

YOU CAN TEACH AN OLD DOG NEW TRICKS

Long-time carp angler **Shaun Harrison** shows us how a slight adjustment to his rig accounted for a lovely, scaly common.

Shaun Harrison has been on the carp fishing circuit for a long time and has picked up a wealth of experience along the way. He has accounted for hundreds of 30lb carp, and bigger, from home and abroad but it's his skill of adapting to any water that separates him from the crowd.

Just because he's been there and done it doesn't mean that he knows it all and Shaun will be the first to admit this. I meet him on the banks of a tricky little pond in Nottinghamshire and discover how a

friend reminded him of the advantages of keeping an open mind.

"I've been fishing this two-acre pond on and off for the last few years, mainly in winter. It has surrendered several old, scaly warriors to more than 20lb and up until now it has been relatively easy. However, rig pressure

seems to have put them on their guard and I've had to go back to the drawing board," says Shaun.

The water, known as The Inner Sanctum, is an ancient ballast pit dug originally for the railway situated



Chopped baits release loads of attraction.

SHAUN'S LEAD SET-UP



STEP 1

Thread a lead over the top of some tubing and follow this with a rubber and swivel.



STEP 2

Slide the lead over the rubber and tie on your chosen hooklength.

next door. It's a small, secluded pond full of character and history. Sweeping willows, underwater snags and silty gullies provide ideal havens for our quarry. There are muddy, brown cattle drinks leading to the water's edge and small openings in between the snags that create these enclosed little swims. Each one gives you the option of casting towards a fish-holding area.

"I visited The Inner Sanctum a few weeks back for a short day session with a good friend, Dave, and it really opened my mind. After the few years of quality fishing here I was beginning to take this place for granted. Initially, it was nice, relatively predictable fishing – my usual self-tied combi-links with boilie hook baits would always do the

A rig adjustment can often bring success.

Kapow!

Shaun opts for a supple hooklength.

ANGLER FILE

SHAUN HARRISON

Age: 43

Nickname: None

UK PB: 40lb 6oz

Sponsors: Quest Baits and
Free Spirit

HOW TO PREVENT PVA GLOBULES



STEP 1 Break up boilies between your fingers and add to Funnel Web PVA.



STEP 2 Create a PVA bag as normal by compressing the boilie with a plunger.



STEP 3 Once it has been formed, squeeze the PVA bag tightly, like so.



STEP 4 Now nick the hook point through the side, opposite the two knots.

business. However, more recently they've become warier. It could be the crystal-clear water or my blatant approach. Whatever the reason, something had to change, and after being thrashed by Dave, who managed four fish to my blank, I rethought my strategy carefully for this session," he explains while tying up a few rigs for the day.

The Monday-morning sunshine shimmers on the surface and springtime activity is well in evidence, with frogs dotted around the weed beds. There was a frost first thing but the sun has burnt it away in no time at all.



Can Shaun's lucky bobbin do the business?



Washed-out baits can fool wary fish.



Lined up and ready to cast.



A mixture of baits help to confuse the carp's preference.

"I've opted for a swim that catches the first rays of the day and therefore warms up the quickest. It's a narrow bay, full of overhanging canopies and beds of silkweed.

"Nevertheless, there are some hard spots in between these weedy areas that make presenting a bait easy. I've accurately placed one hook bait halfway up the steep shelf in shallow water and the other on the edge of the drop-off. That way I can kill two birds with one stone.

"The hard spots that I'm targeting aren't your obvious gravel areas that scream out danger and make your rig stick out like a sore thumb. They're formed by consistently feeding on the area carefully. Before I leave, I will make a conscious effort to feed these areas with bait.

"When I first looked there was all sorts of bottom debris, such as silkweed, silt and chod covering the spots. However, once I gained the carp's confidence they fed regularly and cleaned it themselves. When a fish feeds it will sift through all the fragments of weed and detritus, ridding what they don't want and digesting the

goodness. They will continue to do this and eventually the spot will become clean and hard. You'll notice how fine the silt has been become – it looks like a handcrafted spot that you've created yourself," Shaun says while pointing at the area.

With the baits in position, we sit back sipping tea, hoping to be interrupted by a belting run. While doing so, Shaun talks me through the water temperature and Metcheck forecast that he has printed off.

"I'm particularly interested in the water temperature and conditions. Carp's feeding habits most definitely change with the weather and time of year. According to the forecast we're going to receive light winds today and a weather warning is in place for tomorrow. We're in the lull before the storm at the moment. The water temperature is cold, 44F to be precise, which is enough for a bite, in my opinion. Anything below 39F and I'd be worried," he explains while checking the temperature gauge.

Shaun then receives the first line bite of the day, which causes his Shaun The Sheep bobbin to shudder. At least they're moving in this cold water, which gives him confidence.

An hour passes and, after contemplating what to do, Shaun decides to drop one of the rods shorter. The fish could be feeding in the margins, hence the positive liner he received. As he adjusts his rig, which features supple, Dynon hooklengths and heavy rubber tubing, he casts it short with an underarm flick.

"When Dave trounced me it caused a huge rethink in my fishing here. I'm sure that the carp have become wary of brittle hooklengths. All

Dave's fell to supple braided hook links. It could be the different feel, colour or the way that it lays over the contours. Whatever the case; I've decided to change.

"One thing that I like to do with the supplier material is use a PVA bag or stringer to minimise tangles. You'll also notice that I'm a fan of using heavy tubing as a leader material. It's very safe and doesn't cut the fish's flanks and scales like leadcore or fluorocarbon could. To ensure that it lays flush on the lake bed and fills the contours, I snip it into sections and don't bother straightening them. What stick or twig have you seen that's as straight as a ruler? Your tubing needs to mimic the natural detritus on the bottom, making it as inconspicuous as possible.

"The tubing also acts a bit like a flying back lead. When you cast, the tubing will travel back up the line pinning down the final section of your line," he says, as another liner has him leaping to his feet in anticipation of a take.



High vantage points give a better view of the lake.



Keep still when preparing to cast.

THE ROD NEAR THE SNAGS RIPS OFF, RESULTING IN A ONE-TONER.

What intrigues me about his lead set-up is the fact that he isn't using a safety-clip system.

"After years of carp angling I've learnt not to jump on the bandwagon and that doing something different can catch you more carp. My lead system basically allows your weight to run

over the tubing freely should a fish become tethered and break the line. It's ultra-safe and very sensitive," he says. "It isn't always essential to drop the lead while playing a fish. If the water is relatively snag free I prefer to retain it."

Things are slow, so Shaun decides to go in search of some fish, leaving me to mind the rods. He climbs a couple of trees to gain a better view of the lake but no fish are evident. It seems completely devoid of carp and considering that there are more than 20 in here it's a bit of a mystery. He returns with a puzzled look on his face and decides to try a hi-viz pop-up as a last resort. This is once again placed on one of the clean areas in between the weed.

As the sun disappears and we're experiencing nigh-on perfect conditions, with plenty of cloud cover and the occasional spot of rain. We're forced to don the winter jackets too because the temperature has dropped a few degrees.

At last, the rod near the snags rips off, resulting in a one-toner. Shaun's next to the rods and soon has it clear of any obstacles. It's important to immediately steer the fish away from the snags and not give them an inch, otherwise you'll be asking for trouble.



Always keep an eye on the weather.



Precise casting will bring results.

rimmed tubing will lay
ush on the contours and
ut of the carp's way.



The temperature
drops in the
afternoon.

"It might be one of those
pretty commons, I can just make
out the golden flanks," Shaun
comments.

Five minutes later a scale-
perfect common is in the net
and looks to be in excess of
10lb. It's a lovely, dark fish
tailed in the middle of the
bottom lip; the hooklength
change has paid dividends. A
few shots are taken and it's
soon returned to its home,
giving Shaun time to reflect
on the tricky day's fishing.

"I've had to work for that fish.
They seem on edge at the moment and
I can't understand why. We did receive
a heavy flood a few weeks back and
all that cold water going in may have
shook them down. Either that or half
of them have escaped. Nevertheless,
we still managed to bag one for the
camera, and a pretty one, too. It's a
very old fish, possibly over 40 years
of age, and looks cracking. My rig
alteration definitely helped to fool that
fish, so I've proved that it is possible to
teach an old dog new tricks!



Shaun always uses
chops; they release
more goodness.



Build a feeding spot by
introducing bait on a
little-and-often basis



Saved by the
bell – a stunning
common over 22lb