

The gang's all here



# Back to France

## CALUM AND THE GARDNER TEAM HAVE A RETURN ENGAGEMENT AT LAC DE LANEUVILLE.

**I**n the early spring last year Tom Oliver, Andy Loble and I had a brilliant long weekend trip to France, visiting a lake called Lac de Laneuville. We all managed bites, which was a result given the freezing cold conditions, and I managed three thirties topped by a 36lb common.

At the end of March 2014 I was lucky enough to be heading back to the same venue with Tom and Andy, but this time Gardner Tackle's Alan Stagg was joining us to do some filming and Andy's mate, Ben, would also be coming. The lake has some absolutely stunning big commons to over 55lb, and it was these that all of us were hoping to stick a hook into during the week.

With the vans filled to the brim with enough bait to sink the ferry we hit the road and arrived at the lake in the late evening. The light was fading fast, so we had a quick walk around before drawing straws for the swims we would be fishing. I opted for the swim which controlled the most open water and had plenty of fish showing while we walked around. It also was placed conveniently near the lodge where we planned on having many barbecues!

The first night was spent just with single pop-ups on old rigs launched at fish that had shown and I wasn't that hopeful of getting a bite. I awoke at first light to fish showing all over the area, and I quickly reeled in to have a thorough lead around in order to get ready for the week. Up to around

70 yards range the bottom was very solid clay, before it slowly sloped off into thicker silt against the far bank. I decided to fish on the edge of the clay where I thought the cleaner bottom would lead to a better presentation.

The next plan of action was to give them some bait! With the vast quantity of big fish in such a small lake, I thought that they would need to eat so I was going to give them plenty of bait. Into a large bucket went around 5kg of chopped and whole 18mm CC Moore Equinox boilies, hemp, trout pellet and a good helping of maize. The final additions were some Antarctic Krill Meal and a good plug of the brilliant Feedstim XP before I spodded it all out around the float.

The rods were the next thing that needed sorting. As the fish were very line shy the last time we had visited, my main line was the incredible Pro XM, which sinks like a stone, through to a length of CamFlex leadcore and a 3oz lead on a Covert Lead Clip. The rigs were the same

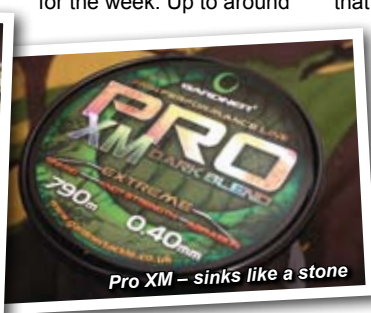


My swim controlled the most open water

on all the rods, my standard setup when fishing over a spodded area; around seven inches of 25lb Sink Skin attached to a size 6 Covert Wide Gape Talon Tip with a small Covert Rig Ring opposite the barb and a large Covert Shrink Tube kicker. A snowman hookbait went on the left-hand rod, a maize stack on the middle and a single bottom bait on the right hander to keep my options open for what was working on the day.

With the rods out on the spots, I spent the rest of the day

**"The fish put up an incredible scrap under the rod tip but eventually it slid into the waiting net"**



Alan Stagg's 41lb personal best common



sunbathing before we all gathered in the evening for a social and a barbecue by the lodge.

With the amount of lines in the water and the disturbance we had caused, it was understandable that nothing happened until the third night of the trip. Staggy was first into a fish, receiving a belting take on his middle rod. The fish put up an incredible scrap under the rod

tip but eventually it slid into the waiting net. The immaculate common weighed in at 41lb, which was a new PB for Alan and what a fish to do it with! Over the next couple of nights Alan was in the action again, bagging a few more lovely commons to over 30lb. Tom also managed to get off the mark with one of the stockies weighing a little over 26lb.

Tom Oliver's 43lb mirror



I was one happy angler



It seemed that the majority of the fish were at the other end of the lake to me, but there were fish showing on or near my rods every night so I was sure that I should have been having bites. For this reason I decided on a tactical change so that if the fish were feeding with extreme caution on my spots I would have a better chance of catching them. The rigs were shortened right down to around three inches, with the same hooking presentation but the hooklinks made of 20lb Trickster. I also decided to use 4oz inline leads to give better hooking potential; with these on the spot I was much more confident of a bite or two.

I had also noticed a lot of activity in a small bay down to the left of my swim. It was extremely shallow and weedy, and for a long time I discounted it as small fish or roach, but the more I looked the more I realised it definitely was carp. I had a stalking rod complete with centrepin in the quiver so I decided to give it a go on the fourth night after having baited the area but not fished it for a couple of nights. The rig was the same as on the main spot and, without too much fuss, I had it on the spot hopeful of some action.

In the early hours of the morning the centrepin rod in the small bay was screaming for attention! It put up an incredible scrap in the shallow weedy water, but eventually Ben slipped the net under it for me. Tom and Alan were ripping into me, saying it was only a small one, but once we lifted it on to the mat they were proven wrong; the scales swung round to 36lb on the nose! It was slipped into a retainer sling

Centrepin setup in the small bay to the left

in the margin to do some filming once it was light enough. I was buzzing to get off the mark, but it didn't end there. Before I managed to sort the margin rod out, one of the rods on the main spot was away to a flier. This one felt big all the way in, not doing much other than a few head shakes. Again, Ben was on hand with the net and this time it was a 35lb 14oz mirror. It was slipped into the retainer next to the common, and I was one happy angler after a bit of a struggle.

The change of tactics had paid off with a couple of lovely fish, but with a change in weather the fish seemed to vacate the area. Staggy managed to catch a few more at the other end of the lake, and Tom chipped in with a 43lb mirror on the last night, which capped off an excellent trip to this stunning lake.

Calum's 35lb 14oz mirror

