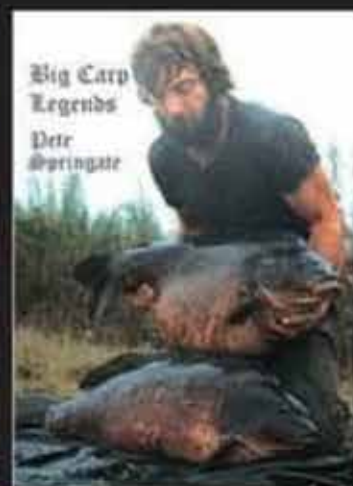
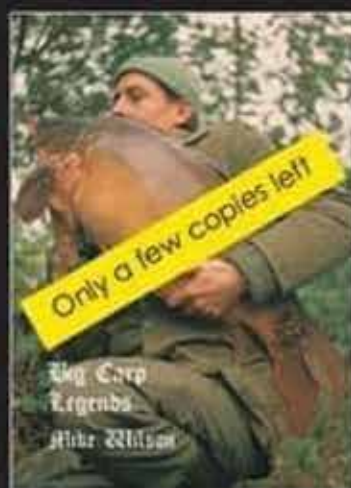
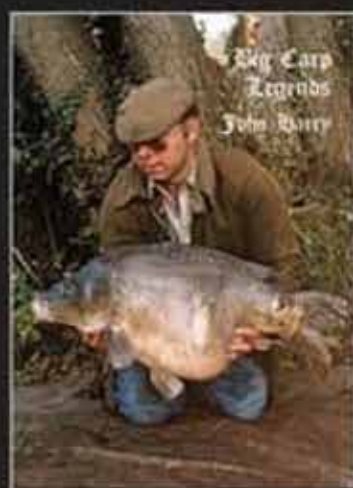
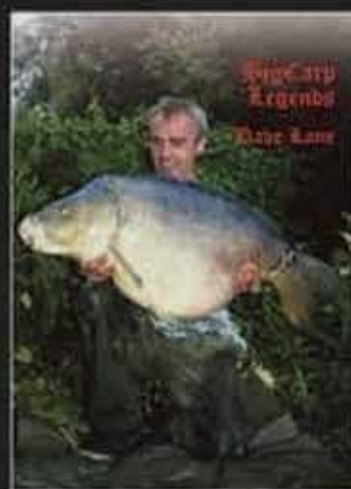
Again, in the winter, the strong winds and rain will fill the river with millions of leaves and branches. This can be problematic when fishing, as this will catch your line and bow it downstream potentially dragging your 5oz grippa leads off their spots. The leaves become less of a problem after the first few floods push through, making it easier to present baits again.

Rowers and boats:

Fishing the rivers come with a strong health warning for those with a weak heart or stressful tendencies. Rowers seem to be the carp angler's natural enemy, as they are often rowing towards you at speed, facing the other way. If your lines are not pinned down with back leads, you will probably end up with the oars stretching your lines and possibly causing you to respool. For this same reason, you may lose hundreds of yards

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of line if a boat propeller catches your line(s). On a couple of occasions, I have actually managed to pull a motor boat in which wrapped my lead core around its prop and stalled the engine (much to the owners dismay). That said, I now am a proud boat owner myself and much of my fishing is done off my boat.

Night-time kayaking seems to be a “thing” now, and it is not strange to get a run at 4am from a burly bloke in a kayak with a glow stick as a spotlight! In recent weeks, whilst pike fishing, I had an encounter with another male canoeist who savagely went through a pike setup with a whole mackerel resulting in an almighty girly scream. This did amuse me as much as it annoyed me.

First committed season for carping on the river Medway:

In my first proper season on the River Medway, it was a wet summer with the river flooding a week before the season started. I focused my efforts at the River Bar in Maidstone town centre, which is now a Thai restaurant by the two road bridges. I had prebaited for a whopping three weeks before the start of the season, even whilst the river’s banks were breached.

On the opening day, I was rewarded with a 23lb common to start the season, followed by three more nights, which produced two 21lb fully scaled mirrors, an upper double common, a 20lb mirror and a 35lb mirror, which I had seen lurking by the bridges for the previous five summers. The 35lb mirror was often seen with a large ghost carp and the longest common you would ever have seen! After catching these six fish, I started prebaiting another spot downstream, and during a couple of day sessions, I managed to catch a double common and a 20lb







mirror. By this point, the water was back up to normal summer temperatures, and the carp seemed to be shoaling up ready to spawn.

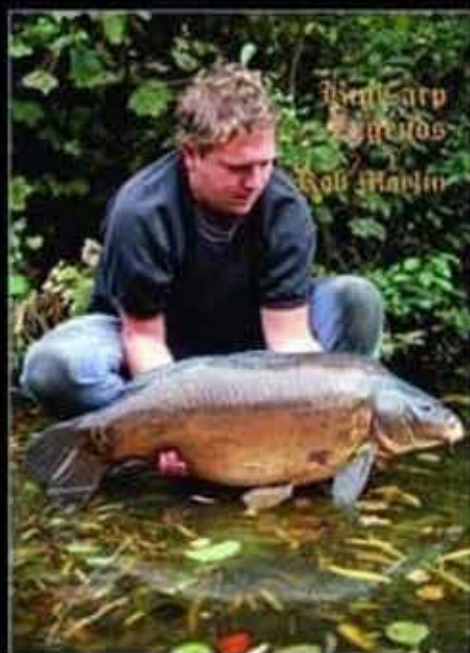
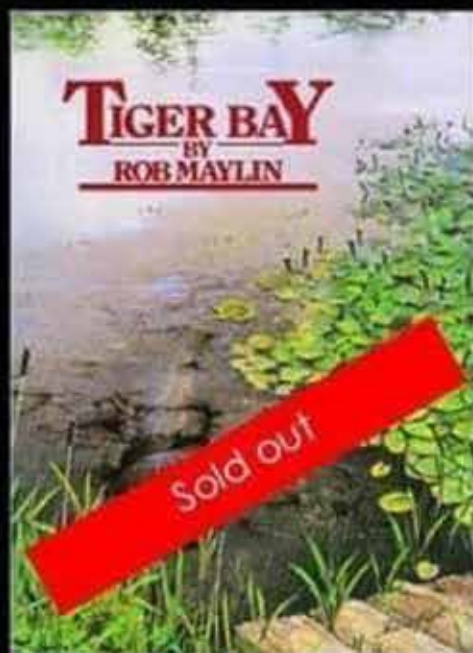
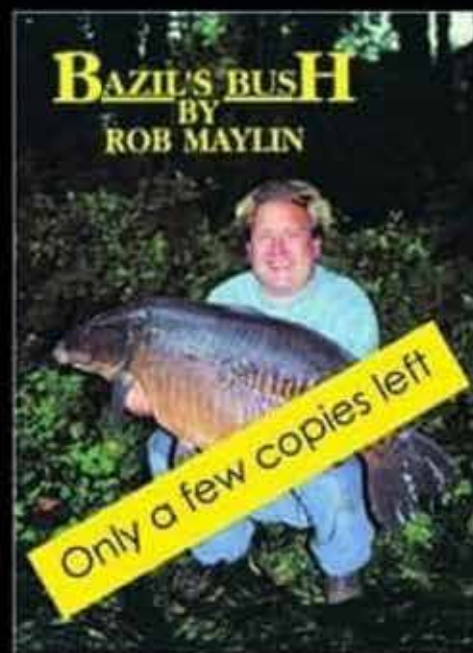
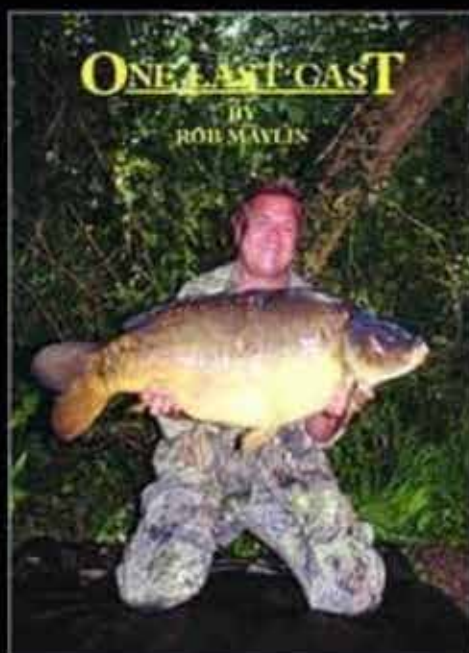
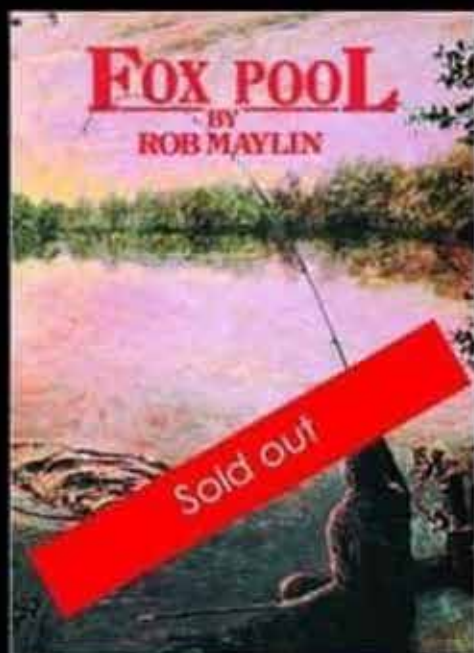
On a random day session, I was lucky enough to capture potentially one of the river's largest residents in the shape of a 37lb 12oz common. I was pretty sure this was the long common I spotted swimming alongside the 35lb mirror and ghostie for the last five summers.

Later on in the week, I went for a quick day session at another spot I was prebaiting upstream and within the first hour managed to catch a low double common. I then continued to fish this swim for the next couple of weeks without a sniff.



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I moved back to the town centre stretch early that August and managed to land a 26lb mirror and a 27lb common in the same night.

I then fished the opposite bank a few weeks on and caught a 20lb leather.

Tip: Helicopter rigs seemed to present best in the weedy conditions that exist in the town centre stretch.

I had an open season blank in town centre accompanied by the trouble that occurs with fishing in town centre, brought by the drunks that rallied around the banks at night. (This only seemed to be an issue in town due to the pubs). I decided to move upstream. The first night I fished at East Farleigh, I managed to hook into a 21lb common with some scars followed up by a 22lb jet black common!

The following night, I landed a chub weighing 9lbs 8oz, which would have beaten the official UK record if I had submitted it. At the time I did not want to report the location of the capture, as I was worried that I would lose my newly found spot to keen match fisherman.

Anyway, that was a season to remember, and I could talk for hours about it. Many more carp were caught later on this season.

The fish:

Most seasons, I manage to catch roughly the same number of carp no matter how hard I try. I have been quite lucky with the number of 30lb-plus fish I have landed from the Medway. I have had six different 30s and one recapture in the last nine seasons, averaging about one 30lb carp in every ten captures until my fourth season where a 20lb carp seemed hard to come by, let alone a 30!

I do hope that we see a 40lb carp come out of the river soon,



ALEX HANSON



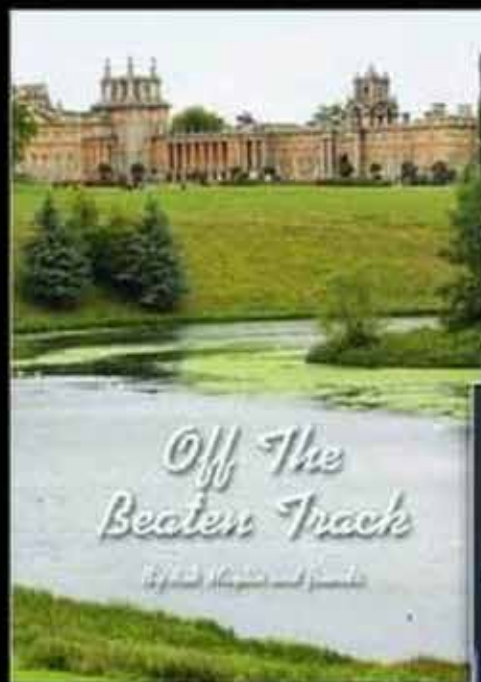


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and I strongly believe there must be at least one in there considering how many years ago the common I caught weighed 37lb 12oz! (Who knows...? Maybe someone has caught one and kept quiet about it!).

The 30-pounders:

Below is a gallery of the 30lb-plus carp I have been lucky enough to catch from the River Medway. Please remember these were caught over a number of years and that other anglers who regularly fish the Medway have not all been as lucky as I have.

Changing colours:



Fish in the river have been noted to change colours from the waters in the summer where carp are darker from basking in shallow water. Often after floods in the winter, the same fish can appear to have different pigmentation due to cloudy conditions. See the difference between the colours of the same carp caught by my friend Peter Blackett. (Very obvious it is the same carp due to the deformity).

Same carp, 12 hours later:

Recently I received a call from a friend, Joe, who was on his way up to see me and decided to stop and fish a hook bait over a showing carp as he cruised up the river. It resulted in a mid-twenty mirror. I went down to meet him and photo the fish at about 2pm. However, that night I was back at my mooring with my rods out, and at 2am (12 hours later), I caught the very same fish a few hundred yards upstream, which was a real turn up for the books.

Summary:

Waking up to fishing in a misty weirpool while the sun breaks the horizon is just amazing to me, and whilst living on a boat on the river, I consider myself privileged and lucky to be able to do as much fishing as I do. These are most enjoyable times for me and will remain my sole passion in life... from the fantastic social boat fishing trips to dragging each other out of bed at 6am to photo a fish or helping each other with boat maintenance. I have a lot to thank my fishing buddies for, so thank you.

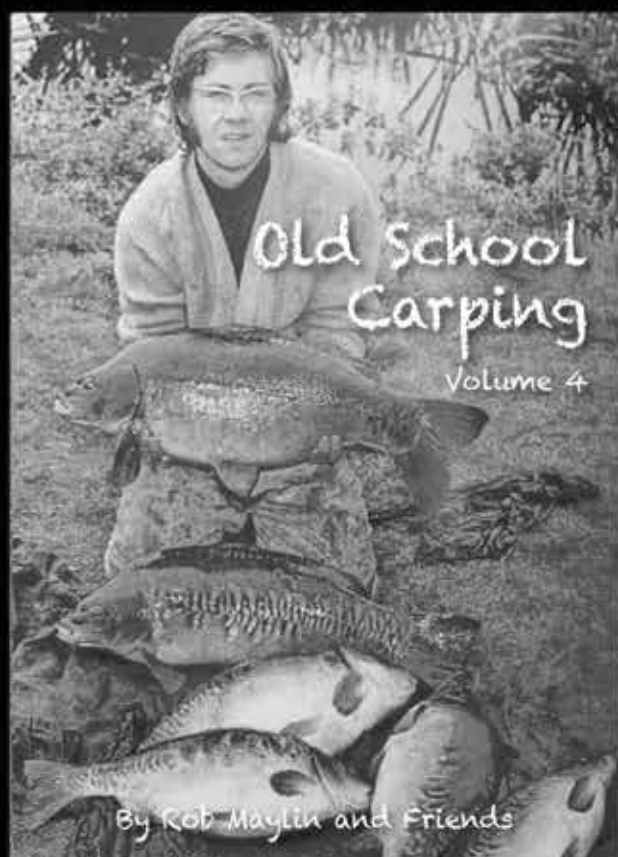
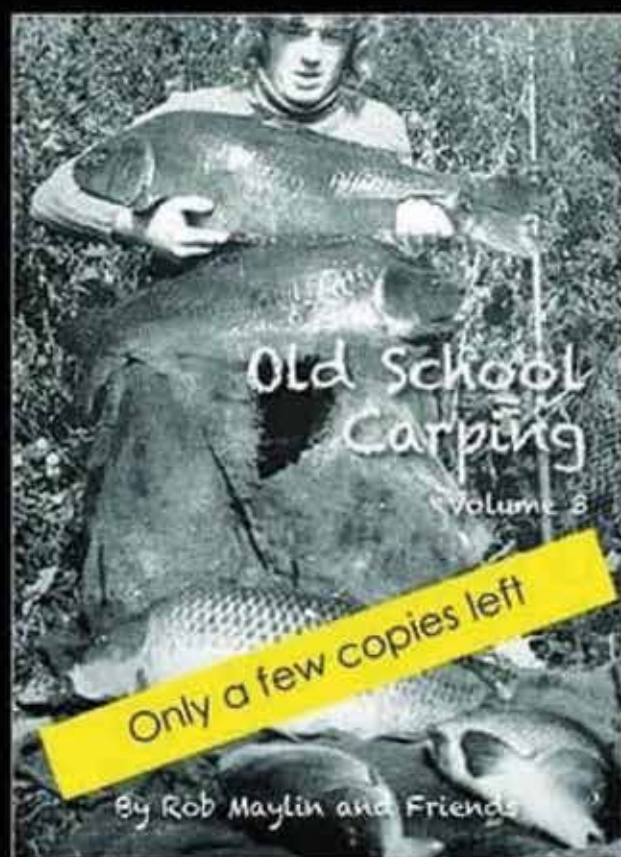
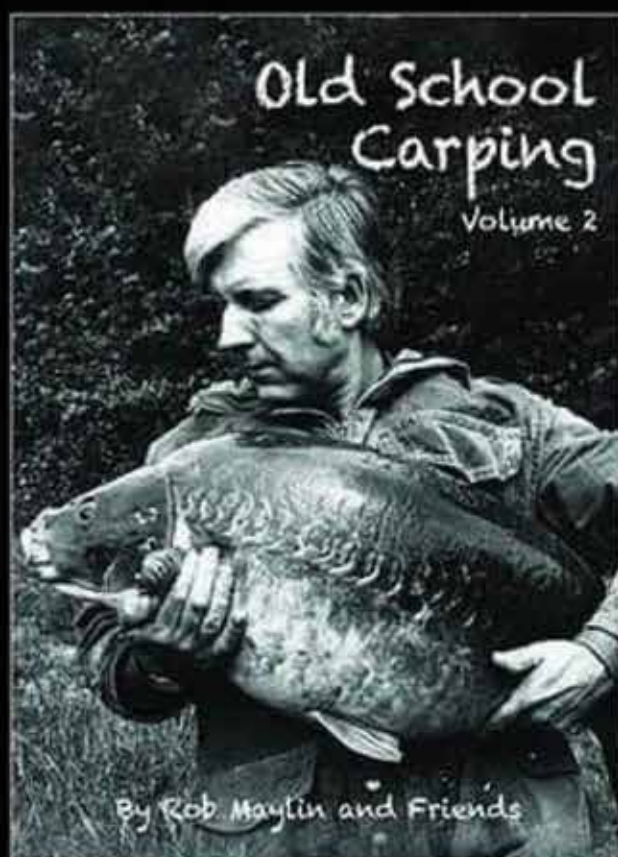
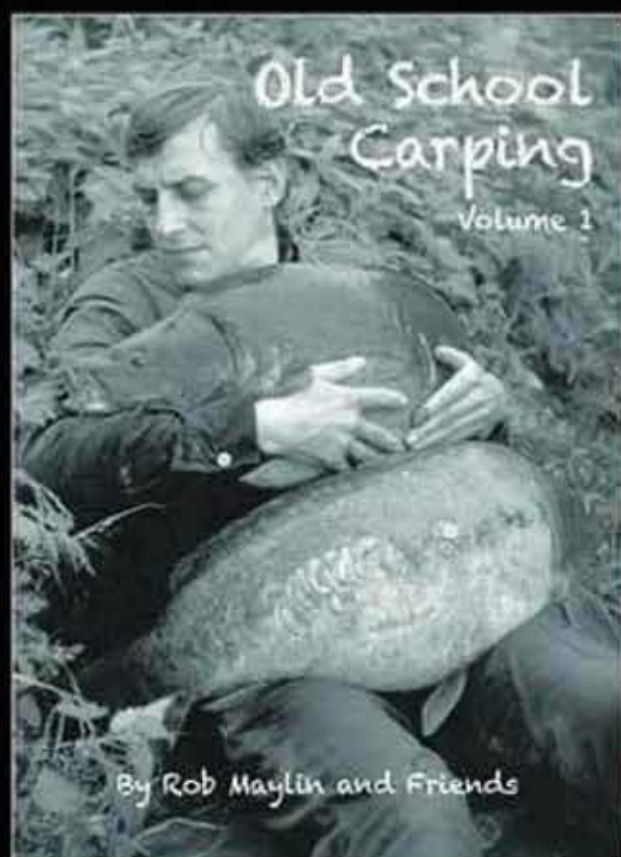
Boat fishing and river carping really adds a unique dynamic to carp fishing and I can see why more anglers attempt the rivers every year. Put in the efforts, and you will eventually reap the rewards.

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AQUA LILIUM CLOTHING — NEW BIB & BRACE SET REVIEW

Aqua Lilium Clothing have stepped things up with their brand-new Bib & Brace set, designed specifically with anglers and the realities of being on the bank in mind.

The first thing that stands out is the protection. The set is 100% waterproof and windproof, giving you the confidence to stay out when the British weather decides to throw everything at you. Rain, cold winds and long sessions are exactly where this clothing is intended to earn its keep.

What's equally impressive is the comfort. Heavy-duty fishing clothing can sometimes feel bulky and restrictive, but the Aqua Lilium set has been designed to remain extremely comfortable to wear, whether you're casting, setting up camp, walking the lake or sitting behind the rods for hours.

Attention has also been paid to the details. All of the zips are waterproof, helping keep the weather on the outside where it belongs, while the Bib & Brace features strong, robust clips designed to cope with regular use on the bank. The distinctive olive-green finish with Aqua Lilium's orange detailing gives the whole outfit a smart, unmistakable look.

AND THERE'S MORE — NEW AQUA LILIUM POLARISED SUNGLASSES

Aqua Lilium Clothing are also launching their brand-new polarised sunglasses — and to celebrate, a pair will be FREE when you purchase a Bib & Brace set.

For carp anglers, polarised glasses aren't simply about looking good. Cutting surface glare can make a huge difference when you're trying to spot fish, investigate margins or find subtle features beneath the surface.

So, you're getting a 100% waterproof and windproof Bib & Brace set, waterproof zips, robust clips, excellent comfort AND a FREE pair of Aqua Lilium polarised sunglasses.

SEE IT AT THE WINTER CARP SHOW

You'll also be able to come and see Aqua Lilium Clothing at the Winter Carp Show at Sandown Racecourse on 28th & 29th November.

It's the perfect opportunity to come along, see the new clothing in person, check out the quality and detailing, and get a first look at the new polarised sunglasses.

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A RETURN TO THE THAMES

At the end of my last article 'A Season on the Thames', I wrote that the river is never far from my thoughts and that I might return, and I did, although I haven't solely targeted the Thames since that 2012 season. These days, I prefer to mix it up with my lake fishing on the likes of the Sheepwalk and Ellis pits and more recently Frimley. You'll never catch all the carp in the river, so it's always a work in progress. My old haunts on the river had got busier and busier, and I fancied a change anyway. I had looked at some club stretches, but they were as busy with anglers as the public ones, although at least you don't get the footfall of joggers, dog walkers, drunks and the like. It

was time to go back afloat.

Throughout most of my adult life, I've at least had access to a boat on the river, the first one being a 38ft Norseman with twin Bedford engines, which was owned by a friend of mine, Martyn Halsey. It was such a lovely old boat with loads of mahogany called San Antonio. It was like a home from home on the inside with a double bedroom at the stern, complete with ensuite bathroom, wheel house/lounge, kitchen, shower room and two single beds in the bow. I was only around 16 or 17 at this time and used to ride my bike down to the mooring with a rucksack full bits and bobs to work on the boat for a bit of pocket money.

Any wood on boats takes so much maintenance, and this one had loads. Every year it needed sanding down completely then reapplying seven coats of yacht varnish. Obviously, this was done with the rods out during the open season. But with it being so big, I was restricted to fishing the mooring it was on, and there were just no carp present. It was quite a novelty to have access to a boat like that at the age I was. At times I would take some female company down on the cross bar of my bike, and they'd have a drink and a sunbathe whilst I got some work done, then wined and dined... and we make use of that double bed in the back, LOL. All in all, it was a bit big to use as a fishing boat, and it wasn't mine. It did teach me about boats and life on the river though. Let's face it, after learning to manoeuvre a 38-footer, the rest should be easy. We made a good job of the restoration, and when it was sold, it made the front cover of a boat and yacht magazine with Martyn and me keeping a silver goblet each that was engraved with its name to remember it by.

After that, there were a few inflatables and little dinghies, which were mainly used for transportation to areas that couldn't be reached from the bank, but none were really suitable at all. Then I had joint ownership of a boat and trailer that a friend of mine, Steve Beeby, had kindly sold us for a cheap price, as he needed it gone from where it was stored. This is always





an issue, unless you own a property with enough room to store a boat on a trailer or have a permanent mooring. We had to store it on my mate's drive, as I lived in a flat, I didn't have a tow bar and we could only fish together, as it needed two of us to get it in and out. We did do the boat up as an out-and-out fishing boat and even did the trailer up so it could take the same wheels as his car. We caught a few carp, but the boat had no cabin or cuddy, so again it was just used as transportation or short sessions. Sadly that didn't work out, the boat was sold and that was the end of that... which brings me back to the end of the 2012/13 season that I fished from the bank and wrote about last time.

A couple of years passed after that, and I was getting itchy feet on the Ellis Pit, as I'd already had the Dink, which was by then the biggest fish in the lake. Out of the blue, my friend Jim phoned me and said that he was now living

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on a boat and had a mooring on a weir. As he was on the river grapevine, I asked him to keep an eye out for a cheap boat with a cabin or a cuddy that I could use for fishing. Pretty soon one turned up too. He was going to keep it as tender, but with space at a premium on his mooring, he decided to sell it. It was perfect for what I needed, but there was a proviso that I had to take it by the Friday, in three days' time! It came with a rusty old 70s Mercury outboard, which wasn't a runner, so I borrowed a 4hp Johnson off a friend, John Merritt.

Unfortunately, this wasn't running either, but after couple of hours' tinkering with my mate Turtle and some basic tools, we had it running off one cylinder. It was like an episode of Scrapyard Challenge or the A-Team, minus the oxy acetylene equipment that seemed be in every location they needed it. Hi fives and hugs all round! We were buzzing! Jim also lent me his 2hp Johnson for an emergency but understandably didn't want it used for the entire journey. I then went and picked up another friend, Phil Healy, at the location I was taking the boat to, so he would have his car at that end of the journey and be able to drive home when we got there. I was staying on the boat for the night, so I could take it to the mooring in the morning, leaving my car at the other end. I had already booked a lift back to that the following morning; it was like a military operation!

By the time we set off, it was dark, and I was on a boat I'd never been on before, using a 4hp outboard running of one cylinder, tiller steering it from the back whilst trying to look over the roof, as it wasn't compatible with the boat's steering control. To be honest, it was great fun for us both, and we had a whale of a time just getting it there. Even in the dark of night, the scenery was awesome, and the miles between the three locks we had to go through passed so quickly. I dropped Phil off, found somewhere safe to moor up for the night and made a cup of tea. It was then that I realised for the first time in my life that I was on my own boat. Oi, oi!

The boat was a 13ft dory type with a closed off cabin with two 6ft long

moulded seats. One would take a Coleman compact inflatable bed for a sleeping bag and the other side was ample for tackle and creature comforts. It also had an area of about 6x6ft at the back, just enough room for full size unhooking mat and still have room to move. The boat was solid but bright yellow... well, fifty shades of yellow to be precise. The previous owner actually said that if he'd kept it, he would have put the Trotters Independent Traders' stickers on it... but it had to go!

I stripped it down to the good fibreglass, removed the remains of an old pilot screen and rusty screws, took off the rotten window rubbers and wooden handles, painstakingly removed the flaking emulsion paint from the inside of the cabin, filled all the holes, sanded it, masked up all the good white gel coat and painted it green. It was now the carpiest boat on the river. I named it 'Project G', and at the start of the 2015 season, I was ready to go, buzzing to explore a new section. I still had the tiller mount 4hp outboard but had replaced the points, and it was now running perfectly. I only had the



actual 16th off, so I set out the night before and picked a swim on a public mooring with a big overhanging willow on the opposite side and cast out the rods at midnight. Sadly nothing happened that night, and just after first light, I decided to set out and find some fish. It was already warm, and a hot day was forecast, so I put on my Polaroids and set off.

It wasn't long before I started to realise that there were a hell of a lot of features in the section. It had it all – shed loads of overhanging trees and islands, boats, inlets and outlets, marinas and private mooring cuts, as well as the same features that are in every section – the top and bottom of locks and weirs at each end. I was spoilt for choice... where did I start? I went up and down the full length of the section twice before finally seeing a carp, a good common, which was sitting between the branches of a spindly dead tree at the bottom end of the section. It was the only dead tree in a row of thick foliage. The carp was obviously sunning itself in the safety of its branches without the fear of being run over by the boat traffic.

I circled back to an opening in the foliage downstream of the dead tree and manoeuvred the boat straight into the gap. I then tied off the bow of the boat to a branch and dropped a mud weight off the stern on the upstream side and sat back to gather my thoughts. What I saw next blew my mind! A carp topped in the middle of river, then another and another and another... What the hell was going on? It was some show, like the carp Olympics. I did flick a rod out to the dead tree, but it was about 10ft deep right next to it with a clean gravel bottom. I was never that confident of bite once I felt the depth. All the carp were obviously up in the water, but to this day, I don't know why they were showing so much. They were jumping, rolling, porpoising, boshing, trying to fly and everything. Everyone I called that day even heard them top on the phone, whilst I was telling them what was going on. "Was that another one I just heard?" they'd say. "Yep" I'd reply. It was mad.

I stayed and watched them until the light started to go and then went back to my mooring. I saw well over a hundred shows that day, which was quite

ironic, as I never saw another carp top for the rest of the season! I tried baiting several spots on the biggest features in the section but didn't have a bite from a carp, just the obligatory bream. That was until one day, as I got to my mooring and saw a carp in the water next to my boat. Cheeky bugger, I thought!

I had left a bucket of bait on the boat since the last session a few weeks before, and it stunk honkerton, so I emptied it in the deepest part of my mooring on the way out. The night was uneventful where I ended up, and I made my way back. As I was pulling into my mooring, floating past the spot I'd tipped the bucket of bait on, it was clouded right up with a couple of tails vortexing! With my heart racing, I moored up in the corner and quickly walked up to the action. After watching for a bit, I could see three carp – one mirror at least mid-twenty, an upper-double common and a tiny mirror. They would go into the cloud, drop down and feed, then circle around the



clear water and come back. I quickly went and grabbed a rod from the boat and walked back up. I waited until they left the cloud, then lowered the rig in and walked the rod back to the boat.

A few minutes passed until temptation got the better of me, and I went for a look. I saw the common go down, come straight back up spooked, and swim off. The rod I picked up had a chod rig on, and it was obvious by the carp's reaction that a pop-up was the wrong rig for the situation. I reeled it in straight away and got one of the other rods, which had a snowman rig on with a Wraysbury Baits Red Hot Squid hardened hookbait and a bright pop-up. As the fish were still in the clear water, I dropped it straight out in the cloud and walked back to my boat and put the rod down. I reached into my pocket and pulled out the bits I needed to construct a rollup, when the rod tip pulled over, and I was in! Sweet, I thought... not! I knew there was something wrong immediately.

The line was going into the same spot in the water, yet the fish was going up and down under the other moored boats, obviously stuck round something on the bottom. I had no control, and soon the inevitable happened and the hook pulled. I was not happy to say the least! When all the disturbance had settled, the common and the tiny mirror were still in the area, but the big mirror was gone. Guess which one I lost? As this was the only bite I'd had from a carp, I was starting to get a bit frustrated by the section as winter came, so I sought some advice and local knowledge.

I was put in touch with two proper anglers that had fished the section in the past and had moved on, so they didn't mind giving me some info. What both said was eerily similar – that there weren't a lot of carp in the section full stop. Both said, "I bet you've been fishing all the main features, haven't you?" "Yes," I said. It turned out that they had actually caught from some of the featureless parts. It also turned out that there were a few 'garden' anglers who either worked for, or owned bait firms. Fair play to them – if I had a house that backed onto the river and access to 'free' bait then I'd be

baiting it every night too. To be honest, I wouldn't dream of fishing those areas, and that bit of info worked for places to leave alone. Add to that three or four more proper boat anglers, and I really was up against it! They did also both say that the carp were flighty on that section, and when they did get one, after baiting a spot and catching one, the carp would do one, the bream would move in, and they'd be back to square one. Both had struggled to break double figures for a season despite fishing the river as their target water, and like I said before, they are proper anglers. Great, I thought! The section was granite hard, and I only had a couple of nights a month fish it! The winter was cold and bitter, and the season ended without anything more than more bream.

During the closed season, I had upgraded the outboard to a 9.9 Yamaha, which fitted on the boat's steering controls. At last I could now stand up and pilot the boat! That was after I stripped down the controls it came



with, reconditioned and painted them, added new cables and serviced the outboard. One of the best features of this boat was that the steering wheel is on the right-hand side, as most are on the left, and on the river you have to keep to the right, so I could look straight down into the marginal water – great for fish spotting.

At the start of the next season, my friend Nikk Aylin and I had done a bit of prep on a swim in the next section up. We had fished the odd session there in the past and knew the carp were there early season. We loaded up Project



G and set out on the afternoon of the 15th – we were buzzing like a couple of school kids all the way up the river and into the lock. I love the feeling of opening day on the river. We made our way through and out the other side and all the way to the area. After re-cutting out an old swim for Nikk and a path leading to the boat where I was staying, we were ready for the start.

Fishing-wise, the first night passed without event, but we did have a bottle of champagne and few beers and cigars to celebrate the start of the season. We had both prebaited our swims a couple of days before. Nikk went for a bit of everything, whereas I went for a boilie-only approach – about 15-20kg of Wraysbury Baits Red Hot Squid and MCNut, which were spread down the shelf. I hadn't put out any more free offerings other than my usual ten-bait stringer on one of the rods and the another just the hook bait, which was back on my 'standard' 18mm hardened hook bait and 16mm bright pop-up snowman.

We were both feeling a bit worse for wear by the evening. I was confident that my baits were still fine, and I didn't want to disturb the swim so left them out and went to bed. This was a good move, as in the dead of night my right-hand rod folded over, and the spool on my reel was screaming as loud as the bite alarm. I grabbed hold of the rod and just managed to stop the fish going round a post in the water downstream from where I was moored. It was sending up big, inky swirls in the dark water, pulling the boat round till the mooring rope tightened up like something from Jaws. It was such a hard fighting fish, and even when I got it close to the boat, it was it was trying to pull my arm off, sending lily pads and streamer weed up from the bottom, which floated off downstream.

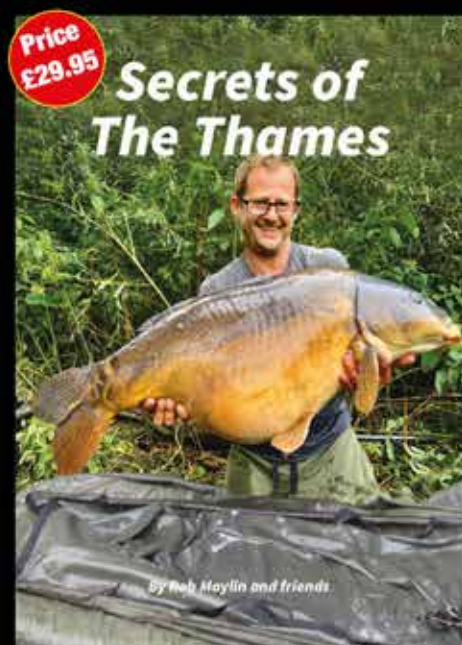
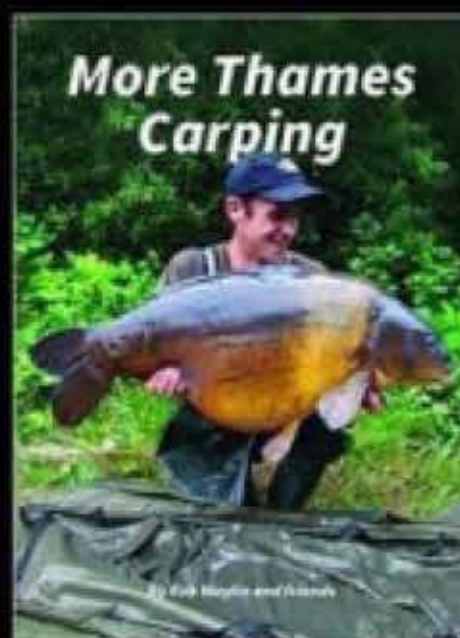
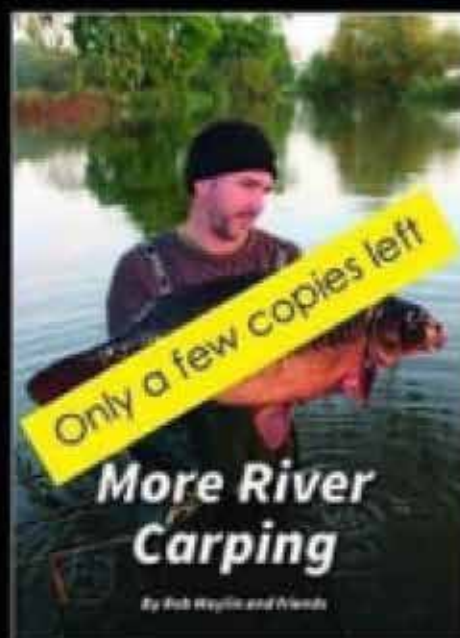
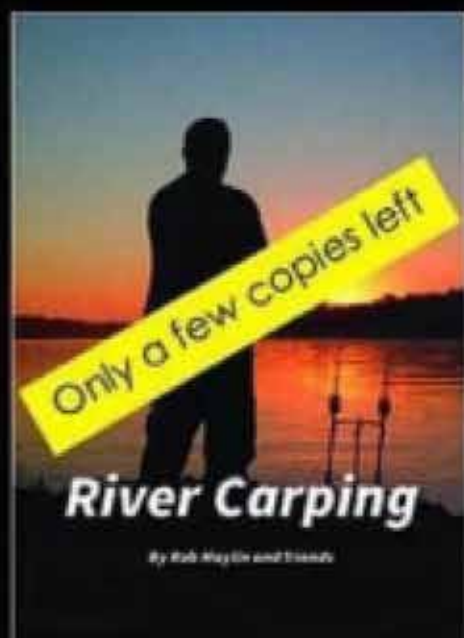
After what felt like an eternity, it popped up on the surface, and I managed to get it in the net and secured it. My heart was racing, so I steadied myself, put the kettle on and woke Nikk up. We got the carp care, weighing kit and camera sorted on the bank, and I went back on the boat to get the fish. On the scales it went 31lb 4oz. At last – my first Thames thirty! This is still an

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achievement for the river these days. I've got friends that have had in excess of two hundred carp out of the Thames and only had one thirty. I'm also talking about 'main river' fish, not a lake that the fish can't return to the river from or landlocked between weirs on parts of the river with a different name.

For me, the epitome of a Thames carp is one that if it so desired, could swim up to Lechlade or down to London Bridge. I'm very fortunate that I've also got a few friends that keep track of Thames carp, and this one was easily identifiable, as apart from being a mirror, it had a chopped bottom lobe of its tail. After a quick search, I was sent a pic of when it was caught some years before by a mate of mine four sections downstream and another pic from even further away. They all have a story to tell.

This brings me on to another subject, which was raised on Facebook by a Thames angler I have a lot of respect for – Neil Wayte. I referred to it as Chopped Tail on my Facebook post, and he commented, "Don't start naming them!" LOL. I do agree with him in most respects, but I was just describing the fish. I had one from Thames Ditton years ago, which was known as Floppy Tail, a fish which I'd seen a few years ago on the front of UK Carp mag when a friend of mine, Terry Hearn, had it from Kingston one winter. Unfortunately, I also saw it in the Anglers Mail not a year after I had it with an unscrupulous angler claiming it to be over 32lbs. It was 21lb 12oz when I had it, and it was known to have been around that weight for years.

The most famous Thames carp I knew of when I was growing up was one called the Schoolgirl, an old school fully scaled carp that fuelled my interest in the river many years ago. So it's not like they've never been named, although I do prefer the names to be a description of the fish. One plus point is that in this day and age of carp fishing booming and social media, there is more and more knowledge and records of Thames fish. This should hopefully stop people taking them out and stocking their own venues for their own profits. A main river Thames fish is a fish of the people – power to the people!



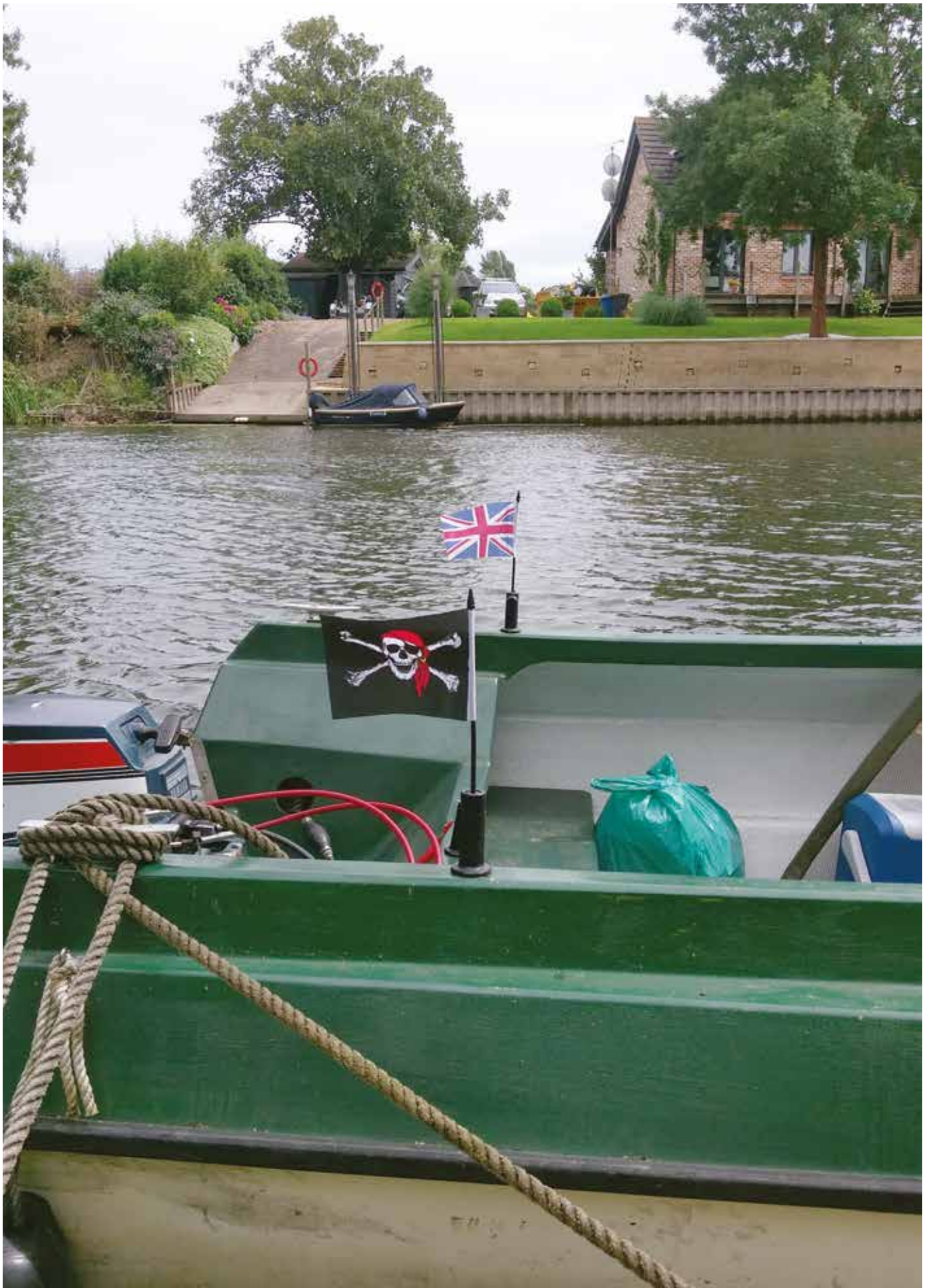
Anyway, back to the session... After we'd weighed, photographed and put it back, we went back to our respective swims and got some much-needed kip. The next night passed without any excitement, but at first light, the same rod was away and a small, gnarly, old-looking common was soon in the net. I did some self-takes with it and let Nikk catch up on some much-needed zeds, as he'd been plagued with line bites from bream and chub all night. That turned out to be the last carp caught, and despite returning a couple more times throughout the season, they'd gone. I did lose something on an end-of-season trip, which snagged me in an underwater tree. Although it felt massive it didn't fight like a carp; it was probably a cat.

I was still only able to give the river a night or two a month, which is a bit



like pissing in the wind, especially as I now wanted one from the granite section my boat was actually moored on. The next season, I spent my limited time on the river in pursuit of that goal, but only had shed loads of snotty bream... Yuk! The only thing of note was when I had a social with Nikk on the section just down from the weir. I had moored my boat up on an old platform on the next swim down and cast a couple of rods out – one on a bush downstream and one down the track for a barbel. That rod ripped off around midnight, and soon after, I had a barbel in the net. It was like a baseball bat, really long and skinny but went 13lb 12oz, a bloody good summer weight, and we wondered what else was in the section.

Back to the carp fishing... I did have one chance at the end of the season... I think... After some strong winds, I noticed that two trees had fallen near an outlet. One was completely covering the swim from the bank, and the other was horizontal in the water next to it. After some trimming the tree in the water, I managed to 'dock' the boat against a big branch running perpendicular





to the bank. I flicked out three rods – one on the upstream margin, one in front and down the shelf and with the other to the downstream margin. All of them had three or four big handfuls of Wraysbury Baits Red Hot Squid and MCNut thrown around them. I had a few bream before it all went quiet, and I got some kip.

I do remember waking up to a single beep on the middle rod, but I looked at the motionless tip, dead straight up in the air and fell back to sleep. When I awoke in the morning and looked at the rods, I knew something wasn't right. In the mist, I could see that the line from the middle rod was at the wrong angle. It was going upstream and under the left-hand rod. I immediately picked it up and started to reel it in. The line went under the boat and in 'knit one, pearl one' fashion through the branches of underwater trees, as far upstream as I'd cast it out in front of me. I eventually got my rig back, as whatever it was I'd had on had transferred me to a branch... None of the bream had done that! It must have been a carp. Unfortunately, I didn't get

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back before the season ended, and that was that.

At the start of the year before, I had obtained another bigger boat, and it was high time to get that up and running. I loved 'Project G', as it was the carpiest boat on the river and perfect for one person for a night or two, but unfortunately, my circumstances had changed. I was now separated from my wife and daughter and living with friends. So, I now wanted something that bit more comfortable that I could take someone else with me on and use as a leisure boat too. This was a Birchwood 18ft Continental, which had a lot more room and features without being too big for fishing, but it needed a complete restoration and modifying for my own preferences, a 'restomod' if you like.

By then I had also been made redundant from the company I'd worked for over 20 years. Although this was another kick in the nuts, it did allow me to fish full time for a bit. I was right into my lake fishing on Frimley Pit 4, and I had also had a productive winter on Pit 3 – stories for another time, maybe? But June soon came around and I had to do something. I decided that if I kept 'Project G', I'd probably have got sidetracked from the other boat with actually fishing the river and couldn't afford to keep paying two lots of mooring fees anyway, so I put it up for sale. It was after all a ready to go carp fishing boat.

It wasn't advertised for long when I was messaged by a proper angler looking for a boat, and it was sold in quick time and went to a good home. I actually could have sold it two or three times over. Now I had to get the other one done. By now it was dry-docked, and I had done some bits and pieces. It was one of the hottest years on record, which hindered as much as helped me. If I'd have known it was going to last as long as it did, I'd have taken it down to a bare hull from the start and made my life a bit easier, but I enjoyed most of it in some sick way. Even when the season started with the calls and messages from friends telling me what they had caught from the river, including Nikk having his first Thames thirty in the shape of a 30lb

GRAHAN STEVENS





2oz fish, I was still buzzing and well happy for him.

After two months of working from dawn till dusk, it was finally ready. The River Monkey was born! I've cut the story on this one short, as I've started a Facebook page for it (River Monkey), which you're welcome to look at or like. After the initial Launch and joyrides with friends and family, it was finally time to get fishing. I still wanted a carp from the granite section but struggled to find somewhere I was happy to fish. That was until on the last lap of the section on my first fishing trip, when I remembered the occurrence I'd had the year before in the Fallen Tree swim.

I quickly spun the boat round and headed to the spot. I first had to make sure the bigger boat fitted in the same hole as Project G, and it did. I quickly deposited a bucket of Wraysbury Baits Red Hot Squid on one spot and headed back home. I returned to the boat a couple of days later, which was now the 15th of August. After the long journey up the other end of the section, I was relieved to find the swim empty. The boat was moored up with minimal fuss, and the rods went out just before dark. A procession of bream then followed on the left and middle rods until daylight. I thought it was a bit strange that I'd not had anything on the right-hand rod, as it was on that spot I'd put the majority of the prebait on. When I picked up the rod, I found out why. It was snagged solid! I tried everything I could to get it free, but eventually pulled for a break. I hate doing that, but it was making a mess of the swim. I tied on another complete setup and cast it back to the spot.

By then it was starting to rain, and I was on the phone to a friend, Ryan Boyda, telling him about the endless bream when the right-hand rod finally went. I threw the phone down on the bed and shouted to Ryan to hang up. I fully expected it to be yet another bream, but something was different. The fish came straight towards me, went under the boat and attempted to get down the upstream margin, the same as the 'occurrence' that I'd had the year before. I had to 'give it the butt' and beast it out. When it eventually surfaced, it looked a good fish with a massive head and wide across the shoulders. I

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sent a quick pic of it in the net to a few friends who all replied with similar comments: "That looks a chunk!"

At long last, I'd finally caught one from the granite section, on the 16th of August, exactly two months after the start of the season. I prepared the carp care, weighing kit and camera and bought it aboard. I was a bit surprised with how little it weighed when I picked it up in the net, only needing one arm to lift it in the boat. On the mat, it was clear to see why; it had an unusual shape – all back end and no front, it reminded me of a Savay escapee, and could well have been. On the scales it went 24lb 8oz, but it looked massive. It didn't matter though, as it was a special fish to me. The rest of the day passed without event, and I couldn't wait for the night to start.

The bream were a bit quieter, and I'd actually managed to get to sleep when the middle rod screamed off at some rate of knots. I lifted the rod and got the fish under control, when out of the blue the hook pulled, or so I thought... It had actually snapped! Oh well, I thought. Actually, that's a lie! I was furious! I have been with the JPrecision hooks team since the owner Jamie Peters started out, but I hadn't used a sharpened hook on the river before for obvious reasons. But now thought I'd try, as the hook holds I'd had whilst using them on lakes had been mega, and they are super strong. I tied up a few new rigs, rebaited all the rods and got them back out.

Nothing happened until first light the following morning when the right-hand rod melted off again. This time a double figure ghostie common was the culprit, with a good hook hold. This was the second time I'd had a large mirror followed a night later by a smaller common. One bonus was, as I was unhooking it, I noticed some erroneous line in the net. I grabbed hold of it and pulled it in, and I ended up getting the rig back that I'd lost the day before when I pulled for a break! I did return to the spot a couple more times, but only had bream. The swim was now a bit blatant, and other boat anglers were getting in there, which made prebaiting a bit pointless and expensive, especially when you total up the time and distance it takes to get to the boat



then get to the swim and the cost of the bait itself – not for the faint hearted.

By then another well-known Thames angler had moved his boat on the section, and as it turned out had been baiting the same spot. But after exchanging a few messages, I decided to let him have it and concentrate the little time I had left of the season a bit further upstream where I could fish for barbel and carp – a bit of carbeling if you like, or as I don't mind chub and the same tactics are now used to catch them all, I coined the phrase carbarchubling! There was actually one massive barbel I was after that Nikk had caught at 18lb 12oz in the autumn, and it had done over 20lbs at the end of the last season. I was still prebaiting with loads of Wraysbury Baits Red Hot Squid but had now started to add pellet, as there were fewer bream in the faster water, and I wanted something to break down and draw the fish in. I'd had a few barbel to 10lb 8oz and small chub at the bottom of the weir section, but no more carp. I was a member of the club that had the fishing



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

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rights to this bit, but unfortunately, they lost it just after Christmas.

I had intended to leave the boat alone in the New Year and fish the remainder of the season from the bank, but with the club losing the section, the boat was the only option. I went for a look and managed to find a spot I could get the boat in and have a big feature to fish on the upstream side in the shape of a large fallen tree in the water. This was baited with copious amounts of Wraysbury Baits Red Hot Squid and pellet at least once a week. But even with all the will in the world, I could only fish it once a month due to looking after my daughter most weekends, and I was now back working full time. Then the winter floods came. I still made the effort to keep baiting, but it wasn't until the last couple of weeks of the season that I managed to get some 'free' time to actually fish. I've got to admit, I've never had a buzz like it, driving down to the river to fish for a potential British record barbel and big carp and chub on a prebaited spot I was 99% sure of actually getting in.

When I eventually got to the swim, I put two rods out on my usual boilie approach, but one on my "modest" quarter-of-a-tin of luncheon meat rig that I have caught my biggest barbel on in the past. The first night passed without a beep, but on the second night, I had a steady take on the luncheon meat rod, which weirdly turned out to be an upper double figure pike! This was then followed with a barbel on the left-hand boilie rod, yet another at 10lb 8oz. Not being big headed, but I've had every weight in the tens from 10lb 1oz to 10lb 15oz and many of them too, but only few above 11lbs.

The next session, I was confident I was getting some fish in the swim, and felt like a bite was on the cards. I didn't have to wait long either, as a 9lb barbel was soon in the net, quickly followed by another. The river was fining down, and the colour was dropping out... it really was spot on. I could even hear the odd crash of fish topping near the boat too, which I wasn't sure were carp or barbel. As the night got later and later, I thought the fish had done the off and went to bed when the right-hand boilie rod fished next to the tree folded in half and let out an almighty scream!

I ran down to the boat in my socks and grabbed hold of the rod. Immediately the fish surfaced three quarters of the way across the river. I could clearly see the massive swirls from it heading downstream in the considerable flow. The fight was epic, and all along, I was convinced that it was that big barbel I'd been hoping for... But as it reached the shallow water near my boat and within headtorch distance, I thought WTF – it's a carp, and big'un too. After a few more powerful runs, I got it under control and safely in the net. It was so long and wide, I was sure I'd broken my Thames PB again. I joked to Nikk on the phone that I thought I was at Frimley!

After letting my heart rate slow down and recovering with a cup of tea, I set up the carp care, weighing equipment and camera and went to retrieve



the fish in the net, but similar to the Savay looking one I had earlier in the season, it didn't have the weight. John Wilson's saying of, "It's not as big as I first thought... ha ha ha!" springs to mind. On the scales, it went 29lb 8oz, still a big fish by 'main river' Thames standards. It looked superb in its winter colours – dark on top with yellows and a bit of pink on its belly. Nothing more happened that night, and I left the river, already clucking to get back for the last weekend of season. Unfortunately, it had rained nonstop in between the sessions, and the river was up and coloured. I did manage to winkle out a 9lb-odd barbel and one at a PB-shaking 13lb 14oz on the first night, but the river rose and fell by over two feet the following day, and that was that – the end of the season.

Whilst I've been typing this, I've worked out that I've caught carp from every section on the Thames from below Teddington lock up to Eton lock, except one. I think I'll have a go on that section this year...



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