

CRITICAL MASS

Gardner Tackle product-development manager **LEWIS READ** believes that choosing the right lead can be the difference between failure and success.

With so many types of lead available, choosing the best one for the job can be tricky.



Angler: Lewis Read

UK PB: 47lb12oz

Sponsors: Gardner Tackle and Carp Company

Lewis has banked carp from a fine selection of the UK's big-fish circuit waters.

As carp fishing has become increasingly popular, attracting more serious anglers (many with great ideas), modern carp rigs have evolved steadily. The leads we choose to incorporate onto our line perform much more than simply adding casting weight. Far from being a simple leger weight, the lead performs a pivotal role in all bolt rigs. After all, these rigs rely upon a super-sharp hook and the weight to prick the fish's mouth when it sucks in our hook bait and the hook link tightens enough for the point to nick into the lip. On top of this, the size and shape can determine how the weight sits on, or in, the lake bed after casting and how it performs during the initial stages of a pick-up, at the critical instant that the fish hooks itself.

Correct choice of lead can only be made with a clear understanding of what you are fishing on and how the rig as a whole will work with the chosen lead, whatever size, shape and finish.

There are two basic types of lead weights commonly used in carp fishing. Firstly, pendant leads, which incorporate a loop set into the weight body that are supplied with a swivel.

The confusing thing for many anglers is identifying which lead to use.

Secondly, inline leads that have a central hole through which your line is threaded.

The invention of the first true 'modern' fishing weight can only be attributed to the late, great Richard Walker, the father of modern specimen fishing. His innovative approach to specimen angling was responsible for the invention of the Arlesey bomb, designed to cast accurately due to excellent aerodynamic properties and allow tangle-free perch angling in the deep water of the lake from which it takes its name. This was the blueprint from which all the popular pendant-style leads have evolved, with shapes such as pear through to the distance leads that have been developed to help anglers achieve longer and more accurate casting.

It's hardly surprising that, with the variety available in your average tackle shop, the confusing thing for many anglers is identifying which lead to use. All these pendant-style leads are hugely versatile and can be used running, with lead clips or on helicopter rigs. With a little thought, a pendant can be used on almost any type of lake bed, from hard gravel to soft silt. The shorter, dumpier-style pendant leads create a more compact weight that reduces the potential for the fish to move or pivot the lead before its full weight comes to bear on the hook point, a problem that may occur with longer distance leads in some situations when trying to trip up a fish that is feeding tentatively.

The versatile pendant lead can be used running, with a lead clip or helicopter style.



A front-weighted inline lead offers the best hooking potential.





Tubing and a small stringer helps prevent tangles when using an inline lead setup.



Lewis recently had to take a hard look at lead shape when designing the new range for Gardner.

Here's an observation that some of you may be interested to note. Simply using unfashionably bowstring-tight lines, which create much greater resistance to the leads moving to start with and therefore improve the performance of any bolt rig, alleviates the problem of fish moving leads. The angler's decision is whether

The second generic group, the inline leads, are really most useful when the angler knows that he or she is fishing onto a clean spot. This will either be a natural feeding spot, or a baited spot that has become smooth and hard from the attentions of feeding fish. The large surface area of the flattened versions of these leads produces a very stable anchorage that takes a lot of moving with a hook point. This offers the greatest possible chance of the hook point reaching the point of no return, triggering a positive bite from even the wariest of fish.

How do you improve the design of the classic, standard flat-pear lead then? By ensuring that a greater amount of the weight is positioned over the swivel by tapering the lead into a more wedge-shaped profile. A side effect is that the casting performance and stability has also been improved.

Working on the new range of Gardner leads has given the team the opportunity to incorporate tweaks that have not been seen before on commercially available lead ranges. One of the main improvements is to flatten the sides of the conventional-style pear leads. This increases the stability of the leads on sloping features and the bolt effect for the weight used without affecting casting accuracy or range. From experience, unless you have access to a bait boat, all of us enthusiastic inline-lead users still have to consider avoiding tangles. A smooth casting technique and watching your lead and rig in flight, feathering it and controlling its descent to the lake bed help enormously, as does sinking rig tube, PVA stringers or bags, dissolving rig foam on the hook, or stiffer hook links like fluorocarbon or skinned, braided hook links.



The Arlessey bomb was the blueprint from which all pendant leads were developed.

to hide the lines by allowing them to settle discreetly on the lake bed or go for the improved bolt-rig performance and certainty that a greater proportion of fish sampling the hook bait may be snared, accepting that some fish will be put off by a tight line. If your baits are over the back of a major bar then it is worth considering, because the line will be fairly well out the way anyway.

Another benefit of short leads like the Bolt Bomb or Dumpy Pear is that they will tend to plug more firmly in soft silt, which we can use to our advantage. The flatter bottom acts like suction in fine sediment – if you have used a ball lead in shallow, silty venues you will be very aware of this phenomenon. The longer, tapered, distance-style leads are not only for long range. They are firm favourites in the 'chod' angler's armoury because they reduce the incidence of the hook point snagging on the underside of the shorter leads best suited for more conventional rigs.

Don't stop thinking about your lead setup there, though. One great trick that I learnt from one of the most gifted and thinking anglers I have ever met, young Dave Ball, was to make sure you tightened up to your rig enough to ensure that the lead was not sat on end on the lake bed by gently pulling the main line. However, not so much as to make the lead bounce against the lake bed, possibly turning over the hook point or impairing it with some crap off the lake bed. This also improved indication at the instant the hook bait is taken, often giving a bleep a second or two before a bite fully developed – or just a bleep to say 'you've been done mate'! Drop your rig in the edge, mimicking a cast, and see how this can obviously improve a high proportion of terminal arrangements. While you're there, it is worthwhile taking the time to look at how well concealed your lead is. Nowadays, you will easily be able to find a lead that will be as subtle as possible for any environment.

I couldn't finish this piece without reminding readers about the absolute necessity of using safe rigs. There are several really easy ways to ensure that the lead arrangement is safe. When I was a junior carper, the first way we achieved safe rigs was to simply push the bomb's eye onto a 1in piece of 2mm silicone tubing that was pushed over the swivel to create enough resistance to prick a carp. With no leadcore or leaders back then this was a really safe rig (as safe as any running rig). Nowadays, the simplest way of achieving a safe rig with a pendant lead is a properly set up lead clip. For inline shapes, if you need to lose the lead to ensure that you land your fish, the method of looping the line or leader around the inline lead is a tried and tested one. If set up carefully it can be arranged so that it

Streamlined distance leads will prevent the hook point catching when using a chod.



HOW TO SET UP A DROP-OFF INLINE LEAD

1



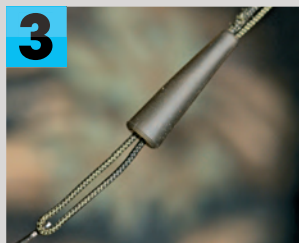
First, splice your leadcore onto a size 8 swivel. This will sit snugly in the lead.

2



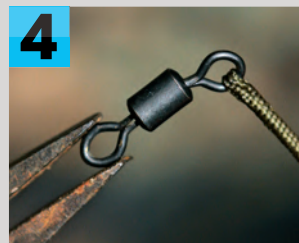
Trim back the lead insert so that approximately 5mm protrudes from the end.

3



Thread a tail rubber onto the leadcore, which is used to trap the lead.

4



Carefully pinch the eye of the swivel. This will ensure that the lead releases.

5



Push the unspliced end of the swivel into the lead. If it is too tight, repeat step 4.

6



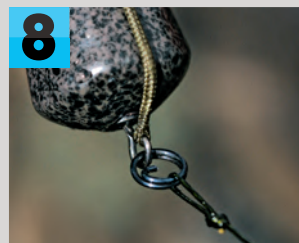
Slide the tail rubber down, trapping the lead insert against the leadcore.

7



Attach a Q-Ring to the swivel eye. This acts as a quick-release ring swivel.

8



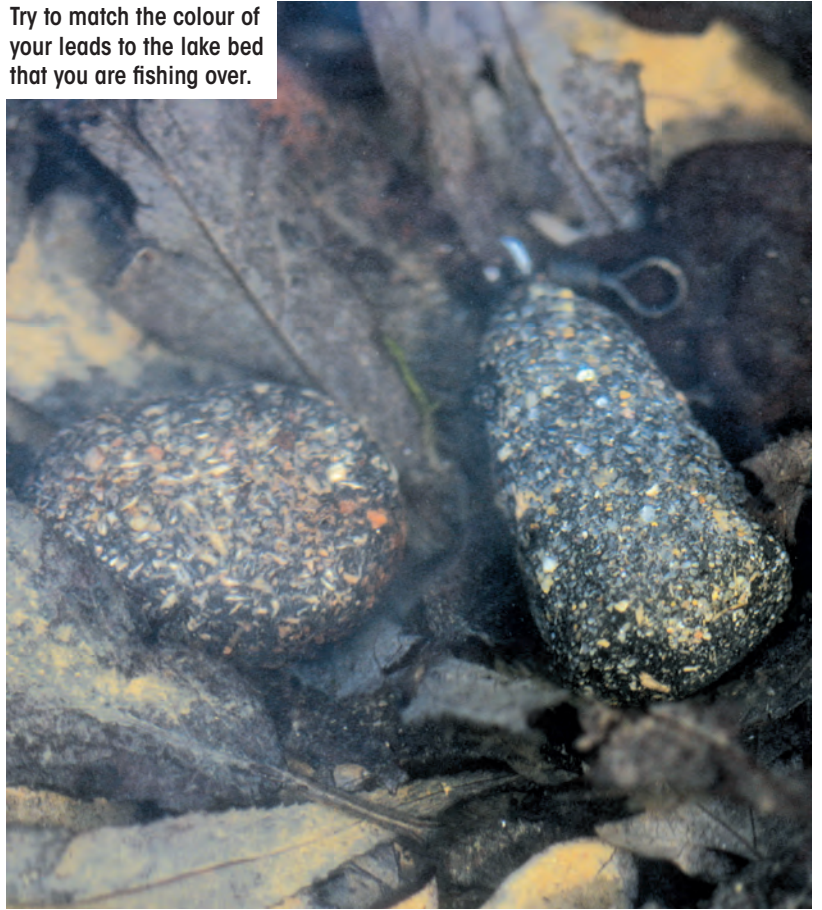
Attach your rig to the Q-Ring and the main line to the other end of the leadcore.

ejects if it comes into contact with an underwater obstacle. I prefer to attach my main line/leader and hook link to the same end of the swivel. This stops the lead ejecting unnecessarily. This setup also has the added benefit of allowing you to cast the rig because the 'pegged swivel' copes easily with all but the most ferocious cast. If you want the lead to drop more easily simply squeeze the eye of the swivel closed slightly.

Helicopter rigs incorporating leaders are a more controversial topic. The acid test is to simply ensure that your hook link is able to detach from the leader by passing over any knots to the main line or stops on the leader. A good starting point is the use of soft rubber beads with tapered bores that provide just enough grip on a silicone tube stop to take the impact of casting, but will pull off if the main line should break, allowing the fish to only be left with a hook link (which they normally have no problem getting rid of in a day or two). If in doubt, please take the time to test your setup and don't ever take a 'that will do' attitude to fish safety.

The lead is often overlooked but, as an integral part of almost all our angling, perhaps it's time that we all scrutinised exactly what it is doing and consider if the terminal arrangements being used could benefit from a fine tune. All those little improvements soon add up to a great gain in the performance of our terminal tackle.

Try to match the colour of your leads to the lake bed that you are fishing over.



The right lead for the job helped Lewis bank this lovely common.