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GARDNER
RIG *HANDBOOK*

THE ULTIMATE RIG GUIDE

COVERT HOOKS

ALWAYS STAY IN...
...NEVER STAND OUT

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Carp fishing can be exciting, thought provoking and sometimes down right baffling!

Every day is different. Some days the fish will feed with wild abandon, aggressively rooting out all the bait that we lay on their table, with the inevitable outcome being fresh pictures in our photo collection, a wet net and an aching arm. On other days they can approach the same baits with the utmost caution, briefly sneaking onto the feeding spots for a mouthful of food before vacating the area. Because of this variation, as anglers we continuously strive to develop, hone and evolve the tactics and baits in order that should a carp make a mistake and inhale our hook-bait, the opportunity is transformed into that fish visiting the bank.

Throw in variables such as the infinitely wide variety of waters we visit, such as meres, gravel pits, canals and rivers - each with their own unique topographies; the effect of different substrates on rig presentation; the size, volume and spread of baits being fed; the huge range of terminal tackle equipment that is available to all anglers; and finally the behaviour of the carp themselves, then 'carp fishing tackle and techniques' can become a hugely complex and sometimes daunting subject.

There is no substitute for getting out and experimenting with different techniques for yourself, and if you are lucky even getting the opportunity to watch carp feed and learning how best to tackle each different situation. The greater success and confidence you gain, the more the sport fuels the desire to continue learning in an effort to unlock the secrets of successful carp fishing.

This rig booklet aims to offer anglers of all experience an insight into the key areas of this big puzzle - rigs and terminal tackle.

Within these pages the Gardner team will lead you through the basic presentations we successfully use for specific scenarios, and offer ideas for advanced tweaks and improvements that you can easily incorporate into your own rigs. Many of these suggestions will improve the rigs critical performance, and will undoubtedly help you to enjoy greater success during your time spent on the bank side.

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Sometimes all we need to catch a carp is a keen eye, our rod and reel, a good line and a baited hook. 'Close up and personal' fishing in the edge is both exciting and hugely rewarding.

Whether you are lowering a hook bait onto an unseen fish 'truffling' in a silty cloud of coloured water, or laying a bait onto a marginal gravel shelf spot amongst active fish in the clear water a of gravel pit, the rush of adrenalin as you watch the fish pick up you hook bait or the line twitch is fantastic. These opportunities are often rare to present themselves, and if the fisheries that you visit lack bank side cover or are extremely busy then the fish will visit the edges less frequently. One thing is for certain though; they will sneak into the margins when the bank side disturbance is reduced (such as the middle of the night). Make no bones of it - watching the carp feed in your lake is the fastest way to learn how to catch them.

When the disturbance pushes fish further out then the natural progression is the addition

of a casting weight placed onto the line to reach the fish, and as our rigs have evolved this

weight has taken on much greater significance. When it is combined with an ultra sharp hook it becomes an anchor point to which the hooklink will tighten, and ultimately pull the hook point into the fish's mouth, causing the instinctive 'flight' reaction to kick in. This is the bolt rig, and it has been used successfully for many years now to catch huge numbers of big carp from all around the world.

Built around the basic principle of bolt rigs, there are now a wide variety of terminal arrangements that offer us carpers the ability to fine tune the way that the hooklink and lead react; how the leader settles and in many cases, the overall effectiveness of the hook bait presentation and how it reacts when a fish swallows the bait.

Of course, it is best to tailor the whole rig to the approach you are using and the lake bed you are fishing on, we will look into the specific benefits of the different lead arrangements in greater detail later in this booklet.



Put in the simplest possible terms 'presentation' describes the way in which the hook bait and hooklink settle on the lake bed, and then the way in which the rig reacts when a carp engulfs the hook bait with those thick rubbery lips.

A good presentation will be untangled and allow the hook bait and hooklink to settle in a manner that ensures that the rig is inconspicuous to feeding fish. It will also allow the hook bait to move towards the fishes mouth sufficiently so the hook finishes in a position that the hooking mechanics can come into play. If this all works not only will the carp be snared but the hook hold will be strong and the majority of fish hooked will end up in the bottom of your landing net.

A poor presentation will be obvious to the fish and will be easier for them to avoid, or will simply be ineffective. There are a lot of things that could go wrong (particularly in weedy waters) and these problems can be anything from the hooklink tangling or failing to settle flush to the lake bed, the rig being engulfed by silt or weed, or simply the hook snaring on bottom debris, restricting the hook baits movements and masking the all important hook point from doing its job.

With a little help and experience it is easy to construct terminal tackle and rigs that will allow you to fish effectively whatever the nature of the waters you are visiting. Whether you are fishing on a polished gravel spot, in deep silt, over chod or amongst ballooning clouds of silk weed there is always a rig that will suit your situation best, and we hope that this rig booklet will offer you a useful guide to mastering the wide range of terminal tackle arrangements needed to improve your presentation.

BUCKING THE TREND

General principles in hook to bait size aside, there are rig tweaks that allow you to throw the rule book out of the window!

'Big hook' rigs are devastatingly effective when combined with a pop up hook bait (see rigs section), as the weight of the hook is totally nullified by the buoyancy of the hookbait. This combination offers phenomenal hooking potential, and is a real big fish special!

Try combining a small pop up bait with a large hook so that it sinks very slowly. This is a really effective method when fished over a particle feed approach, and offers the subtlety of a bottom bait presentation, with the hooking potential of 'the mighty hook'.

A smaller hook can be incorporated, where the features in the lake allow, by increasing the length of the hair. If the fish have been heavily pressured (fished for by a lot of anglers over a long period of time) then reducing the size of the hook is the first and easiest way to make your hook bait appear more natural.



HOOK CHOICE

Before we start looking at the use of individual patterns in the Gardner range, it's worth considering the balance between the size of the hook and the bait. As a starting point most standard rigs for bottom baits will become unwieldy, and the presentation will suffer as a consequence if an overly large hook is used.

If you are a new recruit to the world of carp angling it's good to think of this in terms of how you would present small baits such as maggots or sweetcorn. You would never think of mounting a couple of kernels of corn onto a great big size 8 hook, because most fish would think twice before sucking that lot in! The same principle can be applied to carp rigs.

Fining down will ensure that the presentation is more natural, and this will invariably fool more fish on waters that are regularly fished. Smaller hooks have a limit though, in that bigger fish and demanding environments may mean you need a larger hook to successfully land the fish.

A carp's mouth is large, and if the venues you visit only receive slight angling pressure then the fish will be less aware of tackle and you may get away with using larger hooks. This makes the presentation less subtle, but the hooking potential of the rig will be increased. Only a little time and effort will show you if you have got the balance right.



Always remember one absolutely critical point - the one on your hook!

After reeling in or after a capture, carefully check the hook point using an eye loupe, like the Gardner 'Eye', to check for visible blunting or turning over of the hook points. Then use your finger nail to make sure the hook is razor sharp. If the hook slides on your nail it is blunt - so bin it.

The hook point not only controls the effectiveness of the initial pricking, but then ensures good penetration and a secure hook hold. **YOU WILL HOOK AND LAND MORE FISH IF YOU FOLLOW THIS IMPORTANT RULE!**

HOOK PATTERNS

The Gardner Tackle hook range encompasses seven dedicated hook patterns. We believe that between them they cater for virtually all of the carp and specimen angler's needs.

All our hooks are manufactured using the best quality high carbon steel, that has been forged and double tempered to offer the optimum balance between wire gauge (weight) and strength. Points are robust, chemically etched and seriously sharp – an absolutely essential element for rigs being used for any species.

MUGGA HOOKS & CONTINENTAL MUGGA HOOKS

For over a decade, this groundbreaking hook design has given carp anglers superb hooking potential and unsurpassed hook holds thanks to the combination of a super sharp straight point, a curved shank and an aggressively in-turned eye that enhances the rotation of the hook the moment the hooklink tightens. Simply awesome!



The Mugga is THE pattern of choice for numerous successful anglers, and can be used with either pop-up or bottom bait presentations, and works superbly with a wide range of hooklink materials. Now available - extra strong, heavier wired 'Continental Mugga Hooks' for the most challenging angling situations and monster carp...

Mugga Hooks are available in sizes 2 to 12, in either the Covert or Black Nickel finish.

Continental Mugga Hooks are available in sizes 2 to 10 (barbed only), in the Covert finish.

LONG SHANK MUGGA HOOKS

The long sweeping shank of this pattern makes it extremely difficult for fish to eject the hook bait once it has been inhaled. When used in conjunction with a pop up or balanced bottom bait these hooks offer anglers the opportunity to experiment with advanced rigs, and are particularly suited for use with the ruthlessly efficient 360° rig.

The Long Shank Mugga hook has proven to be a tremendously successful pattern, with big carp all across Europe falling foul of this superb Hook.



Available in sizes 4 to 10, in either the Covert or Black Nickel finish.

CHOD HOOKS

This is the perfect hook for use on Chod and Hinged Stiff rigs. The 15° out-turned eye ensures that the stiff Trip Wire hooklink exits at the correct angle so that the hook is ideally positioned for the super sharp straight point to prick and take hold in the fish's mouth. These hooks feature a strong forged wire, so that they will cope with the most demanding big fish angling without risk of opening up under pressure.



Currently available in sizes 4 to 8 (including a size 5), in the Covert finish.

TALON TIP HOOKS

The original Gardner carp hook. The Talon Tip pattern is super strong, and famed for offering rock solid hook holds. This is thanks to the combination of a 5° in-turned eye, medium length shank and sharp beaked point working together to offer phenomenal penetration. The beaked point is also naturally less likely to be turned over whilst fishing over gravel.



Currently available in sizes 2 to 12 (barbed and barbless), in both Covert and Black Nickel.

*Size 2 only available in Black Nickel.

WIDE GAPE TALON TIP HOOKS

When Gardner decided to develop a Wide Gape pattern, the design naturally evolved from the original Talon Tip – calling on the same strong wire, beaked point and in-turned eye to ensure



the best possible penetration without increasing the lateral forces that could cause the hook to open out during the early stages of a battle.

The increased gape offers the benefit of increased hooking power by allowing the hook point to be set further away from the hook eye, and the hook to grip deeper and even more strongly.

Currently available in sizes 2 to 10, in either the Covert and Black Nickel finish.

*Size 2 only available in Black Nickel.

INCIZOR HOOKS

There is a lot more to the Incizor pattern than is apparent at first glance. The long straight point is slightly angled in towards the shank, and ensures that the hook penetrates superbly and then gives extremely secure hook holds. The Incizor is an amazingly versatile pattern that can be used for a wide range of rigs, thanks largely to its straight eye. Whether in combination with a soft braid like Trickster Heavy, Fluorocarbon, monofilament or a skinned hook link this hook will do the job – admirably.



Currently available in sizes 1 to 10, in either the Covert or Black Nickel finish.

*Sizes 1 & 2 only available in Black Nickel.

LONG SHANK INCIZOR HOOKS

This hook point that has been etched onto the Long Shank Incizor hook is truly outstanding (even by Gardner standards), and makes this pattern stand out from similar patterns available! The pattern excels as a pop up hook when a 'Supa-Shrink' shrink tube kicker is added to the eye, and has proven equally effective when combined with a knotless knotted monofilament (or Fluorocarbon) hook link and a simple snowman setup. It may be simple, but it's also devastatingly effective.



Currently available in sizes 6 to 10, in Black Nickel.

COVERT

— STEALTH HOOK TECHNOLOGY —

What colour do you see? - The unique Covert stealth plating is adaptive to ambient light. By mimicking the surrounding light conditions, Covert hooks blend in seamlessly with the environment like no fish has ever seen before.



Does it work? - Like all true innovations, Covert hooks have set a new benchmark in hook technology - improved camouflage, sharper & stronger points and better performance than ever. To fully appreciate their unique finish, check them out at your local tackle shop and make up your own mind...

For more detailed information on the Gardner hook range visit www.gardnertackle.co.uk

HOOK LINKS

Effective balanced presentation relies upon the way a baited rig settles and how it behaves and reacts to fish sucking at the hooklink. All of these characteristics are affected by the material, length and breaking strain of hook link used when constructing our end tackle.

There is a huge variety available, enough to confuse even experienced anglers, let alone those starting out in carp fishing, so we will offer a brief insight into the uses and benefits of the main varieties commonly used by carp and specialist anglers today.

MONOFILAMENTS: COPOLY MER & FLUOROCARBON

Often overlooked, monofilament hooklinks can range from a section of line taken from your fishing reel, through to specialised hook links like our soft low memory HydroFlex, or our super stiff Trip-Wire (that is recommended for Chod Rigs and Hinged Stiff rigs). They are easy to work with, and Copolymers offer exceptionally high knot strength with most commonly used knots, like the Grinner and Palomar knot.



'Monofilaments' aren't only nylon and copolymer; they can also be made from Fluorocarbon materials. In recent years Fluorocarbons, like Mirage and Subterfuge, have become increasingly popular because of the weight of the line and the way that it becomes invisible when submerged. This is thanks to pure Fluorocarbon having

the same refractive properties as water. Different varieties of Fluorocarbon offer different stiffnesses, and as such can be used for many different advanced rig applications.

Monofilaments are a great alternative to braided hooklinks as they are less prone to tangling, and hold the hook in a set position in relation to the hooklink. This is an important consideration when designing rigs that have a greater chance of pricking the fish when they are being blown out (anti-ejection rigs).

Ignore monofilaments at your peril – if the fish in your water have been caught over and over on a braid or skin then maybe it's time to experiment. Small changes like this can make a big difference!

BRAIDS

Uncoated braids offer unsurpassed limpness that is said to give the hook bait a freedom of movement that can fool fish into thinking that the bait is a freebie.



Whether it is this effect, or simply that the supple nature of these materials feel different to monofilaments on the fishes lip, or that the hook is free to twist uninhibited and take hold more effectively in the fish's mouth is really uncertain. It's probably a mix of all these attributes that makes braid so effective.

The perfect hook link braid should sink flush to the lake bed, be smooth to the touch and ultra limp, have a low diameter

and be nicely camouflaged against a number of lake beds. Thanks to the inclusion of Dyneema fibres in all Gardner braids we are able to achieve remarkable performance in both our soft Trickster and tough Vigilante hooklink materials.

The subtlety that braids offer make them an extraordinarily effective hooklink option, and are the number one choice for many anglers. Especially for fishing with solid PVA bags or small hook baits, as we will see later in the rig booklet.

SKINS

Skinned braided hooklinks are immensely popular and it's not surprising when you consider the enormous variety of rigs that can be constructed using them.

They offer the angler the advantages of a soft braid that can be exposed by stripping the outer skin away, but without the tangles. The skin also helps the hooklink sink faster and makes the hooklink more robust as it offers the braided inner a little extra protection should the link come into contact with a submerged obstacle.



The colour and texture of the outer skins and braided inners varies between products, and within the Gardner Range you will find that the Sly Skin and Disruption hooklinks are slightly stiffer than the Chod and Sink Skins. Apart from this the main difference is colours, with subtle variations between the types giving you the very best opportunity to match the lake bed of the water where you are angling.

The simplest bottom bait rigs, incorporating a small stripped portion at the hook end, have caught countless big fish all around the world. However the scope for experimentation is almost endless. Simply by taking small sections of skin away you can dramatically alter the way in which the hook reacts when the bait is inhaled by a feeding carp.

Suitable for almost any modern rig including pop-up and bottom bait rigs, it is little wonder skins are probably used by more anglers than any other hooklink today. They are awesome!



**If you're unsure
how to start or
want to save time
try our ready tied
rigs range.**

LEAD ARRANGEMENTS

The lead arrangements we use are now much more than simply a weight on the line. Most of the time the combination of a sticky sharp hook and the weight of the lead will be enough for the hook point to snare the fish and cause the fish to bolt off.

The different lead systems allow us to tailor the way in which the rig is presented on the lake bed, and how the rig will perform when a carp picks up the hook bait. If you choose the wrong lead arrangement you could end up with the rig being dragged down into soft sediment or the fish could simply use the weight to shake the hook point out of their mouth!

Understanding how each one works, and how to get the most from them is vital to ensuring the best possible presentation.

RUNNING LEADS

The 'simplest' arrangement, the running lead, offers some major benefits. Realistically, there is still enough resistance to make the hook point nick the fish's mouth. This is great if you are fishing near to snags, as bites tend to be less violent and you have more time to take control of the situation before the fish panics.



Another advantage of a running rig is on heavily pressured venues where the fish are accustomed to dealing with standard sized fixed leads by using them to shake out hooks. The movement between the rig and the lead makes it very hard for them to use the weight to get rid of the rig.

Bite indication with really heavy running leads can be better than a semi fixed lead

arrangement, but we would suggest that this is really only noticeable with leads over 3 ounces, otherwise the lead can skip across the bottom rather than act as an anchor point for the line to pull through.

The situation where a running rig can cause problems is whilst fishing in weed or over pronounced 'bars', where the lead running up the line could potentially act as a snag point. Apart from that, it is an under rated and under used lead arrangement.

LEAD CLIP

Hugely popular, lead clips are used by many anglers mainly because of the ability to swap leads in the blink of an eye. Both the 'original' Covert Lead Clip and the newer Multi-Clip allow the angler to control the force required to discharge the lead by adjusting how far the tail rubber is pushed onto the back of the clip – essential functionality in thick weed, but unnecessary in open water!



To make sure the lead discharges correctly the lead clip must hold onto the swivel. The Covert Lead Clip uses an internal ridge that grips the swivel eye, and is therefore very easy to use. You just pull the size 8 swivel back into the Lead Clip until it clicks into place. Job done! The 'pegged' style of swivel retention is offered on the new Multi-Clip. It's a little more fiddly, but the swivel is held in position with 100% reliability.

The Multi Clip is unique as it can also be set up in a 'leader safe' form so that a leadcore leader can be used safely with a lead clip. Normal lead clips do not allow the leader and hooklink to separate so a fish could potentially be left trailing a leader if

the mainline breaks. The Multi Clip arrangement really is safer for the fish and a real step forward in rig safety.

Thanks to the ability to change lead size and shape, these lead clip systems can be used on almost any type of lake bed. By lengthening the hooklink you can maintain good presentation over light weed or silt, and on hard spots using a flat pear bomb will maximise the resistance, getting the most from your bolt rig.

HELICOPTER RIGS

Due to the way these rigs fly they are fantastic for long range fishing. With the lead on the end of the line and the hooklink set a few inches above it, helicopter rigs offer excellent presentation on almost any type of lake bed.

On hard lake beds the top bead is set just an inch away from the lead, sliding this further away to stop the hooklink being dragged into silt or weed. It's the principle that the Chod rig is based on... and we all know how well that works!



A word of warning, a poorly constructed Helicopter rig, whether tied using lead core, or a fused loop style leader, is dangerous! The golden rule is that in the event of the mainline breaking the top bead should be able to pull up off the leader allowing the hooklink and leader to separate. If your rig doesn't do this then you need to change it. We recommend using a piece of Covert XT Silicone tubing with a Covert Safety Bead. These beads are made from a flexible rubber compound and have a tapered inner bore specially designed for use on Helicopter rigs. Almost any shaped pendant/swivel lead will work well with a helicopter rig.

INLINE LEADS

A nice 'clean' spot on the lake bed is perfect for hook bait presentation, but it also makes it much easier for the fish to identify the terminal tackle and then deal with it if they make a mistake. This is when the high resistance of an inline shaped lead really comes into its own. Both the Inline Bolt Bomb, and the nose heavy Gardner Flat Pear Inline bombs offer a rock steady anchor point for your rig, making it almost impossible for the carp to move the lead around on a pivot point (the furthest point from the lead swivel normally).

If you are fishing with a normal lead on a very clean hard spot the movement in a pendant arrangement means occasionally pricked fish can eject the hook bait before the full weight of the lead is brought into play.

Inline leads have proved devastating in conjunction with a short braided hooklink when dropped out of bait boats with a couple of handfuls of particle. Of course they are just as effective when cast but then you have to be careful to watch that the rig doesn't tangle. This problem is easily solved by adding on a small PVA bag, as the added weight of the PVA bag reduces tangling.



Inline leads are also the first choice for solid PVA bag rigs, and this method allows the rig to be presented perfectly—tangle free and amongst a tempting pile of attractive bait.

There are simply loads of accessories that are pretty much essential for constructing a variety of lead arrangements and rigs.

These 'essentials' range from swivels, clips and links through to beads, sleeves and tubing. All of these individual components have their part to play in our finished terminal tackle arrangements and will be useful at some time or another for tailoring the presentation to suit any given situation. Every little step you take to achieve the best possible overall camouflage and presentation is effort worth taking, as the overall effect of all those little details can make a big difference...

Here's a quick look at some of the more commonly used accessories that fill up our tackle boxes:

RIG RINGS

Normally used for creating blow back rigs or mounting baits onto with D-Rigs. By incorporating rig rings on a D, or alternatively sliding on the shank of the hook for mounting hook baits, the hook is allowed to rotate more freely than a conventional hair - which can potentially inhibit the hook from twisting as quickly as possible and taking the surest possible hook hold.

Always make sure your rig rings are finished in low glare Covert finish to reduce the chance of light glint.

SWIVELS & FLEXI RING SWIVELS

Popular sizes range from 8 to 12, and allow junctions between mainline and hook links. Some swivels have specially designed adaptations to allow for the quick change of hooklinks. Most lead clips are designed to fit the stronger, larger size 8 swivels that are easily capable of handling any carp that swims! Some are adapted for quick and easy swapping of hooklinks like our Link Lok and Kwik Lok swivels

CLIPS & LINKS

Essentially used as a means of swapping over hooklinks, Speed Links, Easi Clips and also Q Rings create a strong link that also act as a hinge that can help bait presentation by allowing stiffer hooklinks to settle easier over lake beds that are scruffy or rocky (most lake beds!)

TAIL RUBBERS & ANTI-TANGLE SLEEVES

The tapered design of these components make them perfect for streamlining the joints between rig components and therefore reducing the incidence of tangles. The taper also makes them useful when trying to achieve the controlled release of inline leads as the shape can be used to control the level of resistance that the lead creates before sliding away from the swivel – a well proven and highly effective way of catching out fish that are shaking their heads in an effort to throw the hook when initially pricked.

SINKING RIG TUBE

Including a length of rig tube above a tail rubber cuts down dramatically on tangles when used correctly. It also helps disguise the mainline from pressured carp and protects it from being damaged by snags or sharp obstacles. Let's face it, tubing is not a 'trendy product', but it is still utilised by anglers that want to ensure good tangle free presentation. Some anglers like to break up the outline of the tubing by using permanent marker pens to improve camouflage.

Our Covert Tungsten tubing offers ultimate weight and suppleness for pinning everything down, but when the going gets tough and the conditions are really extreme we still love the original Sinking Rig Tubing (that we have sold for years) with a blob of Critical Mass moulded around the top. Tough as old rope!

0.5MM SILICONE

One of the least conspicuous and most important items in the tackle box! It's essential for creating neat rigs by aligning hooklinks and hooks. The slightly thicker walled XT version is perfect for use as a stop for helicopter and chod rigs using leadcore, as the diameter works perfectly to create just enough grip to hold a safety bead in place during a cast, but will allow the bead and hooklink to pull over the top in the event of the mainline breaking.

TUNGSTEN PUTTY

Still the most versatile means of precisely counterbalancing buoyant hook baits, and ideal for smearing on hooklinks to make sure they are where they need to be, pinned down onto the bottom. It's available in a variety of colours, but we like to create natural looking blends by mixing a couple of colours together! If you want to be really fastidious with a little experiment you could even tailor different batches to suit your own venue's lake bed. Gardner Tackle's Critical Mass is available in Grey, Green and Brown and is exceptionally dense and user friendly.

PVA

We know – its not a component, but it's one of those products that clearly crosses over into the world of rigs when it is used to hold the lead in place on lead clips that have been trimmed back to offer the fastest possible lead release when fishing on weedy waters, or simply to hold soft hairs in place during the cast. Twisted hairs can cause hook pulls as they effect the way the hook turns and ultimately the position the hook takes hold).

LEAD CORE LEADER

Since the early 90's lead cores have been hugely popular as they offer for a number of reasons. They sink like a stone thanks to the high density inner, act as a buffer against snags and are vital to stop helicopter rigs causing any damage to the section of line. Available in a range of

colours, breaking strains and diameters Gardner's range of Plummet lead cores cover the full spectrum of uses, from our popular low diameter original Plummet to the new ultra heavy colour sectioned Camo-Plummet.

EYE LOUPES

Without a sticky sharp point most carp rigs are much less effective. 'The Eye' offers optimum magnification for anglers that want to scrutinise the condition of their hook points. It's also useful for checking other small items that would otherwise be hard to see – perhaps checking swivels for burrs that may weaken knots.

RIG GLUE

Rig glue is recommended for securing knots between different types of hooklink materials, but is also damned useful for bankside repairs! Accidents happen...

Did you know that you don't need every single item of tackle that manufacturers like Gardner Tackle sell to catch Carp. It's true!!!... However, its well worth building up a repertoire of rigs based on success and experience that you know you can rely on in particular situations and using particular products you have confidence will not let you down. That way, when you arrive at a venue and are faced with specific water conditions – perhaps thick weed or soupy silt - you will be able to put together a lead setup and hooking arrangement that you know will work. To do this you need to have a variety of terminal items to cover these eventualities and a bit of thought (and hopefully sources of information like this rig booklet) will help you identify what it is you need to do the job right.



Solid PVA bags can be a devastating method to use in carp fishing.

Although I would use them anywhere, they are especially good in weedy lakes as the weight of the bag will flatten any weed it lands on and as the bag melts it leaves a small pile of bait with the hook bait sat enticingly in the middle of it. It's probably the only rig presentation guaranteed not to tangle. Either adopt the roving approach and it's a one bite at a time method or when you are putting a couple of bags on a clear spot in the weed and lightly spodding over the top of them, multiple catches can be had.

I normally use a 2oz Flat Pear Inline lead in PVA bags, increasing to a 3 or 4oz lead if greater distance is required. A four inch length of Trickster Heavy braid would be my chosen hook link, tied to a size 10 Covert Mugga hook. I've also successfully used coated hook links such as Sly Skin and Disruption in solid bags.

If venue rules allow it I would use Plummet Lead core Leaders when bag fishing. The big advantage being two or three bags can be prepared

in advance with the rig and bait inside them ready to go. Just snip off the leader and attach a pre-prepared one and you're ready to go again!

The size of bag would be adjusted according to the distance I wanted to fish. The smaller and more densely packed the bag, the further the distance it can be cast.

My bag mix consists of a mixture of small pellets and ground boilies. The smaller the size of the individual ingredients the easier it is to compact the finished parcel of bait, removing the air from the bag and making it more streamlined so it casts further and with greater accuracy.



THE BAGGING RIG (BARRY & BEN O'CONNOR)

MAKING IT!



1.

Place hookbait in the corner of the bag.



2.

Cover with half an inch of mix, position lead and cover with more mix.



3.

Keep tapping the bag so the mix settles (add PVA friendly liquids now).



4.

If you use a dry mix prick the PVA bag to allow air out.



5.

When the bag is compressed twist the top and secure with PVA tape or string.



6.

Trim off excess tape.



7.

Compact PVA bag mix, lick and fold back corners to create a streamlined shape.



8.

The bottom of the PVA bag should look a little like this, and it should be filled tightly.



9.

Once the excess around the top has been trimmed...



10.

...the remaining PVA can be licked and stuck down around the tail rubber.



With really fine and small hook baits it is always important that you use a really supple hooklink, which is why I choose Trickster Heavy as my preferred hook length choice with this rig. It's really soft and smooth and doesn't inhibit the relatively small hook from doing its job, turning and pricking the fish as soon as the hookbait is inhaled.

Maggot fishing can be a deadly tactic when trying to outwit carp – mainly because they love eating them! Maggot fishing is a method that is more commonly used in the cooler winter months, but it also has its place in the spring and summer months too. Several different rigs can be used to successfully present maggots, but in my opinion none come close to the Mag-Aligner.

The rig was devised by two hugely successful big carp anglers who cleverly incorporated an Enterprise Tackle Mag-Aligner grub slid over the eye of the hook, creating a line aligner effect which ensures that the hook turns in the fish's mouth making it a very efficient hooking mechanism. The Enterprise grub also helps disguise the hook.

A small Mugga hook really takes some beating when using this style of hooking arrangement. The curved shape of the hook helps to enhance the hooking mechanism and the straight point takes hold at the slightest opportunity. This pattern of hook also has the bonus of being available in our new Covert finish – a special camouflage plating. When combined with the sharpness of this pattern you have to look no further when using this rig.

Tightly woven Gardner Micro Mesh PVA is absolutely essential when tying up PVA bags of maggot so they do not wriggle through the holes and escape. If you tie a tightly compressed bag of maggots to the lead you can nick the hookbait onto the PVA (being careful not to puncture any of the maggots inside) and this effectively stops any tangles and ensures the hookbait is surrounded by a visual and highly attractive patch of freebies.

The Mag-Aligner is not only a devastating rig for carp, dedicated specimen anglers need look no further either, as this tactic has accounted for specimen fish of all species on both lakes and rivers.



THE MAG-ALIGNER RIG (ALAN STAGG)

MAKING IT!

1.



Tie a size 11 or 12 Mugga on with a knotless knot and 'blob' the tag (optional).

2.



Using a sewing needle pierce the rubber grub (orientation as shown)...

3.



...and carefully thread it onto your hooklink.

4.



Push the grub over the hook eye, making sure the hooklink exits in line with the hook point.

5.



Test it's lined up correctly by gently drawing the hooklink over your finger. The hook should flip over like this every time when it's right.

6.



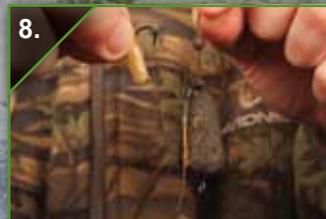
Either tie to a swivel or tie a loop with a figure of 8 (or 16) loop knot.

7.



For still water angling we prefer a short hooklink so cut down anti-tangle sleeves so they're not so obtrusive.

8.



All that's left to do is hook on a few maggots and tie a micromesh PVA bag of maggots onto the flexi ring below the lead.

9.



The finished rig.



to shorten the hook link down to around 6 inches. When carp are feeding heavily on small items they tend to suck the hook bait back much further in their throat and I want to avoid the rig being bitten off by their pharyngeal throat teeth. If however, the bottom of the lake is silty or has a small amount of weed I will increase the length of the hook link so that the hook bait is not dragged into either the weed or silt. The HydroFlex hooklink will then settle over any bottom

For my fishing I like to keep my rigs as simple as possible so therefore a lot of my fishing is done using uncomplicated bottom baits and nylon hook links. Let's face it, having caught carp using these items for years so as the saying goes "if it ain't broke don't fix it".

All of my carp fishing these days is done using the superb Mugga hooks in sizes from 10 up to 6, and for hook link I love Hydroflex. Hydroflex has a lovely matt green colour and is incredibly supple, but retains both good knot strength and a high level of abrasion resistance.

I tie my rigs up using the ever reliable knotless knot, using six turns around the shank of the hook before passing the tag end back through the eye. Combined with a Mugga hook this arrangement gives a very aggressive angle for the hook to catch inside the carp's mouth. Personally, I do like to tidy it up with a short length of green Supa-Shrink tubing, just covering the length of the whipping on the shank extended past the eye of the hook. This helps keep the hook aligned to the hooklink, maximising the rigs hooking potential.

This rig will catch you plenty of fish and I would say that it will convert 90% of pick ups into hooked fish.

Two things that I do vary to suit various fishing situations are the length of the rig and the length of the hair. If I am using particles for hook bait or fake baits like Enterprise corn or tiger nuts I tend

debris giving you an excellent presentation.

One last little tip that I have used and kept quiet about for a while is for fishing single hook baits in the colder months. When carp are feeding over beds of bait they are constantly sucking and blowing food items in and out of their mouths, so a hook set downwards at an aggressive angle has more chance of catching inside the mouth as it's blown out. However, with a single bait the carp feeds by sucking just that one food item back into its mouth. By going back to the old way of tying the hair to the hook, using a piece of very fine nylon tied off at the bend of the hook, the hook is sucked in directly behind the boilie with the point being directed downwards by the hair on the bend so that it will go much further into the mouth and catch hold. Instead of being hooked in the corner of the mouth the hook will be right back in the mouth itself.



BOTTOM BAIT RIGS (NEIL WAYTE)

MAKING IT!

1.



Start off by tying a small loop in the end of a length of your chosen monofilament hooklink.

2.



Thread the hooklink through the eye so that the hair is on the outside of the hook...

3.



...and whip the hooklink six times, being careful to rotate the material so it sits on the closed side of the eye of the hook.

4.



Pass the end of the hooklink through the eye of the hook so that it come out on the inside of the eye (important!) and tighten down.

5.



Adding a short section of silicone tubing or Supa Shrink isn't essential but tidies up the rig and aligns the hooklink and hookpoint.

6.



The finished rig - simple but devastatingly effective.



Neil's Winter Special, tied with a light nylon hair coming off the bend of the hook.



Zig foam works a treat and keeps the hookbait looking more like any freebies.

This is a great method whether you are using boilies or particles, summer or winter.

D-rigs can be tied with either Fluorocarbon or a copolymer, using a straight pointed hook - preferable a pattern with a straight eye or slightly out turned eye (either an Incizor or a Chod hook). With these

The simple approach will nearly always catch you fish, but now and again we may come up against particularly tricky fish. In reality they aren't hard to hook because they are super intelligent - far from it in fact! Normally it's just because of the way the fish are feeding on the bait.

Quite often this can be because the carp are keeping their mouths tight to the lake bed and using the extendable top lip to carefully manipulate the bait under their over slung mouth where they carefully suck up the freebies sifting out bottom debris and anything that feels unnatural. In fact most the time when fish are deemed to be tricky it is because they are feeding tight to the lake bed in one way or another.

One of the most consistent ways of hooking carp feeding like this is to mount a 'balanced' (slow sinking) hookbait on a D-rig.

The D-rig keeps the hookbait close to the eye of the hook - in a position that ensures the hook goes into the fish's mouth even if it tentatively inhales hookbait. The added buoyancy added to the hookbait to make it 'balanced' can be achieved in a number of ways; from making or buying your own 'wafers' to using a snowman setup that incorporating either a small pop up, a piece of foam or a piece of plastic Enterprise sweetcom. Alternatively drilling out the bait and plugging it with a piece of our highly buoyant

materials the finished rig ends up very subtle looking. This rig camouflage is enhanced by using a slow sinking hookbait as it tends to settle over the hook - and what better camouflage can there be than that!

Another tried and tested bottom bait rig tweak involves lengthening the hair, and trapping it round to the bottom of the bend with a small piece of silicon tubing.

By changing the position of the hair the mechanics of the rig changes dramatically, and as long as the hook bait and the rig are taken fully into the mouth, as soon as the hooklink tightens the combined action of the weight of the hook and the heavy hookbait turns the hook point down into the most secure hooking zone - the middle of carps bottom lip.



ADVANCED BOTTOM BAIT RIGS (LEWIS READ)

MAKING IT

1.



Start off with a knotless knot - for D-rigged bottom baits and our chod rig about 9 turns is about right.

2.



Put on a small rig ring.

3.



Create 'D' by looping the hair with the rig ring back through the eye of the hook.

4.



Use a lighter to carefully burn back the tag to create a blob of melted hooklink.

5.



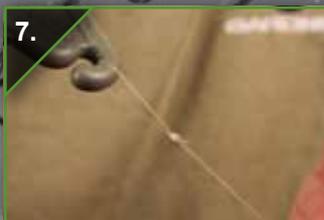
The D should look a little like this - small and neat and sitting straight on the back of the shank of the hook.

6.



We recommend a well tied figure of 8 loop knot for quick attachment to swivels and clips.

7.



Always lubricate knots with saliva and bed down nicely making sure the knot is strong and secure.

8.



The finished rig.



For my own style of short 'hit & run' sessions, with little or no preparation prior to the day, I favour a 'chuck it anywhere' pop up rig! My favourite rig uses our 25lb VIGILANTE as the hook link combined with the awesome Longshank Mugga hook.

I have been using this combination successfully fishing at a silty lake and it has served me well being cast just about anywhere at that venue! The pop up is tied on to a Covert 3mm Rig Ring running between two hook stops, so that I can adjust the placing and size of bait. The stop nearest the hook point is left fairly central for baits of 14mm or bigger, but is moved nearer the point for smaller baits of 10-12mm or if I am using a grain of Enterprise com.

There are two trains of thought on how much counterbalance weight should be used with pop ups, but as a rule I normally over-weight pop ups fished on gravel lake beds and finely balance hook baits fished over silt. The beauty of this set up is that even a small 10mm bait can effectively hide the big hook whilst retaining excellent bottom lip hookin. Drop one in the edge and you will see what I mean!

I sleeve the hook knot with a small piece of silicone tubing protruding about 5mm past the eye as this causes an already amazingly quick turning hook to be even more aggressive. You can test this by trying to move one across the palm of your hand. It will turn before moving showing that the rig is spot on!

Long sweeping curved shank hooks are not allowed on some waters, but a similar set up can be achieved using a Longshank Incizor and a small piece of Covert Supa-Shrink tubing creating the aggressive angle below the eye, or a short shank hook with a longer shrink tube 'kicker'.

For a 25lb breaking strain braid, Vigilante has a fine diameter and nice brown colour, and when viewed in the lake it simply blends in exceptionally well on the bottom. I rub some Critical Mass putty up and down the hooklink and put a couple of tiny blobs of it on the link to ensure it settles down flush to the lake bed. Being woven with pure Dyneema, Vigilante is incredibly strong for its diameter, but can retain a little buoyancy unless treated this way.

Finally, I incorporate an Anti-Tangle sleeve at the swivel and rig foam on the hook to help avoid any tangling on the cast, but for PVA bag fishing I simply shorten the hook link to around 4" and dispense with the sleeve and dissolving rig foam.

The rig has proven excellent for single hook bait fishing over all sorts of lakebeds and will perform equally well fished over beds of bait and in PVA bags too.



POP-UP RIGS (MARTIN LEWIS)

MAKING IT!

1.



Start off by attaching the Long Shank Mugga to the Vigilante with a simple knotless knot.

2.



Trim off excess as the hookbait will be mounted on a rig ring, not a hair.

3.



Push 1cm of 0.5mm silicone tubing up over the eye of the hook as shown.

4.



Thread the first Covert Hook Stop onto the hook, so that the widest end is facing up the shank.

5.



Thread on a rig ring and a second hook stop as shown here.

6.



Create a loop knot. We recommend adding an extra twist to make the knot 'figure of 16' as this is stronger with braids.

7.



With the extra twist it is a little trickier to bed the knot down. Take your time as a stronger knot is worth the effort.

8.



Smear Critical Mass rig putty down hooklink to make it sink like a stone.

9.



The finished rig - just waiting for a pop up to be tied onto the rig ring.

10.



The finished rig.



has been added onto the hook bait. How do you decide how fast your hookbait should sink and how high the pop up should be above the lake bed?

As a rough guide we recommend fishing pop ups that sink slowly over low weed and silt, using a slightly longer hooklink and with the pop up high enough to remain clearly visible and accessible to browsing carp. If you're fishing on clean gravel, perhaps over lots of bait then a

What constitutes an 'advanced' pop up rig? The relatively 'simple' pop up rig detailed by Martin as his favourite rig is simple to construct, but thanks to the long curved shank hook he uses the mechanics are fairly complex, and the final outcome... well, it's an extremely effective fish catcher.

The 'advanced' label really relates more to the combination of materials and how they are used in the rig's construction, with the addition of a few tried and tested tweaks to get the most out of the rig. Tweaks worth considering would include using a rig ring blow-back style trapping the hair to make the finished rig react faster when a fish inhales, mouths or tries to eject your hookbait. With pop up rigs it is normally best to position the rig ring so that it traps the hair on the hook shank opposite the barb (on barbless hooks this would be 2mm or 3mm up from the point) as this will naturally keep the hookbait set correctly in relation to the bend of the hook.

Another easy tweak is the addition of a section of 0.5mm silicone or shrink tube over the hook eye. By extending the shank and holding the hook link so it is straighter to the shank with this tube, you are ensuring that the hook point is in the right position to catch hold as soon as the bait is sucked in as it will be less likely to droop over.

The last critical adjustments relate to the balancing and height of the pop-up. The balancing is how slowly the hook bait sinks when the counter weight

low pop up with counter weight only a few mm from the hook and over weighted so that it sinks at the same rate as a freebie is a good starting point. This is because the fish will tend to feed more aggressively, and with their mouths tight to the lake bed, and the heavier pop up will be less likely to swirl around as the fish moves near the rig.

It's critical that your hook baits are good enough to maintain their buoyancy for the duration of the time they will be out in the water. If you're fishing long periods it's important that you check that the pop up hook bait is still Ok when you reel it in. A great way of making really good pop ups, that maintain buoyancy, is to make them using your normal base mix with a cork ball inside the boilie before it is rolled. There's loads of information online on how to do this and they really are the best!



ADVANCED POP-UP RIGS (LEWIS READ)

MAKING IT!

1.



Start by stripping off 12-15cm of your favourite skinned hooklink, using the Gardner Stripper Tool.

2.



Tie a small loop in the end to retain the hair stop when the rig is finished.

3.



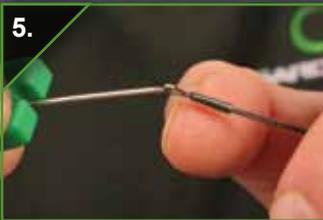
Tie a small loop in the end of the stripped section and add tie on an extra small ring (allow a couple of mm over the diameter of the bait you are using).

4.



Thread the rig ring on the hook and secure with a knotless knot. As it exits the eye the last turn of the knot should be skinned.

5.



Thread an 8mm section of 0.5mm tube down the hooklink.

6.



Push the tubing up over the eye of the hook so 2 or 3 mm are below the hook's eye...

7.



Your hook should hopefully now look a little like this!

8.



Create a hinge at the height you want to fish the pop-up by stripping a small section of hooklink.

9.



Mould some Critical Mass for the pop-up counterweight on the hooklink just above the stripped section as shown.

10.



The finished rig.



The distance from the lead up to the top bead is critical, and adjusted depending on how scruffy the lake bed is where you are casting. In light debris and low weed the stop can be as little as 12 inches from the lead, but if the weed is several feet deep the bead should be right at the top of a long Plummet leader. If in doubt fish the top bead further away from the lead.

The development of specialist high memory hooklink materials like 'Trip Wire' revolutionised the use of early stiff rigs, and enabled the Hinged Stiff Rig to evolve from being a good rig into an AWESOME one! Using Trip Wire enables a curve to be set into the hook section - meaning it will always aggressively twist regardless of the direction the fish approaches the hookbait. This ultimately means more hooked fish are successfully put on the bank!

With the hook bait mounted on a 'D' on the back of the hook the rig becomes extremely hard for fish to deal with. Why? Well, the pivot point stops the hook from turning during the ejection and keeps the hook point facing towards the fish's bottom lip. Combined with the curved hook section and a free turning swivel the result is phenomenal!

The 'classic' Chod Rig uses the same hook section as the Hinged Stiff Rig, and is mounted onto a small flexi ring swivel that runs up and down an extended helicopter rig – moving freely up to a point set by the positioning of a small piece of 0.5mm silicone tubing and Covert Safety bead on the leadcore leader during the cast. As the lead flies through the air, and then drops through the water the chod rig stays up near the top bead and the hook bait settles gently down over any weed and leaves so the hook bait remains clearly visible to fish feeding in the area.

To get the most out of the Chod rig you need to be careful how you set your bobbins. Always try to keep the line relatively slack, otherwise any added tension may pull the hook link down into the debris. Bites with a chod rig will often start out looking like a violent twitchy liner, as the fish hooks itself against the weight of the line and the Plummet leader acting against the anchor point of the lead. If the bobbin stays tight to the buzzer there's normally a fish on the end...

How do you choose which rig to use? If you know the spots are pretty clean, use a hinged stiff link; but if the lake bed is predominantly covered in weed, leaves or algae consider using the Chod rig as the presentation will be much better and you can get your hook bait in position with fewer casts. This is especially important if you are casting at showing fish.



HINGED STIFF LINKS & THE CHOD RIG (LEWIS READ)

MAKING IT!

1.



Start off by threading the Trip Wire through the eye of a Chod Hook this way.

2.



Create a loop - the loop may need to be larger so you can whip it up the hook shank.

3.



When it comes to drawing out excess material from the knot pull the loose tag end first and then the hook link side.

4.



When tightening the knot fully stop the hook link being marked by the eye by drawing the knot tight over the end of your thumb.

5.



Thread on a small Covert rig ring and pass the tag end back through the eye of the hook.

6.



Trim excess material off the tag and blob back so you are left with a small neat D...

7.



...that should look like this. Perfect!

8.



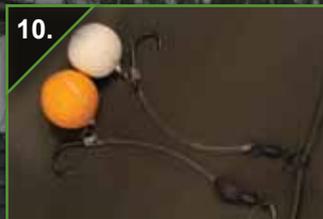
If you're tying up a choddy use a simple 3 turn blood knot with the tag blobbed to attach a size 12 Covert Flexing swivel.

9.



There are various opinions on how curved the end section should be, but we like it just about like this.

10.



The hinged stiff rig has the Critical mass moulded at the base of the hook section, the Chod rig shown relies on the Plummet leadcore to sink it.



On waters that respond well to floating baits, a change from conventional floater controller tactics to long tail zigs fished amongst freebies can make a massive difference as the fish are unable to cope with the change in presentation. If the fish in your venue react positively to the sound of a spod landing in the water, it can be worth making a sloppy cloudy mix and spodding this over the zig rigs using a Pocket Rocket. The fish

Throughout the year carp spend a lot of time away from the lake bed, either swimming around sunbathing, or searching out mid water sources of natural food. They will happily feast on emerging insects like Caddis and May Fly or filter feed in clouds of daphnia. These invertebrates make up a large proportion of the carp's natural diet.

On many heavily stocked waters the fish even feed on freebies as they fall through the water! No doubt this is down to competitive feeding, but some fish will have inevitably learnt that baits eaten mid water rarely have a hook attached to them and are safe.

By observing when the tell-tale bubbling and activity associated with bottom feeding carp ceases, or watching out for increased surface activity when it's warm, we can normally tell when the main feeding period down on the lake bed has come to an end. This is the time to switch your attentions over to fishing with zigs.

Whether the Zig is fished with a really long hooklink so that the hook bait remains on or near the surface when the fish are up high in the water, or with a shorter link so that the bait is suspended straight up off a lead, the method can be phenomenally effective at picking off bites from fish that you simply wouldn't catch if you kept your rods fishing conventionally down on the lake bed.

come into the area excited by the spod landing and the cloud of food particles suspended in the water, and will often take a mid water bait as soon as they see it! This method can lead to multiple catches and some fast and furious action.

Whatever type of venue you are targeting, your hooklink and hook need to be as small and light as possible, bearing in mind the size of fish you're likely to encounter, and the presence of weed or snags. This is simply because the fish are normally eyeball to eyeball with the hook and hookbait, so naturally keeping everything small and neat will be advantageous.

In keeping with this scaling down, smaller hook baits will also normally be more effective than large ones, so rather than sticking on a 16mm boillie it's worth using a trimmed down pop up boillie (trimmed as small as necessary to lift the hook and hooklink), or better still, a tiny piece of ultra buoyant Gardner Zig Rig foam. This foam is available in a wide range of colours, which is really useful as you will often find that on difficult days a change of hook bait colour can lead to a quick bite.

It's important that the hook bait is mounted tight to the hook shank on a really short hair. That way you are certain that when a fish mouths the bait, the hook will always be in the perfect position to nail the fish.

ZIG RIGS (CARL ARCHER)

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:



MAKING IT!

1.



Start by tying a 3mm loop and tying a size 12 Mugga hook on with a 6 turn whipping knot. It's important to keep the overall hair about 5mm.

2.



Cut off a small section of Zig Rig Foam. About 1cm is ample as it's so buoyant.

3.



Cut a slice through the foam so that it's split from the centre and finishes just short of the end as shown.

4.



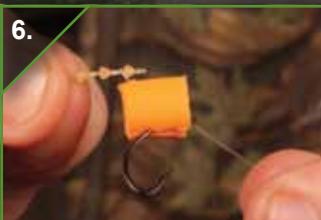
Push a baiting needle through the outside of the foam so it comes through at an angle down into the slice you have made.

5.



Now pull the foam onto the hair. It's just right if the hook is pulled into the foam before the loop is out the other side.

6.



Use a colour matched hair or dumbbell stop to hold the foam in place.

7.



The hook bait should look like this, with the hook partially hidden by the foam.

8.



Trim off the edges - It makes the hookbait look less 'man made'.

9.



With the hair at this angle the hook is more likely to stay wedged inside the zig foam during the cast.



and impressive strength to size ratio) are the size 10 Incizors. These are perfect for use with baits such as Enterprise's pop up Tigemut's or chum mixers or Mistral's floaters.

When necessary I incorporate a Flatliner controller for additional casting weight as these come in three sizes they cover a variety of ranges. They are threaded onto the mainline and kept in position between two beads set using stop knots tied with our power gum. The stop knots are tied with three turns, and whilst this will not normally slip whilst casting at close to medium range, if fishing at long range I like to tie another, just above the first, for security.

I have spent untold hours floater fishing and the following rig is the one that has proved successful for even the shyest of carp, even those that have seen it all before. Floater fishing requires finesse and your tackle can be adjusted accordingly, using light test curve rods such as the 2.25lb test curve model I favour, combined with a smaller reel than the usual 'big pits'.

When floater fishing on waters with prolific birdlife feeding freebies can be a problem! The bait attracts the wildfowl, which in turn prevents the carp from feeding confidently and competitively. By chance I discovered a method that takes the birds longer to cotton onto and provides a way of delivering freebies accurately and at a distance that exceeds normal loose feed range. Using Gardner's Wide Boy PVA mesh, I make up small bags of mixers which can either be catapulted out or nicked onto the hook. Every cast presents freebies directly around the hookbait when the PVA dissolves.

The rig I use is based on 10lb HydroFlo mainline - as it is soft but very strong, abrasion resistant and reliable in the 0.28mm diameter. This is coupled with Gardner Zig Link which is clear and has a good level of stretch as the hook length. This stretch is important to protect hook holds on small hooks and buffers the movements of powerful fish. This stretch also makes for excellent knot strength.

The hooks I prefer (due to their straight point

The hooklink, that should ideally be around 5 feet, is attached with the 'loop to loop' method giving excellent knot strength. I prefer this to using anything that adds extra knots or weight such as swivels, rings etc (potential weak spots).

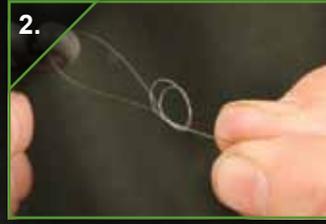
Make up plenty of small mesh bags of mixers in advance so as not to waste valuable 'active feeding' time on the bank. Simply thread your hook point in to the bait and thread it round to the back of the shank. The mixer bag can then be nicked on. There is no need to use hairs, bait bands or glue with the three hook baits I mentioned earlier.



MAKING IT!



1. Start off by threading a flatliner onto your mainline with a safety bead either side.



2. Tie a loop knot in the end of your mainline. Chris favours a single overhand loop for this.



3. Cut off enough 12lb Power Gum to tie a stop knot...



4. ...a 3 turn stop knot is ideal for fixing the Flatliner controller in place.



5. When it is finished (leaving a small tag) carefully move the stop down to the loop knot.



6. Repeat with another stop knot behind the upper bead to keep the controller in position and create a bolt effect.



7. Tie on your favoured hook; Chris has gone for a size 10 Barbless Incizor and uses a reliable 4 turn grinner.



8. Pull off a generous 5 foot of your chosen hook link material.



9. Tie a loop knot in the end of your hooklink and attach the two sections loop to loop.



10. The finished rig with a soft hookable floater and a small Fishnet PVA bag of identical free offering. Now you're ready to go.

So what exactly is a safe rig? To many anglers it is as simple as using a set up that enables the fish to rid itself of the lead. Unfortunately not enough anglers consider how important it is not to risk fish being left trailing terminal tackle should the mainline be cut on an underwater obstruction, or the failure of a poorly tied knot!

With a little thought it's easy to achieve this level of safety, even when using lead core leaders. By using a well constructed helicopter rig, or by incorporating the new Gardner Multi-Clip in its 'leader safe' format (more information can be found in the lead arrangements section) you can ensure that the hooklink separates from the leader and avoids any chance of the fish being tethered on trailing tackle.

Fish welfare is much more than just considering rig safety though!

What about fishing near to snags or in thick weed? It is important that the tackle we use is adequate for the size of fish and the obstacles we are likely to encounter along the way. It really is simple. If you do not land a fish because of weed or snags you need to reconsider whether the critical positioning of your hook baits needs to be changed, moving them to a spot from which you can successfully land the fish you hook. The strength of your tackle may also need upgrading – changing to stronger lines and hooklinks and heavier gauge hooks. In really severe conditions even these measures might not be enough – in which case there is only one choice. Stop!



It's our obligation as anglers to make sure that all the fish we catch are returned in pristine condition and we should also consider the

welfare of the fish in a broader way. Details such as wetting slings and mats before laying the fish on them are very important, as this stops the protective mucus layer being removed. This layer acts as a barrier protecting the fish from bacterial infections. Another consideration is the time the fish is out of the water; before you lift the fish out of the water make sure that everything you need is at hand. It makes a big difference.

Treat any sores or wounds with a tried and tested carp care product like Gardner's 'Medic Plus' – as these will help reduce the chance of the fish being infected and promote rapid healing of any affected areas.



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