

ANGLER PROFILE



PAUL MONKMAN
Year of birth: 1982
Home town: Hull, East Yorkshire
Favourite venues: Grenville's, Lakeview and Manton.
Favourite method: Anything simple.
Most memorable catch: My first UK forty, caught from Grenville's.

Carp-Talk editorial assistants Paul Monkman and Ben Wales get more than they bargained for during a weekend at holiday venue, Cherry Lakes in the Cotswold Water Park.

CHERRY'S

Being a carp angler can be challenging at times. After lugging mountains of gear to our chosen location, many lonely hours are spent huddled by the side of a lake under a glorified sheet of canvas and a few fibre glass poles, often in weather conditions most normal people would avoid like the plague. It is why we deserve to abandon the usual trappings of our pursuit once in a while, and treat ourselves to a more luxurious bankside experience.

Nestled in the heart of the Cotswold Water Park is a lodge-style holiday retreat that offers all the comforts any angler looking to indulge themselves for a few days could hope for. Having opened to

There's plenty of water to fish from each lodge



the public in spring 2013, Cherry Lakes is one of the newest lakeside retreats on the scene, but in just a short while it has emerged as one of

the UK's premier fishing holiday destinations. Situated just a stone's throw from the famous Ashlea Pool in South Cerney and run by Mike



One of the UK's premier fishing holiday destinations

and Judith Kirsch, Cherry Lakes is a 13-acre site comprising four lakes, five log cabins and a delightful cottage. The main lake on the complex is Cherry Lake itself, which harbours three of the lodges and a swim designated for the cottage. With more than 200 carp in its five acres, this is a carp angler's water

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The lodges have all the comforts you could wish for



There are three luxury lodges on Cherry Lake itself

comfortable days' fishing with the family or partner, there is somewhere to cater for your needs. That said, very few of them can match Cherry's stock of around a dozen thirties, backed up by more than 100 twenties.

Catching a glimpse of the great Ashlea Pool as we crossed a small bridge that took us down to the main gate, we were greeted by fishery manager, Dave, who proved to be extremely helpful over the three days of our stay and is clearly one of the contributing factors behind Cherry's success. As Dave showed us to our lodge, Heron, we caught our first glimpse of the Lake and, as if scripted, witnessed a huge common leap clear of the water over towards the far margin, whetting our already fevered appetites.

On Cherry Lake itself, the three lodges are all situated on the same bank, allowing the anglers in each lodge the option of fishing to the far bank. Because our lodge was to the right of the others, we also had access to an enticing margin that wasn't being fished from the cottage swim in the corner of the lake. This margin was to prove to be the perfect ambush spot for patrolling carp.

Our lodge was more than we could have hoped for. A kitchen with fridge, oven and hob meant we could eat like kings, even if the fish didn't play ball, and then retire to the comfort of the lounge area where a flatscreen television and DVD player offered some evening entertainment. A plush walk-in shower and comfortable

double beds also meant there was no necessity to neglect hygiene or lose out on any sleep – unless, of course, the fish had other ideas.

All good holiday venues offer some sort of welcome pack for their guests, providing information about their stay, advice on local attractions, etc., but Cherry can go one better. When Mike and Judith took over the venue, one of their initial jobs was to drain the water for general lake-management purposes, and when they did, they took detailed pictures of the features present, and those pictures are included within each pack, something we found invaluable during our stay.

Change the record

Top-of-the-range Angling Technics baitboats with echo sounders are available to hire at Cherry Lakes, and we decided to make the most of this facility, knowing that accurate and quiet bait placement would drastically increase our chances of catching.

Fishing different spots in open water and on the far margin, the first night of our stay passed without any action, despite a number of fish making their



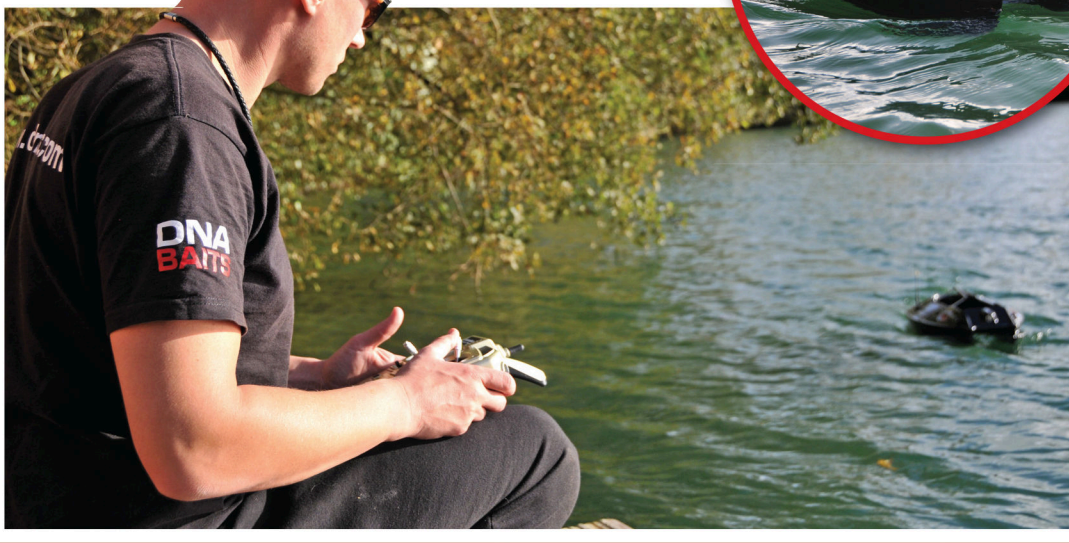
Hiring a baitboat can be a big help

with features galore in front of every swim. The other lakes on site, Springs, Pool and Mere, are smaller and more heavily stocked, and each offers exclusive fishing from their respective lodges, Kingfisher, Egret and the two-bedroomed Pochard.

To find out just why this relative new boy on the scene is featuring so prominently and positively on the grapevine, my colleague, Ben Wales, and I chose to book on for a weekend to sample a bit of luxury carping for ourselves.

Home from home

Lodge-style holiday venues are nothing new, but there is little doubting their growing appeal. Whether you decide to take a break in Cumbria, Yorkshire, Norfolk, Hampshire or wherever takes your



presence felt all around the Lake. The next day saw us make full use of the echo sounder and folder of lakebed features as we pinpointed a number of patrol routes and ambush points between bars and plateaux. Mixing in some of Cherry's own Essential Spice boilies (available to buy on site) with our own offerings, we introduced small scatterings of bait to our chosen spots throughout the course of the day, hopeful that our second night would bear more fruit than the first.

A deep sleep was interrupted at five o'clock the next morning by a take on one of Ben's rods. The excitement was only short-lived, however, as the fish found a weedbed and managed to dislodge the hook. The sense of disappointment was tangible, though there was some justifiable optimism that it wouldn't be the only take of the morning, and so it proved. Just an hour later, my rod on the far margin was away. Keeping the rod high to prevent the fish from finding any weed, an upper-double common was safely scooped up in the net within five minutes of being hooked.

I felt pleased to have got us off the mark, but my capture was soon to pale into insignificance. As we reeled off a few shots of the fish, a startled Ben was forced to put the camera down and grab his right-hand rod, which had begun ripping off at a rate of knots. As I secured my fish in the margins, Ben did his best to prevent what was clearly a far more powerful fish from finding any marginal snags. Once turned, the fish moved out into open water where it plodded around under the surface, occasionally diving down and taking line. With me poised with the net, a large barrel-shaped common rolled on the surface a couple of rod-lengths out, gradually getting closer and closer as a composed Ben coaxed it towards me. Lowering the mesh below its golden flank, the biggest fish in the Lake slid into the net at the first attempt – and it looked enormous!



My upper-double common kicked things off



This stunning fish was the cherry on top of the cake

I didn't want to say anything, but I couldn't help myself. "That's a lake record, mate," I said excitedly to Ben, feeling sure the fish would surpass its own record of 36½lb after having not been out since May. At 37lb 2oz, it beat the record comfortably. Dave was round within

seconds of the phone call that broke the news, and after handshakes all round, together we snapped away at the captor and his landmark fish.

Cherry on the cake

It's not an easy task following a lake record, but with such an impressive

stock of fish, anything is possible at Cherry Lakes. After enjoying a breakfast of bacon and egg sandwiches, the morning had one more surprise in store. Just a few hours later, the same rod that produced the lake record ripped off at a similar tempo. This fish was a great deal more sprightly and gave Ben the run-around for 10-15 minutes before revealing its presence, its orange, scaly flanks a sight to behold in the eminently blue water.

Playing gillie for the second time that morning, I eased the net underneath its body and slipped it towards the fish. Having caught the biggest fish in the lake, Ben had also managed one of the best looking too, and at 27lb 7oz, it wasn't a bad size either. It's very rare you get to see a fish of such beauty close up, so it was quite a privilege to do the honours with the camera once again.

That fish was to be the cherry on the cake in terms of our stay. We'd expected a few nights in relative comfort and hopefully a few fish, but in reality, we'd had so much more. The lodge exceeded all our expectations, the hospitality was warm and friendly, and the fish were quite sensational. Carp fishing needn't always be the challenge we often try to make it; sometimes a bit of luxury can go a long way.

Ben with the new Cherry Lakes record at 37lb 2oz



For further details about Cherry Lakes, head to www.cherrylakes.co.uk, email info@cherrylakes.co.uk, call 07545 495881 or search for 'Cherry Lakes' on Facebook.



The margin that proved so productive for Ben