

DDAS JUNIORS BASIC GUIDE TO CARP FISHING



Carp are now probably Britain's most popular species and this guide will help you to target some really big fish.
From rods to hooks, it's all here.

WARNING

Carbon Fibre is extremely good at conducting electricity.

Do not fish near High Voltage Electricity lines, particularly in the rain.

Cattle fences will probably make you jump and be midly uncomfortable.

But the real threat is Lightning.

**If you are out fishing and a storm brews up,
Please, pack up and go home.**

So much fishing equipment is now made from carbon that you may be at risk from serious injury or worse.

Pack away and live to fish another day.

Carp Fishing

In the past, anglers that have fished for just one species were viewed as either extremely dedicated, or just a little bit odd.

Someone that was prepared to sit for hours, days, weeks or even months in pursuit of just one individual fish, could quite possibly have a few essential ingredients missing.

But today, carp are Britain's most popular species and the foundation of a multi million pound industry. Carp fishing has produced angling technology that many will take for granted, and which has influenced nearly every other type of coarse fishing.

So what is it about Carp that fires the imagination? DDAS Assistant Junior Secretary, Tom Foyle writes;

**“ Carp, as a species, capture the minds of thousands of anglers across the country. We spend hours on end trying to them. They definitely hold something special. Their sheer size, the beauty of unique scale patterns and distinguishing features that can make some fish very famous. So much so that , for some anglers, they become an obsession.
For me it is a fish named ‘The Pig’ at Luckfield. The search is ongoing...**

**The excitement of turning up early to a misty lake, quietly searching for signs of fish, carefully setting up your treasured tackle and, hopefully, nailing that first cast.
The silence of patience.
The peace of your surroundings.
Waiting...
Hoping...
The quiet is shattered by a screaming alarm and the battle begins...
This, is Carp fishing.”**

CARP RODS

As you will have guessed by now, the choice of Carp fishing tackle can be and often is, mind blowing. The popularity of Carp fishing has, quite possibly, made it the biggest and most confusing maze of all. But with a little expert guidance, we can make easier for you.

Let's start with rods.

What is a Carp rod?

Earlier on we mentioned test curves, the amount of weight it takes to bend a rod to 90 degrees. The test curve of a Carp rod is important because it will tell you what the rod is supposed to be used for. The length is important too. With most rods being between 9 and 12 ft long (2.7 and 3.6 metres). The shorter 9ft rods are better for stalking and fishing down the margins. For larger waters, where casting a reasonable distance is required, the longer 12ft rods are better.

It is probably fair to say that a 10 or 11ft rod would cope with most situations. But try to choose rods that would be more at home on the venues that you visit most regularly.

One further consideration is the *action* of the rod. The action or *Taper* of rod, is the amount of the rod that bends to reach its test curve.

If only the upper part of the rod bends to reach the test curve, then it has a *fast taper* or *fast action*. These will generally be a more powerful rod, designed for casting greater distances or for fighting larger fish.

If the rod bends all the way through to the handle, then it will have a *slow taper* or *through action*. These softer, more gentle rods are more for short to medium range fishing.

2.75lb and under - These rods will have a more through action to them and feel 'softer' when you're playing a fish. It will certainly be more of a challenge using them and arguably more fun. They may not be able to cast as far as more powerful rods.

3lb - This test curve will offer variety of uses over the others and will be suited to most Carp fishing situations.

3.5lb and over - Rods like these should be used on really big lakes where a big cast is needed. They will be capable of casting well over 100 metres (even if you are not!) or to tame some exceptionally large creatures.

The features of a Carp rod much different to other rods too. A carp rod will commonly have 6 or 7 eyes or *guides* on the rod, compared to 14 or 15 on a float rod.



The guides are much larger to allow the much thicker line to pass through them with ease during the cast.

Because Carp reels have got much bigger over recent years, the guides on the rod have also had to adapt to cope with the larger diameter spools. *Butt rings* of 40 or 50mm are common. The guide in the image above is a double legged guide, whilst some, usually those fitted on softer rods, have only a single leg.

The handle of a Carp rod is as varied as everything else in fishing, but is down to personal choice rather than performance.

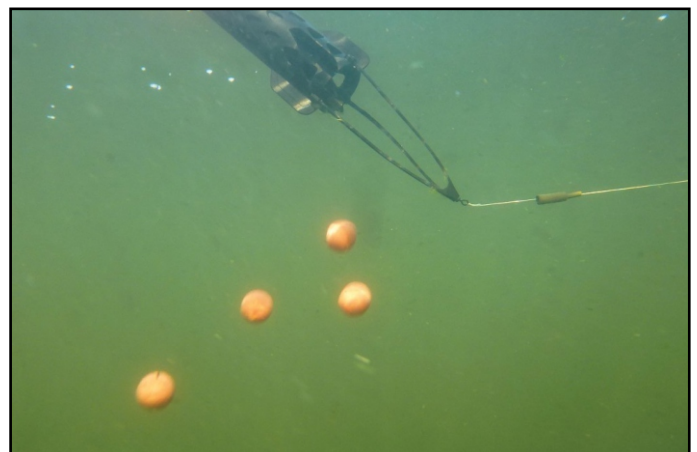
The Full Shrink Wrapped Handle (left) will feel slimmer and will have a slight weight saving with a very grippy feel.

(Middle) *The Abbreviated Handle* Made from *Duplon foam* and is used to keep the cost of the rod down.

(Right) *Cork Handles* are favoured by anglers preferring a more traditional look. Not only that but they warmer to hold in the winter and they will float if your rod gets pulled in.



Not all Carp rods catch fish. Allow me to explain. *Spod rods* and *Marker rods* are not strictly necessary to begin with, but they are certainly worth mentioning. As an addition to a Carp anglers armoury, they can be priceless. Especially if you are fishing on a really big water, or a venue that you are unfamiliar with.





Marker rods are very similar to Carp rods to look at. Similar Handles and rings, but that's where the similarity ends. A Marker rod needs power to cast reasonable distances and also a light tip to feel the lumps and bumps on the lake bed. We will go more into Markers and Marker floats a little later on.



A Spod rod is a completely different beast. With a test curve of around 4 or 5lb, and all power from tip to butt. These rods can launch a heavily loaded Spod a very, very long way in the right hands.

In modern Carp fishing, however, Marker rods and Spod rods have merged into a kind of *Hybrid (or mutant)* rods. With a slightly lower test curve, these hybrid rods mean that you can now do both jobs with just one rod, with less weight to carry and less money to spend.

CARP REELS

Although this booklet has covered reels already, Carp reels are very different to ordinary coarse fishing reels. They come in a wide variety of shapes, sizes and uses.

The same as choosing rods, you must think about the waters that you are going to fish regularly. Do you need a reel that can cast 180 metres if your favourite lake is only 40 metres wide?

Carp fishing, like any other type of fishing, does suffer a lot from the need to own the latest, strongest or most expensive of everything.

What I am asking you to think about is, what do you need?

Carp reels are generally bigger than other types of

reels used in coarse fishing. They are capable of casting a long way, reeling in heavy tackle and (hopefully) some really big fish. Everything is beefed up with bigger spools for casting, bigger handles for power and stronger clutches and drag systems. All of these differences will play a part in helping land some big Carp.

FREE SPOOL REELS -

Free spool reels, sometimes mistakenly called *baitrunners* (Baitrunner is a trade name of Shimano and is not the name of ALL free spool reels), have a double clutch system that allows the reels to be set up so that a running fish can pull line from the reel. The resistance of the spool can be adjusted to change how easy it is for a Carp to take line.

Once the rod is picked up, it only takes a turn of the reel handle to switch the reel from free spool mode back to that of the main drag system.

Do not use the free spool system to play fish. You will severely damage your reel by doing this.

Just as in regular coarse fishing reels, you will have the choice of either a front or rear drag. It really comes down to which one prefer because they will both perform in a similar way.

Personally, I would use a front drag reel because I believe they work much more smoothly than a rear drag reel.

Rear drag reels might be easier to use during a fight with a fish, but they can be heavier because of the extra gears need to operate the drag, not to mention there's more bits to go wrong. It's just my opinion, you must make up your own mind on this matter.

There is a third option. *Quick Drag* reels look similar to front drag reels, but the drag adjustment knob at the front of the spool is also the free spool control. Requiring just a quarter or half a turn to engage the main drag, making the whole process very easy and fast.



SPOOL SIZE AND SHAPE -

Because Carp reels are generally bigger, they will hold more line or have a *higher line capacity*. Even smaller 8000 sized reels will have an impressive line capacity. For most small water Carp fishing, an 8000 reel will probably be enough. But what if need to cast a further distance?

If you need to cast a long way, say over 80 metres, Then you might want to think about one of the *Big Pit* style reels. The actual line capacity will probably be similar to that of a 8000 reel. But, because the spools on Big Pit reels are a lot wider and sometimes even longer, they make it easier to cast further due to the reduced *Friction* or *Resistance* on the line. Wider spools and lower friction means the line can *Peel* off the spool much easier than narrow spooled reels.

Big Pit reels are rated slightly differently too, starting at 5000 and going all the way up to huge 14000 sized reels.

Try to stay within the 5000 to 8000 sized reels in the Big Pit range because, locally, there is no need to go any bigger, especially for smaller, younger anglers.

Big Pit reels have all the same features as reels we have already covered.

There really is no easy way to tell you this, so I'll just spit it out.

Good gear costs money and quality isn't cheap. You don't have to rob a bank to get 'proper gear', but don't get sucked in by buying cheap gear either. There are so many 'reasonably priced reels' on the market today, mostly from China. I can almost guarantee that will not last as long as (In my opinion) better engineered Japanese reels.

I always recommend going to the upper limits of your budget when buy reels. They do a lot of work and gears do get worn out. Paying those vital few pounds for some quality engineering will pay off in the long term.



In the end, the question we have to ask ourselves is, do we ever reach the limit of a reels performance?

The answer is probably no, not really.

But think about where you fish most regularly, and buy your reels to suit those venues.

When you think about it, the size of the reel doesn't really matter for playing a fish. Some really big Carp are caught using match sized reels these days and they cope just fine.

Of course, if you going for some really BIG fish, then small feeder reels won't cope over time.

But, it is really all about the cast. What you are casting and how far.

Be honest about what you NEED and worry less about what you WANT. Balanced tackle is the key to making your fishing sessions worthwhile.



Toms Top Tip #1

"Over the years, I have used a range of different rods. From cheap ones to more expensive models. Fox, Daiwa and JRC are all reputable brand names.

My current rods are 12ft (3.6 metre) Sonik Dominators and 6ft (1.8 metre) Sonik Xtractors. They are all in, what I would term as, the average price range. They have exceptional build quality and I feel give good value for money.

Choosing a reel is down to personal choice and budget. I've always gone for free spool reels because of how versatile and user friendly they are.

But recently, I have changed to Quick Drag, Big Pit reels and they have made a big difference. Being able to change the free spool tension with the rods on the rests or adjusting the drag easily in mid fight, both without too much fiddling around, can be the difference between landing and losing a Carp."

CARP LINES

Nylon Monofilament fishing line or *Mono* for short, is a single strand of stretchy material that is, by far, the most common type of fishing line used in fishing today. From fine canal fishing with Bloodworm, right up to huge Marlin and Sharks, all use Mono for most of the time.

There are far too many different kinds to go through them all here. Each will have their own qualities, so it really is down to personal preference in the end.

As a good place to start for Carp fishing your line needs to be around 10 to 15lb breaking strain. This will be plenty strong enough, to cope with casting, fishing to snags and battling angry Carp

With balanced tackle in mind, try to think about a line that will be at home on the waters that you regularly visit, or the fish you are looking to catch.

If the water is cleaner and less coloured, use a clear line that has no colour.

You can get away with darker or even camouflaged line on cloudier venues.

You might be fishing a water that has sharp stones, freshwater mussels or Crayfish. In which case a tougher, more *abrasion resistant* line is needed so you don't get *Cut off*.

I think the point here is that there is no one perfect line that will work everywhere, all the time. You may need to see which line works best for you, or ask some local anglers for their opinions and suggestions.

If I had to choose one line to use for the rest of my life for Carp, it would probably be Daiwa Sensor. It's quite user friendly and has a dark, almost black colour to it. I've used it a lot in the past and it hasn't let me down.

BRAIDED LINES -

Before we talk about Braid, it is worth pointing out Braided fishing lines are banned for Carp fishing on DDAS waters (Unless individual fishery rules say otherwise).

If you do go to a venue where Braid is allowed, What is it?

Braid is made from a multitude of tiny woven fibres. Making it ultra abrasion resistant, MUCH thinner than Mono and has ZERO stretch.

Zero stretch means that all the power that you put into the cast, is transmitted directly to the weight, as none is lost through line stretch as would be the case with a Mono line. Braid is perfect for use with a

Marker float, which we look at later. Braid is lends itself perfectly to Spodding which, again, we will cover later on in the book.

Toms Top Tip #2

"When you are loading new line onto your reel, always soak your new spool of line in a bucket of water for at least one hour before you load it up.

Leave the spool in the water as you load it on and try to get the direction of the line as it comes off the shop spool, the same as the direction in which your reel turns.

If you don't you will end up with badly twisted line and find yourself in a proper mess when you go fishing."

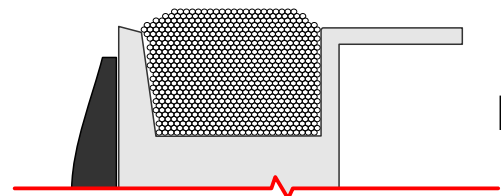


Fig 1.

Fig 1. shows a spool that has been over filled with line. the line will be pulled off the spool in the wrong order and the result will be a massive tangle.

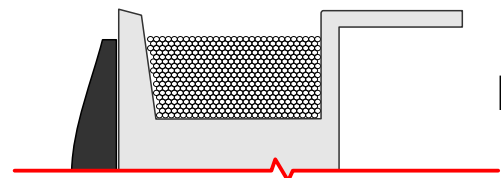


Fig 2.

Fig 2. shows a spool that is under filled. The line will drag over the front lip of the spool, causing friction and reducing the distance of your cast.

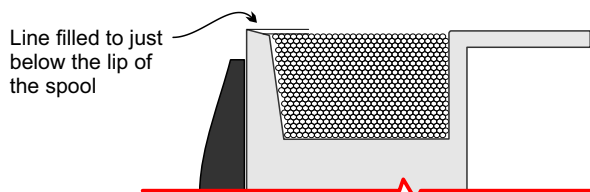


Fig 3.

Fig 3. shows a spool that has been correctly filled. The line is almost to the lip of the spool, but not quite. The line can peel off smoothly and cast well.

TERMINAL TACKLE

So now we arrived at biggest maze of all, Terminal Tackle. Hundreds of leads, thousands of bits and pieces, and probably a million ways of putting them together.

It's a good job we have our very own Carp expert to guide us through the confusion with just three little words....

KEEP IT SIMPLE!

Your tackle should always suit the area that you want to fish over. This will have a direct effect on how you set up your terminal tackle.

Here are some simple set ups that will get you started, how to use them and more importantly when and why.

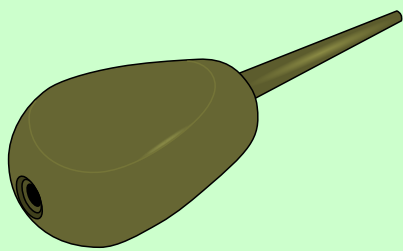
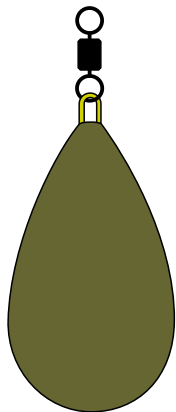
LEAD WEIGHTS (LEADS) -

The first choice of lead weight is a *Pear Lead*. This lead is one that you can use for most of your fishing.

Use one for fishing over a muddy or *Silty* area in the smaller sizes from 0.5oz to 1oz (15 to 30g), depending how far you want to cast it.

Using smaller sized leads will prevent the lead from becoming buried when they land on the bottom.

If the lake bed is more firm, then use a Pear Lead of around 2ozs (60g).



INLINE LEADS -

These leads are very streamlined and aerodynamic and, like most things in fishing, come in many shapes and sizes.

One real advantage of an Inline lead is that it is very compact.

This lends itself very nicely to be used with *PVA Bags*. (More on PVA bags later).

Inline leads can be tacked away into the bottom of the bag to make it nice and heavy at the bottom, ready for casting.

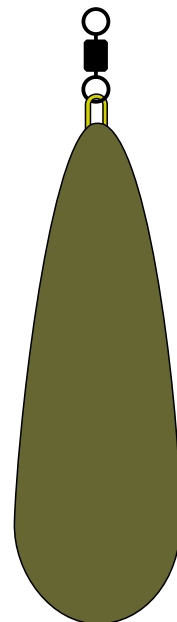
Inline leads are better used over firm or hard lake beds. If you use them on clay, silt or mud, they can bury themselves and the chances are that they will take the hooklink and bait with them.

DISTANCE LEADS -

As the name would suggest, are for casting a bait a fair way.

Wonderfully aerodynamic with a *weight forward* design to lead the bait through the air.

If you have the technique and the rods correct, the Carp that think they are safe sitting 100 metres or more from the nasty anglers will have a nasty surprise when this turns with a tasty bait attached to it.



From my experience of Carp fishing, I have used these leads for short range fishing over soft mud or silt.

Yes they will bury themselves a bit but, because of the shape, they will come out as easily as they went in.

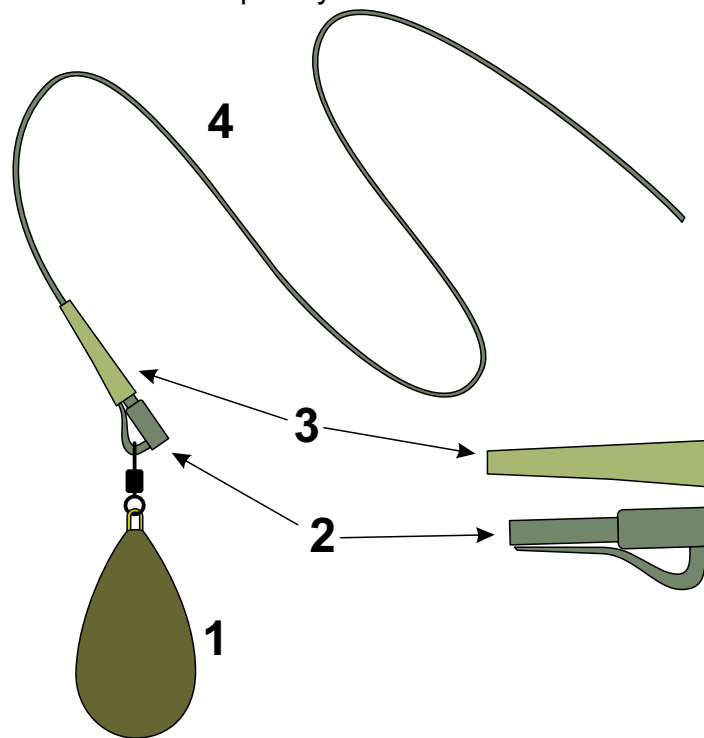
So, now we know which leads to use, How do we use them? Let's take a look...

THE LEAD CLIP -

This is probably the best place to start for anglers new to Carp fishing terminal tackle.

Technically known as a *Semi fixed lead*, it has the advantage of being both fixed and free running.

Fixed because the lead is held in place by the clip. Free running because the lead is not actually on the line itself and can be ejected if need be and, should your line snap, the Carp can loose the lead and the clip. Because we are using barbless hooks, the fish can free itself completely.

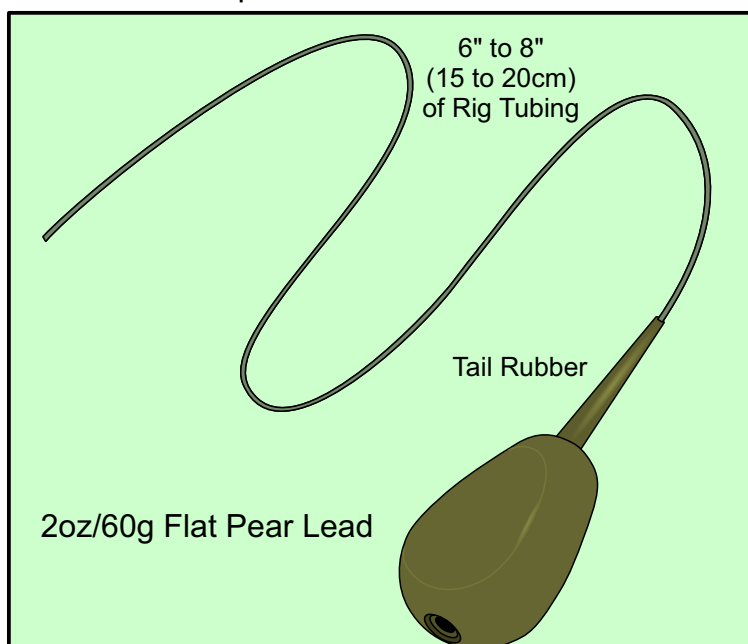


1. 2oz/60g Pear Lead
2. Lead Clip
3. Cone Rubber
4. 6 to 8" (15 to 20cm) Tungsten Rig Tubing

LEAD CLIP CONTINUED -

Better used over firm surfaces like gravel or firm clay. With a lighter lead however, a lead clip can be effective over lighter silt.

Another use for a lead clip is in a snaggy situation against bushes, reeds or Lilly pads. If the tail rubber is pushed on lightly, then if the fish gets into snags and gets caught up, the will be able to discharge the lead and will help to release the fish.



INLINE LEAD -

Inline leads are perfectly suited for using with PVA Bags because of how compact they are. Always put the lead in first otherwise they will not fly properly. You want the bag to fly lead first. so when you release the bail arm, it will fly like a dart. If you put the lead on the top of the bag as you make it, the lead will try to get in front of the bag of bait, start you tumble in the air and won't stop tumbling, losing distance and accuracy on the way.

There are many shapes of inline leads, but stick to a flat pear to start off with.

By the way, the rig tubing is there to protect the fishes scales during the battle. Scales can occasionally get lifted off by unprotected line, exposing the fish to potential infections. Rig tubing will prevent this from happening.



LEADCORE HELICOPTER -

This is the set up to use if your are new to a venue or unsure of what is on the lake bed. A good starting rig for exploring.

Tom explains;

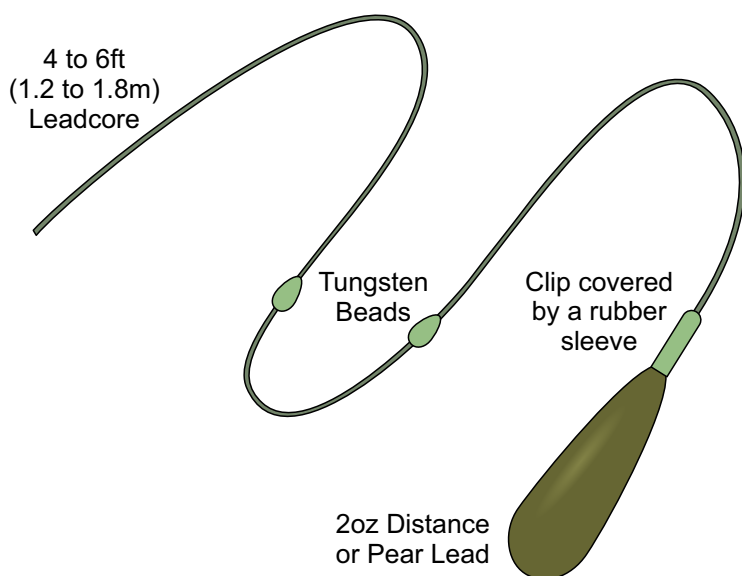
"If I am unsure of the bottom that I am fishing over, then I will quickly tie on a Leadcore Helicopter. This will enable me to fish a rig that I know will be presented perfectly on any material or substrate.

It doesn't matter if it is really soft silt, weed or a leafy, Choddy bottom.

Let's face it, no one likes a Choddy bottom!"

The lead weight is attached to Leadcore with a clip and a rubber sleeve. Further up the Leadcore there are two tungsten beads, between which, the hooklink is trapped.

Once cast, the lead weight can, pretty much do what it wants when it hits the bottom, allowing the hooklink to slide up the Leadcore in the space between the two adjustable beads, and land a little more slowly and gently onto the bottom, preventing it for being obscured by leaf litter and debris.



RIGS & HOOKLINKS

Carp fishing has been at the forefront of rig innovation for many years, and given us some true pioneers. One name that I would like to introduce many of you to, is the late, Lenny Middleton. Lenny is widely recognised as being the first angler to use a bait presented on a *hair* in a similar way as we know it today. Millions of anglers, myself included, need to give Mr Middleton a nod of thanks every time we catch a fish on a hair rig.

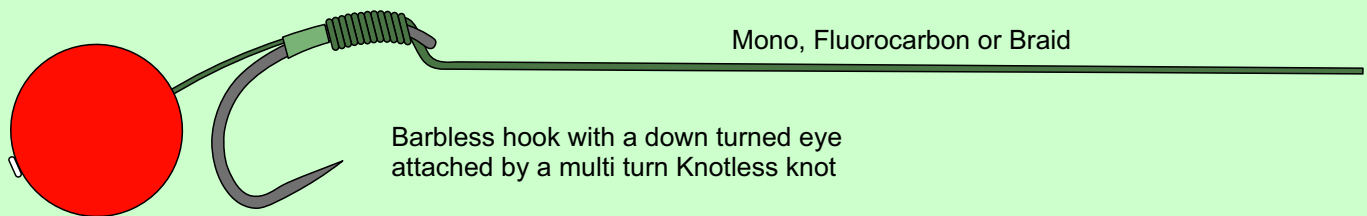
We all have our favourite rigs and there is not enough space to list them all, but Tom has picked out four patterns for us to take a look at and, although Tom makes his own rigs, similar patterns are available to buy from most good tackle shops.

BASIC HAIR RIG -

A modern twist on Lennys original hair rig. Made from Mono, *Fluorocarbon* or Braid. it's about as simple as it gets.

The down turned eye of the hook gives an angle to kick the hook round so it will virtually *grab* the fish. The hair can be positioned where you want it to be using the section of rig tubing on the shank of the hook.

Section of tubing to vary the position of where the hair exits the hook



THE CHOD RIG -

Reading this book, you will have seen the word *Chod* used a few times, but what does it mean?

Chod is a name given to leaf litter and other debris on the lake bed. This is particularly heavy through the Autumn months when all the leaves have fallen.

If the Chod is heavy it can mask bait and hide from sight of the fish. This is where the Chod rig comes in.

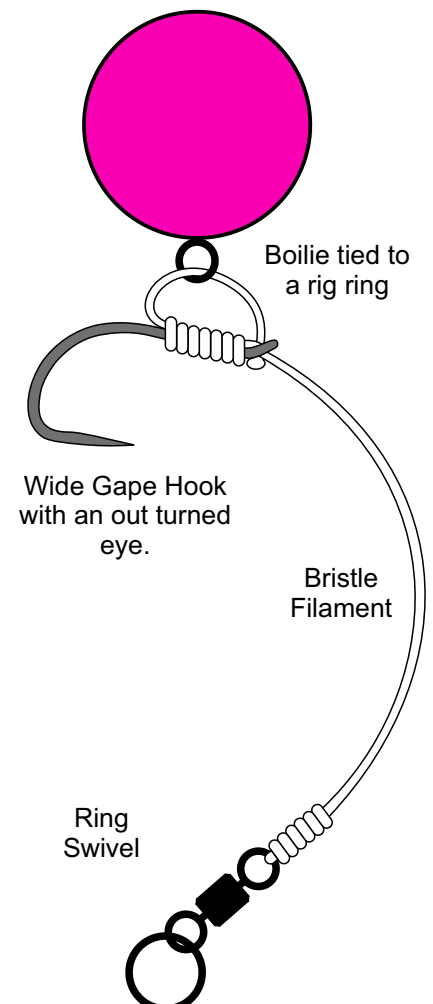
Made from a stiff mono called *Bristle Filament* the Chod rig can be bent into a desired curve and then steamed into position. The beauty of this curve is that, it doesn't really matter from which direction the Carp approaches the bait, the rig will always turn to face the fish.

A wide gape hook with an out turned eye is essential for any rigs the use Mono or Fluorocarbon. If you use a down turned eye, it would place extra pressure on the area where the line exits the hook and it could fail. An out turned eye allows the line to exit to hook freely and without any pressure points.

Chod rigs tend to be fairly short, only about 3 or 4" long (7.5 to 10cm) to keep the bait close to the bottom.

The whole rig is tied to a *Ring Swivel* to allow it turn freely if it needs to. The ring swivel runs between the two beads on a Helicopter rig.

A *Pop up* bait is tied onto the rig ring that is held captive in the 'D' shaped loop on the back of the hook.



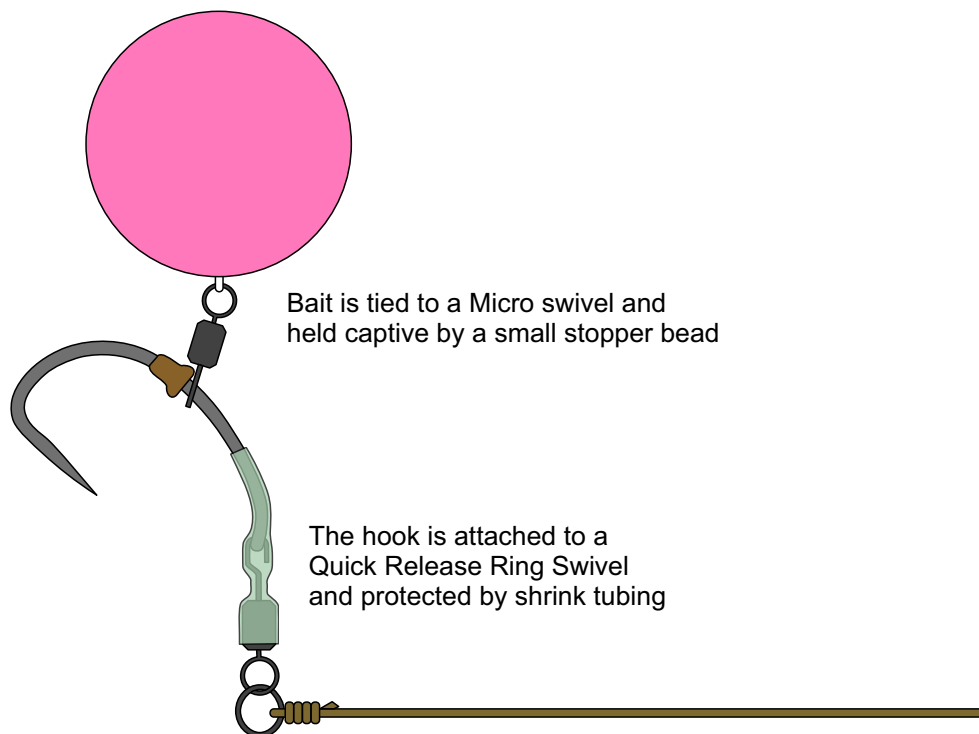
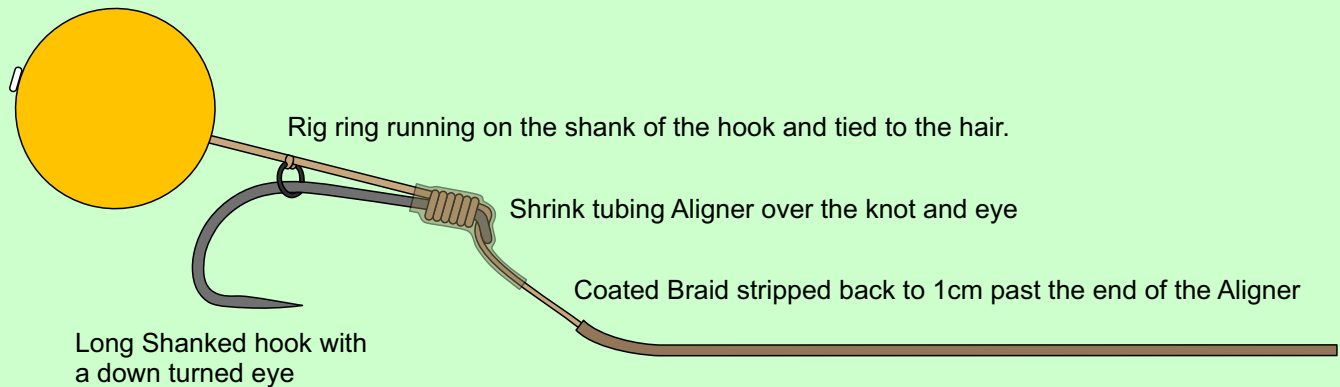
BLOW BACK RIG -

A classic rig that has a great track record. Not too unlike a standard hair rig, but with a notable differences.

Firstly the rig ring on the shank of the hook (Some versions use silicone tubing) allows the bait to be blow from the fishes mouth, but will leave the hook in position. The added rig tubing *Aligner* gives the hook extra rotation that helps the hook point find a hold.

Traditionally a longer shanked hook is used for a Blow Back rig, but you can use Shorter shanks, as long as it has a down turned eye.

The hooklink material needs to be a *Coated Braid*, with the coating stripped back so it is about 1cm past the end of the Aligner, to allow for a more natural movement.



THE RONNIE RIG -

Based on what many will have known as the *360 rig*, the Ronnie rig is much more fish friendly. It works in a similar way to the Chod rig in that it can rotate a full circle on it's swivel and is always ready for action.

The boom that it is attached to is made from a very stiff Bristle Filament.

Again a down turned eye is used and shrink tubing protects the fish from all the nasty metal bits.

Instead of a rig ring, the bait is tied to a micro swivel and held captive by a small silicone stopper bead.

BRAIDED HOOKLINKS -

Very strong with a thin diameter and zero stretch. You can feel every lunge and kick through the line from an angry fish. But all this comes with penalty. Being so thin and no stretch means that, in less experienced or careless hands, braid can cut the delicate flesh like a knife and can cause some horrific injuries to fish. You must be mindful of how you play a fish, set your clutch properly so that the line releases without excessive pressure. Follow the lunges of a fish and definitely don't bully the fish unnecessarily. The same risks do exist with mono, but they are greatly increased using braid.



MARKERS & SPODS

Earlier on we looked at Marker and Spod rods and they differ from normal rods. But what are they for?, I hear you scream.

Let's start with a Spod. A Spod is a rocket or bomb shaped bait delivery system that is used to deposit large quantities of bait pretty accurately with experience.



There are two types of Spod.

One with a button that will flip open as soon as it hits the water.

The other type is a rocket shaped Spod.

With or without holes in the, Rocket Spods also have fins or flights, and a highly visible, very buoyant coloured top. When it is cast into the lake, the tip will bob to the surface, allowing the contents to simply fall out.

All types of Spod have one thing in common. They are going to be heavy. Too heavy for most regular Carp rods to cast in most cases.

Spods were designed to create a large bed of bait on the lake bed. Anything from the size of a coffee table to a tennis court.

It can be time consuming and noisy, causing lots of disturbance on the water. You will need a settling down period

If you are only there for a day session, there is not much point chucking kilos of bait in for a day session with large Spods.

Smaller Spods are available for introducing smaller amounts of bait in for shorter sessions.

You put pretty much any bait in them. From Hemp to big boilies.

You will notice that some of the Rocket Spods have holes and some don't. The solid Spods are good for smaller particles, but they harder to reel in. The Spods with holes can take bigger baits and are easier to wind in.



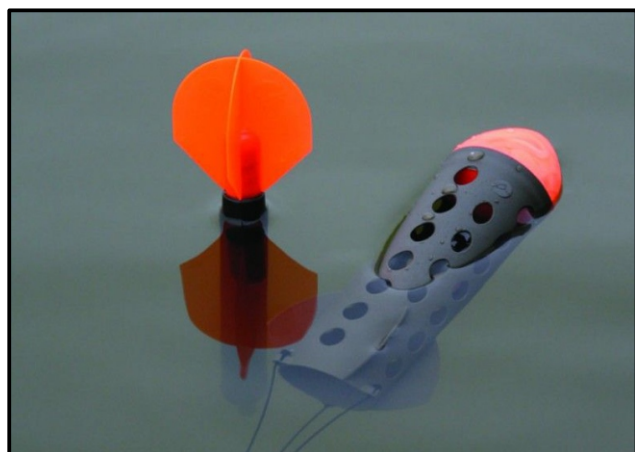
It is important to use the line clip on your reel when you are spodding. *Clipping up* increases your accuracy by limiting the distance of your cast, so you only have to get the direction right. A clip will reduce the *spread* of the bait too, but there might be times when you need a thinner spread of bait over the lake, so could leave the clip off. If you need to cast a long way with a Spod, there a couple of safety measures to think about.

The first is a *Shock Leader*. This a length of much heavier Mono or Braid that will absorb the pressure of the cast. The length of the Shock Leader should be measured at one and a half times the length of your rod, plus three or four turns on the reel.



The second is a *Finger Stall*. It looks a bit like a glove gone wrong and, in sense, it is.

The pressure on the line when you are bending into a big cast is huge. It's not great idea to be holding the line with your bare finger. It will cut like a knife and every other cast you do that day will find it's way into that cut. It's uncomfortable, believe me. A Finger Stall will protect your finger and give you more confidence to cast harder.



If using a Spod is the brute force of Carp fishing, then a marker float is the brains. Gathering intelligence of a lake in the same way as you would with a plummet, only at greater distances. Marking an area likely hold fish is very useful and taking notes with a pen and paper is a good way of building a map of your swim for future sessions.



A marker float, like the one seen above, is a buoyant float, usually with flights like a dart which are brightly coloured. It is used as a visual indicator of whereabouts in the lake your marker set is. But it's not only about sight. Below the float is a bead, then a free running boom. The boom has a large run ring, a stiff section about 15 to 20cm long, then a lead is attached to it by a clip.



Fortunately for us, tackle companies are saving us time and effort by producing marker float kits with everything you will need to get you started. One feature you may notice is the shape of the leads. Not smooth like normal weights, but bumpy and contoured to 'feel' they way across the various surfaces on the bottom of the lake.

So how does it all work?

Let's imagine that you are looking at a new water for the first time. You might have been given some reliable information by local anglers about the venue, but there is nothing like finding out for yourself.

For a start, let's do a cast to your far left, with your marker rod loaded with braid, if it's allowed. It will work with mono, just not as well. Tighten down to the lead and slowly, with the rod, pull the lead along the lake bed. You will start to 'feel' the lumps and bumps through the rod. If it pulls slow and smooth, then you're probably over a muddy, silty patch. Watch the surface as you do it. You may see bubbles from gases released by your lead, or even oily slicks on the surface.

You may feel the pull on the rod tip getting heavier and increasingly more difficult to pull through. It may even stop altogether. It is fairly obvious that

you have found weed and you will be glad that you fitted some heavier line or braid.

If it rattles and skips, then you'll be over stones or pebbles. Probably harder ground. If the lead doesn't stop or 'catch', then it's fair to assume it's clear or debris either naturally or cleared by feeding fish. You may have found a feed zone.

Time to see where you are. You can now release some line out until the float emerges above the water

Next you will to use your line clip on the reel to mark the distance. Reel in and get ready to use some distance sticks.

"What are Distance Sticks?" I hear you cry.

Distance sticks are two specially designed metal sticks with 2 metre cord between them. The sticks are pushed into the ground exactly 2 metres apart because of the cord



- Put the marker float set up next to one of the posts and wrap the line round the post a couple of times to stop everything moving (don't forget to do this with the Carp rods too).
- Using the rod, start wrapping the line around the two posts, counting as you go, until you reach the line clip.
- There should be a bead on the cord to mark where the rod tip ends up.
- Slide the bead to mark the spot.
- Now you've counted the wraps and, hopefully, remembered the number, you can wind the line off of the sticks.
- Do exactly the same with the rod you intend to fish on the spot.

- Remember to wrap the line around the first stick a couple of times. If you don't, the distances will be different.
- Wrap the line around the sticks only this time letting line off the reel until you reach the number of wraps and the rod tip is on the bead.
- Now you can clip up and wind it all back in again. Bait up the rig and you're ready to fish.

It sounds like a lot of messing around and maybe it is for some. But you have to ask yourself, just how much effort is too much?

There is an old saying that says, 'If you fail to prepare, then you are prepared to fail'.

Tom says;

"My distance sticks are the best idea since someone thought of using floating bread as bait".

A definite stamp of approval!

As a final word on the marker float, most of the rods will have depth markers on the blank set at 6", 12", 18" & 24" (15, 30, 45 & 60cm).

Once of have found your position, you wind the float down until it meets the lead. Then, pull the line off the reel and measure each pull on the rod. Once the float pops to the surface you can work out what depth you have. Using the depth markers will help you find flat spots, slopes, gullies and humps.

That's a lot to read about marking your swim. But time spent doing it and recording the information you find is priceless and will be proven by the fish you will catch.

BITE ALARMS

Like most things in fishing, you can spend as much or as little as you want. They will do the same job. But if you want your tackle to last, the chances are you will have to pay a little more. So with that in mind, let's talk about alarms.



A long standing argument is do you really need them?

Well, in modern Carp fishing they have become widely used and essential for night fishing of course.

Over the years they have become much more advanced and packed with technology. They have shrunk in size and cost, with £50 now buying what would have cost £400 a few years ago. It is one of those items that you have to let your budget dictate which to buy.

You can change the colours by pushing a button on some and others turn lights on in your *Bivvy* when you get a run, but the most basic features you need are,

- A volume control.
- Tone adjuster, so can set your alarms to have a different pitch for each rod. (personal choice)
- A sensitivity adjuster to stop your alarms 'beeping' on windy days.
- Drop back indicator. Not vital, but handy. The alarm will let you know by a different tone if the fish is moving away or towards you. There's nothing worse than picking the rod up and striking into slack line because the fish has moved in your direction.
- A remote indicator. Again, not vital, but a good feature to look for. Lets you have your rods on silent and the remote on quietly or even a silent vibrate, like a mobile phone.

Alarms do have a visual indicator with one or two flashing lights when the alarm is triggered. But Carp anglers very often if not always use a secondary, more traditional method of indication.

A WARNING FROM YOUR LEAD COACH -

Right at the beginning of this series of books for Juniors and beginners, I spoke about our responsibilities as anglers.

As your Lead Coach, I want to issue this warning to new anglers about bite alarms.

They are a fantastic way of indicating that you have a bite. The silence is shattered by the shrill sound of an alarm scream and it gets the heart pumping and your body fills with adrenaline.

What they are not, however, is an excuse to wander off halfway around the lake to talk to your mates and/or other anglers. If you want go for a walk, wind your rods in.

Most clubs and fisheries have rules to say that you must stay with your rods at all times. You are breaking the rules if you do not.

You could trip and hurt yourself by running to a screaming rod. If you break your arm, what happens to the fish?

If you have to leave your rods, be responsible and get someone to watch them or wind the baits in.

Another thing is to be conscious of other anglers. There is NOTHING more irritating than listening to someone setting their rods up with alarms constantly beeping away.

Lay your line to the side of the alarm or turn them off. Be considerate to others.

BITE INDICATORS

Bite Indicators or *Bobbins* as they are sometimes known, have been used for many years. Bread dough, washing up bottle tops, bits of tin foil, even a stick, have all made perfectly good indicators. But, just like everything else, innovation has improved on things that already worked. Countless different materials, colours, shapes, weights and prices, make which one to choose is a personal choice.

So, why use an Indicator at all? A visual indicator is a quicker way to identify which rod is active. You can add extra weights to it to make it heavier if it is windy or there is a strong undertow. On some indicators you will find a slot or a hollow chamber. This is where an *isotope* or *mini glow stick* can be used if you go night fishing to make the Indicator visible in the darkness. Or you can splash out on *illuminated indicators* that plug in to the alarm so it will flash along with the alarm lights.

There are several types of bite Indicator,

- Hangers (Bobbins)
- Swingers
- Sprung Indicators
- Monkey Climbers

HANGERS -

A coloured body with a line clip (sometimes adjustable) attached to a tether of a cord or chain. Literally hangs from the line and detaches when the rod is picked



SWINGERS -

A coloured body with a line clip attached to a solid arm that pivots just underneath the alarm. Has no lateral (side to side) movement, only up and down. Better for windy days.



SPRUNG INDICATORS -

A coloured body attached to a carbon or fibre glass quiver tip that fixes just under the alarm. Better for conditions where a strong side wind or undertow is present.



MONKEY CLIMBERS -

The grand daddy of all indicators. A rod is pushed into the ground somewhere between the reel and the butt ring of the rod. The line is then looped around an Indicator that slides up and down the rod. When you get a bite, the Indicator rises up the rod as the line is being taken by the fish. The line releases as the rod is picked up.



PODS & RESTS

Carp fishing can be a waiting game. Long periods of patience and anticipation. Your rods will be at rest for a lot of that so the question is, Pod, Goalpost or Banksticks? Confusion again....



A Pod is a frame with three or four legs that is adjustable to the ground. It keeps your rods together, nice and tidy, and looks cool!

Essential for hard ground or platforms.

Made from aluminium or stainless steel, and can be heavy to carry but very stable. Designed for two, three or four rods and vary in price from cheap to 'How much????'...

Goal post buzz bars are quicker to set up as long as the ground is soft enough to push the banksticks in to the ground. In fact, some Pods can be used as goal posts as well as in the standard configuration.

Goal posts are more compact to carry and store, as well as being easy to move if so required.

Available with one or two legs as pictured below.



The third kind of rod set up is the humble bank stick. Nothing flash here but just as effective as the more expensive options.



As you can see from picture above, on such uneven ground, a pod would be useless. You could get away with goal posts but single sticks can be angled much wider, to have the rods pointed straight at the area in which the bait lies, important when fishing towards or close to snags. No big bend in the rod giving the fish a chance to make it to sanctuary.

POD ACCESSORIES

It wouldn't be right to have a complete set up without needing some additional extras, and so it is with pods. Here's a list of useful bits and pieces;

SNAG EARS -

Not a medical condition but a device that sits behind the alarms and prevents a running fish from pulling your favourite rod and reel in.



GRIPPER BUTT REST -

You will need a rest for your rod handle and grippers do what the name suggests. Great for really windy days.



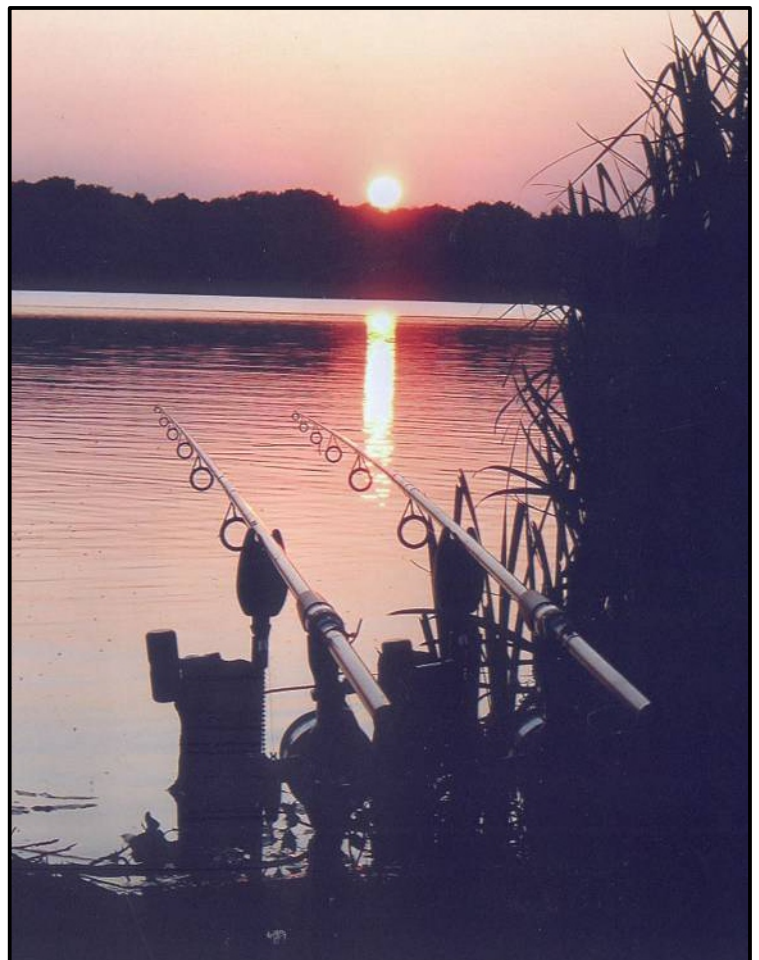
BANK STICK STABILISERS -

If you are considering using goalpost rests, then you might need some stabilisers. Attachments that fix to a standard stick to give extra support. Handy on stormy days or against aggressive takes.



STAGE STANDS -

In modern times, venues are often fitted with wooden platforms to fish from. This can pose a problem when it comes to setting up your rods. A pod is one solution but sometimes, especially on windy days, a pod can be blown around or even completely over, risking valuable fishing tackle to the waves. One inventive solution is Stage Stands. Specially machined fixtures that are screwed tightly to the platform. It goes without saying that permission should be asked before making holes in platforms. That are, at the end of the day, property of the fishery.



NETS & MATS

LANDING NETS -

To a beginner, a Carp anglers landing net looks ridiculously large.



Most fisheries will have rules stating that the arms of the landing net required at the venue are to be no smaller than 42" or roughly 1.07cm. When you get a 20lb Carp in the bottom of your net, you'll be glad you had that ridiculously large net.

The nets themselves have very fish friendly mesh, hung from strong fibre glass, composite or Carbon fibre arms. The arms locate in a *spreader block* which is then screwed to the landing net handle. When attached, the spreader puts tension on the draw string that joins the two arms together at the tip. Usually used with a 6" (2 metre handle).

Such a large net will become heavy when wet and difficult to manoeuvre.

Using a net float (right) will help prevent a sinking net. When a fish is landed, the arms are detached and placed side by side.

The arms are then rolled down the net until close to the fish.

Once the fish is safe, all fins folded down, it can be lifted out of the water and on to the waiting unhooking mat.

So much has been written about to get the bait out to the fish, how to fool the fish in to taking the bait and how to recognise a bite. But how do we get the fish into that very special photograph?



UNHOOKING MAT -

This area of fish welfare has become extremely important to how we are seen as anglers, and as environmentalists.

It has also become a personal crusade of mine to make sure the beautiful creatures that we spend so much time and money to catch, are given the utmost respect and care that we can provide. As anglers we must recognise that we have a responsibility to take the best of an animal that has given itself for our sport and pleasure.

Made from fish friendly nylon and filled with thick foam and/or *polyballs* to protect delicate scales. There are many different types of mats out there, it doesn't matter which one you get, just make sure you get one!



As a self confessed 'Mat Police Officer', imagine my delight when Carp Cradles were introduced... Some of the cradles you can buy makes me wonder if the fish aren't looked after better than the anglers that catch them? The one pictured has its own supportive frame to help keep the fish off the ground. Naturally these models are going to be at the high price range. Fortunately there are cheaper foam filled versions.

Regardless of which mat you buy, you should always keep a small bucket or pot of lake water next to the mat to wet it BEFORE you place the fish on it. Not only does this help protect the fish but, on summer days, the mat will get extremely hot and for a cold blooded creature, it can be uncomfortable to say the least.

Mats will also serve as a safe area over which to take photos. We'll talk about holding a fish later but just make sure you hold it low and absolutely DO NOT stand up when holding a fish.



BAIT

Tom writes,

“Carp fishing is 5% rigs, 5% bait and 90% location. A quote that has stayed with me for a while and it is definitely one worth remembering. Bait choice is important but it is all too easy to get swept away with the hundreds of different bait options”.



Frozen boilies - Arguably not quite as popular now than they used to be and certainly not as convenient. Frozen baits were once thought to be a far better option because of the preservatives that were thought to be used in shelf life baits. Of course, for those anglers that still like to make their own baits at home, freezing them is the best option.



WAFTERS -

Formerly known as critically a balanced bait, Wafers are designed to be semi buoyant. Cork dust is added to the boilie mixture to make the bait lighter but not as buoyant as a pop up. The big advantage of using Wafers is that, unlike bottom baits, a Wafer will gently settle on the bottom because their weight is balanced and almost neutral with a hook. This makes land softly on any leaf litter, debris or 'Chod'. These days you can buy bottom baits to match your Wafers. To steal a saying from fly fishing, you can 'match the hatch'.



BOILIES -

Made from a specially flavoured dough or paste. The mixture is then boiled in water for a couple of minutes for a softer bait or baked at a high temperature so they go really hard. This makes them last much longer in water and too tougher for small fish to eat.



Shelf life boilies - By far the most common and most popular way to buy your boilies. I would love to give you some advice about which boilies are best but twelve new baits came out while I was writing this sentence, and twelve more while you were reading it. This is something that you will have to find out for yourself. There many good companies to chose from and local advice will help.



Pop up baits - Rigs like the Ronnie or Chod rigs are purpose made for pop up baits. Pop ups are floating baits that need to be weighted down to the bottom. The range of sizes, flavours and colours is enormous. Try to find two or three that feel confident using and stick with those. Many pop ups are strongly favoured and/or brightly coloured to be used as single baits with out to much, if any feed.

So, we now know that there many different types of boilies. They will all promise you fantastic success beyond your wildest dreams. I once asked a chap who had caught a few, what bait he was using. *"Boilies mate"* was the reply. An answer that had a thousand, million different variations.

Tom tells us,

"I break down my fishing into the four seasons of the year, Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter.

The Spring and the Autumn will see the fish taking on extra energy stores. In the Spring, after a long winter and before the effort of spawning. In Autumn, all animals will prepare themselves for the winter months and fish are no exception. During these period of the year, I will use a natural looking, 'meaty' boilie that has low visibility. Two baits that I would recommend are CC Moore Pacific Tuna or Sticky Baits Krill.

As it starts to get colder, fish activity starts to slow and their eyesight starts to fade. Sweet baits contain vital energy that will sustain a fish in cold water, that combined with a bright highly visible colour will score well if you brave enough to face the cold yourself.

'Citruz' boilies from Nash smell good enough to eat myself! Highly attractive baits that have caught me some winter warmers in the past. All baits have the option of being enhanced with sweet additives like Molasses, or other bait soaks and 'Glugs' to make the baits ooze with flavour and attraction".



Pellets - The early days of using pellets saw anglers reaching for *Trout Pellets*. A pellet with a very high fish oil content that Carp found very hard to digest. Not to mention the effect it was having on the water. But, since pellets have become available with a lower oil content, they are now probably the biggest fish attractor in modern fishing. Pellets for match and general coarse fishing are not available in such a wide variety of flavours as they are in Carp fishing. Often pellets will match the flavour of your favourite boilies, along with pop ups, Wafers, pastes, glugs , dips and liquids. Matching the hatch is much easier once you have found a bait you are confident in. Everything is done for you.

Sweetcorn - Although we have covered some of these baits earlier in the booklet, it is worth talking about how they are used in the world of Carp fishing. Sweet Corn is a bright, sweet and more importantly, cheap bait that works really well all through the year. Carp have poor eyesight in cold water, so in the winter they are particularly effective I the winter. Every piece of feed is filling, so be careful how much you put in. Also, if you over do it, you will turn the lake bed into a bright yellow carpet that fish may be scared to swim over. Realistic plastic corn offered as a pop up bait over a small bed of loss grains of corn can be a real winner. Corn is great for bulking out Spod mixes too.



Maggots - There is no doubt that the humble maggot comes into its own in winter.

Tiny bags of juicy protein in a skin, maggots have very little food content to fill up fish quickly. Live maggots will be less likely wriggle away when they cold and even if they do, Carp stay in your swim longer to look for them.

Dead maggots have the advantage of not wriggling away and just lay on the bottom, but be sure they fresh and don't re-freeze them.

Remember that maggots will attract any small nuisance fish too.

Bloodworm - Larvae of the Midge fly, bloodworm are carnivorous creatures that live in established waters, with a muddy bottom. They are tough and need very little oxygen to survive. All fish will eat bloodworm, in fact they vital to aid digestion because they are a laxative...They make fish poop!

Because they are so small, expensive and difficult to get on a hook, they have only been used by match anglers. Today they are available to Carp fishing in a wide variety of ways, from boilies, pellets, liquids and groundbait. The fish love them all.



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BREAD & SURFACE BAITS -

On warm sunny days Carp will lay near the surface taking in the sunshine. They will feed there too and that's where surface baits come in.

Bread is one of the most traditional baits. It's sweet, fluffy and cheap! 16 slices for a quid. You can't argue with that!

Bread can be tricky to keep on the hook, but special bait bands, called Bread Bombs, have made life much easier. Cat or dog biscuits make a great floater baits. The mixture of shapes and colours really confuse inquisitive Carp. Make sure with any bait, that the fish are feeding confidently before casting in your hook bait.



PVA

PVA - Polyvinyl Alcohol bags were originally designed for use in hospitals for soluble laundry bags. Now they widely used Carp fishing as way of getting controlled amounts of bait to an area very accurately. Not just bags either, mesh stocking, string and foam nuggets are all useful to the modern Carp angler. One thing about all PVA though, you MUST prevent moisture from getting to it. Many a session has been ruined by a sudden rain shower. Keep it covered up! Solid bags allow many kinds of baits to be used. From maggots to boilies and 'wet' baits like corn, hemp and groundbait can be used, as long as they are dried or made/covered with a PVA friendly liquid first.

Solid bags allow your rig to be placed inside with the feed to create a streamlined package that can be cast a very long way. Providing that you've tied it correctly!



PVA MESH -



Some anglers prefer mesh because they find it's easier to use. Mesh bags can be tricky to tie, where as mesh is filled through a tube and then simply tied off with a knot. Mesh has a different 'action' to solid bags too. Bags will gently melt away, where as mesh will release bait almost explosively if it's packed in tightly enough. You can make your mesh bait bags at home and tie them to your rig or just slip the hook through the mesh and away you go. PVA String, Tape and Nuggets.

PVA String or Tape can be used to tie off solid bags or to tie a mesh bag to your rig. You can thread boilies on it and then tie it to your hook for a 'Stringer' presentation.



PVA Nuggets are used to make the hook buoyant until the PVA dissolves, leaving your baited hook to flutter gently on the bottom without damaging the delicate hook point. It also stops the hookbait from burying itself in a soft bottom and can prevent tangles during the cast. You can either push a nugget over the hook point or lick a nugget and fold it over the hook so it sticks to itself. This will stop the hair getting tangled on really big casts.

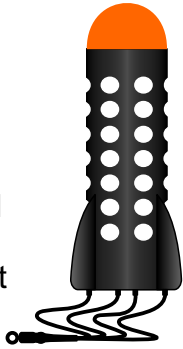


TOMS TOP TIP #4 -

“When using a solid PVA bag, always pierce the bag with a baiting needle a few times before casting. The holes will let any air out and stop the bag from floating.”

SPODS

Spods - Although we have briefly discussed Spods in an earlier chapter, it's worth having a closer look because there are quite a few to choose from. A classic Spod is rocket shaped with holes, fins and a buoyant coloured top. So that's the basic Spod, but there are many more. Here's a few types that are worth considering.



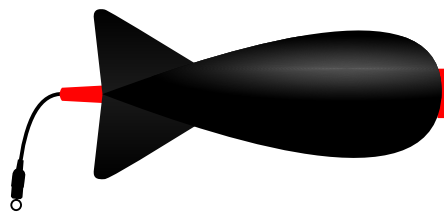
A SOLID SPOD -

For wetter baits and mixes. Much more difficult to reel in and acts more like a parachute in water.



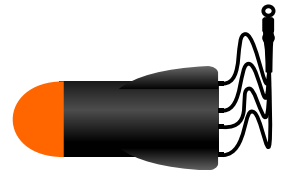
SPOMB -

Has a trigger at the nose that pops the spring loaded catch on impact with the water. Very popular in modern Carp fishing.



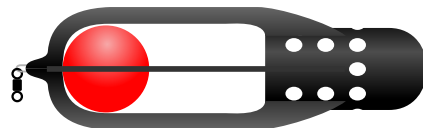
MINI SPODS -

For smaller amounts of bait. Obviously!



A SURFACE SPOD -

Works up-side-down and uses a hollow ball that opens the Spod, releasing the bait inside. For fishing floating biscuits or pellets at distance.



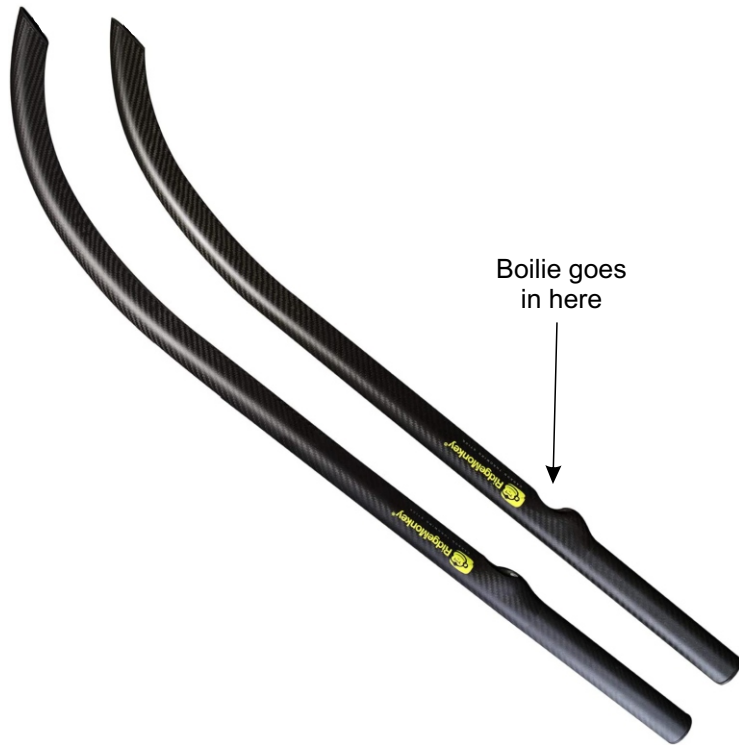
A BOILIE ROCKET -

Unsurprisingly designed for Boilies. This version has a door that opens on impact with the water. Others work the same way as normal Spods.



THROWING STICKS & CATAPULTS

Again coming in all shapes and sizes, a throwing stick can be tricky to use at first. A single boilie is dropped in from the top or 'posted' through a special window and used with a strong flicking action. The sudden stop launches the boilie up the tube. The curved shape of the stick gives the boilie a back spin so that, when in the air, it will actually rise and fly further. Baits can put a very long way with practice, but boy do they make your arms ache!



CATAPULTS -

The good old catapult still has a part play with different versions for pellets, particles (Left) and boilies (Right).



LUGGAGE

BIVVIES & SHELTERS -

Let's look first at the largest item you might like to consider.



A bivvy, short for bivouac, is specially designed tent for fishing overnight or in bad weather. Light, tough and should be fairly easy to put up, a bivvy is just another item with a million different options to choose from. Prices will range from under £100, to close if not over £1000! So your budget will help decide. A good bivvy will have a selection of tailor made extras like ground sheets (if not sewn in or fitted), over wraps for colder weather, porches and extensions. Choose one to suit your needs. You won't need a multi person super hotel bivvy for an overnighter on your local lake.



Oval brolly systems are designed to be easily moved if need be and double as a bivvy or a shelter. A lot of experienced anglers prefer this type of bivvy.

CHAIRS & BEDCHAIRS -

If you are fishing overnight, you will need something to sleep on. Of course angling companies have been kind enough to give us a billion different options. As usual, price will dictate your choice. But make sure it's comfy and that it actually fits inside your bivvy! Don't laugh, it's happened before (not to me!)



Some models will have specially designed sleeping bags that will zip on and off for cleaning, and special 'crash zips' for a fast exit for screaming alarms in the middle of the night.



CHAIRS -

It is essential to be comfortable when you're waiting for the fish to play the game (Left). The chair on the right fits across the frame of your bed chair is very handy and space saving inside your bivvy, especially if it's raining. The Moon chair (Bottom) in the was included because it just looks so comfortable!



HOLDALLS & QUIVIERS



HOLDALLS -

Padded rod bags (Left) keep valuable rods safe and protected, with padded separators between each rod and pouches to protect each reel. The holdall in the picture will hold up to 6 rods and reels plus a landing net handle and other accessories.

QUIVIERS -

(Right) For anglers who prefer to travel lighter or want to get fishing faster if time is short. Of course, your rods and reels will need extra looking after because they are not quite so well protected as they be in a larger holdall. Delicate rod tips can be protected with rod socks and reels with zip up pouches.

HARDCASE -

(Below) These more coarse fishing styled rod bags are somewhere in between, and give good protection to rods.



BARROWS -

All this new gear needs shifting unless you want to carry everything to your swim?

By far the easiest way is to use a barrow. You could use a normal wheel barrow, but it's much nicer to have proper one.

You can spend a lot of cash on barrows, but you're budget will dictate which one you end up with.

Super barrows come with side and end frames, water carriers, extra external bags, extra wheels and even electric motors!

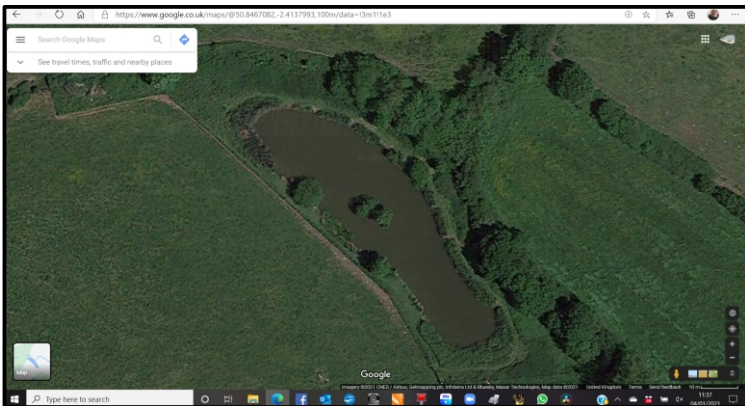
Extra price and extra weight.

So called 'session barrows' are smaller, lighter, much more compact and cheaper. A more basic design for shorter sessions.

LUGGAGE

Spend all the money you want on tackle and accessories, but if you don't know where the fish are, you may as well save yourself a walk and fish in the car park.

Watercraft, especially for fish that seen a hook before, is everything. Location, location, location.



Modern technology like Google Maps can give you a huge amount of information, and not just about how to get there. Bars, islands and which way is North will all become apparent on your phone or laptop. Once you know where to go, get permission to walk around the venue and if it's small enough, walk round again. Keep your eyes open for signs of feeding fish.

BUBBLES -
(Right) and cloudy or muddy water are all signs of feeding fish. Swirls



from tails and bow waves of swimming fish, disturbed lily pads and shivering reeds all give away the position of a lake's inhabitants. Sightings of the fish may happen when they 'show' themselves with head and shoulders or by leaping clear of the water completely.

Walking round the venue will allow you to see features above and sometimes below the surface. Paying attention to the margins might allow you to see the bottom and be a window to how it is made up.



Islands are a sanctuary for fish and both the margins and islands with form part of the patrol routes of the Carp.

On larger venues accurate distance casting can be a real advantage to reach fish that think they safe in inaccessible areas. If other anglers have baits at

100 metres and you can put a bait at 110, guess which one the fish will find first.



Take note of the behaviour of water birds. A sudden taking to wing or other commotion could signal Carp activity. Swans serenely gliding along may sometimes swerve to the left or right after an encounter with a patrolling fish.



In the summer, you will see Carp aimlessly swimming around in packs or on their own. Or are they? At your chosen venue, watch Carp moving in summer because they will often follow 'Patrol Routes' that would use during low pressure days, on the bottom. Make note of these routes and learn them. The same can be said of rest areas.

ISLANDS - Absolute magnets for fish with extra margins for feeding from, extra snags to hide under and other kinds of inviting features. Patrol routes will naturally have to go around islands, so the ends or points on an island are an excellent spot to set a trap.





GRAVEL BARS - The Motorways of the lake. High pressure will see Carp in shallower water on top of the bar and, during low pressure, they will be at the base of the bars or in between. If possible, fish on the back of the bar rather than the front. Your line will be hidden by the bar itself and away from causing false line bites.



MARGINS - Same or similar to the margins of any islands. You can observe the fish, bait an area very accurately and place your bait exactly where it needs to be. Make sure you have a spread of bait to attract fish in and focus them into a baited area.



WEED - With an endless supply of food sources, weed and lilies are a haven for fish. A gap in the weed or a hole can be a holding area for feeding fish. A carefully placed bait at the mouth of a weed channel to tempt a patrol or around the edges of a weed hole where all the food lies.



CHANNELS - Carp get funnelled into channels through weeds, islands and reeds. Concentrating them into a small area. The entrances and exits of these corridors are prime positions to lay your bait traps.



SNAGS - Under tree branches and through tree roots, weeds, reeds and lily pads. All give Carp sanctuary from anything that may trouble it or shelter from the sun's rays. You can grab a strong rod, heavy line and some real animal hooks to drag the fish out. There is nothing wrong with fishing in or close to snags, but I do sometimes wonder if the need to catch a Carp over rides thoughts of their safety. Damage to fish can be avoided with strategic baiting and patience. Try to create a bait trail to lead Carp away from those safe snags, to an area where they can be hooked, played and landed safely. Yes, I know it's easy to write this stuff but, a fish caught with clever strategy cannot fail to bring more satisfaction than one caught with brute strength, In my humble opinion...



We have spoken in detail about finding depth and feature marking already, so I won't go into the any further. It is worth noting that depth will have significant effect on the location of target fish. Features like gravel bars and margins, both close and along islands, will harbour food and where there's food, there's fish.

Temperature plays a part in finding the right depth too. Warmer winds will see the fish heading towards shallower areas. The opposite will occur for colder winds, making the fish go deeper.



WIND - Northerly winds will naturally be colder and usually bring cold rain and/or snow.

Easterly winds will be cold and bitter.

Southerly winds will, as a rule, be warmer. But they can bring thunderstorms and rain.

Westerly winds are most common and generally warmer, but they can bring rain too. Of course it is never as simple as that. In the winter, a south or westerly wind can be a blessing because of the warmer temperatures they may bring. North or Easterly winds can be an advantage in the hot summer with cooler conditions.



So, where do you fish when it's windy?

Many anglers believe having the wind blowing into

your face is the way to go. Sometimes they are right. A facing wind brings with it food and oxygen, the two most favourite things of a Carp.

Fishing facing into a south and westerly wind is always going to be warmer and the fish will know that. They will usually be found on the windward bank.

North and easterly winds, being colder, fish are not going to be comfortable being blasted with cold air and water. So the opposite bank from where the wind is blowing is usually better. This known as 'fishing on the back of the wind'.

The next two subjects are more complicated. An important part of weather is air pressure and the effect it has on fish. Understanding air pressure will give you a big advantage against the fish and other anglers. Enough to make you look pretty good.



Air pressure is measured in Millibars, or Mb for short. Let's start with sea level, the thing from which everything is measured.

Air pressure at sea level is 1013Mb.

Air pressure under 1013Mb is regarded as 'Low pressure' and a measurement over 1013Mb is regarded as 'High Pressure'.

Because we are inland and higher than the sea level, 1010Mb is regarded as high pressure.

Low air pressure will raise oxygen levels in water.

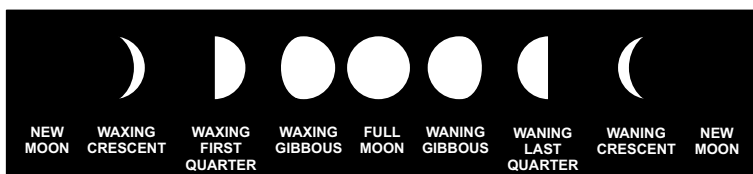
High air pressure over extended periods in the summer will lower oxygen levels in water. The oxygen in the lower layers of the water, near the bottom, will be much less than the upper levels, near the surface.

This explains why Carp spend much of their time 'Sun bathing' during the warmest days. Of course, fish are cold blooded animals and the warmth of the sun on their bodies will also make them feel more comfortable.

From a fishing point of view, and I have seen this many times, fishing hard on the bottom is much less effective in these conditions. Zig rigs may be a better option than bottom baits.

Low pressure will see oxygen levels rise and the Carp sink lower and out of sight. You may see large patches of bubbles like a Jacuzzi as the Carp rip the bottom up looking for food.

So it's obvious that periods of low pressure give you the best chance of bagging a big one. Low pressure in the winter will cause air and water temperatures to plummet and fish will switch off in an instant. Days like these can leave you scratching your head in frustration.



"Big Commons get caught on a full moon"...

Well, there is no real scientific proof to back up that statement. However, science has shown us a new moon often brings lower pressure. Lower pressure causes insects to hatch. Carp feed better during periods of low pressure. One of the beautiful coincidences of nature that we would do well to remember.

The Moon. The Sun.

The wind and weather.

What does it all mean?

All have their own and very different effects on the fish and how we try to catch them.

As usual, there is no real substitute for experience and asking advice from those more experienced than us.

Get to know your favourite venues and learn their behaviours and moods.

Quiet time or time spent just watching the water will increase your knowledge now you know what to look for.

When You start to understand water craft, then your Carp fishing journey will then have truly begun.



SUMMARY

There is no doubting the popularity of Carp fishing.

I'm not surprised that Carp are a favourite fish of many anglers. Their beauty and power are truly addictive to the point of an obsession.

I used to love my Carp fishing sessions and always think back to them with great fondness. The thought having a full 24 hours of fishing ahead of me was very relaxing. Although, when the fish did go crazy at night and feed like mad, I did question why I was outside, on a bed less comfortable than my own at home, being woken up by hungry fish every 50 or 60 minutes.

The Carp anglers of old probably had the best of it, before the commercial fisheries became so wide spread. Seeking more wild Carp to catch on misty, unexplored lakes, must have been very exciting.

But today, Carp are more accessible to the masses and Carp fishing is a massive industry. Millions of people sit in anticipation of their alarms screaming off, hoping for a new 'PB' to be on the other end.

I do think that the obsessive search for a new person record fish does take away some of the excitement of actually fishing for Carp sometimes. Your ability in the eyes of others is measured by your achievement, much the same as match fishing.

Popularity also means pressure for the fish themselves. Mouth damage is a constant threat for today's Carp. The lack of experience, knowledge and vital skills, results in some terrible injuries for the fish. Scars that will not go away and leave a poor impression to anglers that, will in no doubt, catch that fish again one day.

It's not just Carp fishing of course, lack of responsibility exists in all angling circles.

Be the angler that you wish to see in others.. Try to care for each fish as if it was your first. Our actions can leave lasting impressions for good as well as bad.

Above all else, enjoy your Carp fishing. Enjoy the nature that you are surrounded by. Enjoy the battles with these magnificent creatures. Enjoy the modern technology and the advice of fellow Carp anglers, but don't forget the little things that make a big difference.

Carp fishing is here to stay and I'm glad about that. All the hours of waiting are well paid back when the line starts pouring off of your reel....