£1.60
BEST VALUE

BIGGEST-EVER HOTSPOTS AND UK HOLIDAYS GUIDE

April 7, 2009

Angler's Mail

Weekly

FREE* FISHING SHADES WORTH £24.99 FOR EVERY READER

*Just pay £4.99 p&p

YOUR EASTER MUST START HERE!

Where To Fish and All The Answers

EXCLUSIVE

VERDICT ON TV's ROBSON GREEN

TENCH TACTICS SPECIAL

They're feeding already!

9 770003 324236 15

IAN WELCH'S angling adventures

Here, in our unmissable 4-page slot, the UK's most cutting edge specialist coarse angler is the man to follow every week. Welchy writes exclusively in *Angler's Mail*.

Big perch fall for air filled worms

THIS WEEK'S VENUE

MILTON LAKE,

OLD BURY HILL, DORKING, SURREY.

Always in the shadow of its famous neighbour – the beautiful and famous Old Lake – Milton is the larger of the two lakes nestled in the lower valley of the Bury Hill complex. It was purpose-designed for anglers back in 1991 with the emphasis on producing a genuine mixed fishery – without too many carp! In the warmer months match and pleasure bags regularly top 100 lb with tench to 7 lb, crucians to 3 lb, roach and rudd to 2 lb and the occasional carp. The roach show in winter too, but the stars of the coldwater show are usually the perch which run to almost 4 lb.

IAN'S AIM

Bury Hill tackle shop manager Russ Evans has given Welchy a tip off that some big perch could be on the cards and the pair of them are looking to get to grips with some chunky spring stripys.

CONDITIONS

Spring is in the air bringing some delightfully warm sunshine, but the high pressure has brought a sharp overnight frost – and between the sunny spells there is a violent hailstorm!

Purpose designed for anglers, all pegs on Milton will bring a few bites whatever the conditions.

Russ put together a brilliant mixed bag of fish on his light tactics, and included some cracking roach along with tench and a couple of smaller perch.

'YOU must come back in early spring for the perch, there's a chance of a serious haul of big fish!'

The words of Old Bury Hill's tackle shop manager, Russ Evans, as I left the venue after a highly productive zander session on the main lake last autumn, stayed in the back of my mind throughout the long, cold winter.

Russ had enjoyed some excellent early season returns from the venue last spring and reckoned fish to over 3 lb could be on the cards as it started to warm up this year too.

We kept in touch regularly throughout the early part of the year – Facebook is a wonderful tool – and when the weather finally started to deliver some genuine warmth we hatched plans.

With Russ a top flight matchman and me a big fish angler willing to learn from all disciplines I was really looking forward to it, and the contrast between our respective styles could make for a very interesting session.

Timing is everything when it comes to spring perch as the species is amongst the first to spawn. Get it wrong and not only are weights well down but the chances of bites are much reduced until the fish enter 'recovery mode' and start to feast on newly hatched fry later in the spring.

Being on-site most days Russ kept a close eye on things and as the date of our outing approached it looked like we might have got it just right.

A sharp overnight frost on the morning of our visit did not worry me too much as perch are usually active throughout the coldest part of the year and quite resilient to thermal change. On the plus side it might actually deter the venue's tench and carp which could potentially ruin the day if they moved into our swims in numbers.

It was strange to arrive at the complex and not head straight for the main lake, but our destination for the day was not the noted Old Lake but the smaller Milton Lake, designed in the early 90s to provide a match-style arena for competitive and pleasure angling.

Typical of so many prolific 'commercial' pools where there is a huge head of fodder fish and no pike, Milton has developed an excellent population of big perch.

Russ was already setting up when I arrived and had positioned himself in peg 1 with a big reed-bed covering a large expanse of water to his left.

Perch just love ambushing along reed margins and we both reckoned the area might be good for a few fish.

My plan was to have a nose around the entire venue before I decided where I was going to settle, but I only

WELCHY'S pole tactics with worm fished right amongst the roots of the reed-beds brought most fish, including a string of lovely perch. But the better specimens, including this stunner of 3 lb 10 oz, all fell to light link leger tactics and popped-up lobs right on the shallows.

This 2 lb-plus specimen is typical of the stamp of perch in Milton.

Russ used a pole float on a running line – just to be awkward I set up a chubber float on my pole!

Get away from those reeds! Russ is into a good fish early on and we are convinced it's a very big perch – until the green back of a chunky tench rolls on the surface.

My essential baiting tools for the day were worm scissors and a hypodermic syringe. The pop-up lob accounted for more fish than the standard bottom bait.

Russ flavoured his chopped worm with bloodworm extract and Predator Plus liquid.

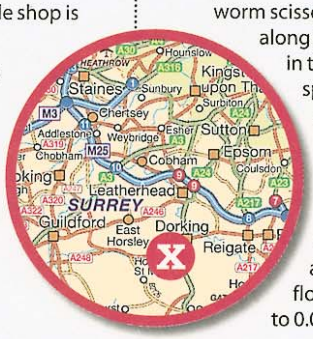
VENUE information

DESCRIPTION. Covering some three acres with depths to around 4 ft Milton has been landscaped with islands, bays, reed-beds and subsurface fish-holding areas to ensure there is plenty of potential from each of the 30 pegs. All methods work, and it's a rare day when something won't bring a few good fish.

TICKETS. Fishing at Milton is by day ticket only with sunrise to sunset tickets available from the on-site shop at a rate of £11.50 per rod for adults with second rod tickets at £5.50. Discounts are available for junior, OAP and disabled anglers. Tackle hire and tuition is also available, with full details from the fishery on 01306 877540 or the excellent website at www.buryhillfisheries.com

LOCAL TACKLE SHOP. A well-stocked tackle shop is present on-site. Tel: 01306 877540.

LOCATION. From J9 of the M25 pick up the southbound A24 Leatherhead by-pass towards Dorking. After approximately five miles, at the roundabout junction with the A25, turn right towards Guildford. The fishery entrance is on the left hand side after approximately one mile before entering Westcott Village.



» got as far as peg 3 before I stopped in my tracks and knew exactly where I was going to spend the day!

It was a corner peg and, with generous spacing, afforded me a lot of free water with no chance of being disturbed even if someone dropped into an adjacent swim.

It also offered the largest area of reed cover on the lake and two minutes with a plummet showed me there were considerable depth options in front of me too. There was deep water under the rod top, shallower water tight to the reed line and very shallow water tight to the corner. A few inches of reed-strewn water may put off lots of anglers but it's classic perch habitat!

I spent five minutes chopping lobs with the worm scissors. I then baited two spots along the reed fringes and one right in the edge, with the chops and a sprinkling of red maggots before going to see how Russ was tackling his peg.

He was, in fact, combining the finesse of pole fishing with the versatility of a running line, and had a float rod rigged with a 0.5 gr Drennan Choppa pole float and a size 20 Kamasan B510 to 0.09 mm (1 lb 8 oz) line.

"I spent five minutes chopping lobs with the worm scissors, and baited two spots along the reed fringes and one right in the edge."

It was the sort of set-up I had employed in the past for shy-biting crucians but I reckoned it all looked a bit too fine for the big sergeants, even with perfect balance delivered via a long, soft-actioned float rod and Russ' skill!

On the bait front we had similar ideas but instead of lobs Russ shredded a tub of dendrobaenas and I was taken aback by the fact he appeared to be doing it with a set of garden shears! It was only on closer inspection I realised they were, in fact, long-handled worm scissors - a blinding bit of kit which really takes the pain and effort out of the job.

A good glug of bloodworm extract and

I was impressed by Russ' long-handled worm scissors - they made light work of chopping.

Each time we hooked a tench we were convinced we were into a big perch. Thankfully I managed to stay away from them for most of the session – Russ got on with it and kept bagging!

Sensas Predator liquid and they were ready to go.

Russ too was feeding red maggots and alternating between maggot and worm section on the hook.

As I stood on the platform behind him I watched as his first cast brought a couple of dips of the float before it sailed away. He lifted into a fish which bolted straight for the sanctuary of the reed – and by the way the rod was arching around it looked like it might be a really serious perch!

Perfect control kept the fish out of the danger zone, but after a couple of minutes with the fish still making the occasional strong run we both suspected it might not be a perch. Sure enough a flash of olive green gave the game away shortly afterwards – a nice tench but not really what we had hoped for!

Back in my swim I was undecided whether to fish the pole tight to the margin reeds or to target the middle of the reed-bed with light leger gear, so in the end I did both and set up two separate swims with my seatbox and pole kit on the platform, and my light barbel rods, buzzers and bobbins at the side!

Whereas Russ had used a pole float on running line I opted to use a relatively heavy Fox chubber float on my pole, for the simple reason I was going to fish one and a half lobs on the hook and needed a bit of buoyancy to support it.

On the barbel rods I set up a light link leger with both kits employing a size 8 hook to 2.6 lb fluorocarbon.

The only bait difference on the leger tackle compared to the float was the fact I decided to use a hypodermic syringe to very carefully inject a little air into the whole lobworm to lift it off bottom slightly.

Perch are sight feeders and I find that popping the bait off deck brings bites a little quicker. I've also found that reed-beds generate a lot of debris and I didn't want my lobs burying themselves out of sight.

Starting off on the leger tackle it took me about 30 minutes to get my first bite and after playing the fish oh so carefully I too found a little tinca had snaffled my bait!

There was a bit of fizzing and movement in the area too so I decided to cut back the feed and rest the area.

Instead I decided to flick the re-baited hook into the shallow spot right in the corner and within a minute struck into a steady take on the lightweight bobbin.

The head-shaking this time left me in no doubt whatsoever what I had hooked and there was a bit of solid weight to the fish too; and as Russ came up to see what was occurring a flash of red and black boiled on top before bolting for the reeds. It was not just a perch, it was a big one!

Thankfully it didn't quite have the power to bury itself deep in the reeds and I kept it at bay right at the edge of the danger zone until constant pressure eased it into open water and the net.

At 3 lb 10 oz Russ informed me it was one of the largest caught from the venue – that would do for starters!

The disturbance destroyed any chance of further action on the shallows for a while, so I switched to the pole and picked up a second fish of around the 2 lb 8 oz mark some 20 minutes later.

This set the pattern for the day with me alternating both lines and methods and picking up the occasional fish on each, although I noted the leger tactics with a buoyant bait picked up the larger fish.

We called it a day in typical British weather, as the spring sunshine dissolved into a freezing hailstorm late in the afternoon!

I'd got ten or so perch of a lovely average size; Russ had only picked up one on his light tactics, but instead his net was bursting with a cracking haul of early-season tench together with some very plump roach.

I had an e-mail call from an obviously excited Russ a few days later letting me know after fishing light line on Milton all day he had switched to heavy tackle and a whole lob and within 20 seconds of casting had a PB perch of 3 lb 3 oz!

Sometimes us big fish boys can indeed show the matchmen a thing or two!