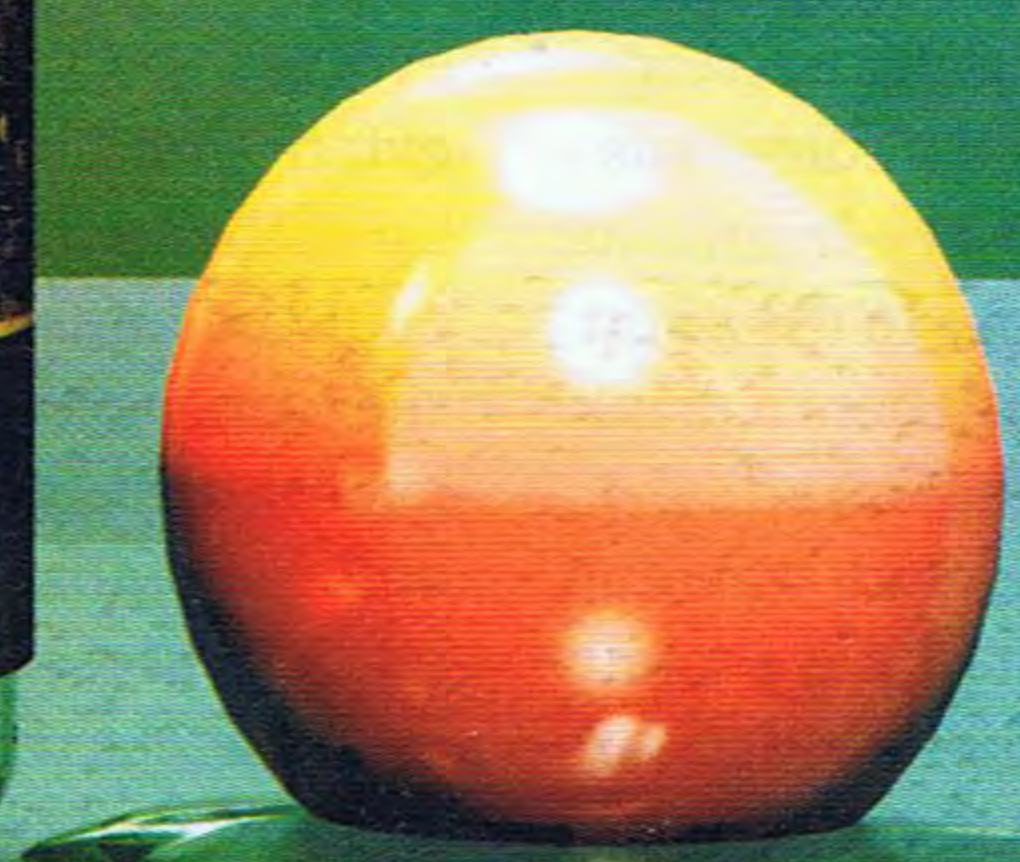


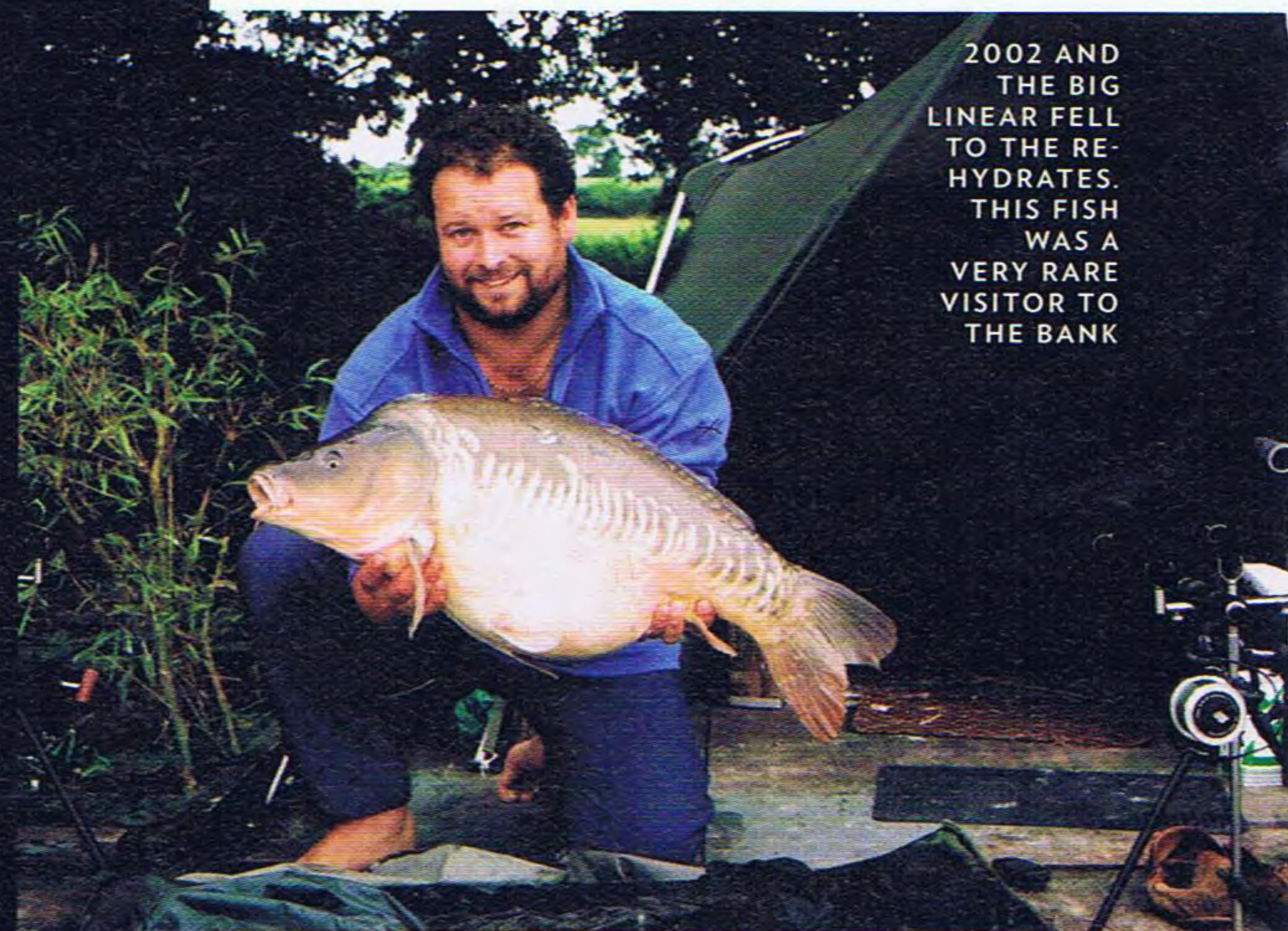
'GIVING BOILIES
A GOOD DRINK'

IT'S A TACTIC CARP FISHING VETERAN AND BAIT EXPERT, SHAUN HARRISON CALLS 'ALMOST CHEATING AT TIMES' AND HERE'S HOW YOU DO IT...





2001 DURING EARLY EXPERIMENTS. THE LEGENDARY CONAN AND FIVE OF HIS MATES TURNED UP



2002 AND THE BIG LINEAR FELL TO THE RE-HYDRATES. THIS FISH WAS A VERY RARE VISITOR TO THE BANK



2013 AND THE BIGGEST FISH IN THE LAKE TURNED UP ON MY FIRST VISIT ON 'VERY WET BAITS'

FIRST NIGHT ON A CAMB'S GRAVEL PIT - THEY WORKED - AGAIN

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ever in my 25-plus-years of regular angling writing have I covered a subject as many times as re-hydrating boilies or more to the point really – giving them a drink.

So many anglers still get this mixed up with washing baits out, but this is a totally different subject and so far removed from what I do. I actually add liquid to my bait but wash nothing out of it.

My first article on let us call 'Giving the boilies a good drink' was over 10-years-ago and over that period of time I have still to come up with a more effective way of fishing boilies. Yes, I have had my idle moments and simply opened a bag and fired them out dry into a lake but when I have been 'bothered' to add liquids and soften them, then that is when my angling has been at its best.

It has been quite a long journey to arrive at

what I do now with my baits but one that has evolved and improved along the way to the extent that I'm not particularly happy baiting up with dry boilies these days, knowing I could be improving the appeal of them to the carp, particularly the older carp. These experiments go right back to the olden days before I realised I could make shelf-life boilies without preservatives. Back then, due to bad experiences with the shelf-life boilies that were around then and by bad experiences I mean the bobbins not moving as often as when I used a fresh frozen bait (how things change and turn right around).

So, back in the day when venturing overseas for a week in what could be damp weather I needed bait that wouldn't be going off after three or four days. My method at the time was to totally air-dry them in a warm room or on a warm day outside on towels until there was no moisture left. These baits would be rock hard, like marbles, and last as long as I needed

them to last. In order to be able to revert these rock hard baits back to needle-friendly baits I had carried out a lot of experiments by adding water a bit at a time until they had drunk enough up and resembled a normal boilie again. By getting into routine on the bank preparing the bait a couple of days in advance I was able to use relatively fresh bait all week and keep those indicators flying.

It was at this time I was fishing the incredibly silty Mangrove Swamp in deepest, darkest Shropshire. The Swamp has been developing its silt for thousands of years as it is a totally natural mere, not a man-made place. Because of this, the baits would soon take on the smell of silt (the silt was several metres thick). I'm sure the carp aren't over bothered by eating silty baits but it didn't do a great deal for my confidence and I couldn't help but think the attractors in my baits would be trapped inside rather than be free to leak out due to the silt barrier that the outside of the boilies would drink in.

I was juggling things around in my head, as you do, and after catching well on some re-hydrated air-dried baits I'd had left over from a French trip, suddenly the penny dropped.

If I let the baits drink in as much as possible before use then they would be unable to take much of the silt smell and taste in as they should already be full. It made so much sense; fill the boilies with liquid so as to open the pores up more allowing a better and quicker escape of the attractants I wanted to escape, but also give a barrier against so much silt penetration.

It worked incredibly well and my brain being what it is bait-wise I soon started to think of the next stage, how I could improve things even further and keep ahead of the game so that when others possibly started to do similar I would already be onto the next level. I'm not sure what the panic was, as 10 years on I still see so few taking advantage of a terrific way of improving any boilie.

'IT WAS LIKE CHEATING'

This next stage was quite an obvious one but one I have really struggled to better. Yes, I have come up with things that have been as effective but very few have been better and after over 10 years of experimenting I'm not going to give them away on a plate.

The thing that was incredible and one that I still use at times to this day was to substitute the bottled or lake water I was feeding into the baits with the excess water from freshly cooked hemp. Not hemp oil or any other



I AM FOREVER LOOKING TO SEE HOW DIFFERENT THINGS REACT AND SPREAD IN WATER

"APART FROM GETTING ONTO THE HAIR RIG IN THE EARLY DAYS, MY HEMP JUICE-FILLED BOILIES WERE THE BIGGEST EDGE I HAVE EVER HAD."

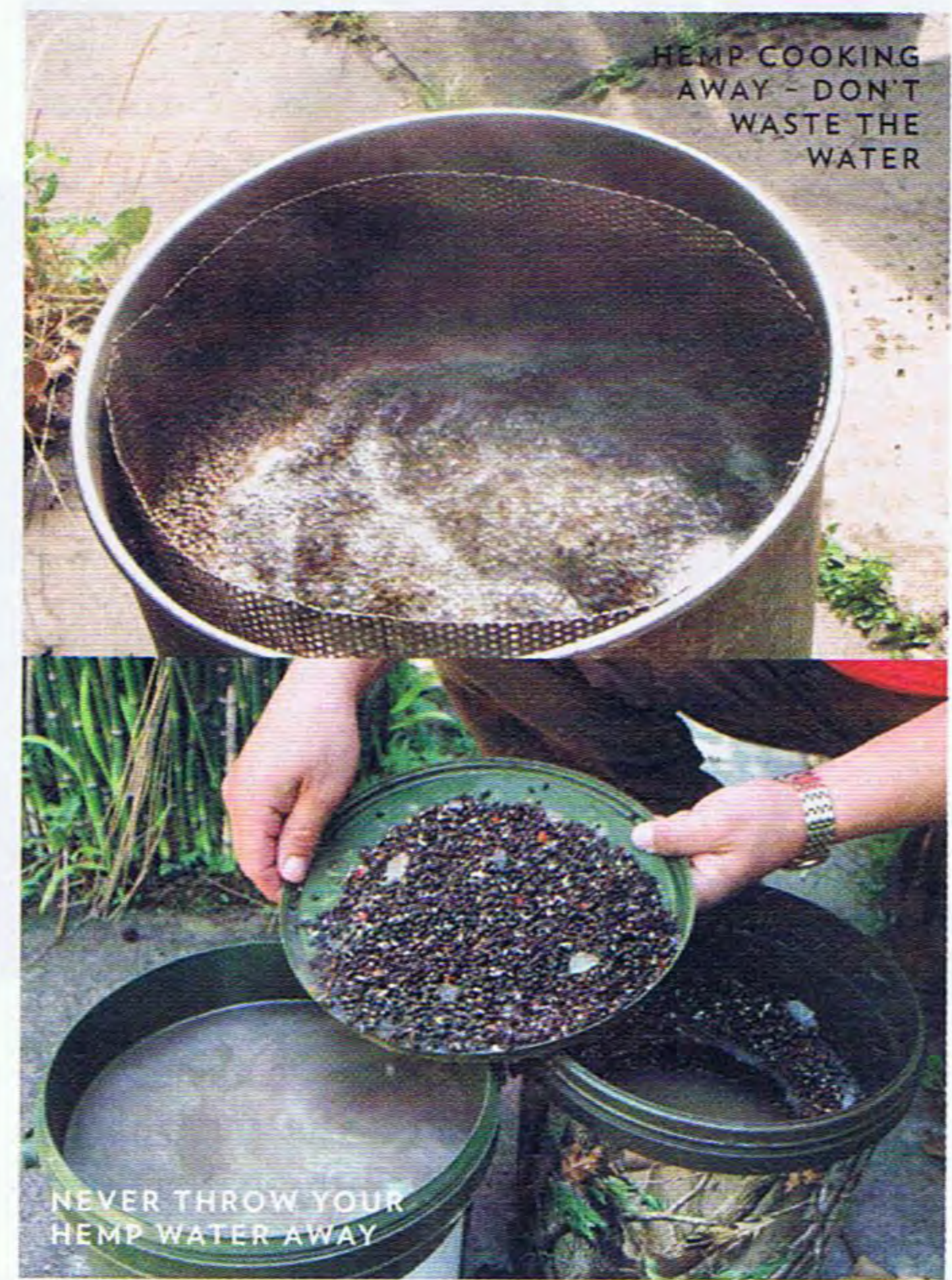
hemp product but the naturally oily water the hemp has cooked in. Quite frankly the carp's response to my baits filled with hemp juice was nothing short of amazing and for a period of time on the Mangrove and everywhere else I used it, the carp simply couldn't get enough.

I would say, that apart from getting onto the Hair rig in the early days, my hemp juice-filled boilies were the biggest edge I have ever had in my carp angling career; it almost felt like I was cheating at times. Indeed there came a time on the Mangrove that I started to fish some of the swims that hadn't been as kind to me as some of the others in the past, simply to catch some from them. My favourite swims everything was getting a little bit, dare I say, 'repetitive'?

You only need drop a hemp juice-filled boilie in the edge and watch it to see why it worked so well. There could be no fish swim over a bed of it without breathing in the hemp aroma for they continue to pump tiny trails from them for a long period of time, particularly if you go to the trouble of totally air-drying the boilies first before giving them a drink. When totally dry, a pint of dried boilies will drink half-a-pint of juice and still look like a normal bait but oozing with a product you can't roll into a bait in those quantities in the first place.

The more I used these liquid-filled baits the more I began to realise the other advantages of them over a conventional boilie straight out of the bag. I was already totally filling the baits with juice rather than simply reverting them back into a normal looking boilie. I would add as much liquid as they could drink and then soak up any excess with pellet so nothing was wasted and nothing was lost should I have inadvertently added a little too much juice and possibly washed any of the ingredients that were already in the bait out. To be fair, when you are preparing something week-in and week-out you don't end up making many mistakes with quantities though.

The more I used these 'soft' wet baits the more I noticed I was catching larger fish. I



must admit at the time I felt I was simply catching big fish for the waters I was fishing simply because I was catching a lot of them so the bigger fish would turn up.

In later years though it suddenly occurred to me one of the possible reasons I was suddenly catching the better fish and that

JUICE-FILLED GOODNESS!

HERE'S YOUR TIMELINE ON HOW TO SUPERCHARGE YOUR BOILED FOOD

WEDNESDAY EVENING

Start off by preparing your liquid. This could be the juice from a cooked particle, simple bottled water, flavoured bottled water, etc, it

just needs to be a very thin liquid or else it will take too long to soak into the bait.

WEDNESDAY EVENING CONT.

Once your liquid is

sorted, the boilies go in to soak. On the Wednesday, start off by putting in your 15mms first.

THURSDAY

Drop in your 10mms.

FRIDAY

On the Friday morning, add your broken boilies and then a couple of hours before you're expecting to be starting fishing,

stir everything together and possibly add dry ingredients to soak any excess liquid should you feel the boilies have drunk as much as they can.



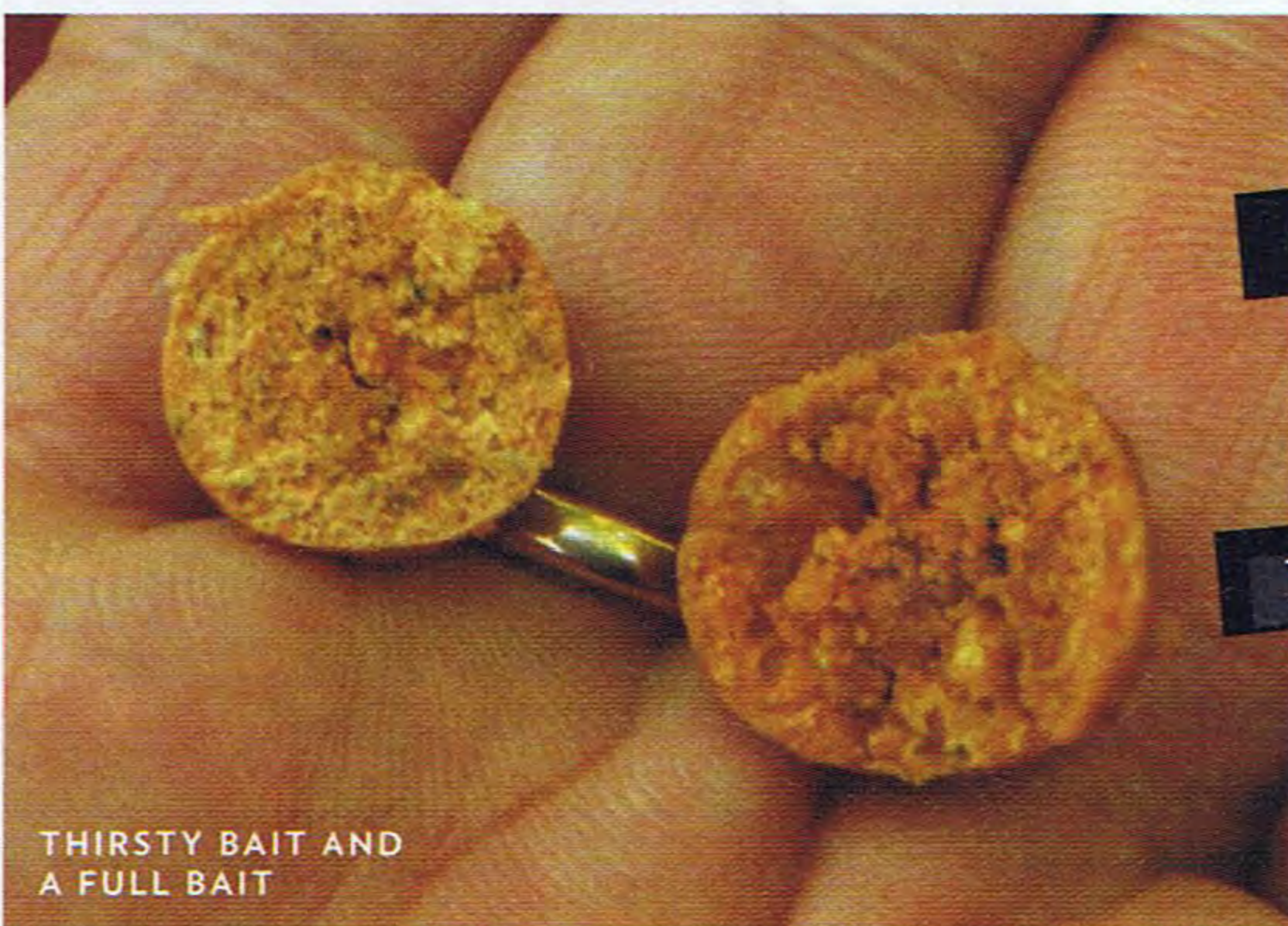
AIR-DRYING BAIT AT HOME FOR MAXIMUM LIQUID DRINKING



DRINKING IN THAT LOVELY CARP-ATTRACTING JUICE

return against energy used. They can then spend much more time frustrating anglers by simply enjoying life drifting aimlessly around or simply basking without the need to be constantly foraging for food.

Since I came up with the theory of older carp possibly suffering with teeth issues it has answered so many other things and has given me a totally different way of looking at bait, trying to offer food that will be attractive to



THIRSTY BAIT AND A FULL BAIT

"YOU ONLY NEED DROP A HEMP JUICE-FILLED BOILIE IN THE EDGE AND WATCH IT TO SEE WHY IT WORKED SO WELL."

comes down to teeth. Carp's pharyngeal teeth are very similar to our teeth in as much as they look like they are porcelain-coated the same as ours. Now, I started to think about this a lot and it stood to reason that 20-plus-years of crunching on snail and mussel shells is going to wear those teeth down and quite probably give them tooth problems. Most wild animals suffer with tooth problems so why wouldn't old carp? Particularly when you look at what they do with their teeth. A carp can survive easily without crushing hard food items, there are the obvious bloodworm beds to get stuck into as well as a whole multitude of different aquatic insects as well as many critters that blow into lakes from trees and indeed the land. So having toothache when trying to grind up snails, mussels and hard boilies etc. will be something they possibly avoid. But, give them a substantial food item that is easy to eat that is hardly any tougher than luncheon meat, then you can be sure they will get on with eating that for maximum

all carp and not just those young healthy ones, who, like us, never think they will have any health issues until it's often too late.

HOW IT WORKS

So above are a few pointers as to why to this day I still prefer to give my boilies a good drink before I use them. I must admit that these days I rarely totally air-dry my baits like I used to and merely soak liquid into my normal shelf-life baits (I haven't used a frozen bait in years, preferring the preservative-free Quest Baits shelf-life baits over frozen bait as I know it isn't going off at the same rate as any fresh frozen bait).

It depends upon the size of bait I am using as to how long before a fishing session I start to prepare my bait. From a personal point of view I very much prefer using small baits simply because I truly believe carp prefer to eat small baits, possibly something to do with ease of eating again as well? But the biggest advantage I see with small baits is that it

keeps the fish in the area grubbing around longer so more chance of putting a decent catch together rather than just a one off fish.

So for me, boilie-wise, I use mostly 10 and a few 15mms in my own angling. 20mms I prefer for breaking up as they usually have a softer centre to start with and can be extruded and rolled so much quicker than the smaller baits. It always seem sacrilege to me to break up boilies that have been rolled in the first place but broken boilies are a must in all of my baiting scenarios.

These days I am stuck with being a weekend angler so usually Wednesday evening or the latest Thursday I will be starting to prepare my bait for the weekend. This will start off with me preparing my liquid. It might be the juice from a cooked particle, simple bottled water, flavoured bottled water, a home produced liquid-based on whatever theme I am running along at the time, either a normal bait glug scenario thinned down or perhaps take advantage of some of the amazing sauces now readily available from the larger supermarkets. Fish and shellfish sauces used in a lot of oriental dishes can be very good. Your imagination is the only limit here, but remember you need to keep this juice runny or else it will take too long to soak into the bait. Most of my soaks incorporate water and always out of a bottle rather than out of the tap. Don't get tempted to used water from any other pool than the one you are fishing if you choose to take this route. You could be spreading all sorts of disease by soaking bait in water from a different one to the one you are fishing. I am happy with bottled water, it's so cheap and there are some interesting flavours that can be utilised as well. The big advantage though, is that I am perfectly safe to change venues last minute or move venues if things don't feel right on my first choice.

Once my liquid is sorted, the boilies go in to soak. These days I tend to use either a Spomb for a spread of bait or a good old fashioned bait dropper if I want to retain tight piles (PVA bag replication), so I tend to mix different sized baits during the soaking as I don't need to worry about different sizes dropping different distances out of a catapult. I like to get 15mms soaking on the Wednesday evening and then tend to drop the 10mms in on the Thursday but this can vary between different make-up of boilies and the viscosity of the liquid being used. You will soon learn how your baits are performing, how much liquid they need etc.

Friday morning I will include broken boillie and then a couple of hours before I am expecting to be starting fishing I will stir everything together and possibly add dry ingredients to soak any excess liquid should I feel the boilies have drunk as much as they can. These are usually pellets and Micro Feed which also has the added bonus of being cleaner to use and not spraying yourself whilst Spombing.

So, there you have it, nothing washed-out but plenty soaked in. It may seem a long-winded affair to preparing bait but each stage only takes a couple of minutes. In fact, I tend to carry out each stage whilst waiting for the kettle to boil.

One final line I will add, is that by soaking the baits, you make them heavier and they don't half fly in the Mini and Midi Spombs that way.

SHAUN HARRISON