

# Be prepared for tench

Southern specialist Sam Meeuwissen looks at what it takes to ensure you enjoy a great day's tench fishing on the feeder.

Mature gravel pits are some of the best venues to target when tench are the quarry.



## ANGLER FACT FILE

**Name:** Sam

Meeuwissen

**Age:** 35

**Hometown:**

Twyford, near  
Reading

**Best tench:**

9lb 8oz

**Sponsor:**

Gardner Tackle

**W**hen it comes to fishing for tench I like to keep it as simple as possible.

Having cut my angling teeth on big windswept gravel pits, mainly after anything that swam by, I always enjoyed my time spent using the swimfeeder. The reasons for this are many, but none more so than the reminiscence of many happy days spent as a junior angler, when I used the feeder nearly everywhere I fished.

It allows me to apply a bit of creativity to my angling, which can be a nice break from slogging it out on the big pits, sitting behind boilies and buzzers. It also keeps me on my

toes while recasting and watching for any signs of activity over my baited spots, casting at signs of feeding fish, experimenting with rigs and bait combinations until eventually I know that I have an attractive pile of bait with an effective rig presented nearby. It all goes towards sharpening angling skills in the long term.

Over the years I have refined my approach to a few tried-and-tested variations on a theme and utilise them as and when necessary. I still have my favourite starting points that form the basis of most sessions; these revolve around location, reliable tackle, basic rigs and quality bait.

## TAKE TIME

Imagine you arrive at the lake and find yourself faced with that most wonderful of opportunities – you have the whole pond to yourself! What do you do now? Don't just rush to the swim you may have already spotted while travelling to the lake but stop, sit back a bit and watch for a while to see what is going on.

Sunrise is a fantastic time to be out and about, what with the dawn chorus, tench fizzing and coots arguing. Take your time and let the fish tell you where to set up. If you don't spot any fish movement after a while, then try to set up on a peg





that allows a good field of view. Assemble the minimum amount of tackle you need to fish. This means you can quickly and quietly react if you spot fish in the edge, or see something roll further out in the lake.

#### GEAR GUIDE

For hardware, most of my tench feeder fishing is done with my 12ft 1¼lb Barbel Tamer rods. They have enough backbone for me to reach where I need to be on most lakes with a 2oz feeder full of maggots, yet still have enough finesse to use relatively light hook links such as 4lb Gardner Mirage Fluorocarbon.

I prefer fluorocarbon for my shorter rigs and smaller hooks as it offers a stiff-rig effect that fish find hard to deal with, especially when using a maggot-and-worm cocktail on a size 12 Talon Tip hook. I will also tie

hook links in 5lb or 6lb Hydroflo, which comes in both clear and green and thus allows me to ring the changes and camouflage my hook link according to whatever lake bed I am fishing over, be it weed,

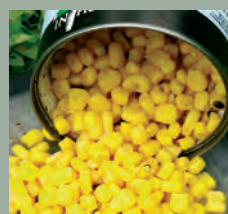
## TOP FOUR TENCH BAITS



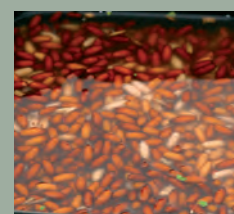
01 Small redworms.



02 Very fresh maggots.



03 Corn – worth a try.



04 Casters – in the mix.



## TACTICS

Preparation of the swim is key to catching tench on mature gravel pits, so spend time raking each swim the night before and/or when you arrive.



silt or gravel. Coupled with the 8lb Hydroflo main line and a small free-spool reel I stand a good chance even if I hook a decent-sized carp. Well, in open water at least!

For bite indication, I rate the ATTs system of alarms, usually fished with the sounder switched off, and rely on the sight of the Micro Bug bobbin and the LED lighting up to sneakily signal interest.

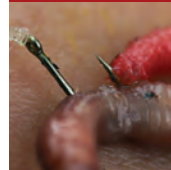
### FIRST-CHOICE RIG

When it comes to rigs, I like to keep mine as basic as possible. My

favourite is the ever-popular rotary-style rig. It has excellent anti-tangle and aerodynamic long-casting properties, and constructing it couldn't be simpler. First thread on a float stop, followed by a size 12 mini rig swivel. Follow this with another float stop, thread on a buffer bead and tie on a speed link. I use the Gardner Covert range.

My choice of feeder or weight can then simply be clipped on and the buffer bead slid down to cover the knot and link. I can then change tactics easily, swapping from maggot

### TENCH BAIT TOP TIP



The maggot stops the wriggling worm from masking the hook point.

feeder to a straight lead in a second. It also allows me to remove the feeders or leads prior to a move of swim, preventing any annoying bashing and crashing against the rod and announcing your arrival from several swims away.

The position of the float stops can be raised or lowered on the main line, depending on bottom detritus, and the length of hook link can vary too. I like to attach mine via a loop threaded through the rig swivel, after threading an anti-tangle sleeve on for good measure, to keep the whole

## SAM'S TENCH RIG

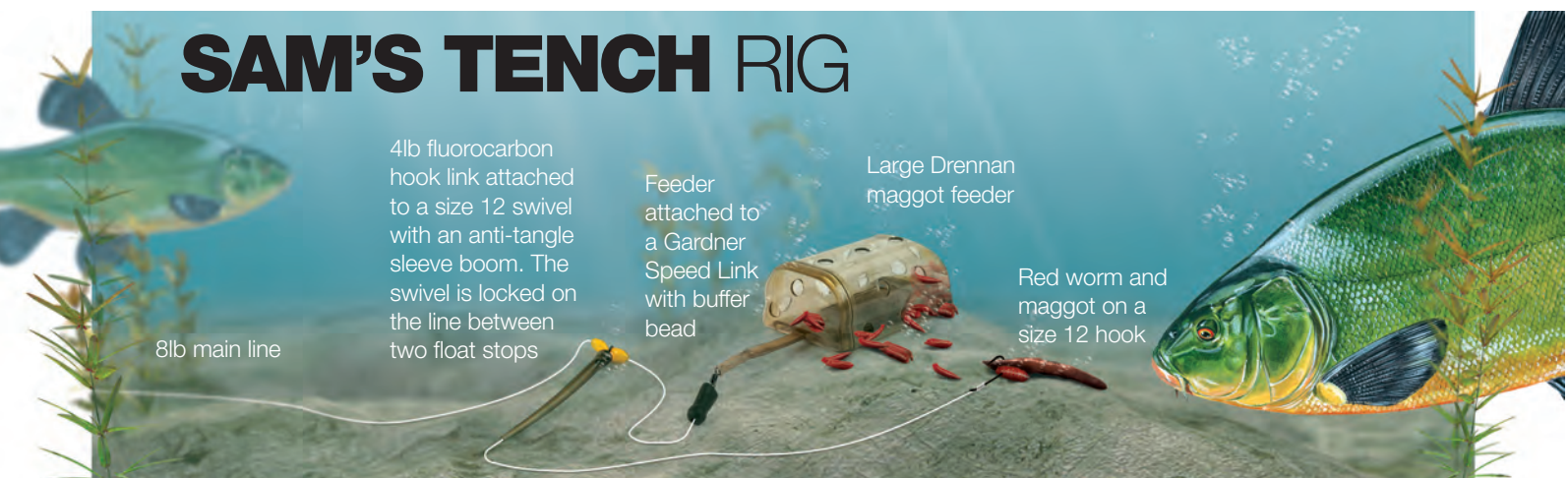
8lb main line

4lb fluorocarbon hook link attached to a size 12 swivel with an anti-tangle sleeve boom. The swivel is locked on the line between two float stops

Feeder attached to a Gardner Speed Link with buffer bead

Large Drennan maggot feeder

Red worm and maggot on a size 12 hook





## SAM'S FEED MIX



**01** Red Salmon-flavoured Method mix, Green Swim Stim and white breadcrumbs.



**02** The salmon Method mix is full of attractive particles that the tench seem to love.



**03** Place equal quantities of each groundbait into a large mixing bowl...



**04** ... and mix them together well dry, before adding any water.



**05** The finished mix looks like it's just been raked from a swim – camouflaged feed!

setup tidy. It creates a boom-like effect, which pushes the rig away from the main line and helps to avoid tangles when casting.

### ALTERNATIVE RIG

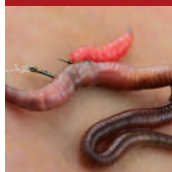
An alternative rig, which can be very successful, is a running groundbait feeder. To ensure a tangleproof rig, I stop it using a buffer bead pushed over a mini rig swivel. On the hook link there's an anti-tangle sleeve, which fits snugly over the swivel. With the hook link kicked out at a nice angle away from the feeder and the line, I can cast with confidence knowing that it will sit right every time. The feeder is attached via a snag-safe clip and any metal components are covered up with silicone sleeves.

Hook links for both rigs are tied up to suit on the day; however, I find the rotary rig lends itself to shorter rigs of up to 10cm in length.

### RAKING THE SWIM

Raking is one of those forgotten tactics that really goes against my usual stealthy approach. Hurling a huge lump of metal into a quiet and

### TOP TENCH BAIT TIP



A small redworm tipped with a red maggot is a top tench tempter.

undisturbed corner of a gravel pit may send shivers down some anglers' spines, but a commotion is exactly what you want to create.

Apart from clearing out weedy areas where you can then present a hook bait, it also stirs up all the natural food. This massive disturbance is soon investigated by inquisitive fish and tench, especially, capitalise on this activity.

I find that raking any weed down to bare gravel in a small area just off the bank, leading up to the marginal slope creates the perfect spot to target. Similar to the mobile tactics employed while roving on a river, priming a few spots like this on a stillwater and then fishing them in rotation or when you see fish feeding, pays dividends. Just check with the anglers in neighbouring swims before you start to throw the ironmongery about.

### ADDED FEED

Even though the natural food will attract the tench you need to keep them feeding for as long as possible, so I will feed a few balls of groundbait into the raked area before the water settles. Groundbaits are a personal choice and there are a wealth of options. I'm currently

having success using a mix of equal quantities of Carpbait-UK's Red Salmon Method mix, Dynamite's Green Swim Stim and good old white breadcrumbs. When this is mixed with a little water it turns a brown/green colour, and in the water looks like natural silt. The aim is to offer little in the way of food and make your swimfeeder full of maggots stand out as the icing on the cake, so to speak, and the colour of the feed easily shows up the baits.

### KEEP ON LOOKING

If it's at all possible, take time out to rake and feed a number of swims. I recommend that if you can plan ahead, then go down the evening before to prepare a few swims, looking for any signs of fish rolling. Then make an early start the following day and try to get to the venue at the earliest time allowed. Before setting up, look for telltale bubbles of fish feeding. If there are none, though, this doesn't mean that the fish aren't there – a quick rake and feed will get their attention. After priming the first, do the others and then start your session back at the original swim. Try and keep a lookout at the other swims and, if



## TACKLE



01 Light lines are not an option when tench are the target.



02 Quality accessories and hooks help create the right rigs.



03 Free-spool reels allow the use of buzzer and bobbin bite indication.



04 Barbel rods also double as the perfect tench-taming tool.

the fish start to feed in one, move into that swim making as little disturbance as possible. If the fish do have their heads down, then they won't be spooked by your feeder hitting the water.

## HOOK BAITS

My main choice of hook baits for my tench fishing consists of fresh maggots, followed by small redworms if I can get some – it pays to have a composter in the garden! I will also take corn. Casters are a treat for tench, so I often take a pint. When bites are slow I find it's a good idea to experiment with hook baits, as on the day the tench may show a preference for a single bait or a combination of two. I will primarily chop and change from maggots to worms and then a combination of the two, as these are, in my opinion, the top two natural baits for tench. Corn or a corn-and-maggot combo are worth a try. You will soon be able to tell which is top on the day, and then you can use that on both rods and watch the bobbins start flying!

To sum up, appropriate tackle properly set up and gauged to the situation you face, combined with fresh bait applied well to a prepared swim, will enable you to reap the rewards of big tench this summer. **TOTAL GAME FISHING**



Follow Sam's advice and you too will be able to catch hard-fighting tench close in.