

# EDITOR TIM PAISLEY'S CARP LEADER

A Redmire mid-double that I managed not to unhook with the backlead during last year's 'More From the Bivvy' session!



## Leads, the Law, the EA, and Birch



**I**'ll start with leads, because if I start with politics I'll lose most of my audience within a couple of sentences, instead of a couple of pages. It's common practice to lose the lead on the take because that makes playing fish easier. Not everyone does it. Not everyone can afford to do it. But enough of us do it on a regular basis to ring alarm bells in a few minds in connection with what we may be doing to the

environment. The quick answer is, I don't know, but my common sense tells me that discharging leads is not going to cause pollution. If research comes up with an alternative answer to that then I will have to sit up and take notice, but for the moment my conscience is clear. I'll give a couple of reasons for that.

The first is that most leads are coated, which covers up any potential problem. Then leads themselves get covered up, the timescale here depending on the nature of the lake or riverbed. I would guess that there is greater potential for lead poisoning from shooting than there is from carp anglers' leads. There was a seemingly authoritative letter from Chris Emerson on the subject of leads in the last issue and he gave a convincing scientific explanation as to why we need not fear leads causing pollution, for which I thank him. The fact is that this issue was raised recently by no less an authority than Jim Gibbinson, and I wouldn't want him to think that we are ignoring his comments. I suppose the quick answer is that no one really knows, but... But how much does it matter in the greater scheme of things? I mean we know that we are polluting the environment, but that doesn't stop us. We know that alcohol and smoking shorten our lives – and so on. I'm not being flippant here, and I rather liked John Odriscoll's eco-friendly weight discharge system in *Carpworld* 234, but how many of you are going to go to that much trouble? Either we go down John O's route, or we put the carp at risk on weedy waters by retaining the lead and making it easier for them to get irretrievably weeded. I'll keep discharging the lead until someone proves to me that there is a problem, not because I'm irresponsible, but because I don't believe there is one.





The magical Redmire Pool. The thick Canadian pondweed made lead discharge advisable.

On the other hand I did encounter a problem with discharging the lead at Redmire last October. As I explained briefly some time back, I'm not covering my experiences on the bank in the magazine this season because I'm writing a follow-up to *From the Bivvy*, although I still haven't got a working title for the new book yet. (Latest likelihood is 'More From the Bivvy': imaginative, huh?) But this lead experience I will share with you before any of you are similarly afflicted.

Redmire is weedy, with beds of thick Canadian pondweed, so while I was there I fished to discharge the lead. I was doing all right but wasn't getting action from the centre channel in front of me despite the fact that it was the spot where I was seeing most carp movement, and I was getting line bites on those rods. So, in my infinite wisdom, a few days into the session I decided to backlead the two rods which weren't fishing in the weed, which I duly did. I lay in bed that night wondering about the setup I was now fishing. When the lead was discharged on the run the backlead would be free to run down to the hooklink...or would it? I was fishing leadcore and decided that the backlead would probably rest on the top of the leadcore where it joined the leader. Well, I half decided that but wasn't really convinced. How dumb can you get? I was away on one of those rods the following morning and watched in disbelief as the backlead slid slowly down the line, over the end of the leadcore, down to the hooklink, then neatly acted as a disgorging and knocked the hook out! Fortunately, the fish was only a scamp of single figures, but it was a lost fish for all that, and I had a hot flush thinking about how I would have felt if it had happened with a big fish on the end, or not on the end if you get my drift. I promptly sent a text to Fox's chief consultant, the great Chillcott, and suggested that he get his head round the problem. I'd already figured out that if I wanted to fish a backlead with a lead release system then it would have to be a captive backlead. That, or find a way of stopping the sliding backlead at the top of the leadcore by means of a small stiff T-bar of heavy nylon.

I can do some strange things when I'm fishing and not thinking that one through

before I put the lead release/backlead setup into operation certainly fell into the 'strange things' category!

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I have been enrolled onto the voting panel for the Carp-Talk Carp Fishing Hall of Fame, which means I am now not in a position to comment publicly (i.e. here) on who gets enrolled, or the nominees, or the voting, which is as it should be. After the new members were inducted at the Carpin' Show the following are now Hall of Famers: Dick Walker, Denys Watkins-Pitchford (B.B.), Jack Hilton, Maurice Ingham, Albert Buckley, Bob Richards, Tim Paisley, Rod Hutchinson, Jim Gibbinson, Chris Yates, Peter Mohan, Kevin Nash, Terry Hearn, Fred Wilton, Dick Kefford, Rob Maylin, Gerry Berth-Jones, Gerry Savage, Lenny Middleton, Pete Thomas, Donald Leney, Lee Jackson, and Pete Springate.

That's a bit of a random list because the members aren't listed in the order in which they were inducted. The latest inductees were Donald Leney, Pete Thomas, Lee Jackson and Peter Springate, all of whom are clearly worthy additions to the growing list.

Halls of Fame are purely arbitrary. Those who vote for inductees are acting as God, and can't be right all the time, although I think that with something as prestigious (what an awful word, Tim)...OK, with something seemingly so significant, the enrolling panel has to be right. I'll make it clear that there is no criticism of this year's selections there. The problem was with the starting point of the list. Why? Because as time goes by the significance of the past gets swallowed up by the present and the impact that people had in bygone years can get lost in the mists of time. There are people from the past who have a far greater claim to be in the Hall than me, for instance, and I think that fact should have been recognised when the Hall was launched. I'm not going to name names because of my position on the voting panel, and because I'm in that honoured position I can at least nominate anyone I feel may have been overlooked when the next round of voting for inductees comes round. But you know not having a list of say 20 or 30 as a starting point leaves the Hall of Fame in the sort of position that these 'Top 100 Records of All Time' lists are in as a result of voting leading up to the lists being broadcast over bank holiday weekends. Let's just be charitable and say you get anomalies through younger listeners having no idea what has gone before, and quickly move on. At least 'Imagine' keeps popping up in there, although it tends to get lower down the list each year. Heaven forbid!

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Well I can't duck it, I've got to talk politics again, and I'll start with the 'two licences for

"I watched in disbelief as the backlead slid slowly down the line, over the end of the leadcore, down to the hooklink, then neatly acted as a disgorging and knocked the hook out!"



If you are fishing to discharge the lead and use a backlead then make sure the design of the backlead is suitable, otherwise it can act as a disgorging.



four rods' issue. I don't know about you guys (I do but I'll pretend I'm not sure) but no sooner had I gone into print with the EA's figures and protestations that one four-rod licence wasn't practicable than I got two rod licence renewals through the letterbox. According to the EA's own figures 39,980 anglers purchased two licences last year, so presumably that many renewal letters were duplicated. Even allowing for the fact that the EA will get a bulk postage discount, thus reducing the face value £12,000 wastage, there is still a figure of the order of £10,000 per year being wasted here. How long have the EA been sending out licence renewals? That's without the wasted manpower of actually issuing two licences when one would suffice. Surely someone can design a licence where you simply fill in the number of rods being licenced and the amount to pay?

But there's more...I went to renew my licences at the local post office. I was given two receipts and was told that my licences would be forwarded on to me by the EA. They were – in two separate envelopes! So presumably the renewal of two licences by 39,980 carp and specialist anglers involves the despatching of 159,920 second-class envelopes. That's almost as wasteful as stocking our rivers with salmon and coarse fish for cormorants and otters to eat.

I'm still trying to get my head round the figures we were given regarding salmon and salmon fishing by the EA. In the year 2009-10 15,589 full salmon and sea trout licences were purchased. In total there were 30,750 licences purchased, this figure including concessionary and short-term licences. Digest those figures then read on. I believe that a full licence cost £75 last year.

The EA work on salmon fisheries is funded by Grant in Aid from Defra (a Government department) to the tune of £5.9 million. (I've heard a suggestion that this figure may have been higher this year.) We are told that last year the EA released into home waters 1,406,024 salmon in varying stages of development. I have spoken to a salmon angler, Ellis Brazier, who is also a carp and all-round coarse angler – and a good old country boy



With the inspirational Lee Jackson and a visiting journalist during the wild weather of last year's World Carp Classic. Hall of Famer Lee's energy and enthusiasm can ignite my own flagging commitment.

– living north of Shrewsbury. He explained to me that salmon parr are released in river estuaries and set off seawards for wherever it is they go. Salmon smolt are released at the head of the river and what the cormorants don't get the otters make inroads into. I may be misunderstanding the situation here but my strong sense of logic tells me that a great deal of money is being thrown at salmon fishing to feed the very predators that we are complaining about in coarse and carp fisheries. Only we don't get a Grant in Aid of £5.9 million pounds.

Compared to the 15,598 full licences and 30,750 all-type salmon and sea trout licences purchased in England last year there were 690,294 full and 1,321,920 all-type coarse and trout licences purchased in the same year. The total coarse fish stocking figure was 325,000 (compared to 1,406,024 salmon). 39,980 anglers purchased two licences last year, which means that the income from carp and specimen licence holders alone was greater than the income from salmon and sea trout anglers. Go figure. I'm wrestling with it all and I'm trying to be helpful on the political front by going along with the John Wilson- and ECHO-led

initiative in trying to force the issue and get something done about predators. The fact that the EA is still insisting that otters are not a problem is hardly helpful, but then we went through all this with cormorants, and still do so, I guess. In fact I would go so far as to say that the EA stance on otters is as far removed from reality as it is possible to get. Next thing we'll be getting another £1,000,000 two-year survey to prove that otters are not a menace to fishing and fisheries!

The ironic thing here is that the two carp waters I run are on land farmed by the Gwilt family. Until recently they reared cattle for selling on. While they were on the Gwilt's land a beast would

stand them at anything from £400 to £700. In the unlikely event of a heifer being savaged by a dog they would be entitled to shoot the dog. Sheep are more prone to attack by dogs than cows. If a dog attacks a sheep it gets shot – and an average price for a sheep is about £100. Now compare that to a 30lb carp, which will stand the owner at a great deal more than a cow or a sheep. I think it's fair to say that a home-grown 30, of which there are a number in both the Mangrove and Birch Grove, would command a price well into four figures. But can the Gwilt's shoot an otter if they find one preying on their valuable carp? No, because otters have even greater protection than pet dogs! There is a famous aphorism that the law is an ass. It is an ass in those areas where it has no understanding of the problems involved. I suspect that protecting your livelihood from otters comes into the same category as protecting your family and property from burglars. The understanding of the situation is changing. Why should burglars be protected? Why should otters be protected? On this issue the Environment Agency is proving itself as big an ass as the law itself. And these are the people responsible for the future of angling in this country!

I'm sure John Wilson loves the quote from the EA which says, "...in the east of England their recovery is a welcome sign that the health of the rivers in the area is improving."

I think it is generally accepted that angling and anglers have had as much to do with the improvement in quality of the rivers as any other influencing factor!

I'm beginning to think it is going to take the equivalent of the storming of the Bastille at the outset of the French Revolution to get people in authority to sit up and take notice over the supposedly non-existent predator problem. John Wilson has his impassioned say elsewhere in this issue, and there is a further meeting of interested parties of the potential predation problem on 4th May, so more of this anon. I've had my forceful say in the past about the predator problem but thought I was something of a lone voice until John Wilson convinced me otherwise at Five Lakes. As John says in his piece, he knows what John Wayne would do!



Two new licences, but was it really necessary to send out four second-class letters to 39,980 anglers to cope with the seemingly simple exercise?



It's difficult for an editor when someone writes, or says, nice things about you in the magazine, as Lee Jackson does about me in this month's Big Interview. Well, I find it difficult! Do you leave the comments in because they are part of the interview and genuinely meant? Or do you take them out because readers might be inclined to think, 'Well he would say that, wouldn't he?' I've left them in because you have to keep faith with an interviewer and the interviewee, and because there are a couple of comments of Lee's that I want to reply to anyway. Lee says that he wished he'd got my motivation, which I find odd because I fish with the bloke in the World Carp Classic and he carries me along on a wave of his own energy and enthusiasm each year!

There was a time when every time I got beaten up in a major match or a disappointing long session I'd comment, "Never again!" That has been particularly true of the World Carp Classic at Madine. Then a year would go by, time would soften the blow and dull the disappointment, and I'd decide to give it one more crack, because maybe next time it would be different. What's five wasted days in a carp-fishing lifetime? (Sadly, not a lot...) I've been blessed with great partners in major matches. Lee, John Lilley and Steve Briggs are all great anglers, and great session men who don't get down on themselves when nothing is happening. Steve and I have been inordinately lucky in winning two world championships out of three entered. At Madine for the last two years Lee and I have been part of the winning team of three pairs which has now won the team title three years in succession. So going back to Madine to try for a fourth success, and in the case of Lee and me, hoping to catch something this time around, is something to aim for, and really it is having something to aim for that is keeping me going in carp fishing. It's become an effort to lift myself for the big occasions. I'm not really motivated, but I'm driven. The second 70; one more big match win...I can understand where Lee is at in his life at the moment. He's in a newish marriage, has a new house, a new pond, a new dog, a job he enjoys, and at least one carp water to run. That's a pretty full life! Who needs carp fishing? I've always looked on carp fishing as the great escape. When you've nothing to escape from it doesn't quite have the same pull. But I suspect that the odd new target will loom on Lee's horizon and he'll become driven again. But what has he got to prove? He's the only guy who has been British Carp champion and British carp record holder at the same time.

I'm not suggesting that everyone who spends a lot of time fishing is escaping from something. Many of today's high-profile carpers must be in their 60s and some of them are still as enthusiastic as they ever were for no other reason than that they simply have to go fishing. They have an inbuilt hunting instinct that



Birch Grove looking out from the lodge. We have added almost 90 new carp to the water since the deaths in 2003, including 50 during this last winter. Inset, right: Our own Gary Hood with his new personal best common of 27lb 4oz caught from Birch in March.

I don't have. Mine is simply a love of carp and carp fishing which needs a spark under it to reignite the flame now and then. As I write (in early-April) I am two days away from the end of a four-month period of hibernation, induced partly by Carpworld, partly by the weather, and partly by simple inertia. I have loved the period of hibernation and it is taking a real effort of will to lift myself to get ready for a week in Swim 1 & 2 at Rainbow. The fact that I am halfway through my latest book, written on the bank, is the spark that is igniting the flame. Once I'm back at it I look forward to the next session, but just for the moment the motivation that Lee talks about is simply not there. With me, carp fishing addiction comes and goes. I look on it as a long-term affliction which lies dormant for long periods, then flares up again and drives me back out onto the bank in pursuit of some meaningless target that remains just out of reach. I guess my big worry is that Lee and I will win at Madine, and I'll catch another 70 somewhere along the way. Then I will be like Lee and wonder where I go from there. Back to simply enjoying it, I guess!

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Finally, a word about Birch Grove, one of the waters I run in Shropshire. Until I got drawn back into editorship of Carpworld I was planning a couple of anecdotal pieces about Birch along the lines of last year's Mangrove features. They are on the back burner for the moment but as this is the time of year when I spend some time at Birch working on the water, and doing a bit of fishing there, this is a suitable moment to update the venue.

Since the carp deaths in 2003 Birch has been a bit of an unknown quantity. We lost almost 40 fish in the 2003 kill, and these were immediately replaced from the stock pond. This winter we have added a further 50 carp of 7-11lb from the stock pond, and these are already making their presence felt in terms of captures. In addition, the pool has started to produce

an increasing number of 30lb+ carp to the winter syndicate, these captures suggesting that there are now at least eight 30s in the water, plus the big uncaught mirror that is seen but never banked. (Not seen by me, I hasten to add, but by Ellis Brazier and others who are far better fish-spotters than I am.) Our head of production Gary Hood has been part of the winter syndicate for the last two winters and in March he landed a 27lb 4oz personal best common from the water.

Birch is an idyllic place to fish, and while the fishing can be a frustration for all of us who fish there, the facilities are excellent and there are certainly plenty of fish in there for those who know what they are doing – and drop lucky. We let the six-acre Birch exclusively by the week to parties of four anglers maximum (plus non-fishing guests) from June to the end of October and if you are interested in fishing there then get in touch with Pip, who handles the bookings. Birch is a lovely pool in an historic part of England and I still love going there as much as I did when I first fished the water in the late-'80s. It is hard to believe that it is over 20 years since we took over the running of the pool. Long may it continue to be the magical carp pool that so many of us know and love. It has seen many changes and many special moments in the 20 years of our tenure and I'll be reflecting on those 20 years in future issues of Carpworld.

### Black Lizard

Apologies to our legion of Black Lizard devotees who assiduously follow the normally unrecorded off-the-bank adventures of wannabes, has-beens, might-bes and high-profile anglers which constitute our occasional sideways look at the world of carp fishing. Mr Black and Mr Lizard have been enjoying a sabbatical (whatever that means!) for the last few weeks but have promised to come up with more irreverent gossip and off-the-record pictures for the June issue of Carpworld. Meantime, while we remain devoutly non-commercial and inadvertently profit-making, we would ask readers to look out for the Black Lizard T-shirts which we are planning to launch later in the year. **TP**



The new stocking of Birch/Mangrove crosses being consigned to Birch, with one of the bigger fish being displayed for the camera.