

IAN CHILLCOTT'S CARP DIARY

This Carp Fishing Merry-Go-Round

To say **IAN CHILLCOTT** has had a busy month is something of an understatement, but it's also been a pleasurable and largely rewarding one, as usual.

As far as a month's worth of carp fishing goes, I don't think it can be much more varied than my last four weeks. It has left me a bit breathless and I feel a little 'run ragged' to be honest, but I cannot tell you just how exciting it has been. I very often want to go chasing a monster or two around, concentrating on one water for a while, using the conditions to my advantage and utilising any little edges that I can pick up on along the way.

However, especially at this time of year, I like to jazz things up more. The fish I may be targeting will probably be down in weight and the banks seem to be that much busier, as the schools are out and most people take time off during the summer months. And why not! The weather's good and it really is a joy to be angling. For me, though, it's a time to get a lot of things done. Filming, magazine features and reces for waters to be fished at a later date all need my attention from time to time, and the last month has been all about those things.

For a kick-off, it takes me to a lot of different venues; my boredom threshold is pretty low, and looking at the same scenery day after day and session after session, sometimes makes me lose the will to live. Secondly, I have to vary my

ANGLER FILE **Ian Chillcott**



AGE: 54
OCCUPATION: Angling consultant
UK PB: 53lb 12oz
SPONSORS: Fox, Mainline Baits and Wombat Leather



As the light slowly filled the sky, I kept one eye on the sling with a rather special common inside it.

fishing, which, at the very least, keeps the old grey matter ticking over.

I have spent the last 20 years or so using the same two rigs and catching the vast majority of my carp on boilies, but even a one-trick pony (as the odd disparaging writer would call me) as myself has to vary things a little from time to time. The problem for the 'disparagers' is that my tactics have worked everywhere I have taken them and I cannot, for the life of me, see things changing anytime soon. It has often been written that "if it ain't broke, why try and fix it?" and I couldn't agree more.

The four waters we are about to visit are just about as varied as it is possible for lakes to be; sizes, depths, stocking levels, weed content and even the weather played a part this month, and at the end of it all I couldn't help thinking about another old saying, one that sums up my month completely... "It's a funny old game!"

I had been to RK Leisure's Jones Pit up in Bedfordshire a couple of times of late, but each time I had a camera or two in tow. While I love the challenge that a camera creates, I really wanted to have a go up there on my own and see if I could land a few more of its residents from the open water, as

She was a lot bigger than I'd first thought - another stunning common from Farriers, all 37lb of her.



the filming had all revolved around stalking. I was excited and rather let the successes I'd had there go to my head, because I hadn't factored in probably the biggest hindrance to carp fishing success - catfish!

It only took about 90 minutes to get there and the first thing was to set off for a look around. Invariably I looked

in all the areas I had been stalking a few weeks before, and to my surprise I never saw a single fish. I wanted to fish the open water, but in truth I thought I may get the session off to a great start by catching one in short order from the margins. I spotted only one carp after about three hours of looking, and eventually settled on a swim called the Unsociable. The carp hadn't shown that far out, and a while later I had two traps set just over the weed in about 10 feet of water at 15 yards range. I slackened the lines off and put a couple of kilos of my boilie mix over the top. It looked the nuts and I was sure of some action... which I was just about to get, but not from the fish I was chasing.

It was around four in the afternoon, I hadn't seen any more carp show but I was getting the odd big, slow liner when all of a sudden the bobbin pulled up and the line pinged from the clip. That was a bite for sure and I picked up the rod, only to have it nearly ripped from my hands. As exciting as it was, I couldn't help feeling a bit disappointed as a catfish ploughed its inexorable way up the middle of the lake.

I held on for an age keeping as much pressure on it as possible, and eventually it turned. I got it halfway

A 45lb Jones' Pit cat - not exactly what I was hoping for from there.



back and once again it stripped line from the spool, which it continued to do for the next 15 minutes. Eventually, the hook came adrift and I sat down, not sure whether to be happy or sad. I couldn't help thinking it wouldn't be the last catfish I hooked and an hour later I was once again leaning into a bit of an animal. This one only took me half an hour to get to the bank, and at 45lb I couldn't help wondering how big the one was that I lost! I had another in the night and by morning I was up for a move.

I had heard carp to my right in the night, so that was the first port of call. It looked good but it was very obvious there would be no hiding place from the aquatic felines. I set a couple of traps that were sprung three times by the catfish, and at three in the morning I decided it was time to go home. Unbelievably, a small mirror of around 12lb reminded me that there were some carp in the lake, but by mid-morning I was clearing the catfish pooch from my net and unhooking mat and heading for home. I'm definitely going back, but I suspect I will have to wait until the moggies have gone to sleep in the autumn.

I had some other stuff planned for the following week that was cancelled at the last moment. I wasn't too unhappy and decided that a trip to the Cotswolds and Farriers was in order. Word on the street was that the fishing was a little patchy, but the odd fish was coming out. I learnt last year that the situation on this lake can change

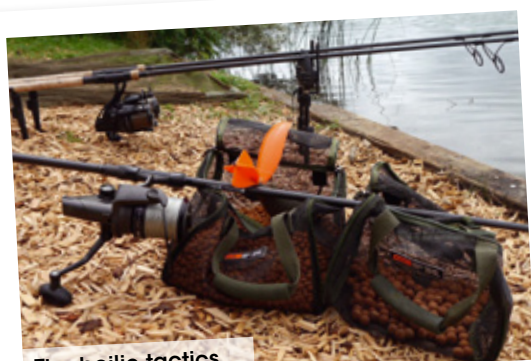


It was a big of a struggle for me and partner Leigh at the MNDA event. I'd have swum out to land this one if I'd had to!

in the blink of an eye, so while it was good to know what was being caught, I kept an open mind and, as always, I would fish just the way I wanted to.

Amazingly, as I opened the gate the following Monday there were very few cars in the car park, and there were only four people on the lake... nice! One of my favourite swims was empty, so I put a water butt in there. However, when I found out where the person next door was fishing his right-hand rod, I decided to move. I eventually moved onto a popular point, mainly because there were some fish in front of it. An hour later I had two hook baits in position at around 65 yards with a kilo or two of Hybrid over the top.

The night was quiet, but I was ripped from my slumber in the early hours by a vicious take. I stopped the fish easily, but it then wanted to kite rapidly to the right, and that inevitably picked up loads of weed on the line. Thankfully, once all the green stuff had slid down the line and over the fish's head, she gave up making my life difficult. All that was left to do was for my neighbour, who had heard the bite, to slip the net under what he thought was an upper-twenty common. By the time we had got it on the mat the estimation was that it was a lot bigger, and at 37lb it most certainly was. It was almost full light now, so I placed her in a retainer for 20 minutes, which gave me time



The boilie tactics...



... came good again and Leigh was a happy man.

to re-set the rod and sip a fresh brew. She was spawned out, but looked magnificent in the early morning light, and I really couldn't have been happier.

I was staying another night, but it was much quieter than the night before, and I lost a fish in the weed around six the next morning. As gutting as that may have been, I was chuffed with my result and was away around mid-morning, and all the way home all I could think about was my trip to Linear Fisheries the following week for the annual, but unfortunately the last, MNDA event.

Some of you may be aware that there are far more important things in my life than carp fishing, but my diary isn't really the place to go into too many details. That said, things in Lynn's life had taken a turn for the worse. To that end we found out that there were a couple of hospital visits the following week, and I knew I wouldn't be able to stay for the whole three days. However, I would be paired up with someone who had paid £300 to take part in the event, and I wanted him to catch a carp... whatever it took, and it took some, believe you me!

I arrived on the Sunday afternoon, which is a great time to catch up



The weed was a bit of an issue, but I landed most of my bites on the North Lake.

with people I haven't seen in a while, sometimes since the last event. As far as I could tell, myself and my partner for the event, Leigh Herbert from Weston-Super-Mare, would be in a little corner of Hardwick Lake, so the first thing was to set up in there. The swim to our right was free, so I baited a plateau for my buddy and I would fish to the left in a clear strip in the weed, which I baited too.

Come the morning, however, the

swim to our left became occupied, which put another six rods in the little bay. It got worse when another pair turned up to say that they should be fishing one of the tiny slots that you would have difficulty fishing two rods from. Leigh was just getting his rather sodden gear into the swim and I said, rather jokingly, to the bloke that Leigh and I would move... and was left totally gobsmacked when we were allowed to do just that!



While filming for the Mainline website, the fishing at Wraysbury was amazing.

I was fuming by now and so was Leigh, and we drove off soaked to the skin. To cut a long story short, we eventually found some real estate to fish on the far side of Brasenose Two, but the pain didn't end there. It was a wasp's nest that made things even more 'interesting'. I had been to Sainsbury's and got us about eight kilos of sweetcorn and that would form the basis of our fishing, which in an interesting twist of fate was just about to get a little more exciting.

I could tell Leigh wasn't happy, and who could blame him? I wasn't pleased either, but we got on with things as best we could. Which actually turned out very well indeed. By now I knew I would be going home the following day, so enjoyed Leigh's tales of my old stomping ground down in the West Country. An hour later we were sharing a brew with a couple of rods fishing as well as we could. For the first time we relaxed and all seemed right with the world, until Leigh hooked a carp and it fell off. I couldn't believe it, he really didn't deserve that.

I let him get on with sorting the rod out, when unbelievably he got another bite. The pair of us were as nervous as hell as he gingerly played the fish in. I would have swum out to net it if I could, but Leigh soon had it boiling in front of the net, and all I had to do was scoop it up.

You would have thought we had just landed the British record, what with all the celebration, but he had truly deserved that mirror of 21lb 8oz. And I, of course, was just happy his journey hadn't been a carless one.

We spent the evening with my old buddy Lee Jackson for company, which was as great as it always



The biggest of a 12-fish Wraysbury haul, at 22lb.

is, but by morning I was on the road. Leigh caught a couple more fish and I cannot tell you what great company he was. Most of all, though, my thanks to Len Gurd for doing this for so many years; it has been an incredible event filled with incredible memories and had provided so much for people less fortunate than ourselves.

And then it was back to life in front of the camera once again. Jamie at RK Leisure had kindly given Mainline Baits permission to do some filming at Wraysbury. To that end I met up with John Kneebone around midday the following Monday. I was armed to the teeth with Hybrid boilies, and once I had found the perfect place to apply them I settled down to hopefully catch some fish. While

John, and occasionally I, bombed around on the old cart that is utilised around the lake, I cracked on with the job in hand. It was weedy and I lost a few fish, but I have no wish to give the game away as to exactly how it all went. The biggest of 12 fish was 22lb 12oz, and just proved that if you use your bait with a little thought, and just as importantly in exactly the right place, then the rewards will certainly come.

The weather was a lot cooler than of late and may have contributed to my success, but whatever the case Wraysbury is an incredible venue, and in five years' time the queues at the gates will be long ones. It was a spectacular session, and we achieved all we wanted to and a whole lot more, and it will soon be on the Mainline website for you to all enjoy.

Now it's time for me to get on with some fishing for myself, and I suspect I will be once again travelling back to the Cotswolds just as soon as I'm able. Until next time, take care.

Chilly.

The End



The ultimate carp barrow!