

Landing Little Linn.

On returning from a relaxing holiday in Spain on 6th October 2007, I was delighted to find the UK weather pleasantly mild. Additionally the Lancashire forecast for the following few days was good, with light southerly winds and highs of 15 C. Although Beacon Fell is slightly above sea level and therefore temperatures can be a degree or two cooler than the forecast, 13/14 C still sounded good to me.

Feeling a little tired I treated myself to a lie-in on Sunday morning and eventually left home at 9.20am for what I hoped would be a fruitful day at Frank's.

Whilst unloading the car I remembered back to one of my best sessions last Autumn in which I landed almost 60 lbs of carp from peg 25. I decided to fish in the same place again in the hope that I could repeat the process. I recalled that all of my personal best weights had improved this year with the single exception of Mirror Carp which still stood at 16-1. With luck I hoped that this session would allow me to shatter my Mirror record.

Having not had my tackle out - so to speak- for over two weeks, I was soon set up and in the water. I quickly put out a boilie near to the reeds on the island opposite and fired about 10 freebies close to the bait. I used my feeder rod to fish for bream and roach with baits ranging from maggots to softened cat biscuits over a thin bed of trout pellets. Although bites were sluggish for the first few hours, I did catch several small perch and two nice roach of about 8 ounces.

As noon approached I noticed some disturbance in the reeds to the back of the island and a good distance away from my boilies. I knew that the movement was caused by fish as I could not see any ducks in the vicinity and there was no wind to speak of. It was clear that the fish was substantial and the occasional fin sightings showed that it was circling slowly just below the surface. It remained in the same area for a few minutes and sadly gave no indication that it was prepared to move towards my hook bait.

On the basis that it is sometimes necessary to take the mountain to Mohammed, I pulled in my boilie and quickly recast it towards the fish. Although my lead initially landed in the reeds I was luckily able to yank it free without much trouble and get it to land just outside the reed line exactly where the fish had been. I kept my fingers crossed that my boilie had not been pulled off or tangled with the lead in the kaffuffle, but as all anglers know, bait presentation is difficult and certainly not an exact science. It also struck me that when casting near vegetation it is possible for the bait to become wrapped round the reed roots which can sometimes extend several feet away from the plants. I decided to leave my bait where it was and hope for the best.

Whether the large fish was spooked by my cast and caused to leave the area I will never know, but no further evidence of movement was observed during the remainder of the day and my bait was apparently ignored.

Meanwhile action on my other rod, though slow, was productive with two more good-looking 8 ounce roach taking maggot and five nice bream up to a pound falling to strawberry pellet. Curiously two small rudd also took pellet in quick succession but given the preference of this species for feeding up in the water, I concluded that they must have taken my bait on its way down to the bottom.

By 4.30pm the light was starting to fade and I began to think about packing up and heading for home. It did not look as though any of my personal best records would be broken on this occasion.

Strangely I stared down at my carp alarm, which had remained deafeningly silent for the whole session. For some inexplicable reason I had a strange feeling that it might well go off so I left the carp rod out and set about packing up the rest of my stuff. I pulled in my float and removed the hook length but before I could do any more the alarm on my carp rod sprung to life. Line screamed off the reel as the clutch allowed a powerful fish to make off with my boilie. Moving rapidly towards the center of the lake the fish almost pulled the rod from its rest. I snatched at the rod and held it upwards to get some idea of the weight of the fish and judge what sort of battle I was in for. Bizarrely it came to a complete stop as if to take stock of the situation before powering off again towards the patch of lily pads near peg 24. I tightened my drag in an attempt to slow and turn the fish away from the pads and fortunately was just able to do so in time.

Although I had not yet seen the fish I knew that it was large and I hoped that it would weigh more than 16-1. My heart was in my mouth as a range of questions ran through my mind. Was this the same fish I had seen earlier? Was it a Mirror Carp? Could this be the perfect end to my day at Frank's?

By 4.45pm the large Mirror was ready for the net and I lost no time in getting it on to my unhooking mat. With trembling hands I carefully placed it into my weighing sling and stared at the reading of 18-13 in amazement. With a reduction of 0-4 for the sling my new personal best for Mirror Carp now stood at 18-9. For me this was one of those rare moments that makes the hours of sitting at the waters edge sometimes in wind and rain, worthwhile.

The magnificent mirror had a giant girth, big belly and massive mouth that could easily have swallowed a golf ball. It posed comfortably across my knee for a photograph and gave the impression that it was quite familiar with the whole process. Imagine my astonishment to learn later that I had actually landed the legendary "Little Linn". This "not so little" young lady had apparently lived in Frank's Pool since day one and was now well over 25 years old. Starting off at about 5lbs she has been caught and photographed many times over the years.

No wonder she relaxed and smiled for the picture, she has probably seen more cameras than I have!

What a star!

Alan Harvey.
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