

# In Pursuit Of A Canal Thirty by Alex Grice

---



After a successful previous season on the lakes around my local area, I decided a change was on the cards for the forthcoming season and the challenge of the canal thirty on my local stretch was all that I had on my mind. I'd heard of an original 30lb mirror in the stretch which was very rarely caught, so

without hesitation was rearing to have a go. I spent the winter months down the canal regularly walking the banks, trying to find spots that looked good to present bait and where the carp had previously been feeding. I knew that the stock was very low with only 5 original fish and 10 stockies with lots of Tench and Bream. The stretch still had a close season, which I personally think is good, but meant that my season's campaign would only realistically start from June 16<sup>th</sup> due to A-level commitments in the early course of the year. With only being a 5 minute drive from my home I could get down most nights to trickle a bit of bait into likely looking spots. The stretch is about half a mile long and generally quite weedy with varying depths, finishing with a basin where canal boats used to turn around up near the village end of the stretch. It was exactly what I wanted; very rarely fished and night fishing was allowed on the basin end of the canal, which looked a real hotspot.

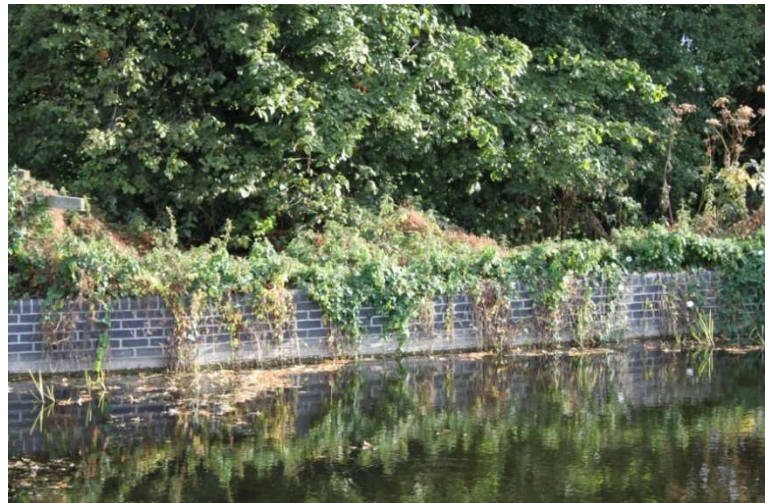
Knowing there were many Bream and Tench in the canal I adapted my usual mix so it was suited to just targeting the carp in the stretch. I opted for CC Moore's Tigers in Talin as my main bait with my baiting up mix consisting of chopped tigers, Particles in Talin, and Feedstim XP to give the mix a good boost! Through the early part of the season I was regularly down baiting marginal shelves and patches between the weed in



the hope that the elusive carp would get used to feeding on the bait I would be using later in the season. I did a few nights early in the season to no avail, mainly due to the freezing cold nights and the canal being fairly shallow, with its deepest area being around 5-6ft in the basin end. However, I did have a stockie around 12lb at the beginning of March just before the close season, so knew they were starting to get onto the bait which was a good sign.

It was now well into the close season and my regular trips to the bank were coming together and creating a bigger picture of the area; I was starting to see the fish becoming more active after the cold winter. They were generally holding up in the basin area of the canal at first light then drifting into the shallower stretch of the canal as the sun came up and the water started to warm. Knowing this, my night approach would be fishing the basin in a swim I called The Boathouse, with a good far marginal bank of reeds and a old walled area down to the left of the swim. For the days I knew I could nick a bite down the canal in the shallower areas trying to stalk the fish. I took a rod down in order to have a lead around, finding a few nice gravel spots along the far bank shelf where five old wooden posts came out the water. There were a few areas of silt between; I knew these were both key holding points for the carp.

It was now the start of the season and I was raring to get down. The rods were all set up and ready to go and the bait mix was already prepared. The rigs were simple and consisted of a metre of leadcore, with a safety clip and a 3 oz square pear. The rigs were my trusty size 8 wide gapes tied to 6 inches of atomic jelly-wire (blowback style) with a tiger half drilled out with cork to create a slow-sinking balanced bait. I



managed to get down on the opening night to find I had the whole stretch to myself, so I set up in front of the boathouse and got the rods out. I was casting to the far side bank then walking round to lower my rigs in as to get them spot on, I used my marker rod to lower the rig in by attaching it with a pva string loop and a little piece of foam, which in turn was attached to my rig; this allowed me to still feel what the bottom was like and when the string melted my rigs were in position. This was followed by two spods gently laid over the area with my mix and a handful of tigers spread a foot or so apart from each other. One rod was placed on the silt and the other of the firm gravel, with the third rod to my left just off the wall. With all rigs in position, it was time to sit back and watch the water with the kettle on. The night passed to no avail, but a few fish showed over the spots early that morning before I left for college so I trickled a bit more bait on the spots and it was time to up sticks and head off.

I managed to get back down later in the week and get in the same spot; I didn't get down till late so I had to get the rods out in the dark which isn't too much of a problem as there's always light from the village which helps. The broolly was up and I was fishing. The night passed and I woke early next morning thanks to the rowdy waters birds. With the kettle on and, watching the water, I saw a fish

pop its head out over the spot; a real dark fish, no doubt it was one of the originals I was after. A hour or so passed and by this time I was on my third tea of the morning then the right hand Neville burst into life and I was in. It tried taking me round the corner of a tree and down the canal so I had to lock down and managed to turn it back into the basin, 10 minutes later and its shoulders were gliding over the net cord and a cry of relief went out... wahey an original! I sacked it for half an hour to wait for the bro to come down and get a few snaps. We got it up on the mat and it went just under 18lbs- I was chuffed! It was a real old fish, very dark and looked magical in the morning sunlight! We slipped it back and it was time to head off, with the gear in the car I put what bait I had left over the spot.



It was now nearly July and due to other commitments hadn't managed to get down for a week or so, so when the chance arose I was back down again. I got down mid afternoon so I could have a walk up the canal to see if I could see some fish and there was the odd one cruising about but mostly stockies. On the way back up I put a few tigers in the holes in the weed as, by this time, the weed was really up so it was hard to find spots. The night passed by and at about 2am I had a blistering take from the silt

spot on the middle rod. It was jaggging away quite a bit so initially I thought it was a good Tench until it started ripping line off the spool towards a snag to the right. My other rods were fine as my lines were well sunk and backleaded so eventually I drew it over the net. I got it up on the mat to see it was one of the small scaley stockies. So I did a few self takes in the night and it went 14lbs and ounces. I was happy because the spots were producing and everything was coming together well. Just a few hours later and the left hand rod was away; the one tight to the wall on a balanced tiger topped with corn glugged in Feedstim XP. It was another little stockie; a real pretty linear of 14lbs again. That was all the action from that night but I still went away very happy and with lots of confidence.

I couldn't get down for many nights now due to working late hours, so my days were spent walking the banks trying to find the biggie I was pursuing. I'd seen a few of the stockies I'd had the previous session but the weed down the canal meant viewing was hard. There was a bit more algae now so the clarity wasn't great for spotting fish either. I climbed a tree over a spot further down the canal I had been baiting regularly to see a good fish - it was definitely an original but I wasn't sure if it was the big 'un. It was mid July and I was eager to get down because I knew the spots would produce, so the kit was loaded and off I went. It was nearly



dark and the rods were all ready and positioned on the spots, with a brew in my hands and a stunning sunset my confidence was high. A couple of hours into darkness I had a few liners then the bobbin rose and the Neville was going, I hooked into the fish and it started moving slowly to my left, then all of a sudden the hook had pulled! Could it have been the big one? I was gutted to say the least but the rod went straight back out and in the early hours was off again over the little silty spot I had found. It was slow pondering fight and after a short battle I managed to steer it in. On the mat it was clear it was another original and went just under 20lbs, which we named the 'dinosaur fish' due to its ancient appearance. I sacked it up until I could get some morning snaps.



Surely I was getting closer to the one I wanted and soon enough morning came around meaning it was time to up sticks and head off. A few tigers went in on the spot as I left.

I managed to get down later that week and saw the fish topping in the basin area just before dark. I got the rods out but the night went by quietly. Just as the sun was coming up I awoke to a few bleeps on the right hand Nev; it was very misty and I could barely see the end of the rod tips. I got up and put the kettle on only to be stopped by a slow ponderous take which slowly lifted the bobbin up to the roller. Latching into the fish I knew it was a better one as it slowly peeled



line off my reel in an attempt to get away. As the mist rose I could start to see where it was heading and managed to turn it. It wasn't happy and bolted off trying to get into a bed of reeds- but I managed to stop it. By this point my heart was going ten to the dozen as I gradually drew it closer and closer. A big set of shoulders glided over the net and it was mine. I looked down at it in the net and knew it was the big 'un. A cry went out,

'woi oi' most likely waking the whole village, but I was over the moon. On the scales it went 27lb 15oz a little underweight but that didn't bother me, the fact was I had completed my challenge and caught some real old original fish. I got my bro down to do some pics at first light and it was a magical moment to see it swim off, probably not to be caught again for another few years.

Until then, be lucky. Gricey