

Words and pics:
Marc Coulson

BAG A NEW PB!



The thrill of carp fishing is not knowing whether the fish you're playing is a big one. Lisa Willis hopes for a personal best as she does battle.

THE MASTER IAN RUSSELL



AGE: 49
OCCUPATION: Angling tutor
UK PB: 43lb 10oz
SPONSOR: Avid Carp

THE PUPIL LISA WILLIS



AGE: 26
OCCUPATION: Nursery assistant
UK PB: 14lb 14oz
SPONSOR: None

IAN RUSSELL sets out to help another TC reader catch the fish of, in this case, her dreams...

When Lisa Willis asked Total Carp to help her catch a bigger carp than ever before, we knew that there was only one man for the job – Troubleshooter himself Ian Russell. This was made easier because Lisa already knows Ian because she's best friends with his daughter-in-law.

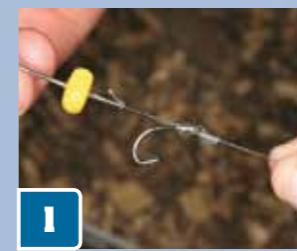
Lisa had done a reasonable amount of fishing before, mostly with her husband, however her angling has been restricted to commercial match-type venues using light gear for smaller fish. She is really keen to catch a bigger carp than her 14lb-plus PB, as well as get a handle on some general carp fishing techniques.

According to Ian, there are a couple of ways in which you can catch a PB. You can either sit it out on a water with just a few big carp in, or you can play the numbers game, which he much prefers and which he insists is more fun.



After a little carp juggling, this one is proudly shown to the camera.

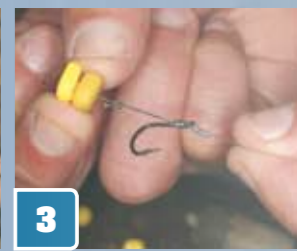
STEP-BY-STEP IAN'S SIMPLE DAY-TICKET HOOK BAIT



1 Start by threading a single grain of buoyant imitation sweetcorn onto your hair.



2 Next, add an Avid Corn Stop. The hook attaches to the hair so you don't need a stop.



3 Pull the two grains together and you're ready to thread on your PVA stick.

So, a date is arranged and we're soon meeting at Thorpe Lea near Egham in Surrey. Lisa, from London, is happy that she has not had to travel far, although she's not best pleased about the early start. The nursery nurse has been woken far earlier than she likes on a non-work day, but she's slowly becoming at one with the world.

Ian, on the other hand, is his usual picture of joy and effervescent energy.

"We'll soon get you sorted out and catching carp," he beams at Lisa, while busily sorting out three rods in Swim 45.



Ian knows that the first hour or two of the day is a great time to catch carp, especially at this time of year before the sun rises high in the sky and the carp do likewise in the water.

As always, he has come well prepared and this is lesson number one for our bleary-eyed pupil. He has a dozen or more small PVA bags made up, containing a pinch of tiny Sonubaits Halibut pellets and finely crumbed boilies. He also has rigs already tied and ready to nick a bag on to and cast out.

Lisa is keen to see the rigs, so Ian demonstrates how they are made. They are simple enough, which Ian insists is all you need, and comprise 15lb N-Trap coated-braid hook link tied to a size 8 Atomic hook with a grain of yellow, plastic corn tipped with a similar Avid Corn Stop on the hair. ☒



There is a shallow gravel area some 80 or so yards out in front of the swim and there is already the odd sign of fish activity over it.

Both rods are safely despatched and Ian sets about the next important task – making tea.

While he talks Lisa through some of the vagaries of the stronger tackle being used, Ian's middle rod roars into life.

"Go on then, you're hitting the bites, not me!" Ian bellows.

If she wasn't already, Lisa is now certainly well awake and in an instant she is connected to her first Thorpe Lea carp.

"I tell you what mate, she plays the fish as well as many of the blokes I tutor," Ian whispers as Lisa does battle.

Eventually the carp is wallowing in the margins and Ian does the honours with the net, the likes of which Lisa has never seen before.

"That's bloody huge," she proclaims as Ian peers down into the 42 inches of net.

"Why, thank you very much," comes the chortled reply!

The carp is soon on the mat and Ian shows his pupil how to unhook it safely. Typical of the Thorpe Lea carp in recent years, it's in decent condition and boasts a lovely scale pattern on its flanks. At 13lb 6oz it is not quite a PB, but we always take a photo of the first fish on any day, so I do the honours before we slip the fish back.

Ian is busy explaining to Lisa about the numbers game. In essence this is where you go



Keep your tactics simple and the bites coming.



With carp cruising the surface it's time to catapult some floaters out.

to a fishery containing plenty of carp, but which you know holds a few better ones. By catching as many fish as you can, the hope is that the law of averages comes into effect and you end up with one or two bigger fish.

A chap on the opposite bank landed a 29lb mirror last night, and on previous trips Ian has seen plenty of 20-pounders on the bank, so we're definitely at the right place.

Over the next hour or so Lisa goes on to land a further eight carp, including a new PB of 16lb 12oz. However, this is not enough for the ever-ambitious Ian.

"I want us to keep going and catch some even bigger ones. I know you've had a PB, Lisa, but I reckon we can bag a 20lb carp if we work at it."

As the sun begins to beat down on us from on high, we're grateful for the shade that the trees around the swim offer. Well, two of us are.

"I want to get out in the sun and get some colour on my

lilywhites," Lisa quips.

Lilywhite is Lisa's nickname and it

comes from her pasty shade of skin, particularly on her legs (her words, not mine). Nevertheless, we're not here for sunbathing, we're here to catch carp and as the action on the gravel area slows, Ian hatches a plan.

"Right, it's time to get the floaters out," he declares.

Soon enough he produces a big sack of floating pellets, a bucket of larger mixer-type dog biscuits and his surface fishing gear.

A light-test-curve rod, mid-sized Shimano Baitrunner, a large controller float and six feet of 10lb mono hook link complete the setup.

He asked Lisa to start catapulting the floating pellets out into the swim. However, she is soon distracted by a group of ducklings and she does her best Doctor Dolittle impression in an attempt to make friends with the little furry critters.



Surface fishing is a brilliant and fun way of carp fishing.



A new PB at nearly 20lb and it's all smiles for the cameras!

His theory is proved correct and carp can be seen slurping the odd bait down.

She's soon instructed to get back to the job at hand and promptly sets to work firing lots of baits out.

"We need to get plenty of floaters out there because the birds will eat many of them. However, each duck or gull will only manage a few before filling up so then it will be the carp's turn," Ian points out.

It's not long before his theory is proved correct and carp can be seen slurping the odd bait down as the ducks lose interest. More and more mouths emerge and suck clumsily at the baits. Now is the time to get the hook bait out.

Ian lets Lisa cast out the controller rig and shows her how to ease it back to the area where the carp are feeding competitively. This competition is the key to surface fishing and many anglers ruin their chances by casting their rig out too early. Get them competing for the pellets and you'll have a better chance of hooking one.

Strike! Lisa is into a carp almost immediately. As she plays it Ian is on hand to guide her through playing carp on light gear. He realises that it's a better fish but doesn't want to make Lisa nervous and keeps stum. Soon enough, though, the fish is in the net and Ian cries out: "Yes, you beauty!"

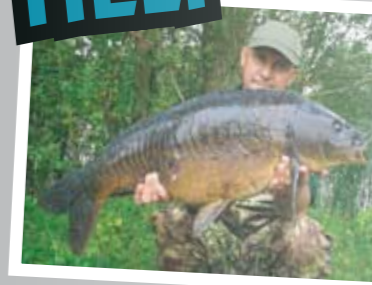
"Why, thank you very much," Lisa replies cheekily.

The fish is a cracker and is definitely another new PB. In the glistening sunlight that mottles the swim through



Lisa coaxes what looks like a better fish towards Ian's waiting net.

HELP



If this feature has whetted your appetite for a bit of learning, Ian Russell is here to help you solve your carp fishing problems. Write in and let us know what you need to work on and we'll try and do the rest. Good luck!

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

POSTCODE: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

PREFERRED LOCAL VENUE: _____

NEED HELP WITH: _____

Send the completed form to: Troubleshooter, Total Carp, DHP Ltd, 2 Stephenson Close, Drayton Fields, Daventry, Northamptonshire NN11 8RF