

“Quote/Unquote”

This week: Alex Bransby. Part 2



Give us a little insight into your current day angling, aims and aspirations, if you have any in particular that is?

Well I now feel I'm beginning to come full circle with my angling of late, let me explain. In my early carping days I always chose the waters I fished by how quiet and least pressured they were, which was a great learning curve for me at the time for developing my watercraft, just how it should be, me against the carp. As time went on I began seeking out waters containing larger fish which inevitably became more pressured, which again was a good learning curve as I found myself tinkering with various presentations and baiting strategies to find success. However I'm now starting to get to a point where I'm longing to seek out the quieter waters once again where carp behave naturally and have yet to be conditioned by intense angling. As we speak I am just beginning my time on the St Ives lagoon in Cambridgeshire on the hunt for a rather fat old mirror!

Are you a bait head, you know is it as important today to you or are there other things you feel are more important? What types of bait do you prefer and do you change your baits and baiting strategy with different weather conditions?

Well as I work in the bio-chemical industry you would expect so but actually I'm not. I do however know what works for me in a bait and (pardon the pun) it all boils down to quality ingredients. One of the joys of being a consultant for CCMoore's is that I can be 100% sure that the bait I'm using is made using the highest quality ingredients available and formulated for peak performance. Which then leaves me free to put all my energies into making sure I apply this bait to the right areas at the right



times in the right quantities to maximise my chances of success. Much of the time, as I prefer to use a quality all year round mix the bait stays the same for the majority of my angling, but as you would expect the quantities applied differ some what with the ever changing conditions.

Tell us what five essential items of tackle you wouldn't be without on a session, and why?

1- Sharp hooks: It's imperative that I always have a good supply of "checked" sharp hooks whenever I'm on the bank. For me if there's even a slight doubt on the sticky sharpness of a hook point I bin it. It's one thing I am particularly anal about.

2- Brew kit: There's nothing like a good cuppa to boost the moral and there's also the whole social aspect of it all. It's worth noting that personally I have learnt loads and gained so much information over the years about particular waters and their fish by simply sharing a brew with fellow anglers and generally being social.

3- Polarised glasses: Observation plays a massive part in being a successful angler and I for one wouldn't be without a decent pair of Polaroid's. They really can make all the difference when locating fish and not just in the warmer months either. It's amazing just how much time carp spend in the upper layers even in the depths of winter!

4- My iphone: I never would have thought this just a mere couple of years ago but with the advancements in technology and the arrival of a number of very useful applications my iphone now comes under the essential category. Besides the obvious communicational uses it also has a high quality camera and shoots video in HD, but where it really comes into its own is with the various weather applications it can run. These include up to the minute



localised weather forecasts via GPS, temperature, barometric pressure and wind speed gauges and also not forgetting the very useful compass.

5- Quality sleeping bag: Gone are days when I used to shiver myself to sleep on those long cold winter nights on the bank, thanks to modern materials that have revolutionised the thermal properties and comfort of today's sleeping bags. I am currently using the new Chub cloud 9 bag which is already proving itself as essential by keeping me warm and comfortable in all temperatures.

Is there anything that particularly gets your hackles up about modern day carp angling?

There are many things I could rant on about but I guess due to my time on heavily pressured waters recently it would have to be etiquette or should I say lack of.

What are your views on these controversial subjects; barbed or barbless hooks, lead core leaders, lead clips and potential abuse and plastic baits (the fact that they continue to fish in the event of a crack off)?

Before I give you my views on these often discussed controversial subjects I thought I best make it clear from the start that I am a confident and long time user of them all.

The barbed or barbless hook debate is an easy one as I will always prefer a barb when using a bio-degradable bait, which is most of the time. I believe like many that a barbless hook is afforded too much movement within the fish's mouth creating a possible scissor-like action during the fight that can cause unnecessary damage. If you need proof of this visit one of the many commercial fisheries that have held a barbless rule for years and check out the mouth condition of the stock.

This leads me nicely on to the use



of plastic baits and as you may have picked up on from the previous subject, being non bio-degradable as a plastic bait is, I believe that they should ideally be used with a barbless hook. This is because in the event of a crack off the lost rig will continue to be "active" for a very long time and although far from ideal, any fish picking up this ticking time bomb would stand a greater chance of ridding itself of the presentation.

This subject is a worry for many anglers and I myself have looked into a way of trying to make the use of plastic safer, for example when topping a bait with plastic corn, instead of threading onto the hair maybe lassoing it with a large hair loop which would mean when the boilie had eventually broken down, the larger hair loop would allow the plastic to come away from the hair with ease and hopefully help alleviate the problem.

Having used leadclips for many years I know what a great lead ejection system they can be in the right hands, but are far from foolproof. Many companies produce their own version and are all slightly different, therefore I suggest choosing one version and sticking with it to fully understand that product to get the best out of it. For example I use the ACE lead clip system which I rate highly.

Through use of this product as standard I now know exactly how much of the tail rubber needs pushing onto the body to enable the lead to do its job on the cast and then safely be ditched shortly after the take with ease. Another way of achieving the same effect would be to trim the actual lead clip arm down slightly. Your chosen lead clip should also incorporate some sort of removable pin to lock the swivel inside the body which is essential for the clip to work effectively. Another factor to consider is the weight of lead used in



conjunction with the clip, as a heavier lead will be ejected far easier than a lighter one so again these variants must be experimented with to get the best and safest use out of the product.

I have been a user of leadcore for a long time now and have never had a problem with it but I am all too aware of the dangers. By its very nature leadcore can easily kink and twist and therefore the inner lead can break and protrude through the outer and pose the threat of not only inhibiting the safe release of terminal tackle but also easily picking up weed and other debris. This could potentially increase the chances of a fish becoming tethered should a crack off occur and the rig be picked up, so please be sure to regularly check for any damage.

As time has gone on, and with these dangers in mind my leadcore leaders have become shorter and shorter over the years, as they now measure around 18ins in length. These shorter than average leaders I believe are a lot safer and also suit my style of angling better than the longer lengths seen on many set ups.

I feel I can't leave these subjects without bringing up one of my own that can greatly reduce any of the above scenarios occurring, which is to always fish with a reliable, strong abrasion resistant mainline and to religiously check it before each and every cast is made.

I think in a nutshell this question comes down to the competency and experience of the individual angler concerned and highlights the need to thoroughly educate newcomers to the sport.

What would you change if you could in angling today, given the opportunity?

Oh lots and lots...I'm afraid once again most of it is connected with other angler's behaviour so is highly



unlikely to ever change. Such things as competition, ignorance, snobbery, arrogance, egotists, jealousy, backbiting, lack of respect for the countryside and wildlife. These are all things you see on far too many waters up and down the country and I think it's all a bit sad really.

You are a very accomplished angler but if you had to have two anglers on your side to make a team who would they be and why?

Bloody tricky one that as I know many exceptionally talented anglers out there who I am yet to angle with. So perhaps I should make my decision based on those I have first hand experience of and have actually spent time on the bank with.

First up would have to be Frank Warwick. As well as being at the top of his game for longer than I care to remember, Frank has a great innovative mind and we shouldn't forget some of the creations he has given us over the years that we take for granted these days. He's also one of the nicest most genuine blokes you could ever wish to meet.

Next up has to be Jon McAllister. Jon's hunger and determination in pursuing his chosen quarry is nothing short of inspirational and his ability to locate and stick a hook into his individual target fish is quite astonishing. He is however crap at making tea!

Where do you see yourself in five years time?

Hopefully with a few more whackers under my belt but more importantly fit, healthy and still enjoying my angling wherever it may take me!

Many thanks for your time Alex, much appreciated.