

# Modern Day Course Fishing

by Fred Davis

As a young lad, and we are talking around the mid 1960's, I can remember catching the train from East London to Cheshunt or Broxbourne Station with fellow school friends in the depths of winter to sample the fishing on the River Lea, sometimes we had to break the ice to fish, our quarry were small roach, chub, dace, perch, gudgeon and bleak, even in the depths of winter some fish would normally be caught and after a day out in the cold, fishing without the modern day comforts of thermal clothing and moon boots, we would return to the warmth of the local train station and warm up in the normally deserted waiting room in front of the glorious coal fires that serviced the empty waiting rooms. Time for reflection on halcyon days you might say. I would say definitely not. As time marches on most people view the past with rose tinted glasses, forgetting how hard life was.

I look at the modern day course angler with envy, these days all anglers are catered for be they competition, pleasure or big fish anglers, even the variety of fishing on offer is vast, from big carp and barbel to specimen chub, dreams and aspirations can be achieved, even tackle has been refined to suit different types of fishing to catch a variety of fish on different methods and techniques. Today, although the River Lea it is not the river it once was, as it has radically changed due to water abstraction, cormorant predation, pollution, and lack of flow, it is thriving in parts. The Cornmill stream which flows through Waltham Abbey is producing some terrific roach sport in winter and tench to over 6lbs in summer, the river at Broxbourne on the once famous crown fishery which used to host competitions for match anglers because of the good roach and chub fishing now produces specimen chub to over 8lbs and 5lb chub are not an unusual catch, this stretch now attracts more big fish anglers than match anglers, and many of the surrounding lakes in the Lea valley hold specimen carp to over 40lbs.

As a young I used to dream of emulating the achievement of people like the legendary Richard Walker but the chances of emulating such angling

heroes were nigh on impossible, However, now opportunity has never been better, particularly because of the improvements in tackle. There has been a tremendous improvement in nylon lines for example. I always used to say nylon was nylon but how times have moved on, I was glancing at the range of lines that are available for anglers from the UK based company, Ultima. There are now special line for all today's angler's requirements. High abrasion resistant monofilament lines for carp anglers, braided lines for long casting and great bite detection. New hi-tec lines for use with carbon poles or specialized hook-length such as and the first true hi-tec reel line, Power Plus. There are a few other UK companies that make fishing tackle like Drennan who make good products in the face of stern foreign competition and they deserve our support.

As for the local tackle shop, there numbers have been radically reduced. These were once formidable places to enter for the apprentice angler, with local anglers occupying the serving counter deeply engrossed in chat. However, with increasing pressure from mail order firms and mega stores they have had to change to what most are today, clean excellent tackle outlets that are really user friendly, catering to each individuals needs with excellent information and service.

In this day and age, it is no longer acceptable to pollute river systems due to an ageing sewage system, society wants change, the green lobby are increasing and angling is an acceptable pastime in this modern day, not for me an accidental angler, I am an angler by design and proud to be one, It's ok to reminisce about the old days but that where I draw the line. Bring back the old days? Never in your dreams! Believe me when I say wave never had it so good and the future does look brighter.

The lea valley parks produce an angling guide book called "Get Hooked in Lee Valley Park" which covers fisheries from Hackney to Ware. The fisheries website is [www.leevalleyangling.com](http://www.leevalleyangling.com). Much information on fishing lines and how to use them is available at [www.ultimauk.com](http://www.ultimauk.com)