

Make it happen...

**TONY  
GETS OUT  
FOR SOME  
EARLY  
ACTION**

**Right:** A mix of  
Cell and Hybrid  
was used for  
baiting up  
**Main pic:**  
The tree  
line I had  
been  
baiting



# MAKING THE MOST OF IT!

I was watching the telly when my wife said, "You haven't been night fishing for a few weeks. Why don't you go for a couple of nights?" She was correct; I had only done a single night's fishing in each of the previous three months. Of course, I had done plenty of day sessions, but that's the way I like to go in the winter; short day sessions, working at it, playing around with hookbaits, zigs, etc., rather than being bivvy bound on the long freezing nights – brrrr!

However, the weather looked good for night fishing on this occasion, with south-westerly winds, good air pressure and temperatures around 7-8°C – and the storms had stirred things up



nicely. The only issue was the venue I had chosen wasn't fishing that well, with just odd fish getting caught here and there by anglers putting in plenty of time. I had a plan to fall back on, though. I had been slipping a bit of bait in one or two areas when the time was right; i.e. when no one else was fishing. I don't think there is anything worse than someone baiting up right in front of an angler who is already

fishing, though I can't see a problem if someone is fishing at one end of a 65-acre reservoir and a bit of bait goes in at the opposite end.

Anyway, I was slipping a handful of Cell and Hybrid on a certain spot each time I walked

around the lake with the dog, or nipped in while I was working! It's close to the car park and no one really fishes the area too much. It offers deep water, varying depths off a treeline, cover, underwater obstacles such as rocks and branches, and a silt and gravel bottom – so plenty of options. Well, you could have knocked me down with a feather when an angler went in there for a three-night session and caught five fish in January, the week after I started to put the bait in. I couldn't believe it that someone was in my neglected swim!

Decision time: did I carry on baiting, or forget it and look elsewhere? The jungle drums were sure to beat and, sure enough, others followed and a few more fish were caught. I continued to sneak the bait in on my chosen spot, though. The reason being the spot in question cannot be cast to. The only way to get a bait in there is to wade in under the trees and place the bait smack on the dinner plate. Surrounding this spot are lots of tennis- to bowling-ball-sized rocks and the bottom is up and down, so you have to know what you're doing.

**Right:** The assault  
course back to the swim  
**Below:** Dropping the rig  
down to the spot on a  
tight line



**Left:** The  
ingredients  
used for the  
orange fruity  
pop-ups





The two rigs used

work a treat, and it can sound obvious to fish the same thing on the hook as what's being introduced. Without an element of buoyancy, though, I think the fish can suss out the rig more easily, unless it's one of those situations when they throw caution to the wind and get their heads down. Also, towards the latter stages of the season bottom baits straight out of the bag will do well when the fish have been eating lots of them all summer and are naturally on the munch. Early in the year can be a different ball game, though. Trying to nick a bite or get something going can be very difficult, so I use hookbaits to grab the carp's attention and, with the use of some superb liquid attractors, get a quick bite!

I've caught fish on all the hookbaits in the Mainline range and I also like to make my own. The white Blackcurrant specials that

I've used for ages now certainly do the business for me. The second homemade hookbait I've been using for the last year or two is an orange bait with a mix of fruit flavours. Both are rolled using Polaris Pop-Up Mix with the addition of cork dust. You can see how the baits are put together on either the Mainline or Gardner websites if you fancy a go at rolling your own. Also, if you are serious about making your own hookbaits, or rolling your own boilies in general, it's worth investing in a decent bait gun and a couple of rolling tables. I use the Gardner kit, as there's nothing better in my opinion.

Rigs were kept very simple. I used a bottom bait rig on my baited spot as it was predominantly pea gravel. I used a split shot on the hair in conjunction with a Blackcurrant dumbbell. This nestled the hook on the bottom and left the bait just hovering above. The rig was constructed with a Gardner Disruption hooklink knotless knotted to a size 8 Covert Mugga hook, with a small section of shrink tube over the top. A small section of coating was stripped back at the hook end to aid movement and allow the hook to find the bottom lip, and a figure-of-eight loop was tied to the other end to attach to the lead setup.

The other spots were a mix of soft and firm silt, and were cast to rather than dropped on. On these spots I used a very simple pop-up rig with the orange hookbaits; a length of Disruption knotless knotted to a size 8 Mugga and trimmed off at the bottom of the knot so there is no hair whatsoever.



Finding a quiet, rarely fished area can prove productive, even on big open lakes

I use a small Pop Up Hook Aligner to make a D and give the hook faster turning qualities, and a Covert Rig Ring to mount the pop-up.

On this occasion both hooklinks were set up on helicopter rigs with drop-off 3oz Gardner Flat Pear Bombs, which hold bottom and can be fished on a slope – good hookers too! I incorporate a Drop Out Chod Safety Clip to lose the lead in and around the snaggy bottom. I'm not an advocate of losing the lead just for the sake of it, but when it can be the difference between catching and not, then I'll lose it.

During the night I caught three nice carp, and I'd certainly worked for them. I don't use bait as a 'weapon' often enough in my fishing, but I'll certainly be looking for some new spots to sneak some bait into and hopefully have a bigger and better result next time. I don't have as much time to go fishing these days compared to a few years back, so I really need to make the most of every opportunity and find extra edges for myself. It can be done and it will be great fun having to try harder and think smarter to make it happen.



It's dodgy at the best of times, and once the bait is in position you have to run the assault course back to the setup. It's about 25 yards negotiating the underwater obstacles, while keeping the rod tip under the surface to avoid the overhanging trees, and then missing the 15-foot drop-off, before finally getting back to my swim, hopefully not suffering a soaking from water going over the top of the chesties!

Because of where the spot is situated I could put bait in by hand, so half boilies and chops were the order of the day. At that time of year I don't usually put more than a hookbait with a PVA stick out when I'm fishing open water swims, and then rove the rods around every few hours. However, because I had been putting the bait in so accurately, able to draw the fish in on a small area, it was an easy decision.

I like to fish an alternative hookbait over the top of my free offerings. Taking a bottom bait out of the bag and casting it out can

Above: My homemade hookbaits  
Below: Worth all the effort



Above: First one, probably the smallest in the lake, but more than welcome in my net