

It was Nearly Tutti Time.

Summer, which had turned into the crimson tints of autumn, was in turn dragging itself into the stark nakedness of early winter. Trees had shed their leaves in the nor westerly gales, water levels inched up and the Canadian geese returned to delight us with their choral honking. The darling coots suddenly reappeared and enthralled and amused us by diving on the baits. Several times Noel and I had sat there chortling at their comical antics. Roland's families had grown up and departed and I guess he was something like a great thirty two times granddad. The Percolator had stopped wearing his real tree shorts and going topless so at least there was some good news. We were all hoping that the drop in temperature would be accompanied by an increase in feeding activity from *cyprinus carpio*. How naïve of us. If anything Treesmill got even harder. One fish came out between September and late November and the lucky captor worked hard for, and fully deserved his reward of a low double in the middle of wet and windy autumnal night.

The fishmeals of high summer had turned into the birdfoods and ethyl alcohols of late autumn. The shallows of the Back Bay were forsaken for the deeps of the Old Pump T shirts were ironed and put away and fleeces taken out from the musty old drawer under the bed. A long and bleak winter lay ahead. It was, as one eminent local angler put it, "Nearly tutti time".

I was encamped on the Moonscape, having taken care to avoid the ling, (summer flowering heather, cunning that!), not wanting to upset Imerys or English Nature or of course the committee. I had once been reported to the latter for moving more than the designated ten feet from my rods. I had got off with a warning that time but to drive on heather! – I bet she would have been really pissed off. The wind was a steady norwester, not yet cold but cool enough to remind you if your woolly jumper had been left at home. It seemed to be hinting that the fish were in deeper water and possibly behind the wind.

I had been baiting the area in front of me regularly with a bird food / milk protein base and a mushroom flavour which I thought was magic. I intended using this bait throughout the winter. With hopes that the carp had sampled it and might at least have found it palatable I lobbed out three pop ups. They were all on the Stony Bakers, in varying depths but all close to the decaying weed beds. A scattering of quick breakdown freebies followed and the kettle was on as I sat back once again in more hope than expectation. I watched the water for a long time without any hint of a fish in my area. Soon anticipation got the better of me and I drifted off to dream of naked carp and fat women. I was on the banks of some exotic tropical carp lake. Angelina Jolie had my rod in her hand when suddenly my other buzzer started screaming. I pushed Angelina away and woke up on a windy moonscape to find a bloody great rottweiler had taken out two of my rods. I thought I was seeing double but

another had its head in my rucksack, trying to extricate, quite successfully as it happens, my cheese and onion sandwiches. While I tried to wrestle my lunch from him the first bugger knocked over my bait bucket and was eagerly scoffing it down. Yeah, ok, something liked it. Their owner was nowhere in sight. When he finally did turn up he yelled and shouted at his dogs who took no bloody notice at all. He came charging into my swim and hit one of the rotts with a length of knotted rope which caused it to bolt and in doing so it took out my remaining rod, knocked over my bedchair along with the stove which spontaneously ignited and set fire to the bivvy. Ok that's a bit of an exaggeration but only the bit about the bivvy going up in flames.

"Sorry mate", was all I got. I was quite naturally in a state of some shock, especially when I realised that each dog was about twice the size of me and I'm a fat little bugger! I gave the dogs owner my best schoolmasterly lecture about the dogs not being under control, the need for leads and poop scoops and how there were polite notices all around the lake asking that dogs be kept under control and out of the water. He listened in what seemed a polite and patient fashion then, when I had finished, he told me to, "Piss off", and chucked a stick into my swim for the dogs to retrieve. I prayed that a giant pike would come up and take them both out and then a bolt of lightening would take out their owner. Once again my prayers went unanswered. It was another of those times when I wished I had learned karate or some other martial art.

There was little point staying after that little episode. Weeks of baiting hadn't exactly gone up in smoke but it was close to it, for a while at least. I packed up my gear and headed off to the Thunder Hut, another area that had seen a little of the bait. I knew the swim quite well so as darkness started to close in I chucked out three stringers and a small scattering of boilies into the likely area. The night was uneventful save for a series of intermittent bleeps in the early hours. I guessed at a bream which I hoped would fall off but it didn't so eventually I had to exit the bag. On picking up the rod a horrible flapping sensation came up the line and moments later an irate coot was attacking me in my own home when all I was trying to do was unhook it and let it go. What was he doing awake at that time of night?

A combination of the coot and the cold north westerly was probably responsible for me sleeping a little longer than usual. When I did wake up it was not to the alarm call of a delkim but to some guy with a foreign accent asking me if I had caught any fish that I wanted to sell. I said I had caught nothing and he asked if I would use a bow and arrow or a spear gun now that it was light. He told me that on some occasions in his country, when they could not catch the carp by conventional means, such as using a rifle, they would use dynamite! Several thoughts went through my mind. Firstly he had a rucksack over his shoulder and I wondered if this were full of high

explosive! If he started lobbing that in it would certainly spook the Treemill carp out of my swim. God only knows, they are difficult enough to catch at the best of times, if you broke wind they disappeared. I told him other anglers had used Dynamite Baits on the lake and not caught and hoped that would put him off using it. I wondered what the committee would make of this and then realised with horror that although there was a ban on peanuts there was nothing in the rules that forbade the using of explosive. I wondered if the committee had envisaged this sort of problem when they drew up the rules or the politicians, when we joined the common market.

My new found friend, whose name I had learned, was Zvonimir, informed me that he would stay with me until I caught one and then he would show me how they prepared and cooked carp in his country. As he went off in search of some herbs with which to garnish my anticipated catch I thought it might be a change from the usual bacon and eggs! I was worried that the already low stocking of carp at Treemill was going to get even lower. However, the carp had two things going in their favour – they were pretty clued up and I was a crap angler.

Zvonni came back about half an hour later with an armful of assorted dock leaves, stinging nettles, Canadian pond weed and what looked suspiciously like a couple of Roland's offspring along with a dead squirrel. He picked up my bait bucket, inspected the boilies and popped one in his mouth. After chewing it for a few seconds he screwed up his face, spat it into the lake and threw the contents of the bucket after it. He then put the herbs into the bucket and proceeded to add lake water, boiled in the kettle, before mashing the contents with a storm rod. By this time I was beginning to panic a bit, wondering what the committee might make of this. I had faced a ban for wading above my knees last summer so goodness only knows what they would make of my part in dynamiting their carp stocks into oblivion.

I was unsure as to how you went about dynamiting carp – I mean – you didn't hair rig a block of semtex - or did you? Zvonni explained that he would mould a piece of plastic explosive into the shape of a slice of bread and insert a fuse into it which could be detonated by a radio signal. The carp would mistake the bread for the real thing and move into investigate it. When it did, we would set off the charge by radio signal and stun the carp rather than blow it into a millions bits as we were using low, not high explosive.

So Zvonni made the "bread" and reluctantly I joined him behind the wind and lobbed it out towards the islands off the Folsom Prison swim. Zvonni sat with the detonator in his hand. It looked a bit like the Percolator's Smartcast and would probably have fooled the committee. Out floated the crust, bobbing gently on the wind generated wavelets and just then Rottweiller man turned up on the adjacent bank! His dogs were off the lead as was normal and spying

the “bread” they promptly jumped into the water – much to the amusement of their owner!! My eyes lit up – I thought that if I played my cards right I could kill two birds with one stone or more precisely two rottweillers with one piece of semtex. My accomplice didn’t seem to understand what was happening so I took advantage of the situation by telling him that the dog’s owner was the chairman of the Carp Protection League and that the rottweillers were actually Carp Protection Dogs. I added it was highly likely that we would both be deported if we got caught! I suggested he had better give me the detonator and make his getaway pretty sharply. I explained that I would pretend it was an echo sounder and promised not to divulge the real reason for his presence at this part of the lake. With the threat of deportation hanging over his head Zvonni buggered off like a rat up a drainpipe, never to be spotted in the vicinity again.

By now the two dogs were homing in on the bait amid much verbal encouragement from their owner. It was touch and go as to which one would reach it first. It turned out to be a dead heat and as two sets of canine jaws clamped onto the bread simultaneously so my thumb clamped onto the transmitters red “fire” button. With an ear shattering bang the “bread” exploded, there were terrified yelps from the rotties as they broke all Olympic aquatic records on their way back to shore. They moved so fast that it seemed they were equipped with Evinrude outboards. In the ensuing confusion I jumped up, shook my fist at the dogs owner and shouted, “You cruel bastard. I saw that. I’m reporting you to the RSPCA”. With that I dialled an imaginary number on the radio transmitter and putting it to my ear started to wave my other arm and point and gesticulate in the general direction of the dog’s owner. A passing group of ramblers and a lady horse rider joined in the haranguing when I told them my version of what had happened. Rottman appeared to get the wind up and ran off up the lane closely followed by his dogs. Like Zvonni they were never spotted in the area again. However, sometime later, I did come across a snippet in the local paper which reported how an Estonian immigrant had been attacked and bitten on the butt cheeks by two deaf, crazed and unsupervised rottweillers. The upshot of this incident was, according to the newspaper, that the Estonian returned home after complaining to the Home Office that he didn’t want to live in a country where you were set upon by rabid dogs whilst preparing your breakfast. The dog owner was ordered to pay a hefty fine for not exercising proper control over his dogs and compensation for the injuries suffered by the Estonian. His dogs were taken from him by the welfare section of the RSPCA and put into care. Peace reigned again at Treesmill, at least for a little while. The report was accompanied by photographs of Zvonni and Rottman leaving the court.

I returned to the Thunder Hut. A calamity of coots was feeding on the remains of the bait Zvonni had chucked in. Well it was a birdfood. I salvaged a few freebies and got the rods out again. The Percolator telephoned and

asked if anything much had happened. "Bugger all mate", I replied as I reflected on how slow and boring carp fishing could appear to be at times.

I even started to have doubts about the birdfood / mushroom combo although it hadn't really been given a fair trial. Maybe I ought to switch to the Tuttis. After all, it was nearly time.

Gert Louster, Kernow



A rare winter Treesmill kipper.