

My Best Day At Frank's Pool.

After a gap of 40 years, I decided to return to coarse fishing on my early retirement in July 2006. In preparation I decided to join a club, read a few basic fishing books and build up some experience before fishing "properly" in August. My first surprise was the discovery that the sport had moved on a bit since 1965 when the only baits I remember were bread, maggot and good old worms and rods were made of split cane and something called tank ariel – what ever that is.

As a new member of the CSAS my first trips to Frank's Pool in May saw me hooking two red maggots on a size 14 and excitingly catching small roach, perch and skimmers with the occasional larger bream. The things that struck me most about this venue were its cleanliness, beauty and tranquility – a far cry from the muddy Staffordshire ponds and polluted canals I remember as a boy.

Following advice from other members I experimented with soft hooker pellets in June and started to catch tench up to 2lb 8oz and bream to about 4lbs. I was amazed just how much tench fought against my efforts to land them in comparison to bream which tended to flop across the surface and into the net rather like small dust bin lids. It was about this time that I started to get my 6lb line broken from time to time by something then unknown but clearly with more pulling power than I had been used to in the past.

My interest in carp as the ultimate fighting machine of fresh water came on the 24th June when I fished peg 15 for the first time. During the morning I hooked into what I now recognize as an upper double carp with all the power that goes with such a fish. After a poor attempt to "play" the monster with 6lb line and a 4lb hook length for a few minutes I realized that I had neither the experience or tackle to land it. I think the fish came to the same conclusion as it soon broke my line and swam off the other end of the lake in spite of my efforts. They say that we always remember our first love – well I will always remember this my first contact with a big carp!

From that point I was as they say "hooked" on carp and determined to catch at least one double this season albeit with much stronger line and a modified approach.

I improved my "carp skills" at Wild Boar Farm Pool during the Summer and after six respectable mirrors of 4-5, 4-9 and 4-15 on 5th August and 5-4, 5-1 and 3-8 on the 26th August, I felt ready willing and able to land a bigger specimen.

Friday 1st September 2006 started for me like most trips to Franks. Remembering the gate code, dipping the landing net and making that all important decision about which peg to fish. The water on pegs 1 to 7 was quite rough that morning so I decided to fish the calmer side of the lake on peg 25. Although a warm day (17 degrees C) the sky was quite dull and the one or two rain showers which blew in were so slight as to have little effect on fishing conditions.

At about 10.30 my float started to bob, move from side to side and lift up in the water. Clearly something was playing about with my hooker pellet which I had set just off the bottom at a distance of about 12 feet from the bank. My first thought was that the interested fish was too small to swallow the 6mm pellet. But eventually the Drennan Crystal float sank slowly beneath the surface prompting me to strike. Within seconds “all hell was let loose” and I realized that this was no minnow. The fish determinedly ran first one way then the other shaking its head and jerking the line in an attempt to break free. My new 15lb line (with 12lb hook length) was so tight that I could have played a tune on it – although in the excitement I could not think of anything suitable. Remembering what the books had said about ‘playing big fish” I let it run when it wanted to, adjusted the drag and took back line when I could and made the rod to do its job by holding it up in the air. The fish plodded around near the bottom and although I did not see much of it during the fight, I knew it was my best fish to date and I also knew that netting it would be a challenge given my limited experience with bigger fish. But so determined was I to land this magnificent specimen that I played it for what appeared to be an age – probably about 20 minutes – almost losing it twice in the reeds on the left and the willow on the right of the peg. Eventually the fish slowed down and became tired enough for me to land – just in time as the size 12 hook was almost out! I could not believe my electronic scales which showed that the common in my sling weighed 18lbs 4oz. Just my luck that there was no one else around to photograph me holding the whopper! However, I made up for it by taking three pictures on my mat next to a foot ruler which showed the carp to be about two feet long. After the photos back it went into the water and within seconds it vanished into the murk with a swish of its strong tail. I sat back in my chair for a moment realizing that I was still shaking from the excitement of my astonishing encounter.

Having adjusted my rig, back in I went not really expecting to catch anything for a while due to the amount of disturbance my swim had experienced. How wrong I was, a few minutes later my float shot under and I hooked into what appeared to be a fish of similar size to the last one. I just could not believe my luck when after a similar fight a 16lb 1oz mirror was being photographed on my unhooking mat. Astonishingly the first two fish of this session were bigger than any I had ever caught before.

The next few hours saw me land a 7lb 2oz common, a 4lb 8 oz mirror, a 1lb 4 oz tench and four bream of just under a pound.

By late afternoon I heard the voices of other members arriving for the working party session at 4pm and recalled again the disappointment of not having a photograph of me holding my big doubles of the day. Such a picture was clearly not to be on this occasion – or so I thought.

Yet again my float vanished and battle commenced for the tenth time of the session. This big fish was powerful and faster than the other doubles, it bolted like a train diagonally across the lake stripping line from my reel as it did so. I could not turn it by applying side strain or slow it much by adjusting my drag. This fish did not stop to allow me to regain line as the others had obligingly done and it eventually broke the 12lb hook length as

though it were made of cotton. I could not help thinking that this one must have been bigger than 18-4 but of course I will never know.

A few minutes after getting my rig back into the water again out came my last fish of this incredible day. A 10-2 common which fought frantically before capture but settled down well for its photograph with me.

What a day. My best at Franks!

Alan Harvey.

27th October 2006.

1315 Words.