

Words and pics: James Armstrong

# OVER THE MOON

**Lewis Read** goes to the heart of the Berkshire countryside to see if CEMEX Angling's Theale Two will surrender any of its mythical monsters.

**T**heale Two's local anglers have always kept themselves to themselves, but why? There are many stories of large, plated mirrors reaching the 40lb mark, but could it all be speculation?

We asked Lewis Read to spend 24 hours on the bank to see if he could outfox any of these legendary specimens.

I find myself in a carp fishing Mecca surrounded by beautiful woodland, dense shrubbery and lush, green grass. The banks are overgrown and, other than the purpose-cut path, it seems completely untapped territory. As we scan the lightly rippled surface you sense that it could hold a surprise or two.

There are snaggy areas, intimate islands and quiet, secluded bays – literally everything you could wish for in an ideal gravel quarry. You can now see why the locals like to keep this paradise so secret.

"I've always known about the potential of the area," Lewis begins, "having fished Theale One on and off for a number of years. However, Theale Two has always remained a bit of a mystery.

"I'm regularly in touch with the carp fishing grapevine and a trusted friend mentioned that it had produced quite a few fish up to around 25lb recently. Many of the locals believe that it's due to the heavy flooding they received. It

*Using his glow-in-the-dark marker float, Lewis pinpoints the silt.*





## ANGLER FILE

### LEWIS READ

Age: 36

Nickname: Harry

UK PB: 47lb 12oz

Sponsors: Gardner  
Tackle and DT Baits

## VENUE FILE





could be down to the sudden influx of cold water, or a few fish may have escaped from the neighbouring waters – who knows?” Lewis explains.

“I think that we should settle in here. It gives plenty of scope for open water and it’s opposite a non-fishing bank – if you were a carp where would you be?” he adds.

Fishing is prohibited in an area on the far bank simply because it’s someone’s back garden. The carp are bound to regularly hold up under the bushes and patrol the far margin – it’s the safest area on the lake. Lewis then delves inside his rod bag, removes the marker rod and researches the lake bed to identify some likely looking spots.

“The topography of the lake bed is up and down like an egg box. At around 100 yards you can pull the lead back nice and smoothly, indicating clean silt with a depth of around six feet.” Lewis reveals several casts later. “You’ll certainly receive takes from these spots but I’m looking for something a little more pronounced with variation in depth.

“As I continue to retrieve I eventually feel a jolty sensation on the rod tip. This shows me that I’m pulling the lead up a gravel shelf. Consequently, I decide to peel line off my spool a foot at a time to gauge the depth. The result is two feet and my suspicions are correct – a shallow gravel bar.



*A powerful fish kites along the bar...*

“At this time of year

the fish will be seeking slightly deeper water and patrolling the bottom of the shelves for food items that may have rolled down the slope. Therefore, I’m pulling the float back until it hits silt and deepens off.”

Following precise marker work, Lewis identifies a depth of five feet and he’s found a suitable winter spot. He finds the same areas for the other two rods and sets about using the remote-controlled boat. It glides across the calm surface and with the flick of a switch drops the hook bait over the desired area.

“Many anglers like to let out yards of line before dropping their hook bait in a boat. They do this to allow the rig to fall directly into position. Just like casting, though, I prefer to feel my lead down to the lake bed on a tight line – this lets me know that I’ve landed on the correct spot.

“I’m using two different rigs today but ones that I’d feel confident in using anywhere. The standard blow-back rig



*... but is soon captured – a mirror of 26lb 8oz.*

is great for targeting virgin waters because the carp find it very difficult to eject when they try to blow the bait out. This is used in conjunction with my dependable DT Baits boilie sticks, tipped with a grain of plastic corn.

“The other rig that I’ve been using recently was developed by a friend of mine, Jon McAllister, and I rate it highly. It’s based on the same principles as a D rig but allows you to change your hook without the need to tie a completely new hooklength. Take a look at the sequence hereabouts and you’ll see what I mean,” Lewis explains.

The baits are now dropped and each lands with a thud, showing that Lewis was in the correct area. Within minutes the surface of the water is covered in an oily slick that’s seeping from the hemp and pellet mix. If there are any carp hovering over the spots they’ll surely dip down and pay a visit for the feast.

Lewis immediately begins to receive liners, indicating that the carp are close by.

“Carp will often home in on the appealing slick that the hemp provides so action can be pretty instant – depending on the type of water you’re fishing, of course. Within minutes of dropping the bait I’ve started to receive small knocks on the rod tip and the occasional bubble is rising over the hook bait. I’m pretty confident that something will happen.”

Just as Lewis is tying a few spare rigs ready for the night ahead his rod bursts into life, sending bubbles and



*Lewis lengthens his hook links for fishing in the silt.*



*An old Theale original weighing more than 25lb – a right result.*





boils to the surface over the gravel bar. The local ducks and tufties scatter in a state of shock as an angry carp powers towards the left-hand side of the swim. He picks up the rod and takes the strain, ensuring that the line angle is as high in the water as possible.

"With such a prominent, sharp gravel bar I have to be careful not to shear the line. The slightest nick from a zebra mussel or stone could cause it to part. By keeping a tight line high in the water it should prevent this problem," Lewis says as he keeps firm resistance between him and the fish.

As it nears the margins Lewis wades out into slightly deeper water to net it. This is to prevent it grating its scales on any close-in gravel. Soon enough it's there and it looks to be in superb condition.

## WINTER ESSENTIALS



"It's a bit bigger than we think, maybe an original," says Lewis excitedly.

It's quite a pale fish but features some distinctive scratches along its side, which may have been caused during spawning. The solid mirror, which fell to the boilie stick, goes 26lb 8oz and it's a pleasing start to the session.

Out goes a rebaited hair and the rig is soon back in place, along with another handful of hemp and pellet. With the wind slightly stronger and the surface featuring a ripple, the hemp slick is even more noticeable.

The change in conditions act like a feeding trigger and carp begin to show either side of the gravel bar. They're feeding heavily and Lewis makes the most of his opportunities, landing four fish into darkness.





"To fish accurately during the night I use a glow-in-the-dark marker float. It allows me to find the feeding spot and negates the possibility of chuck-it-and-chance-it casting – also known as a pub chuck.

"The float contains a luminous chemical that glows in the dark when charged by a powerful light. It stands out up to reasonable distances and makes recasting easy," Lewis explains.

The night sky is clear and the bright stars reflect on the calm surface. It's tricky carp fishing conditions but Lewis is confident that he can still tease another one out. I'm absolutely amazed because, being the mad hatter that he is, he's decided to sleep under the stars without any brolly or bivvy – it's freezing, too.

"I often sleep under the stars. It's lovely being at one with nature and as long as you own a decent winter bag and cover you'll be fine," he comments before hiding away under the cover for some shuteye.

After several bream and tench, I'm awoken by a belting take on Lewis' right-hand rod. The screaming clutch is fizzing and the TLB alarm is singing its high-pitched tune. Lewis stumbles out of bed, puts on his steamed-up glasses and does battle with another Theale Two carp.

This one tears around the swim for a few minutes but the short bursts soon come to an end and it's clearly one of the smaller occupants. He shines the headtorch into the net and the bronze, glistening scales reveal a beautiful koi carp that looks as if it should be in an ornamental pond. It weighs just into double figures and is safely released to fight another day.

*This beautiful koi looks as though it should be in an ornamental pond.*



The bream and tench continue to feed throughout the night and Lewis is up at first light watching the water for surface activity and feels that a recast is needed. He reels in the rods and positions them in the same places – baited with fresh boilie hook baits.

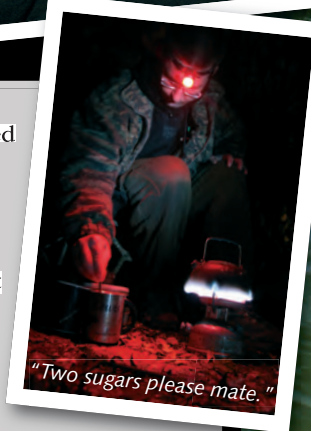
Just like the previous morning the carp begin to show over the gravel bar, no doubt feeding on food that had gathered at the bottom of the slope.

As predicted, one of the rods ramps off and after a spirited fight a second 20lb-plus mirror is lying in the mesh. The bigger originals are very similar in stature but full of power and fight. They're only short fish but real brutes around the shoulders. This one goes 23lb 6oz – another cracking result.

One thing that I notice is that Lewis has managed to lose his lead during the fight, on an inline set-up.

I ask him what his thinking behind the rig is.

*"Two sugars please mate."*



*Lewis returns a fighting-fit carp to its home.*

"It's simple really – I want the anti-ejection properties of an inline lead so that the carp feel the weight of the lead immediately. Secondly, I want the inline lead to eject on the take, leaving the fish to rise in the water rather than hang deep during the fight. If it were to stay deep there's a chance that it could find sanctuary in a sunken weed bed or snag – this will cost you fish!

"Instead of threading the leadcore through the middle of the lead I attach it onto the outside, holding it in place with the swivel and tail rubber. Again, take a look at the pictures and you'll see what I mean," he replies.

He also states that it's not great for distance fishing, but up to 100 yards it's more than adequate.

Overall, the trip was highly successful, considering that we're in the middle of winter, and we'll definitely be returning.

*Lewis spent the night sleeping under the stars.*



*There are some cracking carp in Theale Two – give it a go!*



## VENUE FILE

Theale Two, situated near Reading, is around 29 acres and is available to fish through CEMEX Angling's group ticket scheme. There are currently many carp up to 34lb 6oz, although the way the regulars keep it secret there could be a lot bigger residents. Night fishing is allowed and permits are valid from June 16th to March 14th. Spring permits are valid from March 15th to June 15th.