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Cyprynews



DOWN MEMORY LANE PART TWO

By Len Arbery



Len with good friend Chris Ball

Len Arbery has been going back through his archives to assemble a picture collection of special memories, the intention being for the Society to publish this in the foreseeable future on Len's behalf. We have already published one extract from the book. Here's Part Two, with thanks to Len for his unfailing support down the years, and for supporting Cyprynews in this way.

Correspondence

"One of the charms of angling is that it presents an endless field for argument, speculation, and experiment."—T. E. PRITT.
[We do not hold ourselves responsible for opinions expressed by our Correspondents.]

RECORDS OF LARGE CARP.

SIR,—Under the above heading in last week's *Fishing Gazette* Mr. J. Robinson asks, What is the weight of the largest carp caught in British, and also in German, waters? The following may be of interest to your correspondent, but possibly some of your readers may have records of larger specimens:—

Yarrell records large carp as follows: "A brace weighing 35lb., from Mr. Ladbroke's park, at Garton. A carp taken at Stourhead, 30 in. long, 22 in. girth, weight 18lb. There is a painting of a carp at Western Hall, Staffordshire, the seat of the Earl of Bradford, which weighed 19½lb."

Dr. Hamilton, in *Fishing Gazette*, 1st December, 1888, states that, "The largest carp recorded in this country was one killed at Pain's Hill, Cobham, which weighed 26lb."

In December, 1875, Mr. Frank Buckland, in *Land and Water*, described an extraordinary specimen, which had been brought to him by Lord Arthur Russell, M.P. for Tavistock. The history of the carp I give in his own words: "There is a fishmonger in Berlin who had given out that he could supply carp up to 30lb. weight; Lord Odo Russell gave this man an order for a large carp. After waiting some time, the specimen which Lord Arthur has brought me was produced. The weight of this splendid fish is no less than 27lb.; he measures 2ft. 10in. in length, and 1ft. 11in. in circumference. The largest carp (a cast, of course) in my museum is a fish which weighed 21lb.; it was given to me by Mr. Charles, of Arabella Row. Lord Odo Russell's monster German carp is, I believe, the largest on record in modern times."—Yours, &c.,

GIANT.

Perhaps the accompanying scan/photo will be of some interest to those interested in carp fishing history. This is a letter copied from an issue of the *Fishing Gazette*, published way back in 1889. As you will read, it provides some idea of the weights/sizes that carp could possibly reach in Europe at that time. (Converting the length and girth mentioned, that is – 2 feet 10 inches x 1 foot 11 inches, equates to 34 inches x 23 inches, or 86.5cm x 58.5 cm.)

Here is a picture of the very successful early carp angler, and member of the original Carp Catchers Club, Gerry Berth-Jones, the venue being the Red Spinners' famous carp water, Cheshunt Lower Reservoir. This mirror's weight, in Gerry's inscription on the reverse of the pic, is a bit difficult to decipher, but I am confident that it reads either 10lb or 16lb, but no further details provided. Sadly, Cheshunt Lower Reservoir is no more, it was filled in and a housing estate now occupies the site.





This picture shows the late Bill Keal and the late Alec Lewis, who were very great friends. This friendship began in their schoolboy days, and only ended with Bill's untimely and tragic early death, due to an accident on the M4 motorway. Both Bill and Alec were already carp fishing at the time Richard Walker and the Carp Catchers' Club were laying-down the foundations for 'modern' carp fishing in this country. Alec and Bill fished many of the notable carp waters of the 1950's and

1960's; including Woldale (Benniworth Haven), Claydon, Cheshunt, London Colney, Stoneham, Billing, Austins, Redmire Pool, etc. Here, though, we see Bill and Alec sharing a session afloat. The packet containing this negative unfortunately contained no further information when it passed into my possession, but it is now known that the venue is most probably Blenheim Palace Lake. Like most (all?) anglers of that period Bill and Alec were interested in most of the major coarse species, as well as trout and salmon; they were founder-members of the Herts-Chiltern Anglers; major players in the Red Spinner Angling Society. Besides being very successful anglers of their time Bill was a noted author, and Alec captured some of the best and most interesting angling pictures of the early specimen-fishing period.

This photograph shows the female side of the successful Berth-Jones carp duo, Gerry's wife, May, who became May Lang after re-marrying. The scene is the Sussex venue Wadhurst Lake, one of the most famous lakes in the country at that time, this being the mid-1950's. May Berth-Jones and Kay Steuart (Dave's late wife) were the most renowned lady carp specialists of that, (and perhaps any other), era. This picture is a personal favourite, not only for the obvious reasons: just look at the background, where May & Gerry's baby son, can be seen happily (and safely) sitting in his carrycot at the side of his mother's swim. Note also what appears to be a large centrepin reel in use.



(NB. Although the slim-bodied common carp of this period, from waters such as Wadhurst, the Chichester canal, Bushey Park, old stew ponds, etc. were known as 'wildies', it is now generally accepted the term 'wildie' is most likely erroneous,

for it has been suggested these carp all display features of past selective breeding.)



This photograph, taken by the late Alec Lewis, shows on the left the late Bill Keal, whom I seem to recall was the then Red Spinners' Fishery Officer, and three members, inspecting the new stock of Leney-supplied carp for Cheshunt Reservoir following the disastrous fish kill occasioned by the Big Freeze of 1963. The late Donald Leney delivered these carp personally. Alec Lewis' memorable quote late on that historic day was, "Cheshunt is now a carp water once again!"

As a reminder: This historic carp fishery, where John Andrews caught his ex-record 20lb 3oz common in 1916; and where Hugh Tempest Sheringham caught his

16lb'er that was immortalised in his iconic account – you know, the one that opens with the words "A little after half-past eight...." Most unfortunately this very important part of carp angling's history was lost to angling for a housing estate now stands on the site of what was once Cheshunt Lower Reservoir; so, so sad.

This photo of my dear, late friend, Bill Quinlan returning a double-figure mirror, dates back to about 1964. the venue being Brooklands Lake in Kent, adjacent to the A2 highway. Brooklands was then controlled by Dartford & District AC. In his early attempts at Brooklands' carp Bill would set-up with a rod (in rests) to each side of his chair, typical of his usual tench fishing style, this being in order to allow a rapid response to any movement of the silver-paper bite indicator on either rod. Fishing in this fashion brought almost instant success, thereby suggesting to his companions, Jack Hilton and Roger Smith, that 'twitcher-hitting' was a very



worthwhile carp-fishing tactic. Bait was a free-lined well-boiled potato; so soft, in fact, some would break-up when casting. Although this year (2020) witnesses the twenty-fourth anniversary of Bill's sad demise, I miss him just as much as ever, and can report the late Bob Buteux did so, too.



My own carp-fishing career began in the early 1960's at a day ticket still-water in Bedfordshire, seen here. In those days it was known as Maylins Pool, being directly to the rear of a roadside cafe of that name. Much, much later, this venue became very much better known as the carp syndicate water, Withy Pool.

I well recall my first trip to Maylins, driving a clapped-out, pre-war Rover, owned by a friend. Its steering gear was so worn that it

was kept 'within the white lines and on the black stuff' only on a 'wing and a prayer', and with considerable difficulty! Maylins is where I met an angler for the first time whom I now believe, almost certainly, to be Frank Guttfield, for the angler in question spent the nights there sleeping directly on the bank in an ex-Post Office mail-bag. Later I learnt from Jack Hilton's classic book, 'Quest for Carp', that this was Frank's modus operandi of the time when night-fishing Maylins. Frank and Jack were very close-friends at this time, spending many hours fishing together, and with fellow members of the old Hertfordshire Specimen Group, which, of course, later joined forces with the Chiltern lads, becoming the Herts-Chiltern Anglers.

Maylins Pool is also the site of the capture of Jack Hilton's first-ever double-figure carp, 17lb 8oz, in 1960: hhe caught a second 'double', weighing 16lb, around an hour after the first. (See 'Quest for Carp' pp 46-47), Jack's brace being caught from a swim adjacent to the area shown here. Alas, I never was sufficiently savvy (or lucky!) to catch a Maylins' carp, but did take a quite sizeable perch as scant consolation.

Unless my memory has betrayed me once again, this picture dates back to that tropical summer of 1976. Because Redmire Pool was suffering from the incessant hot weather, with both water and dissolved oxygen falling to worrying levels, my close pal and Redmire syndicate partner, Kev Clifford, was looking for an alternative water with big carp potential. I'd recently been tench fishing Yateley, along with more of my angling pals, including Pete Cranstoun, Bill Quinlan and Bob Buteux, and knew it held carp. In fact, a recent 20lb'er had been taken on floating crust, and I lost what could have been a 'biggie', when it 'ran me out of line' on a tench sortie.



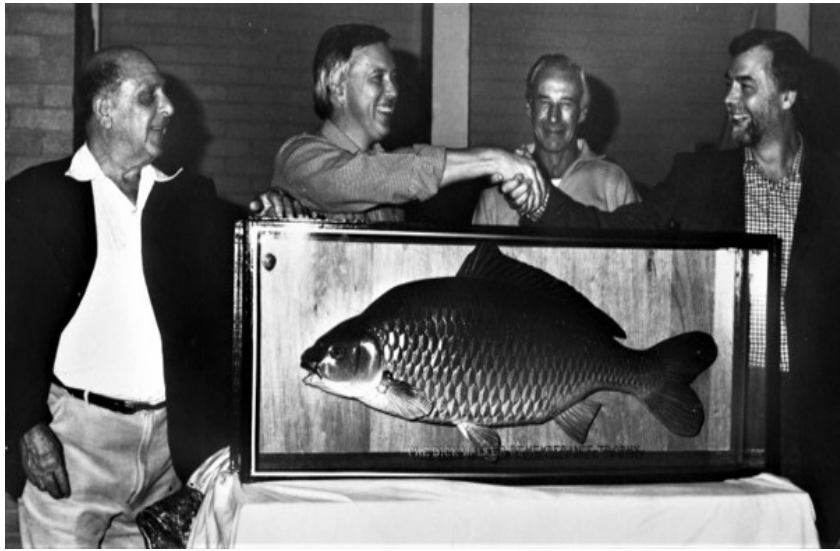
Kev considered it worth a go, and caught this beautiful thirty-pounder during his inaugural visit. Kev called me at home and I was very pleased to turn-out in order to take some pictures. Later, of course, this carp became very well-known; famous even! What was it christened? Basil; yes, I'm pretty sure that's it. But, why? I have no idea.

PS: Since penning the above it has been suggested that the name 'Basil' was taken from a popular TV show at the time, 'Fawlty Towers', Basil Fawlty being its main character. This does sound rather plausible to me, particularly if the name became applicable after 'Basil' attained forty-pounds in weight; Fawlty/forty plainly being a play on words.



Here's my late friend, Jack Hilton, in his embryonic carping days, the venue being the Red Spinners' famous carp water, Cheshunt Lower Reservoir. As mentioned earlier this is a water long since regrettably filled in for a housing estate! I've been informed by Chris Ball that Jack began carp fishing in 1959 and reckon this shot possibly dates back to that particular year, or very shortly afterwards. This may have been even before Jack acquired his B. James & Son laminated cane landing net, for plainly a circular version is being employed here. Jack's rod is, I suggest, one of the early fibreglass examples he was involved in designing with the late Don Neish. Don, then the proprietor of one of the main specimen anglers' tackle shops, Dons of Edmonton, and being a well-known tournament caster of the time,

plainly had his finger right on the pulse of rod design back then. Jack knew Don very well, and they collaborated in sorting-out perhaps the first-ever purpose-built successful and reliable 'hollow-glass' carp rods. Furthermore, Bill Quinlan's input was in dreaming-up the spigot idea to replace the metal ferrules that had been used as rod joints previously.



There is quite a story behind the accompanying two photographs, but will try to be brief: Back in 1987, the Carp Society asked me if I'd be prepared to compose a quiz for all the members, which I was very happy to do. Then the question of a suitable trophy to mark the event arose. Somebody, and I'm sorry it can't be remembered just who, suggested the brilliant idea of a Brian Mills' carp carving but, in the event, it fell to me to get everything organised.

Happily, Brian was only too happy to create a life-sized replica of Dick Walker's ex-record carp, his Redmire 44lb'er, Clarissa, for the purpose. As this mahogany replica would only be carved on the 'show' side (meaning that the reverse would be left flat), it would be prone to damage without some form of protection. After discussing this with several others friends, Peter Stone, the famous Wolvercote angler and taxidermist, offered to make a bowed-glass case to house the carving, similar to those used to house traditional stuffed specimens.

So, Ted Hadaway picked-up the finished carving from Brian Mills, in Ramsgate, and then took it to Stoney's home in Oxfordshire. Furthermore, Ted generously donated £180 (a very tidy sum back in those days), towards Peter Stone's costs for the bowed glass and other materials, and the case bore a plaque inside confirming this. It was all done in a bit of a rush, and the finished trophy, the 'Dick Walker Remembrance Trophy', was only ready for me to



collect from Pete Stone a couple of days before the presentation date. Some years later this trophy was sold by the Carp Society but now they'd very much like to get it back, hence this piece. So, if anybody knows of its current whereabouts, please get in touch!