

“Quote/Unquote”

This week: Lee Collins



Lee lets just start with when it all kicked off and carp became a part of your life?

I have been going fishing for 28 years but only Carp fishing for the last 24 years. I first got into fishing through my Dad who took me fishing while we were on holiday. I started off general coarse fishing on the lakes on the Holiday complex catching whatever came along - Roach, Perch etc which I was happy with as I was learning all the time. I call this doing an apprenticeship and I think it is important for all anglers to learn first catching other species instead of just jumping straight in at the deep end.

I then started getting my own tackle together instead of borrowing my Dad's all of the time and going fishing every weekend to different lakes, learning all the time and catching consistently. I steadily progressed onto catching the odd small Carp around 2-3 lb in between the Roach and the Perch etc which certainly put up more of a fight than the other smaller species. There was only one way to go... and Carp fishing was it!

I soon had a ledger rod set up solely for catching carp and still float fishing with the other. On the lake I was fishing at the time there were a few specimen carp anglers and I was always curious to know what they were up to and what they had caught - as ever, always eager to learn as much as I could (or in other words a punisher!)

Things quickly progressed from there with my Dad buying me a 2 rod set up, a bivvy, bedchair etc for Christmas and Birthday presents. I was totally converted and was living, breathing and sleeping Carp fishing.

While fishing on the lake I was taken under the wing of a local angler called John Turner who was catching at least twice as many fish as anyone else on the lake. He



helped me improve my catch rate and soon I had caught my first double figured fish which I was overjoyed about and before I knew it landing my first 20lb. The lake I fished only contained about 4 fish over 20lb with a stock of about 70 to 80 fish so I was playing a number game. I caught my first 20lb on the 16th June - the first day of the season on the surface on a dog biscuit, and then 2 days later on an evening session after school I caught the same fish again on luncheon meat.

I fished a fair few waters around the Midlands area including your Patchull park, Castle Meir and Larford but there was always an urge for me to travel further south to the Oxfordshire area where there seemed to be a glut of big fish over 30lb and 40lb

So, as soon as I past my driving test and got my first car aged 17 I started travelling all over the country fishing different waters - the world was my oyster! I would say fishing different waters around the country made me a better angler as there were many different challenges thrown up on every lake, whether it was weed, Crayfish, birds or just the amount of pressure from the other anglers you can't help but learn the more you fish at different venues.

In your travels and on the waters you fished did you ever rub shoulders with names of the future; can you mention a few of the team?

Being reliant on my parents for travelling before I got my license I stayed fairly local for years, fishing on waters like Leighton's Pool and Pool Hall, Bayliss Pool etc. just to name a few. There was a couple people fishing these lakes who are now working in the trade including anglers like Simon Crow, Richard Taylor (MD of Leeda), also Nige Williams the well know Pike angler



was Carp Fishing Leighton's in the early days. A few years later I started to fish a bit further away in Shropshire on waters like Moss Mere and Knighton reservoir for the next few years.

It wasn't really until I started fishing in Oxford on the Linch Hill complex that I started fishing on the same lakes as some of the named anglers of today like Shaun Hodges, Ian Poole, John Finch, Martin Pick, Barry Davies, Lee Petty and Kev Wilson which are now some of the household names of today.

Before moving on and fishing on the Linear Complex with all the named anglers like Terry Hearn, Dave lane, Nick Helleur, Iain McMillan and Martin Clarke.

Have you ever been a time bandit?

In about 1999 I was made redundant so from going fishing maybe a couple of weekends a month, I decided to go fishing a few nights a week which soon turned into three nights per week depending on how the lakes were fishing. This carried on for a few years as fishing in the week was a major edge at the time - being able to move on the fish and get in the swims you wanted was a bonus.

Do you have any other interests out side of angling, like playing tiddly winks on the fast lane of the M25?!

Besides fishing I am a passionate football fan and support my local team, Wolves (Wolverhampton Wanderers) and have done since I was young. It was my Uncle who took me to my first match when I was about ten years old and I have been hooked ever since. I have had season tickets for years but I had to drop it two years ago after I moved up to Newcastle with my job - travelling 500 miles to watch a football match every other week



was exhausting also, I was missing quite a few matches when I was working away with my job. I still watch as many games as I can via the internet each week so this sort of makes up for it.

What do you see as your strengths and weaknesses on the bank?

I think one of my strengths is being open minded about my approach and being able to adapt to a variety different methods as most of the time when I turn up to the lake I don't have any preconceived ideas of where I am going to fish or how I am going to fish in a certain swim. Lots of my fishing is flitting from venue to venue so I try and tailor my approach to the swim I am in and if I am fishing a new lake I will try three different methods on different rods to see which produces the best.

My weakness is probably the amount of gear I take with me as I tend to take the kitchen sink just in case! However, this would never hinder me if I wanted to move swims, it would just take a bit longer to move.

I know you are passionate about all fish you catch but if you had to pull that one out of the memory sack which one would it be and why?

I think it would have to be Blackeye from Chad lakes. Ever since I saw a picture of this fish I wanted to catch it so when I got my ticket for the lake I was over the moon and, keen as ever. I started in March and managed to winkle one out about 19lb on my first trip and things were on the up from here and the next trip I managed 14 fish including 4 fish over 30lb and things kept getting better and I was catching all the time but I still hadn't seen Blackeye but the weather was still freezing then the first sighting I saw of the great fish

was end of April when the angler in the next swim caught her at 39.15lb so I gave the lake a rest for a couple of weeks after the capture. It was around mid May when I returned and the weather had warmed up considerably with summer definitely on the way. I remember walking through the gate by the house trying not alert the fish by clanging the big wooden gate shut when I noticed quite a few fish basking on the surface and lying under the floating weed beds so I quickly hurried back to the car to get my gear as quickly and quietly as possible.

I pushed my barrow up to the middle swim and left it there out of harm's way and went looking to see if I could get the fish to take a few floaters but before I managed to fire any mixers out I noticed black eye lying under some surface weed only a foot or so from the bank I saw there was a small hole in the weed so I thought this would be my ideal opportunity I could lower a bait in front of him so I hastily cut off my rig quickly and tied a size 8 Drennan Super Specialist barbless hook on to the mainline and had remembered I had bought a tub of worms earlier in the week which I thought would be ideal for float fishing in the margins so I quickly threaded a worm onto the hook and tried to lower it into the hole in front of black eye I must have been shaking that much that I fluffed getting it though the hole first time and caught the weed thought I had blown my chance but as luck would have it never move and second time lucky I lowered the bait right in front of it as it was going through the water all of a sudden the worm disappeared as the fish had sucked it in so I stuck then all hell broke loose the fish went ballistic charging everywhere trying to take me around the back of the island on numerous occasions after about a five minute bat-

tle I was worried if the hook was going to hold up to all the strain it was being put under after another 5 minutes of charging up and down the margins I managed to get the fish up to be netted as soon it was in the net I collapsed with exhaustion and punched the air with joy.

After I calmed down a bit and let the fish rest in the net and quickly made a few phone calls to see if any of my mates were about to do some photos as I knew the owner had gone out for the day. Unfortunately, they were all busy so as luck would have it the two guys on the coarse lake were packing up. I was a bit reluctant to ask them to do the photos as I have had some bad experiences when other people have used my camera but I was running out of options. The lads did me proud and as I weighed Blackeye the weight was immaterial but it went 40lb 2oz on the scales and I was over the moon.

Do you have a nickname and why did it stick?

I have a few people in the trade and work calls me Ronald Mc Donald. My nick name comes from when I go to China with work I try to eat either Mc Donald's or Pizza Hut as much as I can as I would rather eat food that I know as I have had some dodgy Chinese meals including chicken feet or sparrow, snake and even road kill. Also I have had food poisoning quite a few times when I have been out there so it was a case of better the devil you know. Don't get me wrong, I love Chinese food in the UK but it's a different kettle of fish when you're over there and if you could see the state of the kitchens they prepare your food in you would probably be better eating your meal off the floor.

There's more in two weeks time...