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Angling Times

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NEWS

BIGGEST PIKE OF THE SEASON

Predator fishing legend lands 40lb giant

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STEVE RINGER reveals how to solve the fishmeal puzzle

PAUL GARNER - 'MY TOP BAIT COMBOS FOR SPRING ACTION'

PLUS How to catch more on the whip this weekend

YOUR TOP CATCHES

"A 10-minute battle followed before an epic fish surfaced"

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AnglingTimes
TUESDAY, MARCH 1, 2022

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BRITAIN'S MOST TRUSTED VOICE IN FISHING

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It's high time I set my sights on a monster predator!

I THINK out of all of our coarse species, pike would have to be the one I've fished for the least. I'm not entirely sure why, but in among all the other options, they always seem to slip from my mind.

When I was a kid, I haphazardly flung an old spinner around a local park lake a few times, failing dismally to catch a pike. Sad to say, I've never really intentionally targeted them since. I've had the odd jack grab my bright pop-up hookbait when carp fishing, and a few while light lure fishing for perch, but that's about it.

Seeing some of your catches rolling in over the last few weeks, I've decided that this shortfall is something that I need to address. I defy any angler, whatever they fish for or whichever 'discipline' of our sport they fall into, not to be impressed by pike. There's something incredibly awe-inspiring about this species, which has evolved over thousands of years to become the apex freshwater predator. Perfectly camouflaged to blend in with their surroundings and capable of incredibly rapid bursts of speed, they really are a marvel of nature. If I needed any further incentive to give pike a bit more attention in the future, then Neville Fickling's latest capture is it. It's a great tale from the former British record pike holder, who has dedicated so much of his life to targeting the species.

As you read this, there'll only be a few days to go until The Big One Show Farnborough. It'll be the first show since it was cancelled in March 2020 at the start of the pandemic, and it certainly feels like another massive step back towards normality. I don't think any of us envisaged it being two years before we could hold events again, and I'm looking forward to hopefully seeing some of you there!

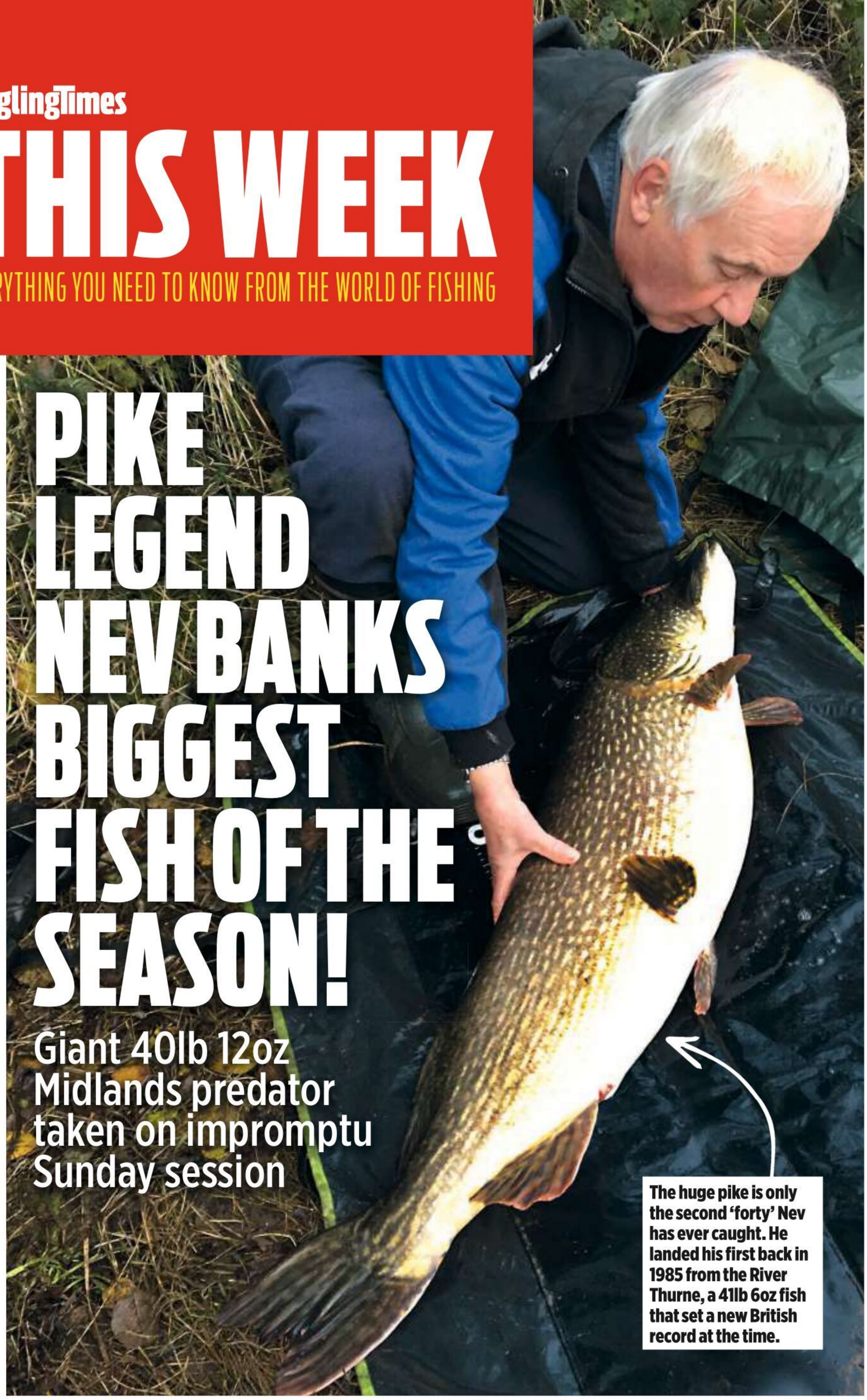
JAMES FURNESS
EDITOR

SAVE £££s WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE THIS WEEK
TURN TO PAGE 63 for DETAILS

AnglingTimes

THIS WEEK

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW FROM THE WORLD OF FISHING



PIKE LEGEND NEV BANKS BIGGEST FISH OF THE SEASON!

Giant 40lb 12oz Midlands predator taken on impromptu Sunday session

The huge pike is only the second 'forty' Nev has ever caught. He landed his first back in 1985 from the River Thurne, a 41lb 6oz fish that set a new British record at the time.

The 40lb 12oz pike came from a Midlands lake.

AnglingTimes DRENNAN CUP CATCHES OF THE WEEK

TURN TO PAGE 11

FORMER British pike record-holder Neville Fickling rolled back the years this week when he landed an enormous 40lb 12oz fish that left him 'shaking' as he tried to hoist it on to the scales.

It's only Nev's second 'forty', coming fully 37 years after his first - a 41lb 6oz fish he landed from the River Thurne in Norfolk back in 1985 to take the British record.

Yet, despite all his experience with huge predators, Lincs-based Nev admitted that this pike - which came from a Midlands lake he's spent the last few years fishing - reduced him to a 'wreck' on the bank.

"A good friend of mine told me about a 33lb pike caught from this lake, so a ticket was duly bought," he told us.

"Over two years I fished it a bit but couldn't really figure the place out. Someone I knew caught the big fish at 35lb, then a year passed with no sign of it. With otters on the water, hope was diminishing, but one Sunday lately I found myself at a loose end,

Colin and Linda Cook enlisted the help of the angling community to raise money in memory of daughter Ellie (right).

ANGLERS RAISE £100k IN MEMORY OF DAUGHTER

A FATHER who began a fishing challenge 10 years ago to raise funds in memory of his daughter has finally hit his target of £100,000 thanks to heart-warming support from the angling community.

Colin Cook set up the Claire House Challenge in 2012 after Ellie (7) passed away in September 2011 after being diagnosed with a brain tumour.

Claire House, a children's hospice in the North West, provided support to Colin and his family when Ellie received her diagnosis, and keen angler Colin, from Wallasey, wanted to run a fishing match in her memory.

"In the first year, 20 anglers took part and we raised around £1,000, which we were made up with," he says. "From then, the event has

so I gave it a go."

After casting two deadbaits out and laying his rods on the ground, Nev went to fetch his banksticks and buzzers when he heard a clicking sound coming from the right-hand reel.

"My initial thought was that a naughty jack had taken the bait on the drop," he explained, "but as my float sailed away, I thought, I'd better do something about this."

Neville picked up the rod and hit into the fish, which came straight towards him.

"Six feet down in the clear water, I saw something rather big," he revealed. "It surged away, flared its gills and came to the surface. I noticed the bait was hanging out of its mouth with a flying treble, so I took my chance and bundled it into the net."

It wasn't until trying to lift the fish that Neville realised it had to be 'the big one'.

"I tried to weigh it, but I couldn't hold the scales steady enough. My hands were shaking badly. I called the friend who had originally told me about the fish, and a weight of 40lb 12oz was recorded.

"I know the pictures aren't the greatest, but I didn't want to mess about unnecessarily with a pike this big."

Nev was careful to unhook and weigh the fish quickly.

grown every year, with fisheries across the Wirral participating."

In October 2021, Ellie would have turned 18 and Colin and his family were determined to reach the fundraising target to mark the sad occasion. And, after running online auctions and selling fishing tackle on eBay, Colin and his wife Linda have now taken the total to £106,000.

"Without the kindness of fisheries, tackle shops, and everyone who takes part in the matches, we wouldn't have been able to raise such a huge amount of money for such an important cause," Colin added.

LIFELESS POOLS TO BECOME COACHING FACILITY

The owner of the pits, Mark Egerton, is an angling coach.

TWO unused pits in a patch of woodland are set to be transformed into a facility that'll benefit both angling and wildlife.

If you fish, it's almost impossible to walk past a patch of water without wondering what it might hold, even if it resembles little more than a stagnant ditch. But Mark Egerton, a Level 2 Angling Coach at Try Angling, is showing that with some effort and investment, you can turn the most unlikely of places into fishing havens.

"I stumbled across a patch of woodland with two small pits amidst the Delamere Estate near my home in Cheshire. Instantly, I saw its potential," he told us.

"I purchased the land and plan to turn it into a fishery with easy access, making it ideal for coaching disabled people and children with SEN."

Work is set to start in April, and the pool will be canal-style and stocked with a mix of species. While it won't be open to the public, you'll be able to book a day with Mark at the water once it's complete.

THE BIG ONE IS BACK... AT LAST!

THIS weekend sees the long-awaited return of The Big One Show at Farnborough, in Hampshire.

Thousands of anglers eager to stock up on bargains for the year ahead and get their hands on the top kit from some of the sport's biggest brands are set to attend the event, which is being held for the first time since its postponement in March 2020 at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Rob Hughes will once again be hosting the Angling Times Stage, where star anglers such as Scott Lloyd, Ian Russell, Mark Holmes and Bev Clifford will be among those entertaining the crowds.

Visitors will also be able to sample some of the latest poles to hit the market and receive expert advice at the extended pole alley, as well as enjoying the Bivvy Village, which is a brand-new feature for 2022.

FOR A FLOORPLAN AND TIMETABLE OF TALKS AT THE EVENT, TURN TO PAGE 14.

NEWS EXCLUSIVE

THE MURKY WORLD OF THE

Angler vigilance has never been more vital in combatting the transfer of deadly diseases and invasive species to UK waters. Following a seizure of invasive Prussian carp, Dom Garnett spoke to CEFAS Fish Health Inspectorate (FHI) enforcement officers Jon Hulland and Josh Gray about their vital work

DID YOU KNOW?

It's currently illegal to introduce carp for restocking from anywhere else in the world into the UK and only health-certified koi for ornamental purposes can be imported.

BRITAIN'S BIGGEST ILLEGAL CARP HAUL

In 2010, 120 live specimen carp between 30lb and 50lb with an estimated black market value of £250,000 were seized at Dover. The fish had to be euthanised (pic bottom left).

A FAREWELL TO ARMS?

Fisheries crimes often have links to organised crime. In one shocking example of this, volunteer angling bailiffs in Reading investigating poaching activities found firearms including an Uzi submachine gun and a Magnum handgun!

WHAT have an alligator gar, serious diseases and a 50lb carp in the back of a minibus got in common? They're all among the weird and disturbing finds made by Centre for Environment Fisheries & Aquaculture Science (CEFAS) FHI enforcement lead Jon Hulland and deputy Josh Gray.

If anything, some of their encounters are even stranger than the Hot Fuzz-meets-Billingsgate Fish market scenario I'd imagined. "It's a fascinating world, to put it mildly," says Jon. "Even after 22 years, every day is different." Along with Josh Gray, he's come to expect the unexpected.

From a 120lb Asian silver carp "as big as a teenager" to assorted non-native catfish, you might think they'd seen it all. At least, until the next tip-off, and yet another reminder about the huge vigilance needed to protect UK fish farms and fisheries.

KILLERS ON ICE: THE PRUSSIAN CARP

Just a couple of weeks ago Jon and his colleagues headed a multi-agency sting to seize 4,000 Prussian carp at Dover, as part of "Operation Frederick". At first glance, these crucian relatives might look harmless, but with uncanny survival abilities and highly invasive characteristics, you'd be wrong.

"Even packed in ice, as these fish were, Prussian carp can survive perfectly well for days on end in a dormant state!" Jon says. "Although most are intended for food, it would only take one escapee fish to crossbreed with crucians or other cyprinids and potentially wipe out a whole fishery."

With an insidious ability to create clones of themselves by breeding with other cyprinids, they've caused devastation across lakes in Hungary and elsewhere around the world. Serious stuff, but unfortunately just one item on a long list of current threats.

The 2010 haul of 120 big carp at Dover netted the perpetrators a £10,000 fine.

Criminals will often kit vans out with tanks in order to smuggle fish.

A FISHERIES PANDEMIC IN-WAITING?

If illegal fish hauls pose an obvious warning, perhaps the most sinister current dangers of all are a host of virtually invisible diseases. While KHV might be well-publicised, SVC (spring viraemia of carp) is potentially even deadlier but less well-known. Deadly to carp and other cyprinids such as roach and crucians, it creates haemorrhaging in the gills and internal organs, and can be difficult

FISH POLICE!

EELS WORTH THEIR WEIGHT IN GOLD!

In 2020 a Malaysian seafood trader was caught smuggling "glass eels" out of the UK with a value of £53 million! It was one of the highest value wildlife crimes ever recorded. Juveniles of this endangered species fetch a high price in the Far East, where they're a delicacy. The culprit received a suspended two-year jail sentence.

to detect until it's too late, causing large scale mortalities.

"UK fisheries have a high health status overall, and a lot of diseases prevalent in Europe aren't found here," says Jon. "That could all change if SVC got hold. The last time we saw it, around five years ago in the Midlands, an entire lake had to be drained. That's how serious it is."

Should this disease spread into the UK, our fisheries could also easily lose their special status, which currently prevents foreign fish from entering our borders. "Let's be clear about this, a resurgence of SVC could put the entire UK fish farming industry in jeopardy, which is why there's no room for complacency," says Jon.

VANS, CRATES AND DODGY STOCK

As avid anglers themselves, Jon and Josh are especially keen to stop cowboy operators and dodgy imports ruining our fisheries. "We've seen it all," says Jon, "from fish wrapped in wet blankets, to hire vans with tanks and even containers hidden under piles of fishing tackle."

While demand for carp has perhaps peaked for now, the Fish Health Inspectorate remain vigilant and are always open to tip-offs. "The great thing about the angling community is that sense of ownership - they want to protect their sport," says Josh. "That's why if they see or hear anything that shouldn't be happening, they can contact us in confidence".

HOW CAN I HELP PROTECT MY FISHING?

CEFAS is an agency of the Department for Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). Its enforcement arm deals with everything from the inspection and seizure of illegal stock at ports, through to control measures after disease outbreaks.

When it comes to detecting and preventing threats to fisheries, anglers are absolutely key, according to Jon and Josh. Tip-offs about unlicensed movements of fish, illegal imports, disease outbreaks and other risky practices can be confidentially reported.

CEFAS HOTLINE: 01305 206700
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YOU get a choice of three heads with this alarm – blue, red, purple or clear LEDs. All of them have a one-touch mute system, with adjustable volume and variable tone. The alarm has a range of 400m, and comes in a case.

Price: £79.99 (clear), £99.99 (red, blue & purple) RRP: £131.99, www.tackleuk.co.uk

YOUR TOP CATCHES

THE BEST FISH YOU'VE LANDED THIS WEEK

John's top tip: We fished by boat, and the Korum Snapper Boat Sling made unhooking, weighing and getting a quick picture extremely easy. I'd recommend it to other boat anglers.

"TWO MEMORABLE DAYS GUIDING"

Tom Holbrook – 37lb 12oz pike (top)
Dave Sprotson – 33lb 8oz pike (below)
(words by angling guide John Horsey)

"I'VE just had two memorable days guiding anglers on Chew Valley Lake in Somerset, where two of my clients were fortunate enough to bank 30lb pike.

"On day one I was out with a chap called Dave Sprotson (pictured below), and we were fishing lures. We had 30 pike between us, his biggest going an immense 33lb 8oz and my best weighing 29lb 10oz.

"The following day I was out with another client, Tom Holbrook (pictured above), and he managed to catch a 37lb 12oz beast on a deadbait!

"Chew is fishing really well this winter, despite what the doom merchants have been saying about it in recent years!"

"I NEVER EXPECTED TO CATCH A ZANDER OF THIS SIZE!"

Jonathan Hodgson – 13lb 8oz zander

"I'VE WANTED to fish for zander for some time now, but I never really got round to doing it until a recent trip to the Trent with my good mates Simon Aston and Richie Martin.

"As dusk approached, I cast two deadbaits out and sat back on my bedchair.

"A little while later, I had a few bleeps on the bite alarm, so I went and stood next to the rods.

"I saw a slight tap on the tip before line began to peel slowly from the reel, so I wound down and hit into what seemed to be a good fish.

"A 10-minute battle followed before an epic fish surfaced. I rang Simon and told him I had a zander and that it could be a double. Sure enough, I hoisted it onto the scales the needle went round to 13lb 8oz.

"I was in a state of shock! Never in a million years did I expect to catch a specimen of this size at my first time trying!"

Jonathan's top tip: When predator fishing, try to locate the silverfish first. The pike and zander won't be far behind.

"AT FIRST I THOUGHT IT WAS A PIKE!"

Jack Delaney – 4lb 4oz perch

"I CAUGHT this 4lb 4oz perch from a local stillwater, retrieving a jig slowly across the lakebed.

"My friend also managed a four-pounder on what turned out to be a really great day for us.

"I was only using a light 2g-8g jig rod and I wasn't really expecting something that big – I actually thought it was a pike on the end when I first hooked it!"

Jack's top tip: Lures worked slowly along the deck are a great tactic for perch. Vary the pace of the retrieve for best results.

"A REAL SPECIMEN FOR THIS STRETCH"

Richard Howard – 7lb bream

"AFTER multiple blank sessions on a low and clear Bristol Avon at Keynsham, I decided to have another crack at it on Monday after rain brought the river up.

"I was fishing a maggot feeder, but despite a few nibbles I didn't connect with anything. Then, on my last chuck of the day, I pulled into the biggest bream I've ever heard of coming out of this venue! At 7lb, it's real specimen for a stretch fished mainly by predator and match anglers."

Richard's top tip: Light gear can help buy you a few extra bites. With the feeder I used a size 18 hook and a 2lb bottom.

"IT PULLED A BIT ON A LIGHT ROD!"

Alan's top tip: You can get away with fine lines and small hooks, as long as you balance them with a soft rod.

Alan Rio – 6lb 7oz chub

"I TOOK this 6lb 7oz chub from the Thames near Maidenhead on a maggot hookbait fished below a cage feeder packed with liquidised bread. It pulled back a bit on a light quivertip rod but the 2.7lb hooklink and size 18 hook held firm.

"The fish hugged bottom during the fight, but steady pressure got it up and swimming towards the net.

"When I saw its deep, broad flanks, it looked huge – and it was!"

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THE GAME CHANGER

ROY TICKLE – 3lb 14oz PERCH, 2lb 8oz ROACH, 13lb 8oz PIKE

"Targeting everything that swims resulted in a mega session"

"IN COARSE fishing, there are no more polarising fish to target than predators and silvers – but, by going for both on a recent session, I had a day to truly remember.

"I used to do a lot of carp fishing, but trying for a range of species is far more interesting. I like to try and catch whatever's in front of me, and the key to doing this is varying my approach throughout the day. This is exactly what I did on a trip to the River Ribble in Lancashire, a venue that's been in great form this season.

"Generally, anglers will fish a stick float or waggler for the roach and dace, or they'll fish deadbaits on stout rods for pike. Rarely are the two combined but, if you think about it, it makes sense to do both. If pike are present to start with, you'll generally catch them pretty quickly. Once they're out of the swim, the silvers feel more comfortable, so they're easier to catch. And, when you start feeding and getting them going, you'll stir the attention of the predators again, perch included, and draw them into the swim.

"Throughout the day a peg can go through these natural cycles and, by changing your tactics, you can catch what's there, rather than trying to force it for a certain species.

"You don't need a mountain of tackle. All I carried to the river was a pike rod, a feeder rod, a bag of terminal tackle, a chair and a bucket of maggots. I was on the water at first light – a classic time for predators – and it wasn't long before I banked a 13lb 8oz pike on a deadbait.

"While I was pike fishing, I started feeding maggots for silvers around 15 yards out, where I'd cast the feeder. I bring plenty of bait, usually around six pints, to prime the swim. That 13-pounder was the only predator of the morning, so at around 10am I switched to the feeder. I got into a brilliant run of big roach, landing around 40 fish, the best going 2lb 8oz.

"I use a window feeder, filled with groundbait boosted with aniseed oil, plus hemp and maggots. I fish this helicopter style and don't miss many bites – something that can often be an issue with roach on the quivertip.

"I kept loosefeeding maggots and, when the roach fishing began to slow, I saw a few swirls. The predators were back! There are some big perch in the Ribble and, when the light levels dropped, conditions looked ideal for them. I put on a small livebait and in an hour's fishing I had two massive perch, both of which went 3lb 14oz.

"Come the end of the day, I'd managed fish of three different species, all to good sizes, for a great session. I'd certainly recommend giving my multi-species approach a try. By keeping your options open, you can make the most of one of the best times of the year on rivers."

The roach moved in, with fish to 2lb 8oz.

This 13lb 8oz pike was the first species landed by Roy Tickle. After the roach had arrived, the perch moved in, with fish to 3lb 14oz (main pic).

ROY'S TOP 5 TIPS

GET THERE EARLY: If you're at the river by first light, you can make the most of one of the day's best periods.

BRING LOTS OF BAIT: To keep a swim going, you need to feed plenty. I take six pints of maggots and keep them going in throughout the session.

TRY WINDOW FEEDERS: These get your bait down to the deck in a compact way, giving you a hotspot of feed amid the loose offerings.

USE BALANCED FEEDER TACKLE: I use a size 14 hook and 3.3lb hooklink. It's light enough for roach, but has enough backbone to land larger fish.

ADD FLAVOUR: I have the utmost confidence in aniseed flavour for roach. Mix a bit in with your groundbait, and put some on your hookbaits too!

MAREK NIEWEGLOWSKI – 4lb 8oz perch

PAUL FAINT – 7lb 15oz chub

Anglingtimes DRENNAN CUP CATCHES OF THE WEEK

2021 - 2022 SEASON

LURE CHANGE FOOLS BIG CANAL STRIPEY

AFTER seeing a huge perch follow his lure all the way to the bank before turning away, Marek Nieweglowski switched patterns and was rewarded with this superb 4lb 8oz Grand Union Canal perch.

He carried on casting to the same spot, this time with a Korum Squirmz – a soft plastic pattern that can be worked along the deck. After retrieving it very slowly, Marek's rod suddenly hooped round, and he knew right away that he was into the same big perch, which tried in vain to gain the sanctuary of a nearby barge before he could steer it into the net.

BAIT SWITCH PRODUCES THAMES CLONKER

TRYING out a new hookbait for the first time can take a leap of faith, but if the results are quick to come, all doubts are soon set aside. That was certainly the case for Essex angler Paul Faint, who banked this 7lb 15oz chub using a new boilie named The Herb that he's currently trialling. Fishing the Thames, Paul baited a swim with 12mm baits, then fished a matching boilie on the hook, wrapped in paste. He caught a five-pounder on his first cast, followed by the near-eight-pounder a couple of hours into the session.

ONE BITE, ONE MASSIVE ROACH!

PAUL Scowen only had one bite on his session at a low-stock gravel pit he's been fishing for the past three winters, but wasn't complaining when it turned out to be from this sublime roach weighing just an ounce under 4lb.

He used a feeder filled with dark groundbait and maggots, and said the fish put up a great fight before he was finally able to net it at the fourth time of asking.

HUGE CHEW CROC FROM A BOAT

CHRISTCHURCH angler Terry Findlay became the latest angler to capitalise on the superb fishing at Chew Valley Lake in Somerset this winter when he landed this 37lb 8oz pike. Conditions were spot-on, and just 20 minutes after casting out his deadbait Terry received the all-important run. At one point the fish surged under the boat, but thankfully he managed to get it out into open water before bringing it to the boat – a moment Terry says he'll 'never forget'.

PAUL SCOWEN – 3lb 15oz roach

TERRY FINDLAY – 37lb 8oz pike

HOW TO ENTER THE DRENNAN CUP

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Running since 1985, the Drennan Cup is Britain's No1 weekly catch competition which rewards anglers who target big coarse fish by design.

CURL UP WITH A CULT CLASSIC...

Four iconic 20th Century fishing books that all anglers should read... and what better time to do it than during the closed season?

THIS Thursday marks the 25th World Book Day, a global celebration of reading in more than 100 countries.

So, what better occasion to finally begin turning the pages of that iconic fishing book you've always wanted to read, but never quite got round to?

If you're struggling for inspiration, we've selected a quartet of timeless cult classics that will fire your angling imagination...

STILL-WATER ANGLING, RICHARD WALKER, 1953

ONE of the first books from the highly productive pen of the 'godfather of coarse angling' Richard Walker, published in the same year as another of his treasured classics, *No Need to Lie*.

Still-water Angling laid the foundation for what has since become known as 'specimen hunting', and while many of the theories and techniques he wrote about for targeting big fish by design were seen as revolutionary in the 1950s, their enduring efficacy has shown Walker to have been truly an angler who was well ahead of his time.

I KNOW A GOOD PLACE, CLIVE GAMMON, 1989

CLIVE Gammon was a great sea angler, renowned for his expertise at night fishing for sea trout and surf fishing for bass in his native Wales. He was also an exceptional writer who travelled the globe in pursuit of many exotic species, and earned a job with *Sports Illustrated* magazine in the US, through which he became friends with sporting greats Franz Beckenbauer and Muhammad Ali. Clive's angling exploits in England, Ireland and Wales are well covered, but *I Know a Good Place* also casts its net over trips to the Amazon, Alaska and many other places.

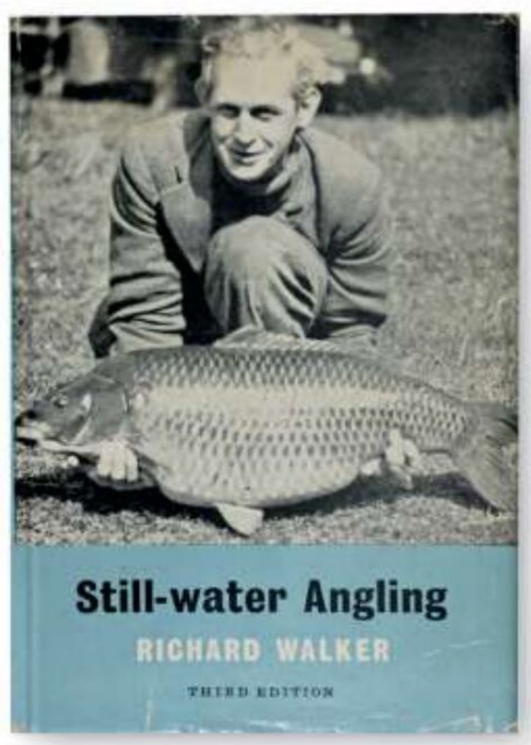
CONFESSIONS OF A CARP FISHER, BB, 1950

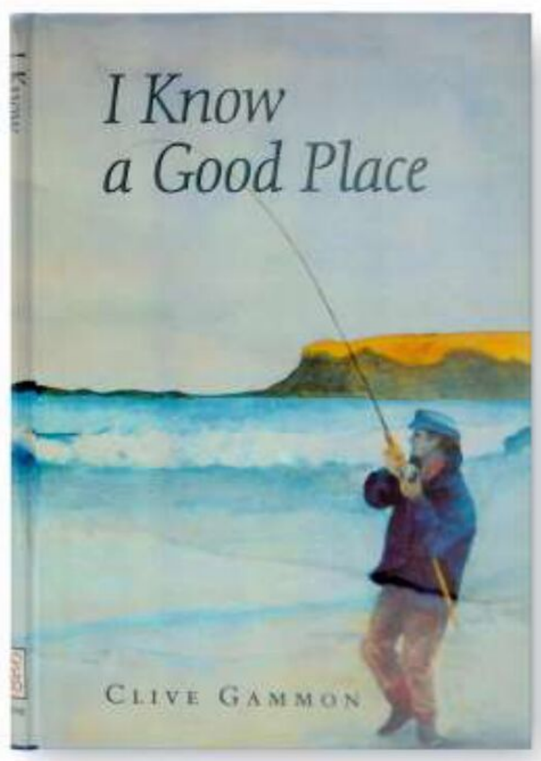
DENYS Watkins-Pitchford (aka 'BB') was a gifted illustrator and passionate countryman, but also a pioneer of post-war carp fishing.

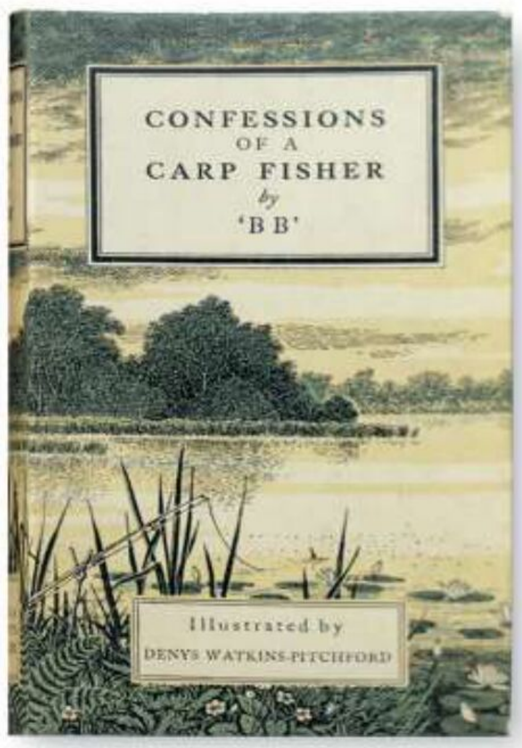
But it's as the author of more than 60 books for adults and children alike that he is best remembered in angling circles. In *Confessions,* BB recounts many of his early experiences in pursuit of carp – at the time seen as an almost mythical species. He details how they may be caught, while eloquently describing the charm of doing so. Few have managed to match his descriptive writing ability, before or since.

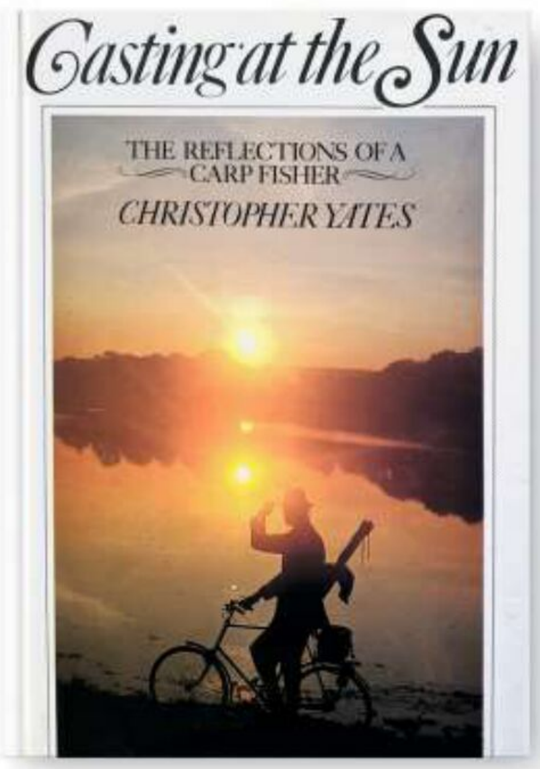
CASTING AT THE SUN, CHRIS YATES, 1986

ARGUABLY the greatest of the dozen or so books penned by the man many believe to be our greatest living angling writer, *Casting at the Sun* charts Chris' journey from the time he first clapped eyes on a carp as a small child, to his capture of a record in 1980 from Redmire Pool... and beyond. The 28 chapters, detailing many of the angling escapades over the first four decades of his life, take in epic battles with unseen giants and visits to magical, often haunted ponds along the way. It's a must for anglers of all disciplines.









WIN FISHING BOOKS!

To mark World Book Day, we've got four copies each of three brilliant books launched last year to give away – Carl and Alex's *The Simple Fishing Guidebook*, Davis Rogers' *Chomp! Charlie Carter and the Monster Pike,* and *The Magic of Fishing* by John Moorwood (actually our favourite of all the books launched in 2021!) To win a copy of each, just answer the question below and email it to newsdesk@anglingtimes.co.uk with 'book competition' in the subject line:

Q: WHAT NAME ARE MALE PIKE OFTEN KNOWN BY?

A: Jim B: Jack C: Jill

GET READY WITH

RINGER

"SOLVE THE FISHMEAL PUZZLE"

YEARS ago, the only groundbait show in town was a sweet mix or brown crumb, but the popularity of carping has seen fishmeal take over.

This is either ground-up fish or, more commonly, ground-up fishmeal pellets. Carp and bream love the stuff and even roach are starting to get a taste for fishmeal.

Yet there are still anglers who view fishmeal as too 'strong' for winter, when feeding needs to be light. I reckon that's wrong - carp and bream eat pellets all year round. The fishmeal is needed to get them interested, but the mix then needs to be very fine in consistency and low in food value, so as to not fill them up.

It can be tricky to know if a groundbait is both these things when looking at a bag, but you should be able to see if it has any larger particles in it. Even if it has, sieving it will quickly reduce the food value.

GIVE IT A GO...

1 NORMAL FISHMEAL

Smells of fish and is crumbly in texture, but superb when used on the Hybrid feeder or for fishing in the margins with dead maggots. The potent smell is what attracts the fish, and we're not just talking carp either.

2 COLOURS

The rules for a commercial aren't the same as on a river or canal when it comes to the colour you pick. The water's coloured, with no predators like pike, so I wouldn't be averse to using a light-coloured mix.

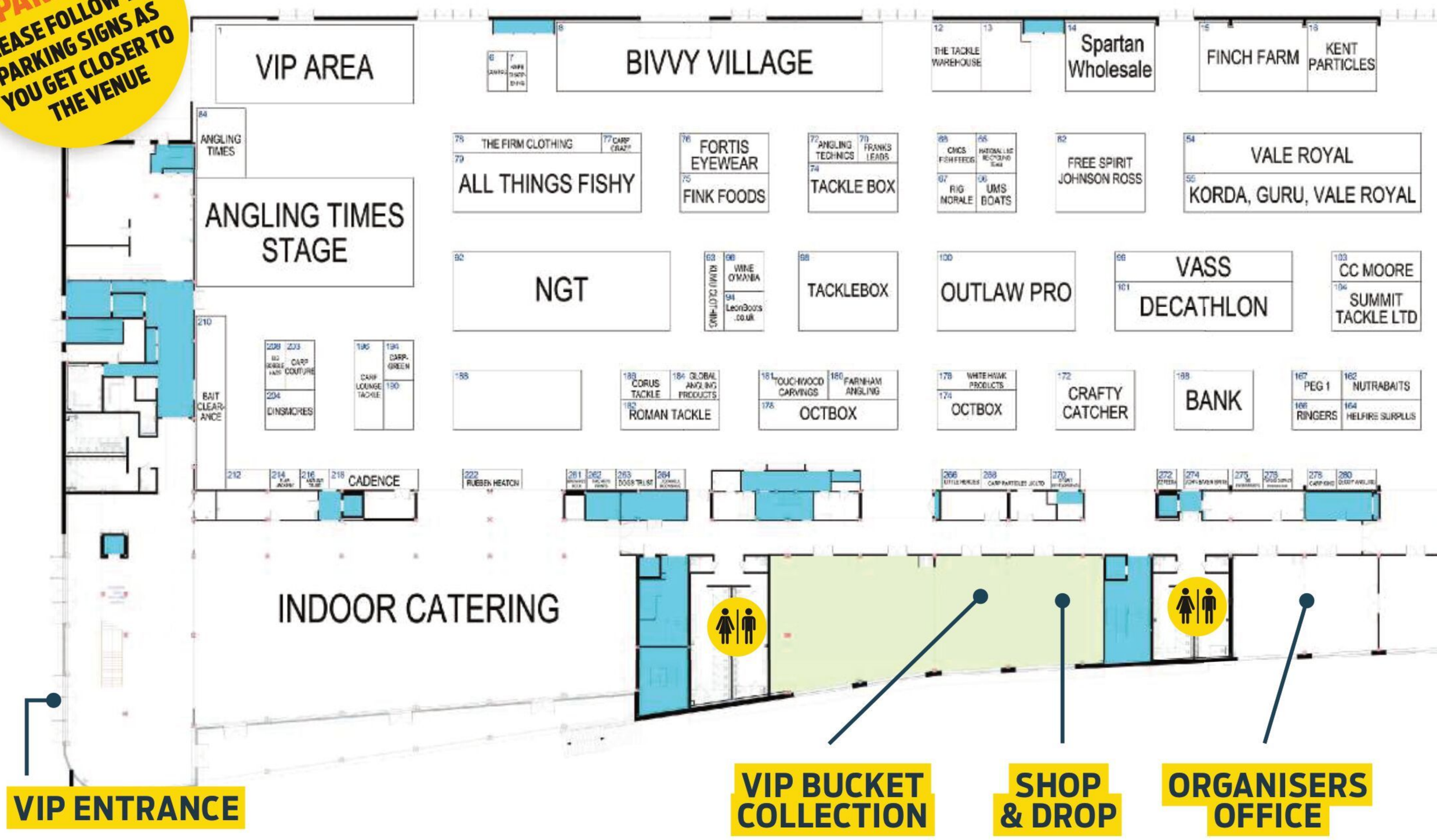
3 SWEET FISHMEAL

These newer groundbaits are basically a sweet mix with varying degrees of fishmeal added. This gives you the pulling power of both types – useful on venues where pellets and fishmeal don't dominate.

4 PARTICLE SIZE

Groundbait is made up of thousands of particles – some tiny and some big. Lots of larger particles are great in summer, but in winter I go very fine, almost ending up with a dry mix like flour. Riddle it before use.

PARKING
PLEASE FOLLOW THE PARKING SIGNS AS YOU GET CLOSER TO THE VENUE



THIS WEEKEND!

FARNBOROUGH
5-6 MARCH 2022

WHEN THE Big One Show Farnborough was postponed in 2020 we never imagined that it would be two years before we could all get together again.

I'd like to say a huge thank you to you all. Whether you'd originally purchased a ticket for the 2020 event or have bought one in the last few weeks, your support is massively appreciated. The team and I have worked tirelessly to deliver a great consumer show and take another step back towards normality. Sadly, due to the lead time for budgets, investing in complex stand builds and uncertainty about Covid, several regular big brands are unable to attend this year. We're assured that they'll all be back for 2023 but, meanwhile, we've worked closely with leading retailers so you'll still be able to buy the latest products from your favourite manufacturers.

Visitors will also be to enjoy our biggest-ever pole alley and the brand new bivvy village, as well as being entertained by the strong line up of speakers on the Angling Times Stage hosted by Rob Hughes. I hope to see you all there.

Vince Davies, Show Director

TALKS TIMETABLE

SATURDAY

10am – 10.30am BOTH DAYS
Mark Barrow
Our Freshwater World – a unique insight into the world of rivers and lakes, showcasing the amazing fish that live in this hidden world

11am – 11.30am BOTH DAYS
Ian Russell
The carp catching machine reveals the tactics behind his recent captures including a winter fifty

12pm – 12.30pm
Rob Hughes & Nick Speed
Go behind the scenes of the new Angling Outlaws TV show with two of the show's stars

1pm – 1.30pm
Jamie Cook
Q&A session with the CEO of the Angling Trust

2pm – 2.30pm
Mark Holmes
Cutting through the science of big carp tactics

3.00pm – 3.30pm
Andy May & Jamie Hughes
Exclusive challenge video from the Winning Ways team BOTH DAYS

SUNDAY

10am – 10.30am BOTH DAYS
Mark Barrow
Our Freshwater World – a unique insight into the world of rivers and lakes, showcasing the amazing fish that live in this hidden world

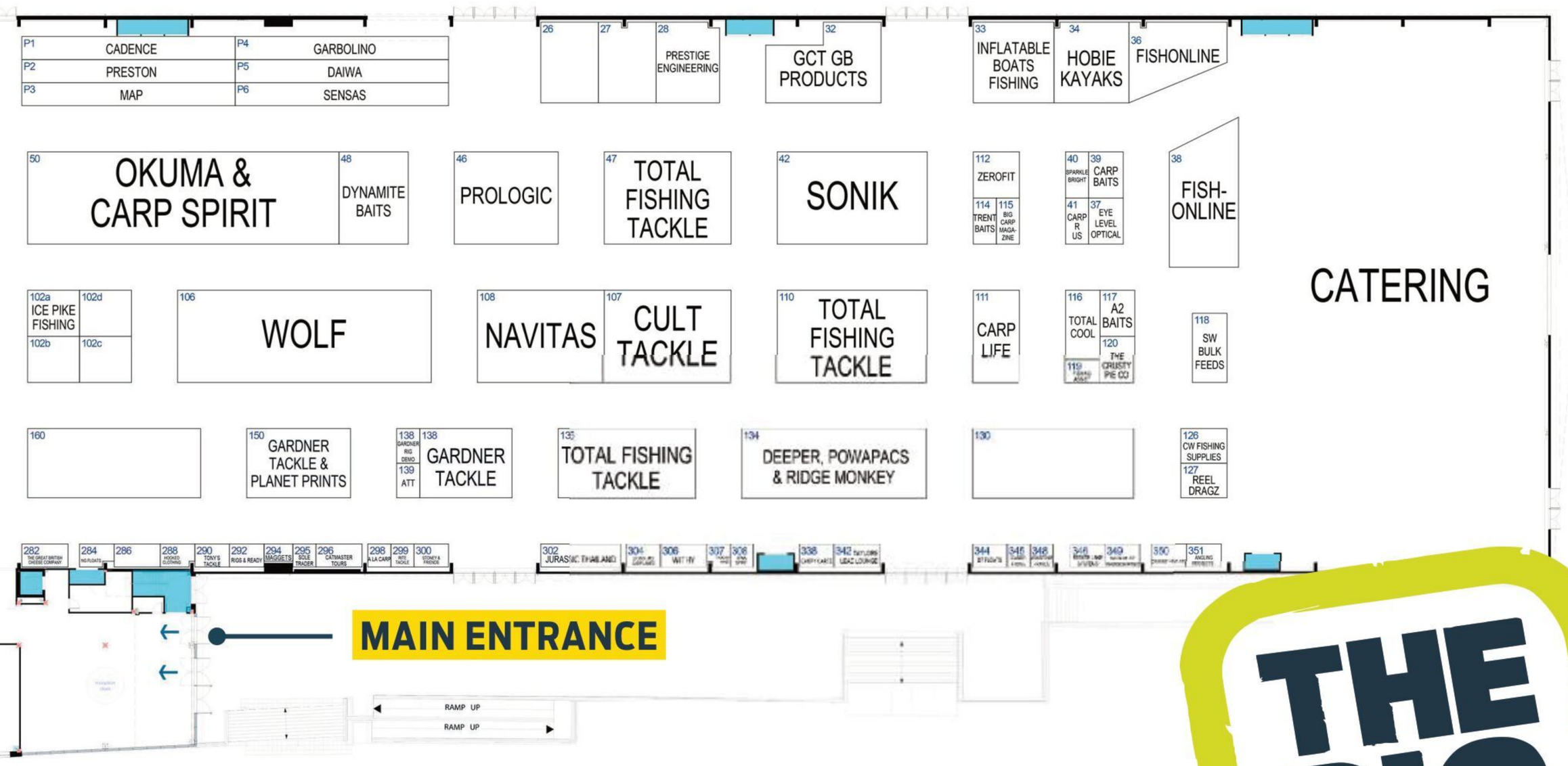
10.45am – 11.15am BOTH DAYS
Ian Russell
The carp catching machine reveals the tactics behind his recent captures including a winter fifty

11.30am – 12pm
Bev Clifford
The Carp Team England Ladies manager talks about increasing female participation in the sport

12.15pm – 12.45pm
Andy May & Jamie Hughes
Exclusive challenge video from the Winning Ways team BOTH DAYS

1pm – 1.30pm
Dave Lyons
Discover more about the amazing work of the Tackling Minds charity

1.45pm – 2.15pm
Scott Lloyd
Watercraft edges to help single out target fish



THE BIG ONE

FARNBOROUGH EXHIBITORS & BRANDS PLUS WHERE TO FIND THEM*

Exhibitors, retailers and brands accessible at the Farnborough show include:

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The Tackle Warehouse 12
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EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK

"THESE RODS ARE A BYWORD FOR QUALITY"

We put Free Spirit's new Feederlite rods through their paces

HOW WE TEST OUR GEAR

Our team of tackle experts use their years of angling experience to test new gear to its limits.
Mark Sawyer, Tackle Editor

AS TACKLE editor for Angling Times I now and again get to fish with some quite exceptional bits of kit – and, with my ear to the ground, find out where best to put them through their paces.

There are thousands of different types of feeder rod on the market. You've got budget priced pub-chuckers, super expensive long-range horizon blasters, not to mention a wealth of bomb, Method feeder and specialist commercial, river and stillwater models. Yup, the list is virtually endless!

Between them, these could deliver anything from a minuscule cage feeder that wouldn't fit over the end of your little finger, right up to a massive metal-clad monster holding enough feed in one go to last a canal match angler five hours. Little wonder, then, that choosing the right rod is more difficult than trying to mix groundbait with treacle while wearing boxing gloves!

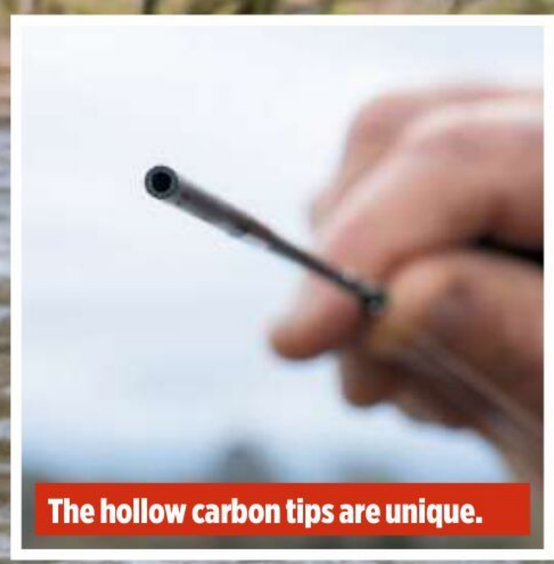
What's more, if you're looking for a rod that stands out from the crowd, and will last you a lifetime, you could well get caught out and spend a whole lot for very little.

So let me direct you along the right path. Recently I got the chance to lay my grubby mitts on the full set of Free Spirit's sublime Hi S Feederlite rods. So outstanding are Free Spirit rods that their name has become a byword for assured quality and outstanding performance. Many leading match anglers, including England Internationals, will

AnglingTimes
BANKSIDE PROMISE!
- Genuine on-the-bank tests
- By anglers, for anglers
- Unrivalled insight
- Every week

Skeletal Fuji reel seat provides feel.

Abbreviated or cork handle options.


The hollow carbon tips are unique.

A keeper ring is whipped on the side.

Forward-facing anti-frap guides.

Non-scratch perdurable finish.

testify to this. The Feederlites are a fine example of the firm's eye for quality, featuring cutting-edge materials, inspired build and design, and faultless furnishings.

Now, Earlswood's Engine Pool, my spies told me, had recently been stocked with more big, bold and brassy F1s than you could shake a bag of pellets at, and was absolutely on fire.

Unfortunately, judging by the number of vans and cars already parked up as I pulled into the Engine Pool's dam wall car park, word had got out about the tremendous day-ticket fishing available here.

But can you believe this? The very first peg I arrived at was still angler-free, and that'd do me nicely... no walking and loads of bites in prospect. It doesn't get much better than that! In no time at all the trio of Free Spirit Hi S Feeder rods were fully assembled and about to make a great day even better.

All three - the 10ft, 11ft and 12ft models - are designed primarily for short-range bream, skimmer and F1 fishing with bomb or feeder tactics.

Casting distances are around the 40-yard mark, although the 12-footer has enough steel through its mid-section to hit around 70 yards.

Maximum casting weight is said by the manufacturers to be up to 30g, but I rigged all three rods with 36g Hybrid feeders which, fully loaded, probably weighed nearer 40g. It should be noted that they handled the extra weight without complaint or mishap.

The trio all share the same sublime, advanced progressive action that's ideal for fishing with smaller hooks and lighter hooklengths. That said, there is still more than enough oomph stowed away in their middle and lower sections to deal with the odd bigger lump.

Thanks to the use of the best low resin 46t and 40t Japanese carbons, these top-end models

OUR VERDICT

"The 12-footer has the edge on casting aggression"

are ridiculously lightweight at around 108g, and as sharp and crisp in casting performance and line pick-up as you could wish for.

My day's testing involved having the three rods clipped up at different casting distances while using exactly the same casting weight.

What I can tell you is this. In my opinion the 12-footer has the edge on casting aggression and will outgun the 10ft and 11ft rods in terms of distance. Other than that, it's hard to choose between them, but 'the smaller the venue you fish, the shorter the rod should be' is a rule of thumb that most anglers follow.

All Free Spirit Hi S models come with unique hollow carbon quivertips that enhance casting distance and accuracy, as well as aiding their fish fighting curves when under stress. The Feederlite tips are rated at 0.5oz and 0.75oz, and are nicely suited to the rods' softer characteristic. They will detect the most delicate of bites, especially when using braided reel line.

Skeletal Fuji reel seats allow for maximum feel through the blank when playing a fish, while high-quality low profile anti-frap guides are perfectly positioned to make the rods less prone to mainlines catching during the cast and causing crack-offs.

Price: From around £365, www.freespiritfishing.com

BANKSIDE TEST VERDICT

WHY I'D BUY ONE

- Super-enjoyable to use, with a sublime fish-playing action.
- Beautifully balanced, yet sharp, crisp, and light in the hand
- Choice of abbreviated or full cork handles
- Arguably the best small winter bomb or commercial maggot feeder rods available.

WHY I WOULDN'T BUY ONE

- Price is a little high for some anglers
- Softness of the blanks limits them to reasonably close-range tactics

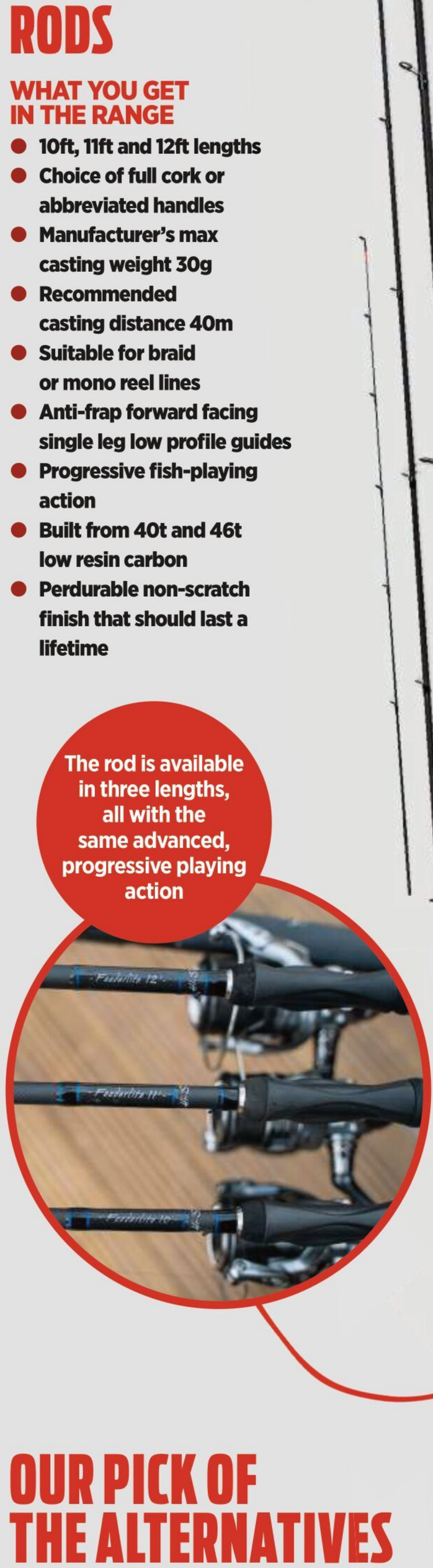
FREE SPIRIT HI S FEEDERLITE RODS

WHAT YOU GET IN THE RANGE

- 10ft, 11ft and 12ft lengths
- Choice of full cork or abbreviated handles
- Manufacturer's max casting weight 30g
- Recommended casting distance 40m
- Suitable for braid or mono reel lines
- Anti-frap forward facing single leg low profile guides
- Progressive fish-playing action
- Built from 40t and 46t low resin carbon
- Perdurable non-scratch finish that should last a lifetime

YouTube

SCAN BELOW TO WATCH THE VIDEO



The rod is available in three lengths, all with the same advanced, progressive playing action

OUR PICK OF THE ALTERNATIVES

DRENNAN ACOLYTE ULTRA FEEDER RODS
PRICE: £189.99 CHEAPER OPTION
THESE classy rods come in four lengths, all with cushioned parabolic fish-playing actions.
www.drennantackle.com

AERO X7 PRECISION FEEDER RODS MID PRICE
PRICE: FROM £249
IN 10ft or 11ft lengths, this rod has three complete quivertip top sections for tactical flexibility on the bank.
www.shimano.com

DAIWA TOURNAMENT PRO FEEDER RODS SIMILAR PRICE
PRICE: FROM £310
WITH lengths to suit all venues and styles, these are widely considered the best all-round top end rods about.
www.daiwasports.co.uk

MIDDY PRO LARGE CATY

WHAT THEY SAY: A large pouch and a robust frame make this all-round catapult ideal for larger baits and heavy feeding. The 317 model has a mid-strength latex, while the 318 is more powerful for increased distance.
WHAT WE SAY: A great go-to catty, be it for blasting maggots and hemp across a river or decent amounts of pellets to a fishy-looking feature on a commercial.
Price: £7.99, www.middytackle.com

KORUM NO TWIST CATAPULTS

WHAT THEY SAY: A chunky and tough ergonomic handle is paired with two different sizes of pouch – a medium mesh for smaller baits like maggots and a larger, moulded pouch for particles. A unique double PTFE system ensures the elastic won't twist and coil around the frame.
WHAT WE SAY: A great twist-free system where PTFE rotates within PTFE. It really does work as well as Korum claims.
Price: £11.99, www.korum.co.uk

DRENNAN SOFTFEED GROUNDBAIT CATAPULT

WHAT THEY SAY: A special cup on the catapult gently cradles hard balls or soft fist-shaped 'barrels' of groundbait. Three grades of elastic cover distances from 20m to 50m, ensuring accurate feeding.
WHAT WE SAY: Drennan's groundbait catapults have always been top notch, and this latest incarnation is the best yet. Not only great for groundbait, the super-sized pouch is also ideal for corn or pellets.
Price: £13.45, www.drennantackle.com

SIX OF THE BEST...

CATAPULTS

It's the simplest and easiest way to deliver bait beyond throwing range, so no angler should ever be without a catapult! Long-range, short-range, big baits or small, these are our top picks on the market today...

GURU INCREDIBLE 'PULT

WHAT WE SAY: Designed for out-and-out distance and power. The frame's four pegging points allow the elastic to be quickly and easily adjusted to suit the range at which you wish to fish. The tough moulded funnel pouch keeps the spread of bait to a minimum.
WHAT WE SAY: A real beast of a catapult, great for regularly firing in pellets at range when fishing a bomb or pellet waggler.
Price: £11.99, www.tackleguru.com

FOX POWER GUARD RANGEMASTER

WHAT THEY SAY: A curved ergonomic handle has a patented built-in knuckle defender, and the heads at the top of the frame swing and rotate to ensure minimal elastic twist. Available with a Method pouch for groundbait or a Multi Pouch for boilies, particles and pellets.
WHAT WE SAY: These are a pain-free way to deliver large quantities of bait accurately at range.
Price: £16.99, www.foxint.com

PRESTON MATCHPULT

WHAT THEY SAY: A durable and reliable catapult available in small and large to cover baits from squatts and pinkies right up to meat and corn. The dual PTFE Anti-Twist system is hassle-free.
WHAT WE SAY: A fantastic all-round pole and waggler catapult, especially when regularly feeding small quantities of bait on a canal or fishing shallow on a commercial.
Price: £9.99 - £10.99, www.prestoninnovations.com

ON OUR RADAR

OUR PICK OF THE LATEST GOODIES TO HIT THE BANKS

GET 16M FOR UNDER A GRAND!

PRESTON SUPERIUM X30 16M POLE

WHAT THEY SAY: A true 16m pole with impressive strength and rigidity. Utilising the new Superium simplified top kit system, it comes with a dolly butt, a Match Kit, two F1 Kits, two Carp Kits, a Kup Kit and a Superium holdall.

WHAT WE SAY: We've been really impressed with the whole Superium range, the X30 being the only current 16m pole on the market available for less than £1,000 – that's why we have a live test coming very soon!

Price: £999.99, www.prestoninnovations.com

OCTBOX MK20 UMBRELLA AND SUPPORT ARMS

WHAT THEY SAY: With a shallow canopy provided by 25ins ribs and a coverage of 105cm, this brolly is around half the standard size.

Used with a covered side tray, it gives the angler sufficient protection from the wind and rain without impeding casting, shipping or netting fish.

Place it on the side of your box, and the space above your shoulder the other side is free to cast. For security, tie it down using the metal rings on the back, and brace with a pair of alloy support arms.

WHAT WE SAY: A clever design. The small size and clamping system make it safer in stormy weather.

Price: £70, plus £30 for support arms, www.octbox.co.uk

OKUMA CARBONITE B FEEDER REEL

WHAT THEY SAY: A good reel for feeder fishing, Okuma's Carbonite B Feeder reel features a freespool facility, making it ideal for big fish on large rivers such as the Trent. It's the most affordable Okuma Bait Feeder model featuring all of the firm's must-have specifications.

WHAT WE SAY: This is an aesthetically pleasing reel with plenty of functional performance, and an ironed-flat line lay, even when using heavier lines. It also comes with a spare graphite spool.

In our opinion it's well suited to heavy feeder work.

Price £29.99, www.okumafishing.com

DYNAMITE BELACHAN LIQUID FOOD

WHAT THEY SAY: This is a highly pungent liquid, ideal for flavouring Spod or pellet mixes, injecting into PVA bags and coating hookbaits.

Belachan contains fermented shrimp for a strong salty taste that oozes out into the water. It's also a fantastic companion to Dynamite's Liquid Food Range.

WHAT WE SAY: Belachan is a proven fish-catching attractant and was a hushed-up additive among big carp anglers for many years. Matt Hayes once told us that it was the best additive he'd ever used!

Price 10.99, www.dynamitebaits.co.uk

ADD TO SPOD & BAG MIXES

GURU AVENTUS LANDING NET HANDLES

NET FISH FIRST TIME, EVERY TIME

WHAT THEY SAY: Two new top-end handles for the specialist match angler. At full length, the 4m + 1m handle is ideal for international competitions and high banks. Remove the 1m extension and it's the perfect 4m natural water handle, while removing the first section and using the second threaded section gives you a super-rigid and strong carp handle that can be used with or without the 1m extension.

The 2.7m F1 handle, meanwhile, is ideal for speed fishing for silvers.

WHAT WE SAY: When match fishing, not netting a fish first time can cost you dear. With this in mind, Guru has developed the best net handles for any fishing situation.

Price: 2.7m F1 £89.99, 4m + 1 Guru Aventus £179.99, www.tackleguru.com

BEAT THE STORMY WEATHER

Providing Specialist Cover For You And Your Fishing Tackle.
Get A Quote! www.theinsuranceemporium.co.uk/AT99

USED & ABUSED

AnglingTimes READERS RATE THEIR FISHING KIT

OUR RATINGS: POOR ★ AVERAGE ★★ GOOD ★★★ VERY GOOD ★★★★ EXCEPTIONAL ★★★★★

RIVE R-TWIN ROLLER

READER TESTED: RICHIE TOMALA

WHEN I bought this, I was looking for a big wide roller for fishing large open venues.

I wanted a big target to throw a pole at and keep it safe during wild and windy weather. It's too big for a canal, but for reservoirs and commercials, it's perfect at keeping my £3,000 pole safe.

Price: £199.99, www.rive-fishing.com

QUALITY: ★★★★☆
VALUE: ★★★★☆

DAIWA HYDRO ELASTIC 3-5

READER TESTED: MARK MORGAN

I CAN'T rate this elastic highly enough for silverfish!

I've used it every week since last spring. It's so soft and forgiving, I don't lose fish on it. I've caught big perch and bream to 2lb 8oz, but all the smaller roach stay on too.

Price: £25.99, www.daiwasports.co.uk

QUALITY: ★★★★☆
VALUE: ★★★★★

MATRIX DURALITE TRANSPORTER

READER TESTED: CARL YEOWELL

I WAS looking for a platform to help when fishing venues with shallow margins.

I'm blown away by how light the Matrix is, and the wheel kit is great too. It's adjustable, so every box with a footplate will fit.

Price: £329.99, www.fishmatrix.co.uk

QUALITY: ★★★★★
VALUE: ★★★★☆

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"I'LL NEVER TIRE OF THE THAMES"

Every time the tip goes round in a familiar swim, my pulse starts to race

AS AN ALL-ROUND angler I explore every avenue that might lead to the chance of catching something special – but sometimes it's the familiar that gives me the greatest pleasure.

To watch a favourite venue evolve, or improve a tactic until you master it fully, is extremely rewarding. It highlights everything that's great about angling - you, and only you, set the challenges from a limitless number of opportunities.

This week I knew my chosen

venue, and the fish it held, well. Nothing was likely to surprise me, and yet that first pull on the quivertip never fails to get my pulse rate soaring, no matter how many times I see it happen.

The Thames has been drawing anglers to its banks for as long as rods have been in existence, and along its 215 miles there's a wealth of fishing to enjoy.

Roach seem to be on the rise again, despite the attention of cormorants, but now the most popular form of angling is arguably with a lure, in the hope of luring perch from their shadowy haunts.

Thames barbel may well run to British record size, but they're far from common. Anyone serious about these wonderful fish will endure many blanks before they succeed in putting one in the net.

For me, though, the Thames means chub. On the upper reaches they can grow to jaw-dropping weights, and bites

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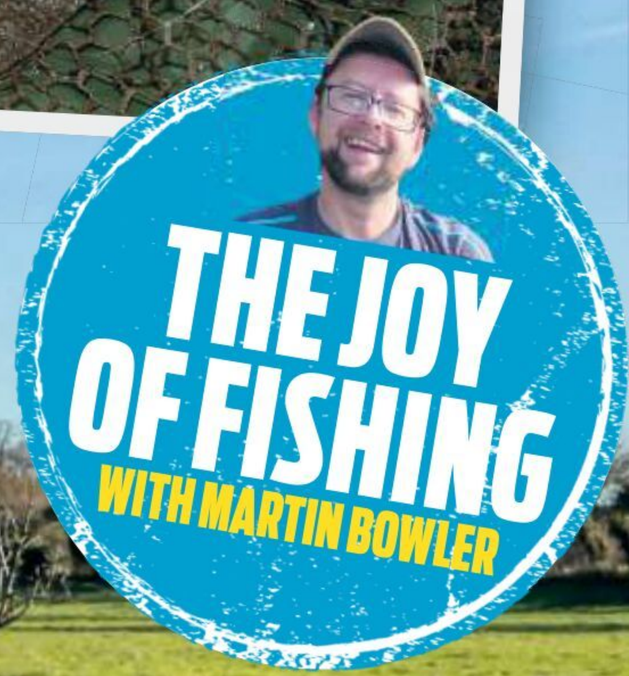


"I stuck with what has always worked for me"

aren't hard to come by. This part of the river also happens to be the closest to my home - within an hour I can be on its banks.

The journey today was familiar, as was the complete absence of vehicles in the car park. This isn't a private or a secret venue, quite the reverse. You can fish it for the price of a cheap club book.

Avoiding locations known for big fish and instead concentrating on stretches with a scant track record of producing them comes with a bonus - peace and quiet - and for me, solitude sometimes has the edge over specimen-hunting! I could wander the gentle and peaceful Oxfordshire countryside unhindered, introducing a few lumps of paste - Sticky Krill or cheese - into every likely looking haunt until I'd gone far enough. Working back over these baited spots would take me all afternoon. Only the distant village church bell would remind me that I wasn't alone, and I made sure my phone was stowed away in my rucksack. For a few hours, at least, social media wouldn't try to hook me!

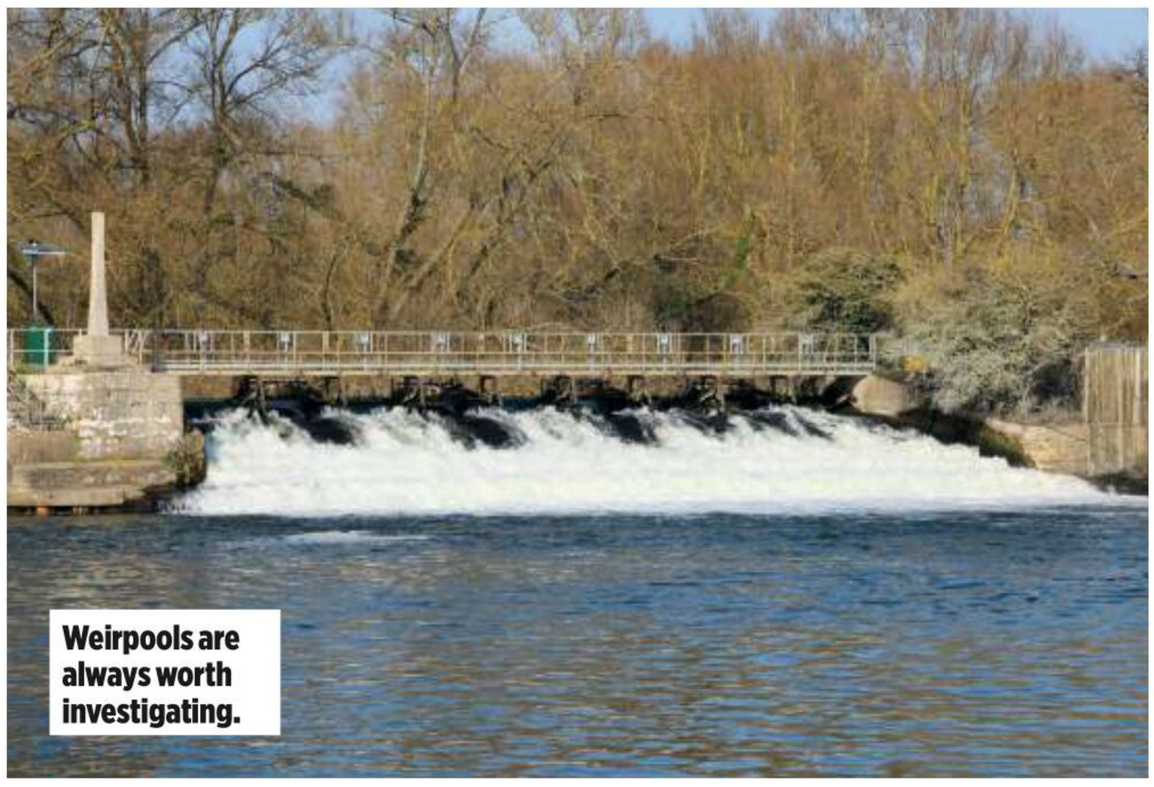
The river was in fine fettle, with a bluey-green tinge and running at a pace that even a 1oz glass tip could control.

We all have our own excuses ready to trot out should the fish not bite, but today none of these would wash. If I failed, it would be because of something I did wrong, and I wasn't about to let that happen.

When I finally decided to retrace my footsteps, the tackle I set up was very familiar to me. I'm a basic angler, and once I know I'm fishing to the best of my abilities I'm loath to change for the sake of it. I'd rather focus on something far more important - watercraft.

For today's chubbing I'd use a Drennan medium feeder rod and a long, soft quivertip. A fresh spool of 7lb Double Strength line was threaded through the rings, but only because its predecessor had been fatigued by many battles with hard-fighting fish.

I learned many years ago how to fish the upper Thames from that master angler, John Everard, so what would be the point of changing? Maybe that would make it more interesting for regular readers, but not at the expense of being led up the garden path, so I stuck with



Weirpools are always worth investigating.

Floater cake and paste make a deadly pairing for chub.

what has always worked for me.

A float stop paternoster, a wide gape hook and a piece of paste and floater cake was nothing out of the ordinary and, provided I balanced the rig, no fish would be able to resist.

When fishing this way it's not a case of adding lots of weight and waiting with a static bait – instead, you want the bait to shuffle across the bottom every now and then. You'd never trot a float with half the body sitting proud of the water so, when legering, it's a matter of constantly tweaking the amount of floater cake, the bow in the line, the number of shot on the link and the test curve of the quivertip to obtain a natural movement of the hookbait.

Given the number of swims I'd prebaited, I allowed myself just 20 minutes in each one before moving on. I knew most of them well, and could tell within that time whether or not they'd produce me a fish.

Unlike most people, I think I enjoy legering more than floatfishing, so when chub pulled the glass tip round in half-a-dozen swims I was in my own angling heaven – and I'd saved the best swim for last.

A snaggy submerged bush just downstream and only two rodlengths from where I sat was a bit too close to receive a slow bite, but on the plus side it would often bring me the best chub of the day. With a gentle flick, my paste landed just upstream of the woodwork, but I couldn't put a bow in the line because the flow would sweep it into the snag. Direct bites on a straight line are the hardest to hit, so I held the rod, ready to react in a split second.

A tiny tap was enough for me to strike, and my hook found a hold in a leathery lip. Not wanting the chub to kite into the snag, I cranked the reel handle and hoped everything would hold. It was a short but fraught fight, and the chub was still up for a battle in the landing net – albeit too late! This was a glorious and immaculate big fish. I might not have done anything new, but how could anyone ever tire of the Thames?

Fish like this draw me back to the Thames.

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SIGN OFF THE SEASON IN STYLE!

RIVER GLEN, SURFLEET SEAS END

Huge river nets are still on the cards

THE closed season is nearly here, but if you want to go out on a high there's no better place to head to than the River Glen in Lincolnshire.

Deep and slow-moving, the stretch at Surfleet Seas End is a magnet for quality roach and perch at this time of year, with 25lb-plus hauls a real possibility.

Located a short distance from where the Glen meets the River Welland, it's easy to see why the fish feel at home here. The houses on its banks create a small amount of commotion as the residents go about their daily lives, and this means that cormorants and other predators don't visit it to pillage its stocks.

There are several wooden stagings along the stretch that belong to the various properties, and you need permission to use them. If this isn't gained, you can nestle in on the bank at plenty of points between them.

The river is 25m at its widest, and fishing with a pole or whip is the best way to target this free fishing hotspot.

Rely on groundbait

The river is 12ft-14ft deep, and that means careful consideration needs to be applied to your feeding.

England youth international Josh Newman has experienced plenty of success here, and he said: "Groundbait is key to getting lots of bites, and a dark, sticky mix is best. I put several balls in at the start and then add small top-ups whenever I feel the shoal has moved off.

"Loosefeed baits such as maggots and casters and they'll either drift off in the slow flow or the tiny fish sat close to the surface will eat them.

"It's worth catapulting a little hemp in every now and then because this is heavier, sinks fast, and the bigger roach love it.

"It's an area that can be extremely good at this time of year, and there are stacks of roach ranging from 2oz to 12oz to target."

Big perch to over 3lb also mingle in the area, and using a bait dropper to get down a bed of chopped worms before placing a lobbie enticingly over the top could well result in a personal best.

Forget loosefeed – groundbait is the way to go on the River Glen.

VENUE FACTFILE

LOCATION: Input PE11 4DH into your satnav and aim for Reservoir Road bridge which goes across the Glen
LOCAL TACKLE SHOP: Granz Angling, 01775 712206
PRICES: Free fishing
RULES: Permission must be gained from property owners to fish from the platforms

Josh Newman took this mixed net on simple tactics.

Catch every drop

Although the pole will produce bites, a whip is likely to be more effective because of the speed advantage it has over its rival. Fish can be hooked and brought to hand over the landing net quickly, without the need to ship back.

In slow-moving conditions, a slimline, 3g pencil-style float can be used, with an olivette placed 18ins from the hook and several small droppers below.

This bombs the maggot or caster hookbait through the top layers of the water column before making it act more naturally close to the deck.

Go with 0.14mm mainline to a 0.10mm hooklength and a size 18 hook and no silverfish you hook stands a chance of escape.

With such little time to enjoy the beauty of the nation's rivers before the annual shutdown, now isn't the time to take a gamble. Head to the Glen and you can wet a line in complete confidence that a bulging netful of silvers will come your way.

Phil Speakman fished at short range to bag 17lb on the Glen during a charity match.

Josh's Newman's younger brother Barnaby displays one of the venue's big perch.

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10 IN-FORM RIVER VENUES TO HEAD TO FOR A MIXED BAG!

RIVER SOAR, SUTTON BONINGTON, LEICS

Quality mixed bags from both Loughborough Soar AS water and the Sutton Bonington AC stretches. Day tickets available from Netbuster Carp and Coarse.
More info: 01509 260610

DORSET STOUR, BOUNDS FARM, BOURNEMOUTH

A secluded and underfished stretch upstream of the famous Throop Fishery. Good nets of roach, perch and chub are possible using both float and feeder tactics.
More info: 01425 475155

RIVER CALDER, MIRFIELD, WEST YORKSHIRE

Waggler and stick float tactics will see you connect with roach, specimen chub, or even trout!
More info: www.mirfieldac.co.uk

BRISTOL AVON, MALMESBURY, WILTSHIRE

Around Daniel's Well is a hotspot for big roach plus mixed nets of dace, small chub and perch.
More info: TK Tackle, 01249 812003

RIVER YARE, LANGLEY, NORFOLK

Tidal stretch offering great bream sport on a feeder, or roach on the pole. Best when the river is full and slowly running off.
More info: www.facebook.com/yarefishing

RIVER SEVERN, BEWDLEY WORCESTERSHIRE

Although barbel stocks are perhaps not what they used to be, the chub, roach and dace sport has improved in recent years. There's a healthy stock of big perch too!
More info: www.kdaafishing.co.uk

RIVER TRENT, LADY PITT FARM, NOTTS

A narrow, feature-rich loop off the main river. Catch bream and roach upstream of the weir, barbel and chub downstream. A float angler's dream, but a season ticket is required at £45 a year.
More info: www.scunthorpeanglers.net

RIVER EXE, EXETER, DEVON

The stretch running through Exeter city centre can be a good feeder water, with bream, roach and dace all on offer. Day tickets are available from local outlets.
More info: 01392 436404

RIVER WHARFE, COLLINGHAM, W YORKS

Plenty of chub, perch and dace, plus a few grayling and the odd barbel to be had on maggot feeder tactics. Day tickets from Collingham Post Office and Costa Coffee, Wetherby.
More info: www.wetherbydistrictanglingclub.co.uk

RIVER OUZEL, MILTON KEYNES, BUCKS

The stretch alongside Willen Lake holds chub to well over 5lb, as well as big perch and the odd decent barbel. Day tickets are £8 on the bank.
More info: www.mkaa.co.uk

TURN THE PAGE FOR MORE GREAT VENUES TO FISH THIS WEEK

18+

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10 VENUES FOR A BAG OF BREAM

Now is a great time to fill your net with slabs. Here's our pick of venues for a bumper catch...

River Ouse, York, North Yorkshire

FREE FISHING

The Ouse through York city centre can throw up some excellent nets of fish at this time of year. A slight rise in temperatures and a bit of colour in the river can really get the fish going. Groundbait feeder tactics score, with maggot, worm, or caster on the hook.
Contact: York Tackle, 01904 411210

Newbridge Lake, Hull, East Yorkshire

At the scenic Newbridge Lake you experience a bream session to remember. It's a deep water that can be fished on both the pole and tip. Start on the feeder, feeding a sweet fishmeal groundbait with dead maggot, worm and caster. Prime the pole line with the same feed.
Contact: 07817 058054

Woodland Waters, Ancaster, Lincolnshire

On the Match Lake quality bream to more than 5lb can be caught in good numbers. Fish the pole 13m out, feeding groundbait. Include a few micro pellets, plus the usual natural options. Expanders are worth a try over the top, as are worm and caster.
Contact: 01400 230888

Peatling Pools, Lutterworth, Leicestershire

The tiny Parva Pool is full of surprises and is home to a good head of skimmers. Fish two lines on the pole 11m out, feeding tiny nuggets of dark groundbait, maggots and micros. Fishing a 4mm expander over the top can single out the better fish.
Contact: 07860 644023

Stowe Pool, Lichfield, Staffordshire

This reservoir is a bit of a hidden gem, offering fantastic sport from a mix of species, including some big skimmers. Both the feeder and pole will score, feeding groundbait on both, and loosefeeding casters over the pole line to draw fish in. Day tickets are on sale on the bank.
Contact: Lichfield District Council, 01543 308866

Warks Avon, Stratford, Warwickshire

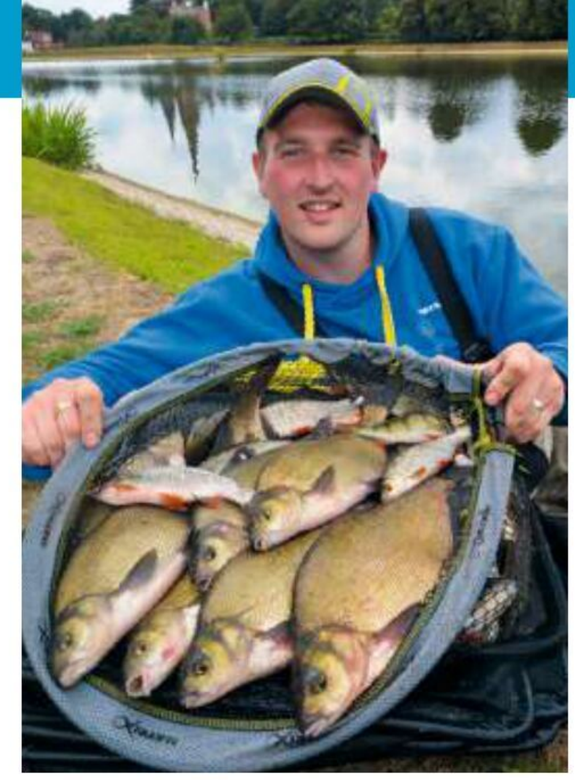
The stretch in Stratford town centre opposite the theatre is known for its big winter bream, with feeder tactics dominating. It's best to arrive early in the morning, avoiding pedestrians. Day tickets are available on the Leamington AA website.
Contact: www.leamington angling.co.uk

River Trent, Stoke Bardolph, Nottinghamshire

Bream are often the species that make up winning weights on this popular stretch of the Trent, especially when there's colour in the water. Get there early and look for signs of fish. You can park right behind your peg, making for comfortable and convenient fishing. Day tickets available on the bank and online.
Contact: www.ashfieldangling.com

Bury Hill Fisheries, Dorking, Surrey

The Old Lake contains some clonking bream, and if you're on them, they can be caught in good numbers. Both the pole and feeder work well. There are some big carp in here that are regularly fished for. With this in mind, it's a good idea to add some fishmeal to your mix.
Contact: 01306 883621



Stowe Pool is a bream water full of promise.

Willow Park Fishery, Ash, Hampshire

Good nets of skimmers have won recent winter league matches here, with quality fish showing. The Middle and Small Lakes both hold plenty of fish, and fishing the pole can be a productive way to go. You'll always get bites from smaller silver fish while you wait for the larger residents to show up.
Contact: 01252 325867

River Thames, Wallingford, Oxfordshire

This day-ticket Reading and District AA water can throw up some good bream catches, with quality fish showing to feeder tactics. Prebaiting can make all the difference, and arriving early and looking for signs of fish, rolling and bubbling, can make or break a day. Day tickets online.
Contact: www.rdaa.co.uk

A fine catch of bream from the Warks Avon.

The Warks Avon is a winter bream banker.

CARPFEED

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CARP NEWS!

What next for Ashmead?

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SKILLS SCHOOL

Rob Hughes looks at the importance of finding the correct depth to catch from

THE SECRET IS OUT!

Mark Pitchers reveals the natural bait mix you have to be on

DARE TO BE DIFFERENT

Adam Penning explains how to beat the crowds at busy lakes

FINDING THAT WINNING 'EDGE'

"POP-UPS don't work here mate." Heard that one before? More often than not after you've secretly had a few on that thing that doesn't work.

Finding the 'edge', one that will work wherever you take it, is one of the most fascinating subjects in carp fishing. It's what keeps me coming back for more time and time again, because even when you think you've cracked it, the carp have a funny habit of making you look a mug.

So how do you stumble on 'the edge'? Well, despite my initial comment, I think there's a lot to be said for listening to the local experts. Sure, some may be trying to throw you off the scent, but others will genuinely be trying to help.

The only time I'd consider this a problem is when it seems the entire lake is using the so-called 'wonder method', or if, through watercraft and observation, you can see a blatant contradiction to the going bait or rig.

In the modern carp scene it's easy to get stuck in the same routine of methods, with the same predictable baiting strategy. Yes, boilies and pellets work wonders, but a bed of sweetcorn can too. It's all about determining what's right for your spot, on your lake at the relevant time of year.

I've seen the best of both worlds in this regard, and have watched anglers tearing it up on the predictable going method for that lake. But at other times the angler who turns up and does something radically different is the one with the constantly screaming alarms.

I guess it comes down to having as many tricks in your armoury as possible and knowing when and where to apply them.

Starting in this month's Carpfeed, we take a look at some of these core skills in a new series with Carp Team England manager Rob Hughes – this time with a fascinating insight on finding the correct depth to fish in. I'm certain his 'Skills School' article will make you a lot more precise at plumbing your swim. Enjoy this issue, and tight lines!

Carpfeed editor, Chris Haydon

THE CARP SOCIETY IS BACK!

Purchase of historic Ashmead bolsters impressive portfolio of waters

ON THE 30th anniversary of The Carp Society's purchase of Horseshoe Lake, it has now acquired one of the UK's most highly regarded carp waters – Ashmead Fishery.

Announcing the news last month alongside former owner Mark Walsingham, The Carp Society stunned anglers around the country when it revealed that it had purchased the 17-acre Somerset wetland, home to many prized carp.

Very much a piece of carp fishing history, the beautiful and wild venue has produced fish in excess of 50lb, and has been frequented by some of the sport's biggest names including Terry Hearn and Chris Yates.

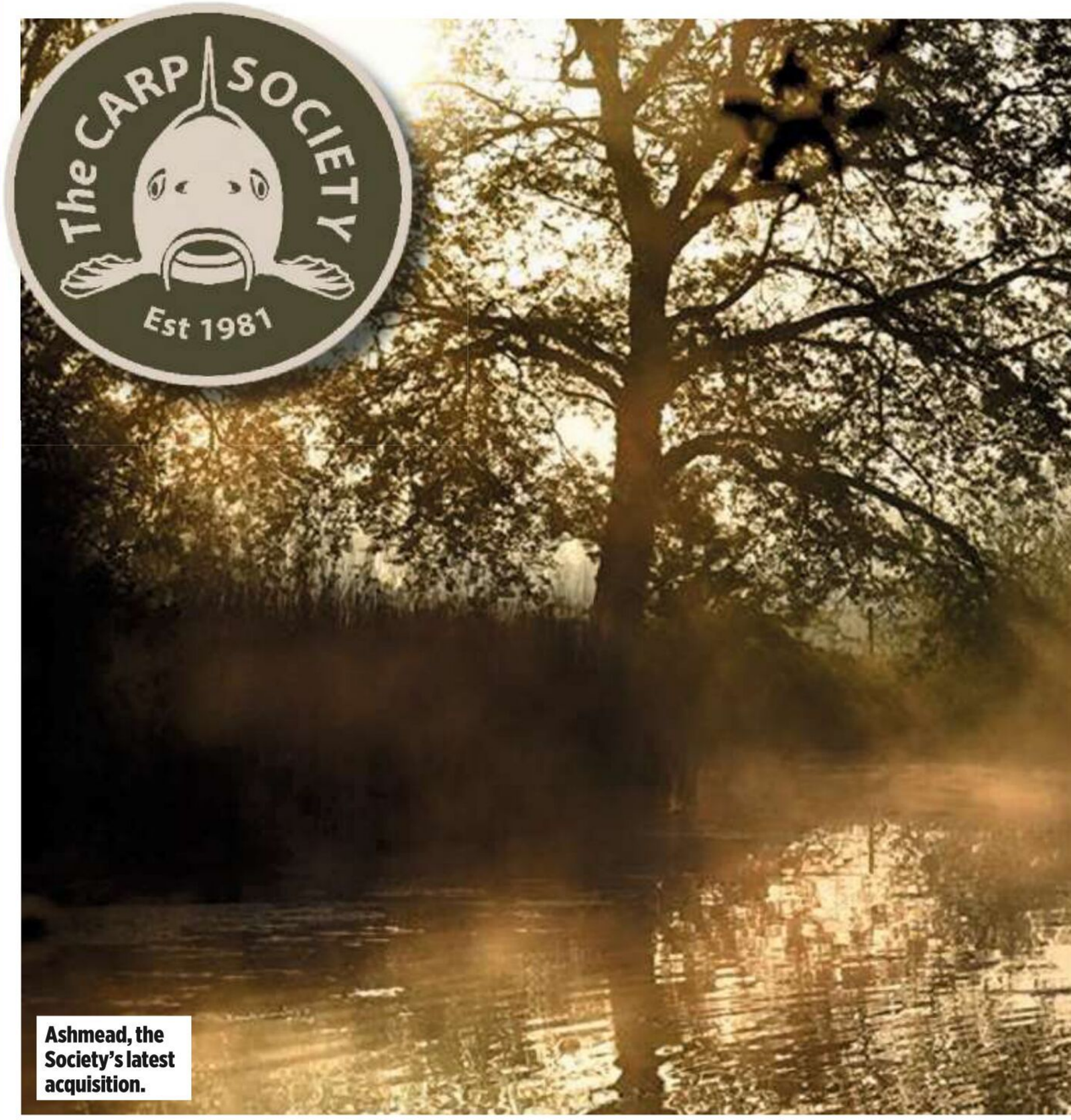
Carp Society fisheries manager, Miles Carter, talked to us in detail about the purchase, and what the future for Ashmead may hold...

"We've been looking to take on other lakes for a while, but for various reasons have been unsuccessful," he said.

"As soon as I walked through the gate at Ashmead, however, I knew this was the place.

"It's so unique and different, with a real feel about it."

Miles confirmed that the history of the venue played a key factor when it came to buying it.



Ashmead, the Society's latest acquisition.

"Ashmead is a piece of carp fishing heritage, the exact waters we want at The Carp Society," he said.

"One of the attractive things about it is that it works as it is, so we really won't be changing too much."

The water is now the second to be officially owned by The Carp Society, alongside the famous Horseshoe Lake in the Cotswolds. Its other two waters, Farriers and Little Farriers, also in the Cotswolds, are on lease.

The latest news is a big sign that The Carp Society is back after a difficult period, Miles confirmed.

"I think this sends a message that The Carp Society is an organisation to support and join. The more members we have, the more scope we have to take on new waters," he told us.

"We've come a long way since 2011, when a fish-kill at Horseshoe severely reduced our membership.

"Horseshoe is now producing new thirties almost every day, and our Farriers syndicate stock fish are truly remarkable.

"Our own fish rearing programme is also going from strength to strength, with four ponds at Horseshoe growing on spawn from the Farriers fish to be stocked, not only in our waters, but across the country as well."

Membership has been a key driver of The Carp Society's success, with an estimated 1,700 members currently on the books. Miles sees no reason why it can't continue to expand.

"If we can keep getting the support and numbers, I know that we would be interested in acquiring more waters elsewhere," he said.

"We would like to have a water for juniors or beginner anglers to complete the natural progression of the venues we have.

"Horseshoe, Farriers and now Ashmead all offer totally different challenges to the angler.

"I know we have some Northern members who would love to see us take control of a venue closer to them, and provided we could get staff there, this is a real possibility for the future," he added.

Want to become a member of The Carp Society?
Visit: www.thecarpsociety.com

An scale perfect example of an Ashmead common.

Mark with Ashmead's 'Single Scale'.

MARK SAYS FAREWELL TO ASHMEAD FISHERY

THE success and magic of Ashmead as a lake is largely down to the superb management of former owners Mark and Shona Walsingham, who say goodbye to the venue after 15 years.

On the latest Carp Society's Carp Radio, Mark spoke about the decision to sell, and what the lake means to him.

"It was important we found the right people to take the lake forward," he said. "We never put it on the open market. It's been a massive part of our lives, and we're delighted The Carp Society wants to protect this legacy."

For Mark, a keen carp angler himself, Ashmead is where he learned his craft. "It's been a part of my life for 40 years and somewhere I learned a lot of my fishing," he said.

"I love the lake, so it's a bit like seeing one of your kids leave home."

Part of the magic of Ashmead lies in the natural environment that Mark, who also headed the restoration project of the legendary Redmire Pool, has created.

"My background is in fisheries and nature conservation. The Ashmead carp are just a part of the wider ecosystem," he said. "I never did a lot of management down there after our initial restoration work. We let the weed grow and encouraged all manner of wildlife. This meant an abundance of natural food – making the fish very hard to catch at times."

Mark also gave an insight into what anglers, who may not know much about Ashmead, can expect from it if they do book a trip.

"There are fish in the lake that hardly ever get caught," he said.

"One that I know of has gone 17 years between captures in the past – it's a real mystery water."

The fishing is also totally different to what the majority of carp anglers are doing these days, Mark confirmed.

"It's not like any other lake I've fished – a stalking paradise," he said.

"Leave the big pits and 3.5lb test curve rods at home – all my carp from the lake over the last 10 years have been caught right under the rod-tip!"

CHALLENGE PENNING

THE ART OF BEING DIFFERENT

Adam Penning takes a look at two more challenges facing the modern carper on busy circuit waters

Boilie mush with added powders and liquids – a very different bait.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR BAIT STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD

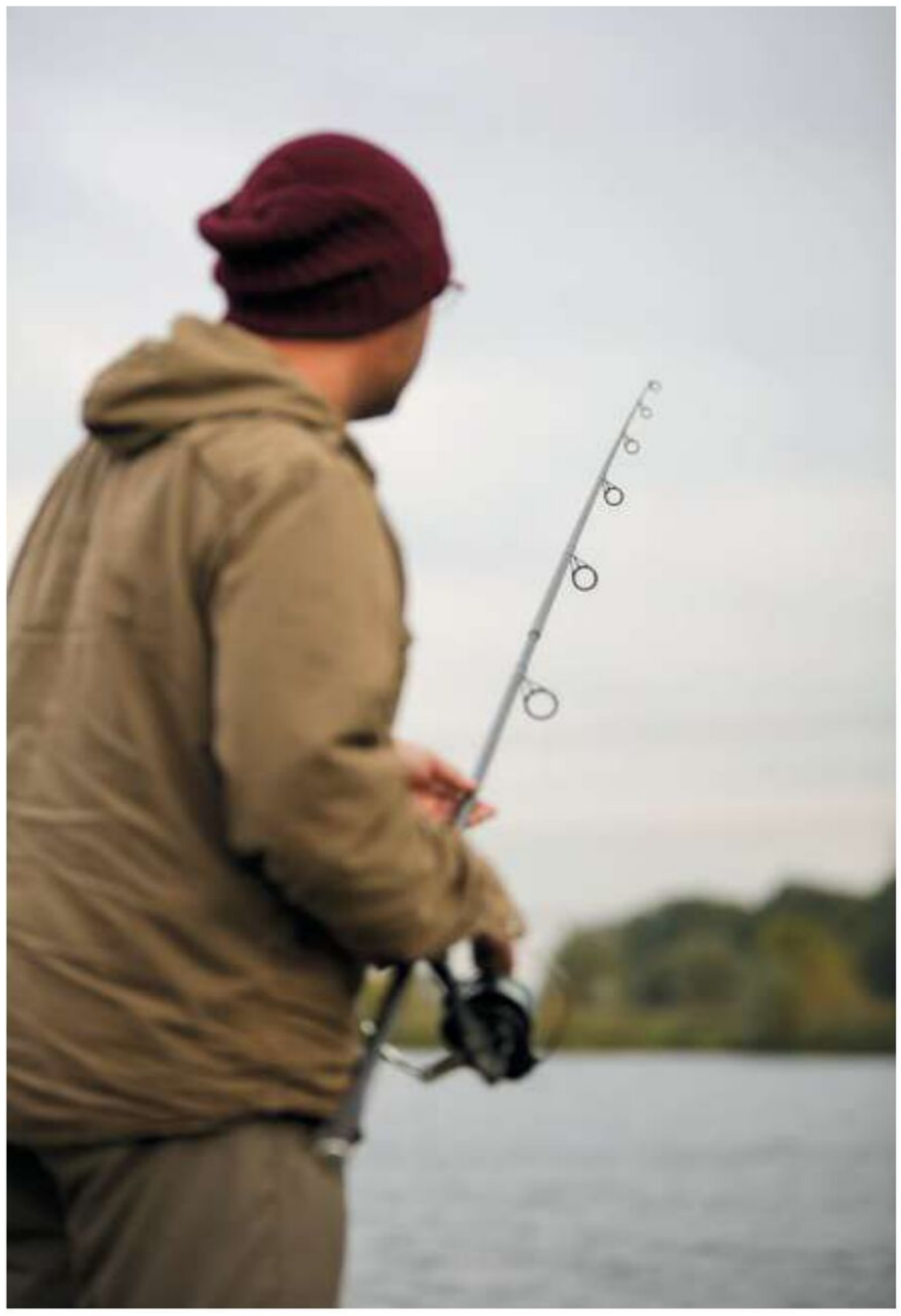
Difficulty rating: 3/10

ON pressured venues, the very first thing to determine is what the 'crowd' are using. On both syndicates and day-ticket venues word quickly gets round on what's worked, and then everyone copies it.

But, whatever the successful method may be, the more carp that are caught on it, the less effective it becomes. Despite this, you'll find the same anglers using the same tactic with a blind and blinkered predictability, sometimes for years.

This process usually rolls on until someone new turns up, gives the carp something they're not used to seeing and then flips it all upside down. Remember, if you want to catch the same as everyone else then fish the same as everyone else. If you want better results, don't be afraid to break the chain of predictable outcomes.

There are many things you can do with bait to give it your own signature. However, in my view that potential is largely diluted if, for example, you tailor your mix by adding perhaps salt and crushed tigers, but then proceed to Spomb it out in a tight area the same as everyone else. You could trigger some success, but never with the magnitude that something totally new could achieve. This could be ditching the Spomb entirely and using just a throwing stick and boilies. On a heavily spodded venue this would be as diametrically opposed to the norm as you could get – from tight to spread, from



small items to big ones, and from lots of disturbance to none.

The key is always to strive to know what others are doing, not so you can copy it yourself but so you can avoid it. This attitude might seem crazy to some, but believe me, if there's a bait or baiting trend on your lake, flipping it can bring a spectacular response.

Lastly, one bait edge well worth considering is boilie 'mush'. I borrowed this one from Scott Lloyd. Take a few kilos of your chosen bait and soak it in a bucket of water for a couple of days. You can add various liquids, powers and oils to this if you wish (rock salt is a good one). After soaking, the bait is mushed to a pulp and is ready to feed. Trust me, it works a treat!

Once you've determined what the fish are most used to seeing, it is then quite easy to go down an alternative route, so I've given this an easy rating.

ABOVE: Be different when choosing your spots and strategies.

BELOW: A single tiger nut in winter is not what the carp expect!

HOW TO OUT-CATCH THE ANGLERS USING BAIT BOATS AND SPOONS

Difficulty rating: 5/10

WITH the massive boom in baiting spoons, this is a conundrum many of us will be faced with. Spoons and boats are basically the same thing, although one is digital and the other is analogue! They each achieve similar end results - a small amount of bait, deployed to the spot with pinpoint precision. One of the biggest edges they provide is supreme stealth, especially on venues where they're not used much. I own neither spoon nor boat, but I can see me needing to add a spoon to my armoury, they're that effective.

If the lake is more commonly subjected to such tactics and they are what the majority of the people are doing, most of the time, it is much easier to counter. Here you have a whole host of options available which will make your angling totally different.

One of my favourites is single baits, because most would rarely contemplate dropping singles from a boat or spoon, and as such the carp would not treat them with any caution.

Heavy baiting could also be an option, because if the angling has become so stylised, the fish may well not be getting the quantity of bait they want. Finally, of course, the catty, throwing stick and boilies could also exploit a real chink in your quarry's armour.

Again, it is all about just being different.

I'll be adding a baiting spoon to my armoury soon.

SEND US YOUR CHALLENGES

Remember to send your challenges for Adam into our email inbox: editor@carpfeed.com

GET THE EDGE WITH WORMS!

Mark Pitchers reveals his devastating natural baits tactic that will get bites in the toughest of conditions

WORMS, when used correctly, can be an incredibly effective bait for fish of all species and all sizes, yet remain very underused on the big-carp scene.

It's a bait I take advantage of in the winter, when the smaller fish are less active, or in late summer, when the fish have been under tremendous pressure and become quite tricky.

Now, I have to admit, it's not a cheap method and the quantity of worms you'll need for a session is very much stock and venue-dependent, but once you've witnessed just how devastating they can be, you won't hesitate to get on them. Here's how I do it...

RELEASE THE ATTRACTION

The key reason worms are so attractive is due to their amino acids, and these need to be unleashed into the water by chopping the worms in your mix. I first used this tactic in my match fishing days when I'd use chopped dendrobaena worms with super-fine riddled molehill soil. The juices and goodness from the worms would soak into the soil to the point where you'd be catching fish that were regurgitating the soil they'd eaten.

So, the first part of the bait prep process is to get chopping. The matchman's multi-blade scissors are perfect for this, so pick yourself up a pair when you're next in the tackle shop.

THE MIX

When putting worms out you need to make sure they get to the bottom in a concentrated manner above your rigs. To do this, I not only keep them

Multi-bladed scissors make worm prep a cinch.

Casters can be added to the mix, but aren't essential.

Chopped worm leaches out loads of amino acids.

Worms are expensive, but well worth it!

Bloodworm is a superb addition to any mix.

in the peat/soil they're supplied in, but I also add another key ingredient - bloodworm! In its own right, bloodworm is another phenomenal natural bait and acts with the other ingredients in my mix as a carrier to get it all to the bottom. You can purchase frozen 1kg blocks of bloodworm from CC Moore and it really is superb, even when added to more traditional bait mixes.

Casters are another bait worth adding to the mix, but not what I'd call essential. Then we have things like chopped boilies or pellets. While these can be useful to have in the swim alongside the worms, I like to keep these mixes separate. It's a personal preference, really, but I want separate signals to be sent by the baits.

HOW TO FEED IT

When it comes to the fishing part, good watercraft and choice of spot dictates where you should deposit your super-attractive worm feast. I don't think any particular spot - as in gravel, silt or clay - is particularly favourable with worms, so just let the fish or conditions tell you where you need to cast, as you would with any other bait.

After finding my spot, I'd then kick off the swim with a minimum of 1kg of my worm mix, fishing a couple of rods over it. Anything less than this is a waste of time.

This kilo of bait should be enough for a couple of bites, and I wouldn't necessarily assume everything is gone after just one fish, as the aminos can linger in the area for a long time, even after most of the feed is gone.

When considering the amount to take for a trip, remember that it's not a cheap method, and is even more expensive than boilies! So, you have to weigh up if the potential rewards justify the cost. On venues where the pay-off can be great, I won't hesitate to go armed with 10kg or more.

FISHING OVER WORMS

As I often use worms when the fishing is hard going and action on the traditional boilie hookbait approach has slowed down, it makes no sense to fish a boilie over the top. Particularly if opting for a bright pop-up, for example, it makes it very easy for the fish to avoid your rig and simply clean up what's around it. This is why, for fishing over my worm feed, I use worms on the hair too.

Any rig will work with worms, but I use my standard blowback rig with the loop and hair longer than usual. The reason is that I don't want the worms possibly getting snared up on the hook and impacting the hooking potential.

I use a big hook too - I'm certain the carp have no idea what it is, so a size 4 minimum and even a 2 are what I think are best for the job.

When putting the baits on, I first slide on a rubber caster which is the same colour as the worms. I then thread on three or four doubled-over worms, then slide another rubber caster on to lock them in like a sandwich. It's then simply a case of nipping the ends off to let those mega aminos leach out into the water.

And that's it. Simple but super effective, underused, and a method that will get you out of jail in the toughest of conditions. Give it a go this month!

Bloodworm can be purchased as frozen blocks.

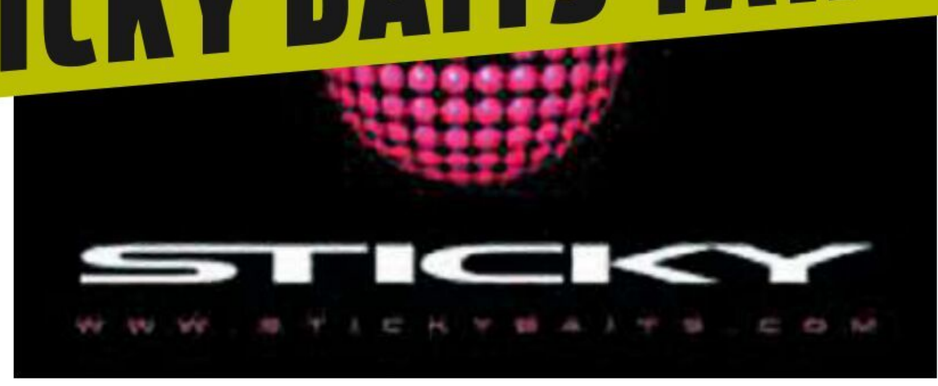
"The key reason worms are so attractive is due to their amino acids"

Carp can't resist a worm, that most natural of baits.

CARPFEED

ASK CARPFEED

STICKY BAITS TAKEOVER!



OUR EXPERTS ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS

David James, email

I'm starting a campaign on a low-stock water this year – any advice?

A You've got to prepare yourself in the best way possible and decide how much time you're going to commit to the cause.

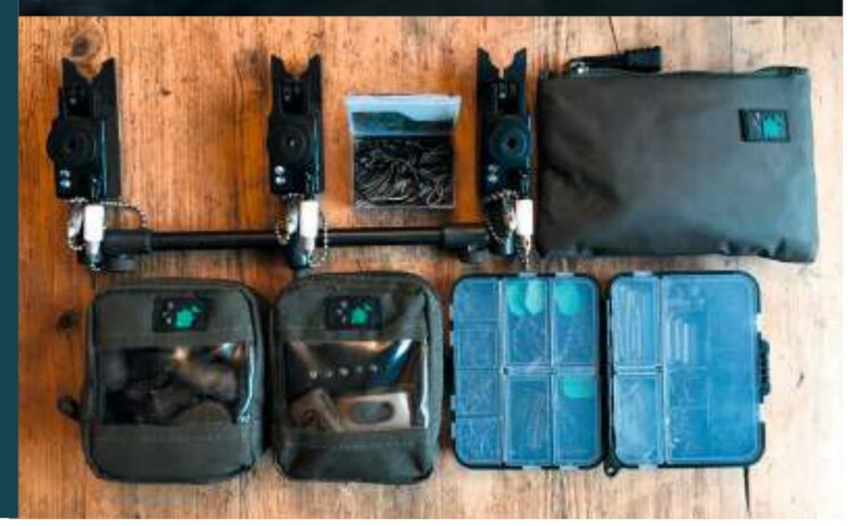
Can you regularly nip down to introduce bait and have eyes on the water leading up to prolonged sessions? Time is your best friend, but you need to be willing to put the extra effort in and focus your attention on it – just one sign on a low-stocked pit can be a game-changer!

There are so many pointers I can give with this question, but it mainly boils down to the above, as well as preparation, organisation and timing.

I've done this style of angling for a long time, hoping to have my moment with some of the most desirable fish in the country, but there's only one person who can make it a success among so many variables, and that's you! Effort equals reward!

Oz Holness, Sticky Baits

A simple, uncluttered approach works best on low stock venues.



PVA bags deliver just enough bait for a bite.

Halved boilies leak out flavour very quickly.

If you feed whole boilies, go for a quality bait.

Mike Peters, email

I can't afford lots of boilies – how can I get the most out of a 1kg bag?

A You can always grind up around 100 boilies into dust, put them in a bucket and add pellets or a tin of corn and even some liquids of your choice. It's good to bulk the mix out with cheaper items.

You can use that mix in a PVA bag or even a PVA stocking. This is a great method for giving them a nice little parcel and just enough bait for a quick bite. If the bottom is a bit choddy, the bag will be presented and fishing.

You can also break the boilies in half to make the flavour leak out quicker, enticing the fish to feed. It's a good way to fish the margins, because you can place your rig on the spot and throw the halved baits on top for something different.

Another great method is to use a PVA stringer, ideal for casting at showing fish.

If money is a little tight, I'd also recommend you purchase an excellent quality food source bait. Any of the Sticky range will pull fish into your swim.

Wesley Coggeshall, Sticky Baits

Watch the water – daylight can still bring bites.

Jake Cummins, email

The carp I'm targeting only feed at night. How can I get bites during the day?

A Many pressured or day-only lakes become dominated by night bites, but there are always opportunities in daylight. Without seeing the lake in question, it's difficult to know the exact whereabouts of the carp. So, the most important thing is to find the fish.

Where they get caught at night may not be the same as their daytime haunts – they may be laid up in weed, reeds, or some other structure. Once you've found the fish you can then work out a way to catch them.

If they're laid up sunning themselves in snags, try to get your hookbait as close to them as safely possible. Then there's the problem of enticing the fish out to play. I introduce a little boilie crumb close to the fish and close to where my hookbait will be placed. The crumb releases attractants and stimulates the fish. In seconds they can go from basking to searching out the food signals.

If there is no obvious cover it's likely the fish are holding up mid-water. The only way you're going to get among them is with a zig.

If the lake is days-only, then your best chances are going to be in the first and last hour. Get everything ready to cast in and visit the night before to put some bait in ready for your morning assault. I've found heavy baiting seems to really pay dividends in these situations. Visiting the day before also gives you the opportunity to locate the fish. All you need to do in the morning is quietly flick a couple of baits out and await the action. Set your alarm early and be the first at the gate.

Ben Wales, Sticky Baits

Zigs are super effective for fish in mid-water.

David Matthews, email

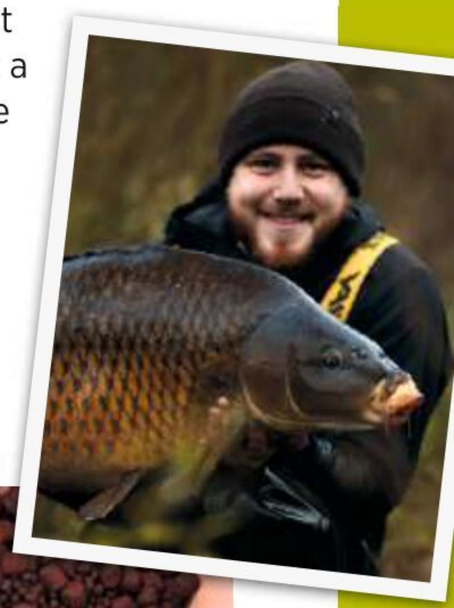
The carp on my venue have been feeding all winter in small spells. When should I up the feed for them?

A Knowing the carp's location is going to set you up perfectly to start upping the amount of bait you're using.

Keep an eye on the water temperature. As this rises into the spring, so will the carp's metabolism pick up. In mild spells, creep the amount of bait up slowly, while during cooler spells, minimise the amount. Feeding is all about feeling your way in, and it becomes almost a sixth sense, just fishing for a bite at a time. Remember, "once you've put it in, you can't take it out", so don't overdo it.

Something like Manilla Active crumb dampened down with Manilla cloudy liquid is a great starting point. It is difficult to overdo it on quantity and it offers ultimate attraction for prolonged periods, while not giving the carp a great deal of actual food.

Lance Barton, Sticky Baits



Feel your way in with your feed at the moment, small bags of crumb or pellets are a good starting point, and then take it from there.

Mark Betterall, email

Are there certain bait colours that work better at different times of the year?

A My first port of call for most of the year is a match-the-hatch hookbait. Whether it's a pop-up or a wafter, I like matching my hookbait to the bait I'm feeding, which more often than not is a mix of hemp, nuts and crushed boilies. Something bright over the top of that would stand out like a sore thumb.

Early spring is the only time I'd consider using fluoro hookbaits over standard ones. They can be good for a quick bite.

Colour depends on the depth and clarity of the water you're fishing. If the water's murky, I'd favour something light over a duller colour to really stand out. To sum up, it's seasonally dependant, but certainly now's the time to be looking to use a very visible colour.

Scott Lloyd, Sticky Baits

WE TAKE A LOOK AT THIS MONTH'S BEST NEW GEAR

OUR TOP 5 PICKS FROM JRC'S LATEST END TACKLE RANGE!

www.jrcfishing.eu

JRC Continental Carp Hooks

Price: £4.99

An animal of a hook, which has the strength and power to land the biggest of carp. The classic short shank and tapered ultra-sharp point make this pattern super versatile too. Constructed with a flat forged heavy-duty wire and finished with a smooth Teflon coating, this hook won't let you down when you have that new PB on the end. They're available in packs of 11 in sizes 8-4.

JRC Contact ARC Hooks

Price: £4.99

This interesting hook pattern from JRC has been designed to help anglers construct the perfect KD or Ronnie rig. It has a large wide gape profile and a flat forged shank, with an ultra-sharp beaked point, finished with a smooth Teflon coating. Available in size 4 and 6, these hooks look to be the ideal choice for the big-fish angler targeting tricky/riggy waters.

JRC Contact Fluorocarbon Hooklink

Price: £9.99

Fluorocarbon has become a vital part of most anglers' rigs these days, with the D-rig and Ronnie being preferred choices. These 22m spools of the material are available in 20lb and 30lb and are perfect for making boom sections. The material is super soft with a low memory and, more importantly, is virtually invisible underwater and extremely fast-sinking – the carp won't even know they're being fished for!

JRC Contact Snag Leader

Price: £10.99

A 110m spool of super-tough 55lb snag leader. This heavy-duty and low stretch leader is abrasion resistant, with a 0.65mm diameter and translucent camouflage, to provide not only strength but concealment to your presentation in the most brutal and demanding of angling situations.

JRC Contact Ronnie Swivels

Price: £4.99

As the name suggests, a swivel designed specifically for the now mega-popular Ronnie rig. JRC has made everything simple in selecting the right one, too, as they're only available in size 11 in packs of 11. The gape on the rig end is far more open than that on other swivels, so there's no bending or messing around to get the hook on.

NEW BAITS FROM DYNAMITE
www.dynamitebaits.com

Dynamite Frenzied Nut Hookbaits

Price: £4.99

Everyone knows how effective the humble tiger nut can be for big carp. Recognising this, Dynamite has added four preservative-free hookbait options to its range of Frenzied particles. In 500ml jars, these are Naked Tigers, Jumbo Tigers, Black Tigers and Peanuts. The 'Naked' skinned tiger nuts have a really washed-out look, ideal for tricking wary carp. 'Jumbos' are the best option for avoiding small fish, while the 'Black' is a fantastic snail imitation hookbait and will no doubt be a winner for anglers fishing over hemp on clear lakes. Peanuts are already a proven winner for carp, and the new Dynamite jars are cooked in thick sweet and salted syrup and can be easily hair-rigged.

Dynamite Belachan Liquid Carp Food

Price: £10.99

Dynamite has added Belachan to its liquid carp foods range. The salty liquid contains fermented shrimp and is highly viscous, ultra-pungent and PVA-friendly. It's well worth picking a one-litre bottle to give your bait that extra kick when the water warms up.

Dynamite Extract Liquids

Price: £12.99

Containing real tuna or shrimp extract, these high-protein, low-fat additives are highly concentrated. Both leach off a strong aroma and are extremely viscous yet highly soluble. Importantly, they are PVA-friendly.

Dynamite Zig Oils

Price: £10.99

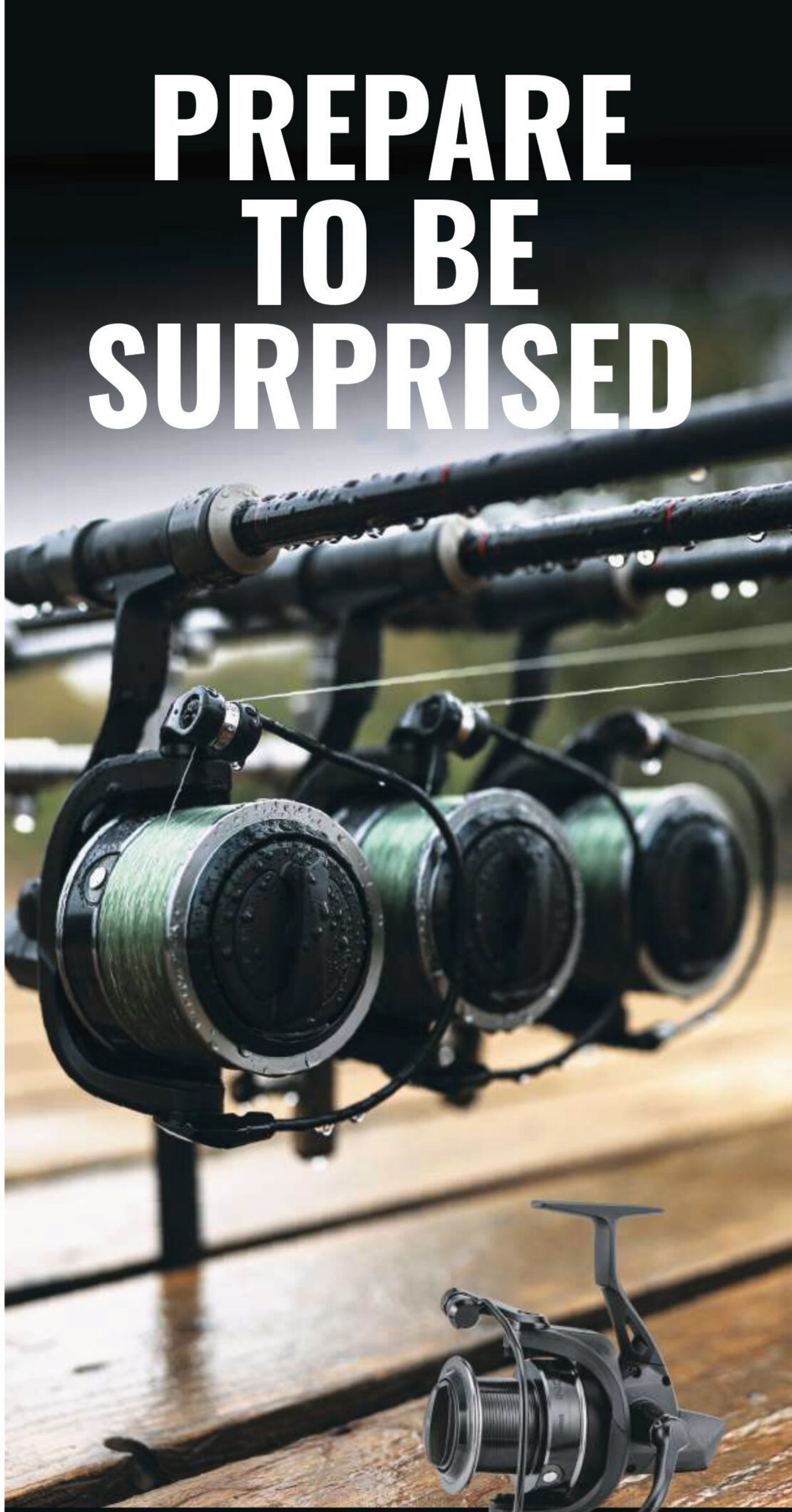
Dynamite's oils range is a firm favourite, and the company has now added two more flavours. Designed specifically for zig fishing, the Fish and Nut oils both help to draw fish into the swim by creating an attractive, coloured slick in the water column. The oils can also be a winner when injected into PVA bags. Both come supplied in one-litre bottles.

Dynamite 12mm Pop-ups

Price: £6.25

All the favourite Dynamite Baits boilie ranges, including the Source and Complex-T, are now available in 12mm pop-up tubs. Ideal for Ronnie or Snowman rigs, these mini pop-ups are super-buoyant and come supplied with a concentrated matching booster liquid in the tub.

PREPARE TO BE SURPRISED



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okuma
INSPIRED FISHING

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH THE DEPTH

NEW SERIES
SKILLS SCHOOL

In a brand-new series, Rob Hughes looks at the skills carp anglers need to master in order to be successful. First up, is understanding the depth

TRAVEL to any venue and there's a good chance that some of those targeting it won't know exactly what depth they're fishing at. This is a basic tripwire that may cost you fish.

You'd never see a match angler chucking and chancing. They spend time with a plummet, micro-testing the depth to make sure they know what's in front of them. It's equally important in our world. When you know where the fish are happy to feed, chances are that they will feed at that depth all around the lake. Most of the time carp aren't hard on the bottom. They only drop to the deck when looking for food or if air pressure or temperature dictates.

THE RULE OF THIRDS

One of the easiest ways to visualise the lake depth is splitting it into thirds – top, middle and bottom. Start by understanding that the fish tend to spend most of their time around the middle third. In a lake 12ft deep, that's between 4ft and 8ft below the surface. There are times when they'll drop and times when they'll rise but, on the whole, this should be your start point.

As the water warms up, they're more likely to be in the middle and upper thirds, unless there's a big low pressure and high wind. If there is, then the carp will hang round the middle and lower thirds.

If I'm fishing bottom baits, I'll be concentrating on any bars that are around 4ft-8ft deep – prime spots.

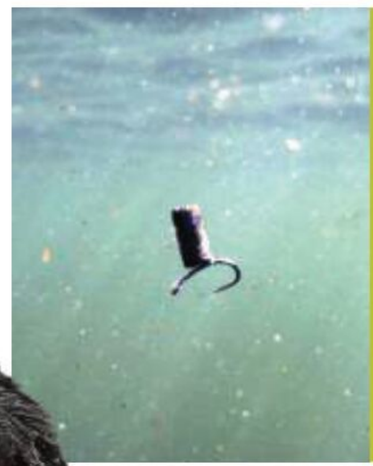
Equally, the marginal shelves will be the same, and if there isn't an option of a bar or shelf, there's a good chance that two out of my three rods will be on a zig.

QUICK TIP
IF SOMEONE gives you the heads up on a zig depth, ask them the water depth as well. That way you'll know how far below the surface it is.

MEASURE DOWN

When you're looking at depth, especially when zigging, measure down, not up. Work out the depth below the surface at which you're getting bites and then fish that depth all over.

Remember, a 6ft zig on a 4ft bar in



QUICK TIP
USE black zigs higher in the water in spring, and red lower down in winter. In this crossover spell, try both till you get a result.

ADVANCED EDGE
WHEN you reel in, especially if the rods have been in the water a long time, feel your lead to see how cold it is, then compare it with air temperature or the margins.

Temperature at the top of bars can differ a lot from that at the bottom.

12ft of water will be only 2ft below the surface. A 5ft zig on the deck in 12ft of water is 7ft below the surface.

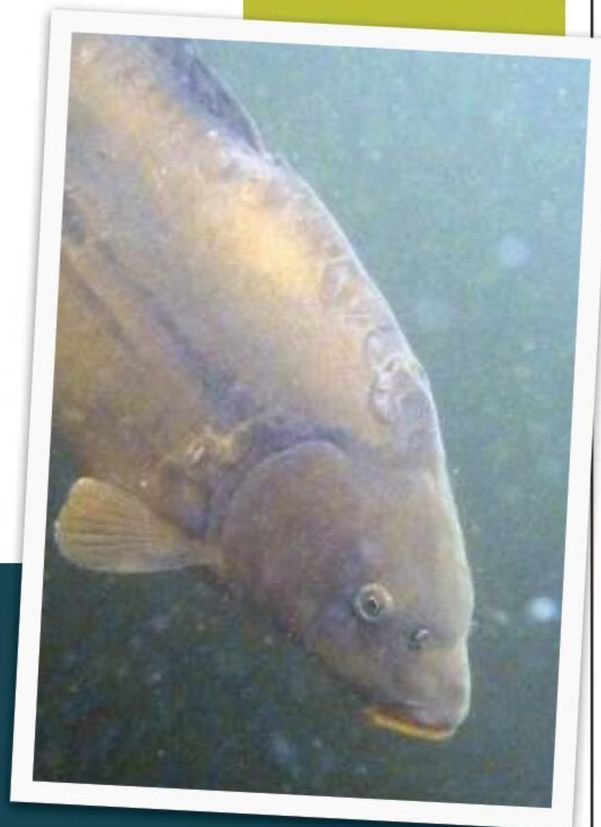
Two very different areas, and just because someone caught on a 6ft zig it doesn't mean that you will. Their depth may be miles different to yours.

ACCURACY

If you're fishing on the deck and anywhere near a slope or a drop-off, it's vital to be accurate in your baiting up.

While not perfect, the odd wayward spod isn't that much of an issue over a fairly flat area of bottom. However, around a bar it's more detrimental. If there's a drop-off and your bait rolls down or misses the spot, there are two potential problems. First, the bait will not be effective, because it's below your feed line, and second, the fish could follow your free bait down and ignore your hookbait.

QUICK TIP
WHEN you're fishing on top or high-up on steep bars, chop your boilies so they don't roll down the slope and take the feeding fish with them. You don't want fish feeding below your hookbait.



CASE STUDY

I'LL FINISH up with a story about how depth won Carp Team England a European event. We were on a big reservoir in France, and I was partnered with Mark Bartlett – a long-range superstar. Tom Maker and Chris Holmes were in one section, Billy Flowers and Jamie Londors in another.

Billy and Jamie were catching well on long-range solid bags. The rest of the team followed suit, but it wasn't working as quickly as it should have. Checking the depth of their productive spot, I found 8ft. The only 8ft the rest of us could find was two rodlengths out.

All the other teams were fishing long too. I felt the fish were shallow, and changed the team orders for the rest of the sections to follow suit – fish short and spray pellets over the top. There was a bit of resistance to begin with, but team orders are team orders. We ended up winning every section. Depth, not distance, was the key!

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THE HIDDEN GEMS ARE OUT THERE

I REALLY enjoy reading Dom Garnett's *Last Cast* features. The one in your February 15 issue, on fishing places you could so easily have ignored, really struck a chord.

I'm lucky enough to live in Norfolk, where the obvious rivers to fish are the Yare and Wensum, but close to my home is a small Wensum tributary that I regularly pass over on my way to work.

One day I got chatting to the landowner in the local pub and he said I could coarse fish this little gem of a river outside of the trout season.

What a day I had! On simple float gear and red maggots I caught dace after dace, as well as a 2lb brown trout which, needless to say, went back super-quick!

Yet most people wouldn't have given this river a second look – I'm glad I did!

Roy Trett, email

Small rivers are always worth a second look.

ALARMING? MAYBE...

IN YOUR February 8 issue you report that a Welsh otter survey shows that the species is in an alarming decline. I'm sure that most anglers would use a different adjective to 'alarming'!

Neo Petman, Thatcham

PIPE DOWN, YOU INTERNET MOANERS

YOU'RE bang-on about the dangers social media poses to our sport (Angling Times, February 8).

So many of the interactions seem to be negative. I'm reminded of what my dear old mum used to say – "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all." The armchair experts and moaners should bear this in mind and zip it.

Rob Grainger, Chester

FINALLY, IT'S SHOWTIME!

I CAN'T wait for the *Big One* shows to start up again. I've really missed being able to mix and learn from lots of anglers from different disciplines.

It's never that easy when you're on the bank, because I don't want to intrude on someone's sport for the day. I'm all too aware that it might be their only trip of the month because of family commitments, so they probably don't want to natter on to me instead of concentrate on sacking up.

The vibe at these kinds of shows is totally different, though, and I've always found them such a great place to swap ideas and tricks.

Sam Connolly, email

BRING BACK HOOKED

I'D forgotten all about Jack Charlton's *Hooked* TV programme until it appeared in your quiz the other day.

Maybe it's time something like this was brought back. It would be great to see an easy-going match show, perhaps with time taken to interview the participants about tactics and the like.

I love watching Fish O'Mania and similar televised contests, but *Hooked* moved at a much slower pace and I really miss it. Big Jack's going to be tough to replace, though.

Paul Haggard, Wimbledon

Big Jack (right) was a huge figure on the bank.

TACKLEBOX HEROES

Have you got a tackle item you won't leave home without? Send your essential kit to: atletters@bauermedia.co.uk

DON'T GET CAUGHT SHORT

EVER since my elastic snapped during a trotting session, I always carry spare catapult elastic.

I'll often have it in different strengths, too, just in case I have to fire bait further.

Dave Jones, Lancaster

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

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OUR MAN ON THE BANK
DES TAYLOR

Me playing a nice blue shark on strong sporting tackle with very little chance of losing the fish.

"I don't compromise on tackle strength"

There's no point in fishing undergunned

I WAS in the pub the other night – like so many others, I'd steered clear of it throughout the Covid restrictions and it felt so good to be back!

There's always a few anglers in the pub who I like to talk to, and before long, Jim, an old mate of mine, joined me at the bar. The topic got round to the River Severn in the town where I live, and Jim asked me if I thought anglers these days fished with tackle that was too heavy and got the fish in too quickly.

A nice 26lb common I caught on 15lb line – strong, but a short fight is how I like it.

"I like to play barbel out on a light line because it gives the fish a fighting chance to get away," he said. "For me, that's the skill of fishing."

He went on to lay into carp anglers who use really heavy line, and at one point he reckoned he could land a whale on 8lb line, even though his best-ever fish wouldn't make double figures!

I'm afraid he was a tad shocked at my reply, although in the end I think he agreed with what I was saying – hopefully, I've changed his views.

For a start, I told him always to use a balanced set-up. In my book that means tackle that gives the fish very little chance of getting away with line and a hook in its mouth or, even worse, taking itself into a snag and being unable to free itself.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not in favour of using tackle so strong you can winch fish across the top (damaging their mouths). But nor do I think playing a barbel on 3lb line for an hour is good for the fish. I'd rather use 12lb line. That lets me put a good bend in the rod and have a great but short fight. Rarely do I make compromises – in other words, if I'm not catching I won't reduce my line strength to the point when, should I get a bite, the fish has a good chance of getting away. What's the point in that?

All this leads me to the topic of anglers deliberately going out for light line records. In my opinion these are a joke. For a start, 'playing' a 100lb shark on 6lb line, letting the fish swim around in circles for hours on end, is a world away from proper fishing. Such records shouldn't exist, and then these people would have no incentive to try and break them.

I've played many big fish over the years, and the fun lies in having a good bend in the rod and a screaming reel – but for as short a time as is reasonably possible, so I can return the fish to the water in good health.

So yes, I do use strong line and hooks. Yes, once hooked, my fish have very little chance of avoiding capture. But then, I never did want to write a book about 'the ones that got away'.

"Playing a barbel on 3lb line for an hour is not good for the fish"

KINGFISHER CLUB

CELEBRATING BRITAIN'S KIDS AND THEIR CLEVER CATCHES

LAST CAST SUCCESS!

OLIVER Barlow headed for Cheshire's River Dane with his dad Adam to land this personal-best 4lb chub.

"It had been a hard day's fishing, and up until he made his last cast he'd only managed to catch two minnows on his legered maggot hookbaits," Adam told us.

"But ten minutes after making that final cast, and just before we packed up, his rod hooped over and he landed this fat chub!"

Sampson Cousins

14lb common carp, Oakley Road Fishery, Bromley, Kent

SEND IN YOUR PICTURES

Email us your child's details, including their name, the weight of the fish, where and how they caught it, along with a photograph, to **kingfisherclub@anglingtimes.co.uk**

Open to children up to the age of 16.

Ben Anderson

1lb perch, Brickworks Fishery, Moreton, Wirral

Jacob Fenton

16lb mirror carp, Ladywood Lakes Fishery, Mirfield, West Yorkshire

George Deighton

2lb 3oz perch, local pond, Edinburgh, Scotland

Christopher & Grace Luetchford

Perch, local club water, Chelmsford, Essex

Sophia Scarrow

6lb koi carp, local club water, Scotland

Alfie Sutton

3lb chub, local stretch of the River Marden, Wiltshire

Toby Goodwin

12lb 8oz mirror carp, local club water, Hullbridge, Essex

Max Jacobs

41lb 5oz catfish, Cackle Hill Lakes, Biddenden, Kent

Noam Lambourne

Perch brace, local Midlands club water

Lacey New

Perch (unweighed), River Avon, Evesham, Worcestershire

DORKING WIN THE ANGLING TIMES WINTER LEAGUE FINAL, 1981

ARTHUR'S ARCHIVE

Keith looks back to when the lads from Dorking dominated on the River Skjern

BACK In 1981, my Trev's Terrapins team qualified for the Angling Times Winter League Final on the River Skjern in Denmark.

We had a strong team of positive anglers who'd dominated the Bristol Avon semi, despite my customary blank. We fancied our chances, as the final was predicted to be stick float fishing for dace, just like 'back home' on the Thames.

On arrival we found the Skjern was far from Thames-like. In fact it looked more like the Test or Hampshire Avon - flat terrain and clear, fast-flowing, shallow water. The final had some great teams, 12 anglers apiece in those days, and we drew between a superb Leeds team and Isfield, who were just becoming a force to be reckoned with.

Our bait, sealed in coolboxes, had been collected the day before we sailed and, unfortunately, wasn't properly ready, with lots of small maggots. Worse still, lots of them floated, which resulted in us having a bit of a disaster.

> **"There was no money at stake – the trophy was enough"**

I was struggling to catch, holding the float back as I would on the Thames, and I couldn't understand why the Leeds angler next door was running a waggler down the middle in 1m of water... until he took a bream!

To cut a long and sad story (for us!) short, the late Rob Mittens, one of the finest, mostly unsung anglers ever produced in the South, took the individual title with 59lb of dace from a downstream end peg.

That proved a firm foundation for what was largely a home-grown Dorking team boasting household names such as Steve Gardener, Steve Sanders, Ken Collings and John 'Lasher' Larraman to dominate the event, something that's been a pretty common occurrence over the ensuing 40 years.

The old Winter League finals were wonderful affairs. There was no money at stake - the trophy was enough - and a trip to Denmark wasn't a bad prize.

We did help Dorking celebrate on the ferry, which is where this picture was taken, once they'd removed their sponsored 'Dartex' clothing but, as the saying goes, what happens on the boat, stays on the boat.

WHAT ELSE WAS HAPPENING

VIDEO GAME CLASSIC

Nintendo released its *Donkey Kong* video platform game. It marked the debut of the company's Donkey Kong and Mario characters.

HOLY LANDMARK

The Church of England's General Synod voted to admit women to holy orders for the first time.

HERE'S WHAT YOU COULD HAVE WON...

The darts-based quiz show *Bullseye* makes its debut, hosted by Jim Bowen. On an average week the contestants would battle it out to land the top prize... which more often than not was a speedboat or a caravan!

PUZZLE CORNER

CROSSWORD

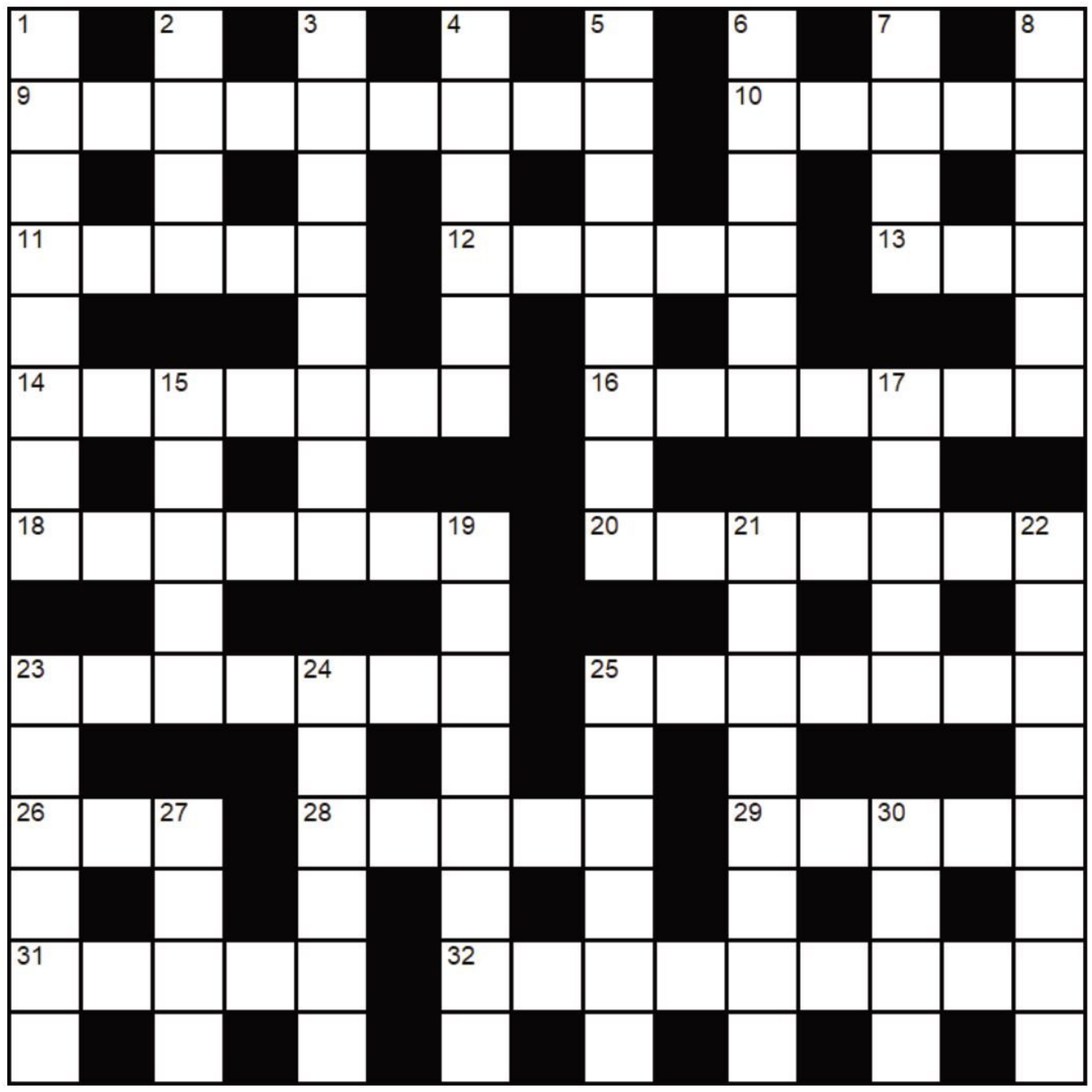
(* indicates an anagram)

Across

9 Bucks. chalkstream for brown trout (*red livery) (5,4)
10 Egg-shaped, like some shot (*a vote) (5)
11 —— White, aka 'Fatha', 17 times International cap (5)
12 Vertical, like a torpedo float in water (2,3)
13 Name of two English and two Scottish rivers (3)
14 Highly visible bite indicators (*her snag) (7)
16 Country location of Fermanagh Feeder Classic 2021 (7)
18 e.g. bagging, crystal or sliding float (7)
20 Larval fish's food supply (*clay's OK) (4,3)
23 Worcestershire spa town and range of hills (7)
25 Type of trout... and rich chocolate cake (7)
26 Exclamation e.g. of surprise... in loch ahead (3)
28 Lincs. town on River Ancholme – in jib rigging (5)
29 Number of spines on common stickleback (5)
31 Richard (Rich) ——, Drennan Cup Winner 2019/20 (5)
32 Jerkbait that swings side-to-side on retrieve (*big-tailed) (5,4)

Down

1/27 A premier Lancs. nine-lake fishery (*wash ball hard) (8,4)
2 Name of several UK rivers... and a buoyant float (4)
3 Long period without much rain (3,5)
4 They pose a shocking danger to anglers! (6)
5 A nine-lake Devon fishery near Tavistock (*try Seine!) (8)
6 A string-shaped pasta (*old one) (6)
7 See 25dn.
8 Describes a curving hookpoint – like bird's bill (6)
15 Nene big-barbel ace —— Bryans (5)
17 Fire-raising... partly near Sonning! (5)
19 With large diameter bores, they reduce line resistance (3,5)
21 It makes a 'coil' of line for hair rig (*ropey lot) (4,4)
22 Alex, of Drennan Team England U25s silver winners in Italy (2018) (8)
23 —— rig, deadly set-up for carp in winter (*wham, OK) (6)
24 Early life stage of e.g. fish (*or by me) (6)
25/7 Day-ticket, seven-acre, 61-peg venue, Northants (*leaking big) (6,4)
27 See 1dn.
30 —— Hayden, speci angler/Angling Times regular (4)



FEBRUARY 22 SOLUTION

Across: 1 Pencil 5 Wisbech 9 Ebro 10 Gunge 11 Town 12 Hewitt 13 Ipswich 14 Chod rig 16 Jokers 17 Fly rod 19 Segment 21 Neville 23 Deputy 25 Nell 26 Gleam 27 Rory 28 Beetles 29 Derbys. **Down:** 2 Ebble 3 Chorizo 4 Light 5 Winding 6 Seeds 7 Ettrick 8 Hawkhurst 14 Colin Hebb 15 Red 16 Jig 18 Revolve 19 Skewers 20 Emperor 22 Legal 23 Domed 24 Terry.

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SWIM 1
FEEDER LINE

I'd put this in where the main flow of the river meets any slacker water, so take time to find this spot. There needs to be enough depth, with 4ft or 5ft ideal. To find this, cast a 1oz bomb and count how long it takes to hit bottom. One second equates to roughly 1ft of depth. A 30g cage feeder is fine, but if the swim was getting on for 10ft, I'd consider a window feeder to make sure the contents get down without spilling out.

SWIM 3
LONG POLE LINE

This swim can be used either as a main line to catch a bit of everything from, or a separate big-fish line. It all depends on whether you've got the depth closer in for the short pole to work. I'd want to be fishing in the main flow and the deepest water with big rigs between 1g and 3g, cupping in groundbait holding chopped worm and caster at the start and then loosefeeding casters over the top. These casters are important, as the fish won't always be on the bottom and there's every chance of catching roach and skimmers slightly off bottom further down the peg.

SWIM 2
SHORT POLE LINE

Smaller fish tend to feed closer to the bank, and early in a session. These are the ones to target while you wait for your other lines to settle. On most rivers you're into the main depth pretty quickly, so fishing at 6m or 7m will be perfect. Feed this line with groundbait, plus a few pinkies and hemp fired in over the top.

IF YOU TRY ONE THING THIS WEEK...

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR SWIM!

Work several areas then focus on the most productive, says Mark Pollard

A WIDE river gives us lots of options of where to fish, but it's rare that putting all your eggs in one basket and flogging one spot for five hours will produce bites consistently – you have to use the whole of your peg.

But it's easy to have too much on the go, feeding several lines but never really doing them all justice. That's why I identify four main areas and concentrate on these. Usually, one or two areas will emerge as being more prolific, and will be the spots I'll spend the most time fishing.

Early rotation of swims is the key to getting a quick and clear idea of how the river will fish.

Lines devoted to bigger fish should be given time to settle, so start by going for small fish and then have a look for bream or perch after an hour or so.

Within a few casts, you'll know if those big-fish swims are going

AnglingTimes

BAG MORE THIS WEEK!

- Tactics to take to YOUR water
- Tricks & tips for bigger bags
- Trusted knowledge
- Every week

SWIM 4
BIG-FISH POLE LINE

You may only get one bite from this line, but it could be worth it! I'd have my big-fish pole line well out of the way, typically with 9m of pole but fished at an angle downstream. Feed this with a bait dropper of chopped worm and caster for total accuracy, using a lobworm tail or double caster hookbait. Have an early look, but don't abandon it if you catch nothing. Just one big fish will make it pay!

to produce and you can then decide how to proceed.

On a typical river swim where roach, bream, perch and tench are the targets, three pole lines and a feeder swim will cover you. Each pole line is fished to do a very different job, from catching everything that swims to hooking a real elastic-stretching beast. That said, you might find the feeder line is the one to be on all day.

You'll need to give big fish time to settle.

GIVE IT A GO

How to attack multiple river lines

CUP IN GROUNDBAIT

Throwing in groundbait balls isn't precise enough. I always use a cup to pop them in. That way, I know that each one is landing where I want it – just slightly downstream of me.

PING IN HEMPSEED

Loosefeeding hemp just past your long pole line gives you a great chance of catching on it later when the bigger roach feed. Feed 6ins or so past it, and keep it going in regularly.

TAKE SOME REDWORMS

Redworms are brilliant for bream. They'd be my main bait on the feeder, fished as a pair tipped with a maggot, but I'd also fish a section on the long pole line for skimmers.

EARN A BONUS FISH

It's well worth loosefeeding casters on your chopped worm line. A few of these drifting past the feed area can help to pull perch and often a tench upstream into your zone.

ASK THE EXPERTS

THE ADVICE YOU NEED TO GET THE BEST FROM YOUR FISHING

STEVE RINGER
World Feeder champ and a constantly successful matchman

ANDY MAY
The 2016 Fish O' champ and triple Kamasan Matchman of the Year

RIVER PIKE FLOAT RIG

Will stillwater pike rigs also work on a river?

Andy Camies, email

A IN MANY situations, yes, a standard float leger rig with a big float and heavy lead is fine, but that isn't always the case.

When you factor in the flow of a river and the fact that many are quite snaggy, then there are better options, one of my favourites being a float paternostered set-up.

This allows you to suspend the bait off bottom, away from the snags, and by incorporating a weak mono link to the lead, if that becomes caught up then it will break away, leaving you in contact with the fish.

Over the years I've found the best places to target are creases between the main flow and slacks, rather than the slacks themselves, which can also be a magnet for debris.

Paul Garner

1 FLOAT
Large inline pattern with a bulbous top

2 MAINLINE
65lb PikePro Main Line braid

3 PATERNOSTER BOOM
Mainline goes through to hooklink swivel. Weak link for lead tied to other arm

4 WEAK LINK
2oz-3oz lead, tied to boom arm with 8lb mono

5 HOOKLINK
40lb PikePro seven-strand wire trace, with two size 6 PikePro semi-barbed treble hooks

6 HOOKBAIT
Mackerel, herring or sardine

How strong should my elastic be for stillwater barbel?

James Kelly, email

A Interestingly, elastic doesn't need to be super-powerful, provided that the fish aren't big. It's all to do with the size of barbel and how snaggy the swim is.

If my swim held fish from 3lb to 6lb and had lots of vegetation, then yes, a strong elastic like the red grade Browning Microbore hollow is needed, but for smaller fish in open water, the green grade, which is my standard carp elastic, will do fine. I don't tighten the elastic up, because I think you lose too many fish this way.

Jon Whincup

PAUL GARNER
Angling Times columnist and bait expert

JON WHINCUP
Angling coach and a consistent framer in many top festivals

GARY KNOWLES
Big-fish hunter and regular Drennan Weekly Award winner

ALFIE NAYLOR
All-round angler and River Trent venue expert

ALAN STAGG
Seasoned specimen angler who won the Drennan Cup in 2015

What's the best way to use fake baits?

Mick Boden, Reigate

A For me, there are three times 'fakes' come into their own, the first being when you're using small baits such as maggots, casters or corn on venues with lots of small silvers. In these waters, delicate offerings can be smashed to bits in no time, but a fake version won't, making them a great choice on the hook

The second time I reach for fake baits is when I need to fish corn at any sort of distance. Real corn would fly off the hook or hair, either on the cast or when it hits the water, whereas a plastic version obviously won't.

The third benefit of 'artificials' is their novelty value. They're not a bait that the fish are used to seeing, especially if you're using a glow-in-the-dark or a bright fluorescent version. Fish will pick up all sorts of different objects off the bottom every day, and the only way that they can find out what the strange object lying in their path is, and whether or not it's edible, is to pick it up!

Alan Stagg

When's the best time of day to catch a big roach?

Neil Barton, Newbury

A Roach can be highly unpredictable with regard to feeding spells, but the periods after dusk and before dawn tend to be the most productive.

If I had to choose, I'd say about 10pm to midnight or a short spell at first light are the best times for big roach but, having said that, I've caught big fish in the middle of the day and late in the morning, so it pays to have a bait in the water at all times. If the weather is overcast and mild, I'd be more confident about catching during the day, but in cold, clear conditions such as we have at the moment, the hours of darkness undoubtedly offer your best chance.

Gary Knowles

Is there an easy way to get a big hit of maggots into the swim for barbel?

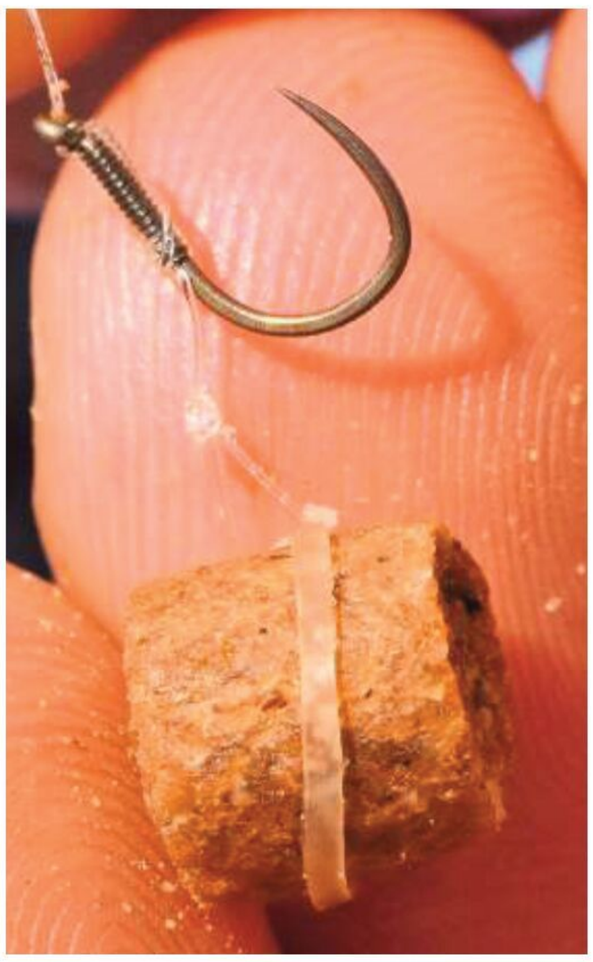
Trevor Cole, Cinderford

A Maggots are a brilliant bait and feed, but when fishing the feeder or leger it can be hard to introduce large amounts at range. A bait dropper can't be cast far enough, and loosefeeding on a river means little, if any, of the feed will end up near your hookbait!

The best way to get a lot of maggots down to the bottom and over the top of your hookbait is to hook on a PVA bag. I like to use a pretty big bag that'll take a good handful of maggots, as I often leave the rig in place until I get a bite and I want to make sure there's some feed in the swim at all times.

The bags can be made more effective by glugging them in a pungent liquid, so the fish can find the feed and rig quicker, meaning a shorter wait for a bite. I've tried a wide range of glugs, with my current favourite being high in aminos.

Alfie Naylor



Are 6mm and 8mm pellets too big for winter?

Geoffrey Harle, High Wycombe

A I think 8mm pellets are too big at this time of year, and are better for summer fishing on the pellet waggler or the bomb.

A 6mm pellet is different. On fisheries where small fish such as hand-sized skimmers will take an expander the moment it hits the bottom, you'll need to switch to a banded pellet hookbait. A 6mm bait is ideal, as it will stand out on the bottom and avoid the attentions of those little fish!

Andy May

TURN THE PAGE FOR MORE ADVICE FROM OUR EXPERTS

RINGER TO THE RESCUE

Champion angler Steve takes an in-depth look at your angling problems

What's the best way to catch late F1s?

Andy Ferris, Lincoln

QUITE often on lakes dominated by F1s, pellets will get you a fast start, but they won't give you the big finish to end a session on a high. This is where maggots fished short come into their own.

Maggots tend to be a better bet for long-term action for F1s, and this is why quite often, to get the best out of the swim, I'll start by fishing pellets, but build my maggot line or lines for later in the day.

Maggots tend to be a much slower bait to get going. Once they do kick in, though, the peg tends to get stronger and stronger, and you don't have to chase the F1s about as you do when fishing with pellets.

Take plenty of bait

In terms of the required quantity of maggots, if the weather is mild I'll take two pints of mixed, mainly reds and whites, just to give myself a couple of hookbait options.

This might seem like a lot of bait for winter, but you have to remember that all species eat maggots, including roach, skimmers and perch, and you have to up the feed accordingly to take into account the bait that these fish are mopping up. Of course, if it's bitterly cold I won't feed anywhere near this amount, but I like to have the option available if I need it.

Simple is best for rigs

My maggot rig is very simple, and the first thing to consider is float choice. That's a Guru MW F1 Slim, and the size of float is worth mentioning because, for maggot fishing, I like to use lighter floats, mainly to try and get a slower fall of the hookbait. As a guide, for fishing in 5ft to 6ft of water I will use a float taking 0.2 or 0.3g. If the peg is shallower, then I'll go lighter.

Mainline is 0.13mm Guru N-Gauge to a short 4ins hooklength of 0.10 Pure Fluorocarbon. I still like a short hooklength for maggot fishing, as it allows me to put a shot close to the hook without putting it on the hooklength itself. Hook is a size 18 Guru F1 Pellet, while elastic is Blue Hydro fished on a puller kit. This allows me to lift into a fish and simply ship straight back without worrying about bumping fish off.

Because I want a slow fall of the hookbait, I like to fish a very loosely strung bulk of No11 shot. The bottom shot is fixed 4ins from the hook and the rest of the droppers are spaced at 2ins intervals above this. This creates a very natural fall of the hookbait.

A good tip when maggot fishing for F1s is to leave plenty of float tip on show. This makes bites a lot easier to read, and stops you striking at every indication. F1s tend to feed a lot more positively on maggots than they do on pellets in winter, and bites reflect this.

Never stop feeding

Unless it's cold, I'll always feed my short line by hand. I'm talking five or six pole sections out, either straight in front of me or at a slight angle. This will always be into the deep water past any near-side slope.

The amount to feed depends on the head of small fish present, but as a guide I'll start off feeding eight to 12 maggots at a time and then vary it, depending on the response. For instance, if I'm getting bitted out by roach, I'll up the feed.

"Maggots tend to be a better bet for long-term action with F1s"

DO YOU NEED RINGER'S HELP?
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Maggots are the bait to be on for late F1s.

However, if things are hard, I'll cut back on the amount. It's important to keep up with the regime, as bait falling through the water is what helps to pull the F1s into the swim.

Double up on maggots

When I first started fishing for F1s I had the mindset that they were delicate feeders with small mouths, so I needed to fish small hookbaits.

As a result, I fished a single maggot on the hook, thinking this would be easier for an F1 to suck in. On one match I was having small-fish problems, so I decided to try double maggot, and the difference it made was unbelievable!

Since then, I've found myself fishing double maggot from the start. Normally this takes the form of two reds or a red and a white. If the water is clear, a red and a white definitely seem to produce extra bites. I assume this is due to the white maggot standing out and giving the F1s something to home in on.

Keep the bait moving

The best bit of advice I can give when fishing maggots for F1s is to keep your hookbait on the move. There are two ways you can do this, the first being to lift and drop the float. Bites tend to come just as the float settles, indicating that an F1 has followed the hookbait as it fell through the water.

Alternatively, try flicking the rig out to the side or straight out in front of you and then holding the float on a tight line. Bites will then come either on the drop or as the float settles.

3 SIMPLE STEPS TO SUCCESS

TIME IT RIGHT

Because maggots take a while to get going, there's no point fishing down the middle until after two hours minimum. Before this, you'll need to feed constantly, even though you're not actually putting a hookbait there! This line is a great area to fish in the afternoon, so look at giving it a go from around one o'clock onwards.

LITTLE AND OFTEN RULES!

Begin by throwing in by hand around eight to a dozen maggots every few minutes. The idea is to create a steady stream of bait falling through the water, which is what will pull the F1s in. Stop feeding, and your chances of a bite when the time comes to fish here will have vanished.

GO LIGHT WITH RIGS

Even though this part of the peg might be the deepest, that doesn't mean a heavy float is needed. In fact, the opposite applies and the lighter you can fish, the better it will be. In 6ft of water I'd think nothing of using a 0.3g float. A short hooklength (4ins) is required, to allow me to put a shot as close to the hook as I can, which helps to show bites more positively.

JUST A HANDFUL
A small cage feeder introduces all the loosefeed you need.

DEAD RINGERS
In March, dead maggots take some beating as a bream hookbait.

BAIT CLINIC
WITH DR PAUL GARNER
Honest advice to help you to catch more fish on every trip, without breaking the bank.

EASY ON THE FEED FOR EARLY BREAM

My tests have shown 'less is more' as we head towards spring

THE LONGER, warmer days of March can easily fool us into thinking that the fish are going to be far more active than they really are.

But lakes can take a long time to warm up, so expect single-digit water temperatures until Easter, and fish accordingly.

It can be tempting to use lots of bait and try to make an early start for summer species, but this is a mistake. For me, the next few weeks are a great time to target specimen bream, because they react to slight water temperature rises faster than other species.

BREAM MAGNET

Right now only the minimum of bait is required to attract and hold a shoal of bream, and what bait you use, rather than how much of it, is the key.

I've been using a small local day-ticket fishery to experiment with different baits, and the results have been illuminating.

Fishing with two feeder rods, identical except for the feed and hookbait, I've run through a host of different baits to see which the bream prefer.

Lesson number one was that a tiny amount of fishmeal groundbait, fed through a small cage feeder, made a dramatic difference. The groundbait rod produced four times as many bream as the 'control rod' that fed just maggots or chopped worms, despite the two rigs lying only a few metres apart on the lakebed!

Because the water was quite clear, a black groundbait proved to be the most reliable, even though there must have been only a very light dusting of bait on the lakebed. The pulling power of the fishmeal, despite the cold water, was remarkable and proved that you don't need a lot of bait to catch bream.

Big bream are a viable target, despite water temperatures still being pretty low.

FREE OFFERINGS

Because the response to the groundbait was so strong, I looked at whether adding chopped worms and maggots to the feed made any difference.

On my chosen venue, it seemed to make no difference at all, although I suspect that as the water temperatures climb it will take more than just groundbait to hold the fish in the swim for any length of time.

I settled on adding a small amount of finely chopped worms and a few dead maggots in the feeder on the basis that such a small amount wouldn't do any harm, and would add to the attractive smell emanating from the feeder.

HOOKBAIT CHOICES

Would the bream show a preference for any particular hookbait? Once again, despite me fishing only short trips, the bream were quite choosy. I caught on everything from mini boilies to worms, but a bunch of dead red maggots proved to be head-and-shoulders better than the rest.

Why dead maggots should be preferred by bream to live ones is a real head-scratcher. But being able to keep a few bags of maggots in the freezer is far easier than looking after live

QUICK TIP
PEP UP YOUR 'DEADS'

ADD a teaspoonful of Scopex flavour to a pint of frozen maggots straight from the freezer. As the bait warms up, the liquid will be drawn into the skin of the grubs.

TEN-MINUTE MAKE
SPRING BREAM GROUNDBAIT MIX

You only need a small amount of groundbait for spring bream fishing. Rather than 'cut' the groundbait with cheaper ingredients, I prefer to use it straight from the bag when the water is still chilly.

Split a bag of pellet-based groundbait in half, because you only need a small amount.

Add a spoonful of molasses to 250ml of water. This will give the groundbait a sweet taste.

Pour the liquid slowly over the dry groundbait, mixing constantly to help avoid lumps.

Leave the groundbait for 30 minutes before using it to allow the water to be fully absorbed.

Chop 100g of dendrobaena worms and dead maggots to make the mix for the feeder.

Next, plug the base of a small cage feeder with the dampened groundbait.

Load the centre of the feeder with a big pinch of chopped worms and maggots.

Plug the other end, but only lightly compress the groundbait so that it breaks down easily.

ones, and helps cut costs too. Use them within a few hours of defrosting, while they're fresh.

Frozen maggots can also be flavoured by adding half a teaspoonful of flavour to each pint of bait. As the maggots thaw out, the flavour is drawn into the skin, giving them a lovely aroma.

It's been great fun learning from the bream in my local pool, and the results can be really distinct at this time of the year, making spring the ideal time for a bit of experimentation.

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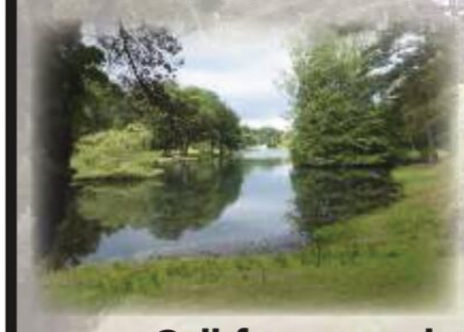

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CHAMP'S DIARY

JAMIE HUGHES GIVES YOU THE INSIDE LINE

"NEARLY A WRITE-OFF"

I HAVE to say, I only got out twice last week, getting soaked and blasted by the wind in the process!

First up was another midweek look at Cooper's Lake for next week's big-money final. The roach fed this time, with very few bigger skimmers and ide - before, it was the other way round.

I drew well though, peg 24, and wanted to feed more pellets on the long pole to see if it made a difference. All I caught on it were those roach, but my short line with maggots and groundbait gave me lots of 4oz-6oz fish plus one big skimmer and two ide for 23lb and top spot.

> "I only got out twice last week"

The rest of the week was a write off in the storms, which left Sunday's match at Jacob's Lake. I drew peg 15 again, the one with the short chuck to the island, and the waggler worked for a bit until the wind and rain got up. Moving to the edge, I never had a bite, and that left my short line with pellets. The F1s here saw me home with 91lb for another win.

The lousy weather did give me enough time to play the Fish O'Mania ticket game. I had a phone, a laptop and an iPad on the go all at once and must have hit the refresh button 3,000 times! I got 14 tickets, though, and it all begins at the end of the month with a qualifier at Weston Pools.

There's a new venue for the final, Westwood Lakes, which I hear great things about. I'd hope from those 14 matches I'm going to get a couple of chances to get through, but you just never know!

Winner Graham West with his 20-8-0 net.

THE BIG WIN

PRE-MATCH PLAN

TARGET SPECIES: Skimmers
FEED: Groundbait in the feeder; micro pellets at 16m; groundbait, worm and caster at 13m; groundbait and loosefed caster at 11m
TACTICS: Cage feeder and long pole lines at 16m, 13m and 11m
TARGET WEIGHT: High double figures
CONDITIONS: Cold and windy

WEST STORMS TO VICTORY

Skimmers net secures the honours from a sheltered peg

STORM Eunice may have passed by the time the latest leg of the Garbolino-backed silverfish series at Meadowlands Fishery came around, but the weather was still atrocious. A sheltered peg was on everyone's wish list, even better if it gave you a chance of winning!

That's just what Graham West pulled from the bag, as peg 27 on Warren Pool did away with any problems with the wind and gave him a great shot at top spot. Five hours later, the Preston Innovations/Brown's Angling man duly obliged with a 20-8-0 skimmer net to see him home by just over 1lb from Nathan Hughes, who had top weight on Lambsdown Lake with 19-6-0. Third was Paul Newell on 18-6-0.

Here, Graham explains how the match went down...

BEATING THE WIND

"The wind was still quite bad, so a peg with a bit of respite was required, otherwise it'd be a case of battling the weather and an out-and-out feeder match.

"Fortunately, peg 27 on Warren allowed me to fish the pole, so I went with the plan of starting on the feeder and having three long pole lines to rotate - at 16m, 13m and off at an angle at 11m.

"After feeding the pole lines, I fished a small cage feeder with maggot on the hook and caught a little run of skimmers, which

Tom Edwards was a comfortable winner on the day.

DECOY LAKES (SATURDAY)

Damson, Cedar, Beastie, Horseshoe, Four Islands & Six Islands Lakes (62 pegs)

ANGLERS in this penultimate practice match for the Winter League Final had a brief respite from the storms, and a ton was needed to win it.

That honour went to local lad Tom Edwards with a 127-6-0

Graham's sheltered peg 27 on Warren Pool.

seemed to be good, as I couldn't see much coming out around me. However, I've found that the feeder soon fades and, as expected, it duly did, so it was time to try the pole.

"I fed each line differently to give me options, with pellets at 16m, groundbait with worm and caster at 13m and just groundbait at 11m over regularly loosefed casters."

A STEADY RUN OF GOOD SKIMMERS

"Presentation on the pole wasn't great, but by being patient I could pick off the odd skimmer on the 16m and 13m lines.

"After two hours, the tow on the lake really began to pick up, which I thought would either make things better or kill the peg stone dead. It definitely improved the 11m line, as I went from just the odd bite to a steady run of skimmers using a positive 0.75g float with a bulk and droppers. They were good ones, too, averaging 1lb with the occasional fish twice that size.

"I kept on catching skimmers steadily. It was never solid, but there were enough bites to keep me from changing lines all the time."

AT THE SCALES

"Once my weight came out at 20lb, I knew I'd won the section fairly comfortably. That's the name of the game in a series across several matches, and that was the single point I was after for my overall score.

"As a bonus I also won the lake, but felt that someone on Lambsdown Lake would beat me. They'd really suffered on there with the weather, though, so I ended up winning the whole thing!"

RESULT: 1 G West, Preston Innovations/ Brown's Angling, 20-8-0; 2 N Hughes, Nathan's of Derby, 19-6-0; 3 P Newell, Redditch, 18-6-0; jt4 C Hughes, Daiwa/ Advantage Baits and S Harwood, Daiwa Tackle & Bates, both 17-14-0.

net of carp and F1s.

The Daiwa ace drew peg 22 on Beastie Lake, and it didn't let him down. Starting on bomb and bread to the island, Tom snared a big carp, later adding two more on the maggot feeder. But it was when he switched to his 14.5m line with maggots that things kicked off.

A steady run of big F1s saw Tom finish with 33 in the net, plus those three carp, to see him home.

Closest to him was North West raider Kieran Marsden on 107-12-0 from Damson Lake peg 2, Jake Fowles taking third spot with 97-5-0 off peg 8 on Six Islands.

RESULT: 1 T Edwards, Daiwa/ Advantage Baits, 127-6-0; 2 K Marsden, Matrix, 107-12-0; 3 J Fowles, SonuBaits, 97-5-0; 4 D Jacques, Browning Ossett, 82-8-0; 5 A Geldart, MAP/Dynamite Baits, 63-9-0.

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FISH OFF BOTTOM

ON THE long pole or waggler, you may want to fish with the bait on the bottom or a little overdepth – but not on the whip. Fishing an inch off bottom is far better. There's no chance of snagging weed, and the bites show up far more positively. We also know that fish like roach, skimmers and hybrids sit just off bottom so, by fishing on the deck, you're wasting time waiting for a bite.

GO FOR BIG FLOATS

A LIGHT float may get you more bites, but where the whip is concerned, it's no good. You need some weight in the rig to swing the bait out far enough and cock quickly, ready to show a bite. That means anything from 0.5g to 3g, depending on the depth, the flow and the wind. Shotting is a simple bulk and two or three dropper shot. A carbon-stemmed float is better than wire, as this helps to prevent tangles when swinging the rig out.

5 WAYS TO WIN ON THE WHIP

Every now and then we get one of those dream days when the peg is full of fish and a real netful is on the cards. To catch them quickly, there's nothing better than the whip...

YOUR MAINLINE MUST BE STRONG

WITH no elastic to cushion playing a fish, your mainline will take a lot of hammer, so it needs to be robust. Around 0.14mm is ideal, and will also be least prone to becoming damaged and then tangling during the day.

A lighter hooklength will be needed but, again, this needs to be tough because you'll be swinging lots of fish in.

FEED A NUGGET ON EVERY CAST

LOOSEFEED is okay, but the idea of the whip is to catch fish close to the bottom quickly. This is where the bigger fish will be and bites are more positive. That requires groundbait. Throw a small nugget in every cast, but ensure the mix is quite sticky so that you can easily make a small ball with one hand and throw it without any danger of it disintegrating on the way down.

ALWAYS USE A STONFO

THERE are a few ways to attach the line to a whip, but the old-style Stonfo connector that works on a hook and sleeve system is best.

This is a quicker way to attach a rig than using the double float silicone method. It's also better in winter, when fingers are cold and wet and trying to thread line through a float rubber becomes a nightmare!

READER RECOMMENDED

TRY WHIP WAGGLERS

JOHN BRIDGE, RIPLEY

"One of the problems with the whip is that any wind can get hold of the line above the float and pull the rig quickly out of position.

"Binning off a top and bottom float and switching instead to a tiny little waggler solves the problem for me, keeping the line buried and holding the rig still just long enough for me to get a bite!"

MATCH ROUND-UP

The latest results from events near you

ANGLING TRUST SILVERFISH QUALIFIER (SAT)

Packington, Molands Mere & Geary's Level (33 pegs)

Result: 1 J Fuidge, Mosella, 14-13-0; 2 P Knapman, Packington, 11-6-0; 3 M Derry, Sensas, 9-12-0. Qualifiers: P Sanderson, J Fuidge & P Knapman.

BLUNDELL'S FISHERY (SUN)

All lakes (28 pegs)

Result: 1 W Pollitt, Advanced Batteries, 38-2-0; 2 S Raby, Farnworth Tackle & Bait, 23-8-0; 3 C Barton, Blundell's, 22-0-0.

CUNNERIES FISHERY TEAMS OF FOUR WINTER LEAGUE (SAT)

Hawk, Old & S-Canal Lakes (40 pegs)

Result: 1 A Jones, Furness FA, 39-0-0; 2 S Williamson, Maver Gold, 34-0-0; 3 A Twist, Preston Innovations/SonuBaits, 30-7-0. Teams: 1 Maver Gold, 10pts; 2 Preston Innovations/SonuBaits, 15; 3 Patricroft AC, 18. League: 1 Maver Gold, 61pts; 2 Preston Innovations/SonuBaits, 75; 3 Patricroft AC, 80.

DAVE'S OF MIDDLEWICH TRENT & MERSEY INDIVIDUAL CHAMPS SUN

Trent & Mersey Canal, Hassall Green, Malkin's Bank & Wheelock (54 pegs)

Result: 1 T Price, Todmorden AS, 13-4-11; 2 D Meadows, Tri-Cast Rochdale, 10-11-0; 3 A Round, Sensas Lifestyle MG, 8-1-0.

DECOY LAKES (SUN)

Damson, Cedar, Elm, Oak, Yew, Willows, Lou's, Four Islands & Horseshoe Lakes (76 pegs)

Result: 1 H Rushton, Drennan NW, 157-1-0; 2 A Rayment, Preston Innovations Black Horse, 122-6-0; 3 S Milne, Preston Innovations NW, 116-12-0.

DONCASTER DAA (SUN)

Southfield Reservoirs (36 pegs)

Result: 1 G Dawes, Daiwa Adlington Angling Centre, 15-3-0; 2 T Parkin, Southfield, 12-12-0; 3 R Jacklin, Hull, 11-12-0.

MARCH DAA (SUN)

Old River Nene, March (80 pegs)

Result: 1 G Welton, Cresta Peterborough, 14-6-0; 2 Kye Jerrom, Browning Hot Rods, 12-4-0; 3 H Dagnall, Browning Ossett, 11-12-0.

MAVER/DAMSON HOMES TUNNEL BARN FARM WINTER LEAGUE (SAT)

Top, House, Canal, Extension, Club, Jenny's & New Pools (76 pegs)

Result: 1 J Fowkes, Team Dynamite Baits, 67-0-0; 2 D Shipp, South West All-Stars, 65-12-0; 3 R Kings, Tony's Crew 1, 53-10-0. Teams: 1 South West All-Stars, 57pts; 2 Team Dynamite Baits, 56; 3 Maver Midlands, 52. Final league: 1 South West All-Stars, 544pts; 2 Preston Innovations/NuFish, 533; 3 Team Dynamite Baits, 526.

MIRFIELD AC (SUN)

Aire & Calder Canal, Knottingley (29 pegs)

Result: 1 K Hobson, Drennan Barnsley Blacks, 7-10-0; 2 K Hartley, Bradford, 7-6-0; jt3 N Thewliss, Mirfield AC and P Dwyer, Tri-Cast, both 6-2-0.

MOORLANDS FARM INDIVIDUAL SILVERFISH WINTER LEAGUE (SUN)

Moors, Middle, Bank & Meadow Pools (40 pegs)

Result: 1 M Woodford, Moorlands, 20-8-0; 2 C Brooks, Moorlands, 19-4-0; 3 S Williams, Moorlands, 13-12-0. Final league: 1 A Morrison, Moorlands, 7pts; 2 D Coates, Moorlands, 9; 3 G Albutt, Drennan/Dynamite Baits, 11.

MOORLANDS FARM SILVERFISH FESTIVAL (THURS & FRI)

Meadow, Moors & Bank Pools (41 pegs)

Winners: Day 1: A Morrison, Moorlands, 29-0-0. Day 2: J Brooks, Daiwa Tackle & Bates, 23-6-0. Overall: 1 J Brooks, Daiwa Tackle & Bates, 41-7-0; 2 A Morrison, Moorlands, 36-12-0; 3 I Giddins, Garbolino, 35-2-0.

NORTHWICH AA MINI LEAGUE (SAT)

River Weaver, Northwich (48 pegs)

Result: 1 A Clegg, Wigan MG, 5-13-0; 2 I Morrison, Matrix Liverpool FC, 5-2-0; 4 G Lambert, AGK, 4-13-0. Teams: 1 Matrix Liverpool FC, 10pts; 2 Reel Elite, 12; jt3 Ruffe Arses and Colmic Red, both 18.

OLD HOUGH FISHERY TEAMS OF FOUR WINTER LEAGUE (SUN)

All lakes (40 pegs)

Result: 1 P Henry, Wirral Raiders, 79-13-0; 2 E Thomas, Limehurst/Burt Baits, 62-10-0; 3 G Gibbons, Old Hough, 46-5-0.

PARTRIDGE LAKES TEAMS OF FOUR WINTER LEAGUE (SAT)

Covey Canal Lakes (36 pegs)

Result: 1 Y Sephton, Preston Innovations NW Blue, 64-2-0; 2 J Howarth, Guru, 50-1-0; 3 W Kearney, Tri-Cast, 39-4-0. Teams: 1 Drennan NW, 13pts; 2 Preston Innovations NW Blue, 14; 3 Guru, 15. Final league: 1 Preston Innovations NW Blue, 131pts; 2 Guru, 132; 3 Tri-Cast, 139.

SOUTHEND FARM FISHERY WINTER LEAGUE (SUN)

Main & Dillon's Lakes (31 pegs)

Result: 1 G McClair, Browning Wickford, 23-2-0; 2 T Harris, Southend Farm, 18-1-0; 3 P Storan, Southend Farm, 17-5-0.

TODBER MANOR FISHERY TEAMS OF FOUR WINTER LEAGUE (SUN)

Ash, Homeground & Hill View Lakes (48 pegs)

Result: 1 C Edmunds, Browning/Spotted Fin, 224-12-0; 2 D Romain, Mosella, 174-6-0; 3 G Manton, Todber Manor, 173-0-0. Teams: 1 Trig's Non-Rejects, 9pts (566-12-0); 2 Thatcher's Vets, 9 (489-12-0); 3 Kingfishers, 11. League: 1 Trig's Non-Rejects, 33pts; 2 South West All-Stars, 45.5; 3 Thatcher's Vets, 48.

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Example 1 - £62,000

Mr M. from **BARNSLEY** was a miner at **GRIMETHORPE COLLIERY**. After it was shut down in 1993, he was advised by a salesman from **PRUDENTIAL** to transfer his pension to them. When he retired he noticed he was getting less than his friends who stayed in the **BRITISH COAL PENSION SCHEME**. Compensation £62,721.

Example 2 - £55,000

Mr G. from **SHEFFIELD** was a furnaceman at **BRITISH STEEL.** After he finished in 1990, he was advised by a salesman to transfer his pension to **STANDARD LIFE**. When he retired he realised he was getting a much lower pension than his friends who kept their **BRITISH STEEL PENSION**. Compensation £55,372.

Example 3 - £76,000

Mr R. from **OLDHAM** worked for **MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL**. After he left in 1989, he was advised by a salesman to transfer his works pension to **FRIENDS LIFE** (now called **AVIVA**). When he retired he noticed that he was getting less than his friends who kept their **LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION**. Compensation £76,552.

Example 4 - £67,000

Mr M. from **COVENTRY** worked at **JAGUAR BROWNS LANE FACTORY**. After he finished there in 1989, he was advised by an agent of **SUN LIFE FINANCIAL OF CANADA** to transfer his works pension to them. When he retired he realised he was getting less than his friends who kept their works pension. Compensation £67,649.

Example 5 - £75,000

Mr B. from **PLYMOUTH** was a boilermaker at **DEVONPORT DOCKYARD**. After his redundancy in 1989 a salesman from **PEARL ASSURANCE** (Now **PHOENIX LIFE**) advised him to transfer his pension to them. When he retired he noticed he was getting a lower pension than his friends who stayed in the **DEVONPORT DOCKYARD PENSION SCHEME**. Compensation of £75,954.

Example 6 - £48,000

Mr C. from **WARRINGTON** worked in the factory at **TI NEW WORLD COOKERS**. After he was finished in 1994, a salesman from **GRANGE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT** advised him to transfer his pension to **NORWICH UNION** (now called **AVIVA**). When he retired he noticed his pension was much lower than his friends who kept their **TI NEW WORLD PENSION**. Compensation £48,342.

In the 1980's and 90's many workers were persuaded by salesmen to transfer OUT of their work pension on the promise of a better return. However, this was bad advice.

If you know anyone this might apply to, please pass on this information.

LAST CAST WITH DOM

Dom Garnett – one man determined to keep the pleasure in angling

Snag fishing with a large bait is simplicity itself.

"Is there any quality fish that won't tuck into a juicy prawn?"

ISN'T it strange that some of the very best baits and methods never quite get the reputation they deserve? For every angler smart enough to use tiger nuts or match-style tactics for big carp, there must be 50 boilie-and-bolt-rig merchants.

For every 10 guys drowning herrings for pike, you'll be lucky to find one using a wobbled roach. I make this assertion with a whiff of hypocrisy, however, after a recent trip that was less about any genius plan, more about clearing out the freezer.

I must have bought the offending tray of discounted raw king prawns months ago. Alongside the usual disparaging comments of my wife, who would prefer to see them in a stir-fry, they're a consistently brilliant bait. In fact, the main problem with them is that they have an unerring ability to pick out large carp, rather than the big perch they're intended for.

They're so much more than perch fodder. I've caught everything from wrasse to bream on them, and prawns from foreign supermarkets have saved more than one holiday fishing trip. So why don't I use them more often?

Just recently, I had a coaching session to deliver at Somerset's Viaduct Fishery, where I fancied a quick cast once my day's work was done. At long last, here was my chance to get rid of those slightly pongy prawns.

What a cracking session it turned out to be. With only two or three hours to kill late in the day, I went for a 'back to basics' approach, fishing just one pole line in a deep, snaggy margin.

In went a decent helping of chopped worms, with just a couple of minced-up prawns. Perhaps the one drawback of this bait is that they're a bit precious to feed in any quantity.

Using a big, hair-rigged chunk, I was quickly into an excellent fish. For about 10 seconds it fought like a big, ponderous perch, before deciding it was a carp after all, and heading for the middle of the lake. Exciting stuff but, being a fair old size, I wasted 10 minutes bringing her to the net.

The next casts were frustrating, as I kept getting dinks, dips and sailaway bites that resulted in nothing. What on earth was going on?

Swapping my size 8 hook for a 12 soon put this right, and it was bite after bite from a startling array of fish. A trio of 1lb-plus perch you'd fully expect – but chunky rudd, roach, hybrids and even a bream were a clear reminder not to neglect this fabulous bait in future. Indeed, is there any quality fish that won't tuck into a juicy prawn?

"I've caught everything from wrasse to bream on them"

Falling for prawns were carp..

predatory perch...

...and even hybrids.

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