

# CHRISTMAS CANAL WONDERLAND

by Fred Davis

**As we move into December it is a time for family and reflection as the year turns the final bend, with our winter league over and with my club Harrow postal shutting down from December to March I find I am at a loose end, I try not to fish on too many Sundays during this period as family visits and seeing my wife on a Sunday take priority, after all she lets me fish during the rest of the year with little complaint, it is quite some time before the first Harrow match of the new year and although I look forward to the London Postal Leagues these don't start until early April, however I still manage to get my fix by going to the local cut during the week, it is on these visits that I can try out a few new methods and still polish up my rusty canal techniques.**

The real beauty of going midweek is that although conditions may be dire the very fact that you are on your own or with a mate you can try to pick a productive area normally a decent bush or renowned fish holding area to guarantee some sport, and so it was with this in mind that I decided to visit the Grand Union Canal at Durrants road to have a dabble, I have never fished this particular stretch of canal however the fact that we have round one of our LPR league in April on the gaff meant that I needed to have a look, I thought I could kill two birds with one stone, a days practice with a days sport, the match itself is a long time off but I needed to have a look the very fact that it was very mild for this time of year even though the temperature was slowly plummeting meant that conditions may be similar in April, who knows? Last year it was very cold in April, the session would at least give me some sort of insight on what to target come the match, I dare say I will try different areas as we have quite a length of canal from Winkwell to the lock left of Durrants road bridge, I relished this opportunity of going to the cut as it was the first time since my abysmal performance in the Div 2 national on the Grand Union canal at Northampton that I had visited a canal, the poor performance was partly due to be pegged very close to the rear end of a boat who decided to run his engine during the course of the match to charge his batteries!!!!!! The joys of fishing, Is it those adverse times that keep making us return knowing we must try harder? Needless to say on this practice session I made sure there were no boats close by even if they great fish holding spots in winter.

Going to this pound with little knowledge I

honestly didn't know what to expect however there were a few things to try, I was going to give hair rigged chopped worm a try to see if it gave me an edge, having been given a few pints of caster and 6 pint of maggot plus worm at the last winter league at Tingrith I thought I could put some of this bait to good use, I did toy with the idea of getting some squatt and a loaf from tesco's for bread punch use but couldn't be bothered. I know it's a sin to go to a canal without those baits but the club (Paddington) who voted this venue in at last years AGM are all chopped worm fanatics, so that was my going to be main starting tactic.

After dropping the wife off for a bit of shopping I made my way to Durrants via the M25 carpark and arrived at the venue at about 10.45am meeting LPR team mate John Watts at the canal, I gave him some of the purloined bait and we were up on the cut by 11.00 after selecting a decent bush I set up a couple of rigs, both Preston sumo floats 4x12, one heavy duty on 0.16 XT7 ultima line and another more standard rig on 0.10 ultima XT7 line straight through both floats had a small bulk with two droppers, however the first rig was a heavy duty rig for hairrigged chopped worm, I set this up with a simple spade end knot and leave a long tag to attach a korum quick stop, when fishing for perch on the pole with chopped worm I lift and drop the rig working the worm and don't really want the bent hook presentation that I would do if I was say feeder fishing, I am still refining this approach and will see how effective it is or if it offers any real benefit as the practice sessions continue, however I digress the other set up was another worm rig although a normal standard rig with 0.10 straight through to a size 20 kamassan 611. I cupped in a medium sized pot of chopped worm with around 30 casters and a few red maggots to initially feed the peg, first put in with the pole I wish I could say the float buried on the contrary nothing happened, I did think after half an hour of fishing at 13mtres whether I was fishing to far across at 13mtres in around two and half foot of water, the clarity of the water was like gin! I did think maybe I should have fed the deeper water and in a match proper I would have done, mind you then I would also have bought bread punch squatt and pinkies, however I started to get a few indications and the swim started to come to life, initially a few perch up to a pound frequented the net, on this occasion because the fish were of a smaller stamp the hair rig was less effective than standard tackle

however it was worth trying the rig.

Perch of all sizes had started to come to the rig one animal was lost due to the worm doubling over the hook and then the peg died and a bite could not be found it was like all the fish had shut up shop, however eventually the float buried and a jack pike of a few pound was lying safely in the net, my mate John was fishing the next peg and was getting small chublets, perch and a few tiny roach on maggots, I went back on the chopped worm and started to get the odd indication on the float and the thin bristle on the float was getting more knocks than deliberate bites, I thought the better fish had vacated the peg and decided to have a go on the caster imagine my surprise when I started to get quality roach one a bung, I immediately moved the bulk up and spread the droppers to give a slower presentation, this improved the catch rate and I was tempted to get a latimer float from my box and set up a more delicate rig but time was running out and I decided to stay with what was working, at the end of the day with light beginning to fade, and John rather concerned about the heavy traffic we called it a day, considering I had fished for only around 4 hours it was a memorable session, I honestly thought roach like these were a rarity and they are indeed on most pounds, after struggling like most on the winter leagues it was a real tonic to catch a few fish, as for bikers, walkers, dog sh\*t and the odd nutter yes it was still all there and I was indeed surprised by the amount of people around, my mate wasn't best impressed with one dog owners pets who decided to urinate all over his carryall however such is life! I did think to myself in the heat of the ensuing discussion no wonder where all on commercials!

But then again looking at the cracking bag of fish from the suburbs of an inner city canal it was definitely better fishing than I had expected on such a dark and dismal day, the fact that I was once again catching roach on caster on the cut was thoroughly enjoyable, I didn't realise how much I had missed it, after a season of carp and more carp it makes you realise that there is still a lot of pleasure to be got from our public waterways, John and I packed up just gone 3pm and by the time I got John to take some pictures it was fairly Dark and dismal, thank god for microsoft Photo standard I was able to bring back a few pictures to life. John had enjoyed the day catching a few pound of mainly chublets and roach and perch, although I never saw a chublet it shows you how diverse swims can be on the Grand Union, worth a visit if you want some Christmas Cheer.