

Another spring in the valley of giants

April is always busy time for me with lots of coaching sessions booked, I deliberately leave May and early June free for my own angling, as such I don't get to start my Tench fishing until early May, a good time to begin anyway as I've made the mistake in the past of having great sessions in April without big fish as they've yet to put on any weight, in the words of my old mate Dai, "I only want to catch them once" ie, when they're big! . And so it was that I rocked up to the Larkfield complex Friday after work on 4th May. I had a mooch about and liked the look of a swim on Railway, in the NE corner with a lovely gentle SW ripple blowing in. Little did I know that it was to be the last sniff of a south westerly for the next 6 weeks. The swim looked and felt good, especially having seen a couple of fish roll during the evening. I had a raised area in front of me enough for two rods, not much else in the swim took my fancy so whilst I could fish 3 I settled for the 2. Fished on maggot heli rig set ups over several medium spombs of Sonubaits hemp and 2mm pellet. To cut a short story shorter, nothing happened. I was up at dawn and worked the feeders whilst constantly watching the water, but by 10 I was packing away and got the gear in the car. I went for a walk round the complex as well as going over the railway line and looking in on the Carp after combat event on Abbeymeads and Brookland. By the time I got back to my motor it was mid afternoon Saturday, quite a few swims had become free so I jumped in the bottleneck on Larkfield. A few nice fish had been out of the swim during the week so I was going on recent form. Again nothing happened, I didn't see a thing and that was the start to my Tench campaign!

During the week the wind swung to that relentless easterly. Arriving as usual on Friday evening I again had a drive around the complex and settled for the Peanut swim on Larky. The popular spot to fish here is just over the bar at 40 yards, I like to add half a rod length extra as I'm not keen on tench hugging the bottom of the bar after a take as this can lead to a cut off. I fished a combination of rigs this time trying both worm kebab on one and maggot on the other. The worm rig was away at 545 Saturday morning with the first tench of the season at 8lb 4oz. The day remained quiet, I'd placed a curry order for me and one of the carp anglers behind me on Railway for 7pm and was thinking of reeling in to shoot off and get it when the alarm started to do its thing. The worm again had done the business, my 2nd bite of the season and a cracker too of 10lb 4oz. Tony the carper took some nice pics, then I went for the curry. I didn't recast as the heavens opened and it didn't stop until the early hours. With night time being generally quiet I was happy to get some kip and set the alarm for the 4am dawn. Again I worked the feeders hard but didn't have or see a thing and was away by 10am Sunday.

I'd chatted to a few of the carp anglers on Larky who had been catching tench up the shallows in the dugouts and Pauls point, with the Easterly wind now blowing that direction for a while I liked the idea of it and with that in mind the following weekend I headed in that direction. Standing in the dugout on the Friday evening I saw a tench roll, that'll do for me. I decided to be a little frugal with my baiting as whilst I like being on the end of a wind and there were tench about, I'm not always sure they feed so ravenous on an easterly. 4am Saturday morning I had my first fish, an 8lb male, then another 8 at 11am and a 7 at 8pm. Sunday morning was busy with 5 more Tench to mid 8s, I then had to wait until Sunday evening and another 7. I had a sneaky extra day with the Monday off and managed one more of 7lb that morning. 10 in a long weekend was good going as very little was getting caught, the odd 2 or 3 fish had been the best I'd heard of. I'd kept the baiting light with just 6 medium spombs to start then 2 medium spombs of bait per fish. Whilst no one was having hits of fish a number of doubles had been out to high 11s

The following Friday evening I jumped in a swim on the railway that I'd looked at fishing for a few seasons but conditions hadn't been quite right for it. The continuing easterly had been blowing in to it for a few weeks now so I thought it might produce. Whilst a lot of Tench anglers like to stick to larky I am happy to flit between all the lakes. There's doubles in all of them even though they might be a bit more elusive. Doubles are obviously always the dream. but as long as I'm catching decent sized fish I'm more than happy, as long as I know there is a target or two. Unless it's been roasting during the day nights can be a waste of time so I often reel in overnight, but being the railway and generally the toughest lake on the complex I left them out this first night. Railway can be quite a hard nut to crack, iv had more blanks than successes so wanted to give myself every advantage. I'd found a nice margin spot off to one side for one rod and a nice hump at 50yds big enough for two baits. The usual mix of hemp and micropellet went in, 4 medium spombs per rod. Overnight I had my first railway tench of the season of 7lb 15oz on one of the distance rods. I didn't recast that rod but was up at 4 and working the feeders by recasting every 30 to 45 minutes. The first of the morning came at 5am and by 9am I'd had a further 6 to 9lb 15oz with a further 3 during afternoon and evening to high 8s from both the distance and margin baits. Each evening I rebated with 4 spombs per rod of my Tench mix, I rarely bait up at dawn preferring to keep disturbance to just the feeders. Sunday morning between 6 and 11am I had a further 9 tench with some more 7s n 8s. The rest of Sunday remained quiet, again I had the Monday off and had another 2 that morning to 8lb 11oz. All the fish were on heli rigs with either a worm kebab on a short hair or 3 red maggots straight on to a size 10 specimen hook combined with maggot feeders with either red maggot or a mix of red maggot and chopped worm in the combi feeders. I'd had a sample pack of Korum's new Ready Heli Kits sent to me to have a play with, last week's 10 fish and this weekends 22 tench hooked, 22 landed meant that the new kit was certainly having a work out. I'm really pleased with this little kit as it is in fact something I'd bought to the design team 18 months previously. Iv since had it mentioned to me that they would have been better with a swiveling quick change link to prevent the hooklink spinning up, however I can confirm that this hasn't been a problem at all, I can't recall a single tangle whilst using my short 3 to 4 inch hooklinks and In fact looking back I hadn't lost a single fish this season.

The first week in June saw me on Trout lake on the Friday evening, Saturday morning I had 3 tench but none bigger than 4lb 8oz. I decided to pack up and have a move, Iv no problem at all in packing down, going for a drive and a good walk looking for somewhere to fish. I ended up in the Rushes on Larkfield. The swim like most on Larkfield hadn't fished well this season, certainly some decent fish had been caught but not in numbers. Nothing to do with anything other than the poor conditions we'd had for fishing this spring. My evening and morning remained quiet and I didn't have or see a single tench until I was reeling in my last rod to go home, typical.

And that pretty much bought my Tench fishing to a close as although I did have another go the next weekend the session proved fruitless, that's fishing!