

01 Shaun Harrison

Some of the B.C.S.G. members at the 40th Anniversary celebrations



Joe Morgan mentioned a couple of issues back that he was sat at home on a Friday evening the day before his birthday typing up his contribution and asking how sad was that? I'm sure you made up for it the following day, Joe, but as for being sad – I'm not so sure as there will be plenty out there who benefited from your tapping of the keyboard.

In complete contrast I'm sat here straight after spending Friday lunch to Sunday lunch at the British Carp Study Group 40th Anniversary celebrations and have to say it was an absolutely superb event, really digging home just why I am so proud to be a member. It was great to see such a big turn out of members along with several big names from the past such as Peter Frost, Dave Stewart, Roger Bowskill, Duncan Kay and his side kick Banger to mention just a few. A great time to catch up, swap a few stories and be a little silly too, but alas, I have other things to comment upon and cover here so let's dive into the 'nitty gritty' world of The Rotary Letter.

Zigging

Hands up, it is something I tend to do as a last resort, so certainly don't profess to be anything remotely resembling an authority on the subject, but there are a few things I would like to comment upon and the first being the foul hooking of carp whilst Zigging. It hadn't occurred to me just how much of a problem this is until a friend of mine went to fish a qualifying match on Cuttle Mill. Cuttle has lots of fish and is relatively shallow and my friend, although managing to qualify with my Quest Baits boilies on the bottom, was quite horrified to see most of the other fish coming out foul hooked! I totally hate any type of ban but when fish are getting injured then I find this practice totally unacceptable.

Easy lead dumping

Safe – and it'll help you land more



"By using the single wire side of the oval split ring on a safety bead, the lead releases very easy. I use them double thickness when receiving plenty of action to cut down on dumping too many leads. They still release okay but not so easily."

I used to love float fishing for carp but stopped doing it in the end as I found myself foul hooking more than I would have been doing with conventional bottom baits. The carp would catch the line on their pectoral fin, the float would sink and the next moment I would be setting the hook into the fish but not the mouth. Obviously this didn't happen all of the time but certainly more times than I was prepared to accept. Surely if there are waters around where the fish are regularly getting foul hooked then anglers should rally around to try and prevent this? I found it quite interesting that the submerged float adjustable methods being more proficient in not foul hooking the fish to certainly be a way forward in this respect. Come on you 'Ziggers', educate everyone to the correct safe ways.

I spent 25 years in a busy fishing tackle shop which had a very comprehensive game fishing section to it. There are many flies available to the carp angler which will work for Zigging. Go and check out some of the larger shops who stock high quality flies rather than the bog standard ones which often come from Kenya etc.

Some of the 'expensive' flies are quite incredible. Check out if they have a member of staff or someone local who can custom tie for the customer. This way you can have matching patterns tied on sensible carp hooks. All carp anglers could do much worse than start to learn about the aquatic insects

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the carp eat every day. There are many books out there such as the Classic John Goddards Riverside Guide through to more modern titles such as Matching The Hatch by Pat O'Reilly. It does amaze me how ignorant most carp anglers are to what is happening in the natural food larder below the surface. Even trout anglers with just one or two years experience tend to know more than a dyed in the wool carp angler!

Rig safety

Skipping back to rig safety brings me very nicely onto Nigel's comments which get my full applause upon giving up an evening a month to try and educate those caught using unsuitable rigs on his local water. This is definitely in my mind the way forward, we must educate rather than simply ban anglers. Ban them and the problem remains for the inhabitants of the next lake they move onto. I have always been a firm believer in holding absolutely no secrets when it comes down to rig construction and safety. If you find a better/safer way to do something then tell the world.

Unfortunately there are no true 100% safe rigs. I guess the safest you will get is a bait free-lined on a barbless hook but this is obviously going to be rather impractical in most situations so we are left with doing everything we can to try and keep everything as safe as possible. The worst-case scenario in my mind regardless of the rig used is a 'frap up' and crack-off. The tail end of the line often ends up knotted and simply awaits the fish, which will invariably take the hookbait to swim along and drag that tail end of line into something. A carp tethered on a few metres of stretchy line is never going to get off and even the best set up, including all rotary rigs and conventional tubing rigs, are then a problem if a knot has formed in the end of the line.

Until we reach the day where the trade are able to offer slow breakdown rig components we are sadly left with being as

DISCUSSION

54lb caught straight after resting the swim for a few hours



20lb commons. Now these fish weren't spawning but were simply following and feeding. I eventually set a rod up with no lead and just a small piece of flake and caught one of these commons to prove to myself really that there was indeed a shoal of 20lb commons.

These days I would rather the owners of the lakes close them as soon as the fish start to spawn. Yes, there are fish which won't be spawning just like the commons I saw above, but what I didn't say was that I had several spawning fish pick up the line on their fins whilst spawning. Fortunately I could see my flake hookbait at all times so managed to avoid foul hooking one. Leaving the swim once they spawn only opens it for others to follow in.

I have now been a member of two different places where you are to report if the fish start to spawn and then the water is closed for a short period. I feel this is the best way to avoid interfering when they are at their most vulnerable.

Fry

Here is one to chuck into the equation and again following on from the above. Over the years I have removed spawn and brought carp on from several waters where carp fry don't survive. It strikes me that they hatch on all waters but rarely get past the first few weeks growth. The waters where they do survive longer are almost always coloured waters where the ones with the worst survival rate are usually clear waters. I would guess it is down to a part of their required diet being lacking on a gin clear lake. What do the rest of you think? Certainly I can take you to waters where there has never been carp caught less than doubles but I can remove the spawn from these waters, hatch them and grow them on away from the water they were produced in. Surely this is something most clubs should be doing in an attempt to keep safe offspring of their own fish for future re-release. I have brought fish on in quite small tanks before moving them to larger ones and then pools. You don't need a lot of space to keep the generations going.



I really must try the same bait in different colours again

Boilies

Interesting views on allowing 'boilies only' on certain waters and yes, I am 100% positive there would be more carp caught over the course of a year if boilies were all you were allowed to use. Boilie rejection creates more problems for the carp than particle rejection. Carp are creatures that are relatively easy to train – you can wean them onto most food sources and get them used to re-visiting and finding the same.

As for the carp's preferences for certain food types at certain times of the year they do appear to have quite strong preferences for certain food types. I do feel anglers can get a little confused with the type of boilie to use and many seem to think it's simply down to flavours and 50/50 and/or birdfood-based baits in the winter and fish baits in the summer. Carp love fish baits but it is us the angler that has made many of them next to useless in the winter by adding bulk oils and or using meals which coagulate and trap in the natural attraction of a quality fish bait. This also makes the baits very difficult for the carp to digest with them being cold-blooded creatures.

The flavour aspect of baits interests me highly. Most of the more successful baits I have used over the years have a distinct pH difference when compared to the water. Anyone who is suitably interested may be surprised how many flavours/attractors out there offered to the angling trade that are very close in pH to your average lake. Can the carp detect a flavour with a similar pH?



Spawning carp

Rig guide

Lakebed: Sand
Rig: Home-tied Combi Rig comprising of 25lb Maxima and 22lb Dylon SK braid with a very soft whipping thread Hair
Lead set-up: Korda Dumpy Pear Lead 2.5oz with the swivel removed.
Hookbait: Snowman comprising of a Quest Baits Liver 88 boilie and an artificial fluoro plastic bait on top



"The water would produce a couple of fish a day if you fished well. In the end I was catching 6-8 every day and over 20 on one memorable day."

Colour of baits

Finally, as I am almost out of word space, I would like to add to Gaz's comments on his red Zigged baits out-fishing the other colours 6-0. This doesn't only occur in mid-water and surface scenarios. One year, whilst fishing Denton, I made up the same bait in five different colours and would bait up with equal amounts of each. Now, the fascinating thing for me at the time was that different colours would produce at different times of the day and over the space of a summer this became so obvious but I never managed to work out what was causing the switch. The water would produce a couple of fish a day if you fished well. In the end I was catching 6-8 every day and over 20 on one memorable day. I would start off with a different colour on each rod then after 30 minutes would change the colours. Once a fish was caught all the rods would go to that colour until I had a 30 minute gap without action where I would then again try all different then rape it for a short period on the next colour to produce.

Incredible fishing but even to this day I have never seen anyone else repeat the mixed colour same bait scenario anywhere I have been. I really should try that one again...

Shaun Harrison



Which pH do you think is the best for your water?

careful as we can be and eliminating as many problems as we possibly can, but please, all you readers out there, take time to show others who have possibly got it very wrong.

One possible way forward as regards to rig components and certainly one which gives a little food for thought, is a novel idea passed onto me by Samantha Collins Ratcliffe. She uses rotary helicopter set-ups and uses small air-dried boilies in place of beads. Obviously a couple of days in the water and these breakaway.

Swim resting

This is something I am still a firm believer in. I take on board what Nigel says about not doing it where there is a 48hr rule. My years I spent on the Mangrove I was never able to fish more than 36hrs, but still felt I was doing the right thing getting the lines out of the way for a period each day. Each to their own as always, I only wish I could control myself enough to bait up in the evening and not cast until the

following day every trip and allow the fish free passage through the swim. The more they eat, the more confident they become for catching later. The busier the water the more effective swim resting becomes.

Underwater filming

Joe asks what we would like to see covered. Well, my personal request would be for a diver to slowly swim around a clear lake in the depths of winter and show the type of areas the fish are holed up in and just how closely huddled and inactive they can be at times. I would also like the cameras to show the reaction of laid up carp to highly-flavoured attractor baits. I think a lot of viewers would be surprised over many aspects of a filmed swim in winter, particularly how many of the fish lay in mid-water or certainly in their own comfort bands. I have been fortunate to be able to watch the fish in the depths of winter on a few places now and when I relay some of my observations to others they seem most surprised.

Spawning fish

I too have watched none spawning carp following those spawning and simply getting themselves in a right old oral delight! A fair few years ago I was awoken in the early hours by the carp starting to spawn at Murphy's Pit in Leicestershire. They were hitting my lines constantly so I removed the rigs and spent the day watching them. One thing which amazed me were the fish turning up in the margins I had never seen before including a whole shoal of

Different coloured hookbaits over the baited area worked here

