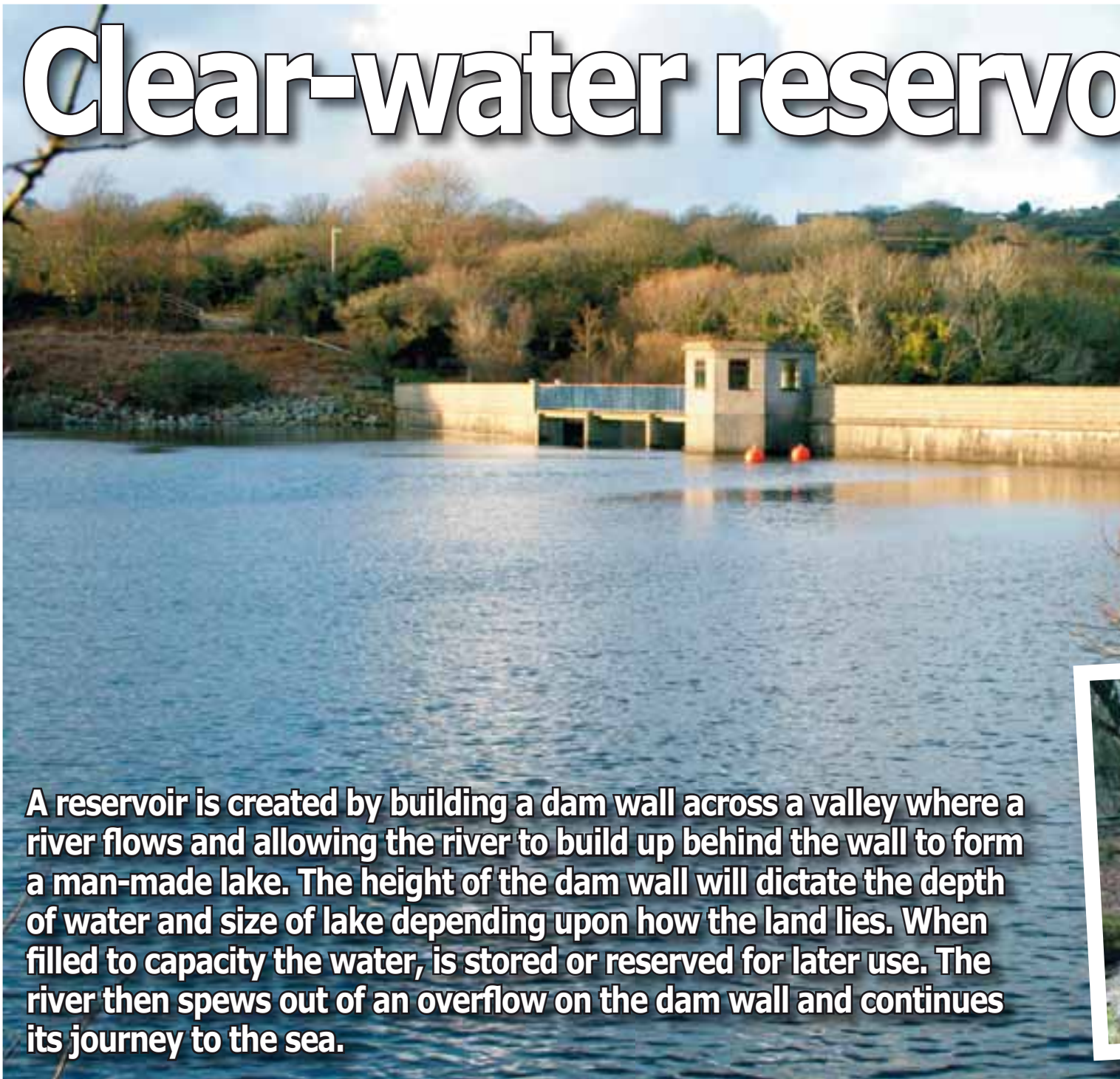


Clear-water reservoir



A reservoir is created by building a dam wall across a valley where a river flows and allowing the river to build up behind the wall to form a man-made lake. The height of the dam wall will dictate the depth of water and size of lake depending upon how the land lies. When filled to capacity the water, is stored or reserved for later use. The river then spews out of an overflow on the dam wall and continues its journey to the sea.

The first thing I noticed when fishing a reservoir was the absolute 'tap water' clarity. I suppose then, the first tactic that springs to mind when it comes to fishing a reservoir is line/rig camouflage.

Carp have great eyesight, and this coupled with gin-clear water, could make your end tackle stand out like the big danger signal! As quickly as the carp come in and investigate your baited area, they are gone again – more importantly, so is the chance of catching one. Add to this

the low-stocked large nature of these waters, and a fish spooking off the end tackle in the winter months when feeding is minimal just doesn't bear thinking about. The bait is right, the location is right, the weather is right, it all looks awesome from above the surface, but down below it's a different story!

Nothing is 100% certain. You could have a really effective rig – tangle-proof, safe and everything else – but if it lands wrong it could spell disaster. How many times in the making of the Korda DVDs did Mr Fairbrass go for a recast after being

informed the rig hadn't landed properly, and therefore, it wasn't fishing effectively? Even when the end tackle lands correctly (which, let's be honest, is the majority of the time), the carp could spot something it doesn't like and back off. Like any wild creature they are going to be wary, especially carp that have been caught time and time again. It's about doing all you can to maximise your chances of success.

When casting, just before the lead hits the water, feather the line and feel the lead down to the bottom on

a tight line. This will give the rig the best possible chance of landing correctly, and it lets you know what you have landed on! A very simple thing to do that could make the difference between a fantastic capture or a camping trip!

Rig camouflage

Throughout the 90s I never really twigged about disguising the rigs and just used the same set-up over any type of bottom. I grew up and learned how to catch carp on College Reservoir, Cornwall, which had everything: bays, islands,

air tactics



Main pic: A dam wall is built, holds the river up and the overflow maintains the level

Below: A river flows down through a valley



weed, silt, gravel, deep water, shallow water, long range fishing... I could go on, but it wasn't until 1997 when I fished the Salamander that I realised that hiding the rig was all important!

Salamander is a small, clear, shallow lake, which held a handful of stunning carp. These carp were as cute and clever as you like, but could be watched from the surrounding trees. Anglers would watch as their best rigs were picked up off the bottom and spat out with ease – after seeing this, some anglers even packed

up never to return!

A friend of mine, Shaun Willetts (locally known as Harold Winky), had placed a bait a rod length from the bank on a shallow gravel slope in around three feet of water. We watched intently as big carp after big carp swam along the slope and over his bait. In fact, the largest carp in the lake showed considerable interest, but something was spooking it and it would not slurp up that bait for love nor money – it was driving the pair of us mad!

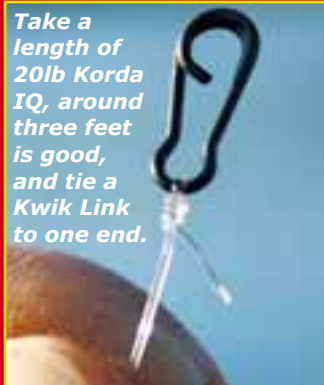
It was late autumn and Shaun noticed a lot of dead

Fluorocarbon leader

Here is my fluorocarbon leader and instructions on how to put it together to make a safe running rig. This set-up is virtually invisible over most types of bottom, and if your water bans lead core, then it's an ideal solution. However, there is a fish safety aspect to this in that when playing a fish there is a small chance that the fluorocarbon could damage a scale by rubbing up and down the fish while it's being played. Be mindful of this when playing a carp on this type of set-up. Use the heaviest type of fluorocarbon you can get away with – the thicker it is the better.



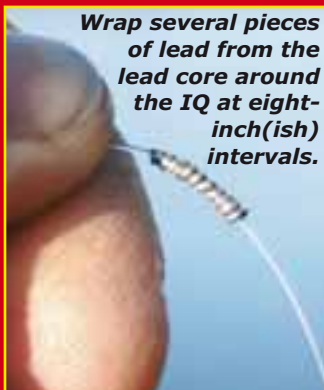
Components required – Kwik Link, IQ, a soft bead, a buffer bead, a strip of lead and some putty.



Take a length of 20lb Korda IQ, around three feet is good, and tie a Kwik Link to one end.



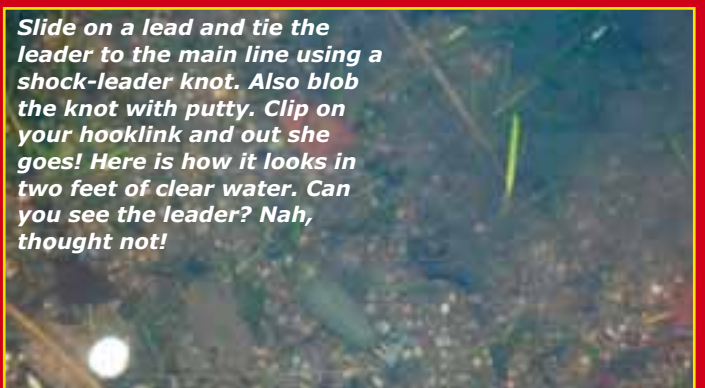
Place a buffer bead and a soft bead over the Kwik Link.



Wrap several pieces of lead from the lead core around the IQ at eight-inch(ish) intervals.



Now put a blob of putty over each of the lead wraps. Make it slim so the swivel on the lead can pass over it with ease.



Slide on a lead and tie the leader to the main line using a shock-leader knot. Also blob the knot with putty. Clip on your hooklink and out she goes! Here is how it looks in two feet of clear water. Can you see the leader? Nah, thought not!



Fishing the Dam with the wind in my favour



This old warrior was feeding along the dam wall

leaves on the gravel slope. He decided that it was his lead that was spooking the fish. Of course, we didn't use coated leads back then – we used the cheap 17p ones from the sea fishing shop! Anyway, I couldn't see it being the lead, but Shaun insisted this was the case. When a gap in the fish appeared, he whipped the bait out of the water, dried off the lead and superglued a leaf to either side of it, leaving only a few inches of hooklink and the bait exposed. This was then sweetly replaced back on the gravel slope (between fishy patrols) and we waited. I must admit that, as I crouched there looking at the little yellow single bait next to the superglued leaves, I remember thinking it didn't half look good!

The fish reappeared and we quietly moved back a little further, but it wasn't long before Shaun's leafy rod was away. It was the largest carp in the lake known as Big Daddy and she *did* want that bait after all – a bit weird calling a female carp Big Daddy, but that's the Cornish for you! At the time it was a Cornish record at 34lb. Now, that's top angling and I learned a valuable lesson that day. It was now firmly instilled in my brain that rigs in clear water need to be hidden – simple as that! I did go on to catch Daddy in late December 1997, but not

on a leaf rig and not at a record weight!

On the bottom

As I said, reservoirs usually have an abundance of all different types of bottom, so you never really know what you're going to be fishing on until you suss out what's what. When you know what's out there and what type of bottom you will be fishing on then you can decide which type of rig to go for.

I've started to incorporate fluorocarbon leaders into my set-up now for two reasons. Firstly, because I can use it over any bottom and it blends in as well as any lead core or tube. Secondly, I wanted to scale down a little, and not only for the colder months, as scaling down the end tackle will attract more bites in the other seasons as well as the winter. However, don't scale down to much and risk losing a fish on tackle that's not up to the

job! Strong *and* subtle sounds good to me!

Topography

The topography or features of a reservoir lake bed are much more flat compared to those of, say, a classic gravel pit. Generally speaking, a reservoir will consist of a sloping gravel margin which then leads to a flat, usually silty bottom. The silt can vary in depth, and features will be abundant throughout the lake. The dam wall itself is a fantastic feature as the fish will cruise along its length hunting out food, especially when the wind is pushing on to it.

All the usual natural features to look for are worth a shout including the gravel margin, reeds and weed at the shallow end, overhanging trees and open water patrol routes to name but a few. However, as a reservoir is a flooded valley, there could be all manner of underwater

features to look for out there the main body of water; sunken trees, walls, old buildings, and even tracks or roads could be present. Also present will be the old river bed running the length of the reservoir and carp will use it as a patrol route and feeding area. A really good short cut to finding out the topography of a reservoir is to pop in to the local library and search out the old Ordnance Survey maps of the area prior to it being flooded! Other man-made features such as aerators will attract all types of fish due to the extra oxygenated water.

In all lakes carp always use the marginal shelf as a patrol route, so this is always a good place to start. I look to put baits where the margin meets the main lake bed, so if it's a gravel margin leading to a silt bottom, I put my hookbait right where the gravel meets the silt. A slack line is always used if weather conditions and the angling situation allows.

These tactics can be applied all year round, not only in the colder months. Hide the rig as much as possible and know what you're fishing on, and it *will* bring extra bites!

Next time I'll have a look at watercraft, weather conditions, hardware, bait and rigs for the silt spots.

Aerator creating a man-made feature

