

A BOTTLE OF FLAVOUR CAN CHANGE YOUR DAY

Des Taylor heads to Furnace Mill with matchman Carl Astbury to prove the all-round nature of a bait additive he swears is among the best he's used...



DES TAYLOR

BIG-FISH WORLD

WATER: FURNACE MILL **TARGET:** CARP AND PERCH

FOR the disbelievers among you I'm afraid this article might not help your angling. But for those willing to open their minds to flavours and attractants, it could just make the difference between a good day and a great one.

Let me explain: In the 1980s a liquid called 'Ace', which is a worm extract, was all the rage with a good few anglers but, in an era dominated by simple, straightforward baits like maggots and casters, it was deemed an unnecessary complication and in 1988 it disappeared altogether from tackle dealers' shelves.

And for 17 years, it has remained in anonymity.

But recently I was approached by the inventor of Ace, Mr D Hallows, who suggested he make the original worm extract for SBS Baits.

He made the first batch for me more than 12 months ago and I handed it out to the SBS match team and awaited the results. In the past year they have taken thousands, yes thousands, of pounds



of carp by both using the liquid in their chopped worms and dipping baits like pellets and sweetcorn in it.

Given those results, I had to give it a go.

A lobworm dipped in Ace caught me a 4lb 14oz perch, while maggots that had been soaked in it led to three carp over 37lb, a trio of other 'thirties' and about 12 'twenties'.

If I wanted proof that it still worked, I had it.

Now we've worked on a 'family' of products based on the original liquid. We've got a plug, which is our tried and proven base plug with added Ace; pellets, which also have the extract; a Method mix, made from the same ground pellets, and a diluted form of Ace called a groundbait mixer.

But the proof of the pudding is always in the eating, so I invited Angling Times over to see the products in action on a hard winter's day.

Let's face it, on commercial waters in the middle of summer a good angler can catch roolb of carp on a bootlace, let alone proper bait...but in the cold it's a different story!

The venue I chose to fish was Furnace Mill. First and foremost, it holds lots of the target species – perch and carp – but also because it is a beautiful place to fish.

Furnace is in the middle of the Wyre Forest and with a brook running around the perimeter of the land plus a variety of old English trees lining its banks and an abundance of winter species of birds flying overhead, it is a delightful place to be, even in the cold. My partner for the day was Carl Astbury, an SBS Match member and a super commercial fishery angler, whose job it was to catch carp.

Meanwhile, I positioned myself 50 or so yards down the bank and set up for perch – laying traps that



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DES carefully draws a quality perch over the net. It was one of several specimens to 2lb he banked with the help of Ace Lobworm.

I hoped would snare one of the 4lb specimens that the owner, Ed Brown, had promised me were in there.

Carl decided to fish the far bank at 13m with chopped worm and pellet – both methods he had been enjoying success with in the recent cold weather.

At first, sport was slow, with no indications of fish present at

all, but Carl was confident that within the hour they would come over 'the gear' and start to feed.

Sure enough, after half-an-hour he started catching small chub and roach and he knew the carp wouldn't sit there long watching the small fish eat all the grub. And so it was.

An hour later, he took his first

carp and when I walked up at about noon to see how he was getting on, he had taken 10 fish.

I stood watching him and marvelled at how small the bites were from the carp and how the float was set with just a 'dot' on the surface. On two occasions I didn't even see it move, yet Carl lifted the pole and



CARL Astbury enjoyed loads of carp sport on a hard winter's day at Furnace Mill Fishery. By presenting his bait tight to the far bank, he got fish going all day.



YOU'D be surprised at the kind of fish you can catch in commercials – like this 2lb plus perch.



SOME anglers can be cynical about bait dips, but Carl swears Ace Lobworm gives him the edge.



CARL with his 40lb-plus bag of Furnace carp. Pellet and maggot was the successful bait.

his elastic gently pulled out as he connected with another fighting-fit two-pounder.

He nearly fell off his box laughing when I said I have more float showing above the water than he had below it, but then again I don't fish for commercial carp.

Carl was using neat Ace Liquid Lobworm in his chopped worm and he swears by it. He actually tried to pump it through his hooker pellets, but unfortunately it dissolves the pellet. He also dips his pellet, or sweetcorn, in the plug – something he rates highly in winter on single bait fishing with very little loosefeed.

He fished well and caught probably 40lb in far from ideal conditions, even enduring the AT photographer wandering around to the far bank just inches from his float to get the right picture.

While he was putting together his carp weight, I was fishing 'specimen style' for big perch.

I chose to fish an open-ended feeder with Ace Groundbait in with the groundbait mixer. In the feeder I also put a few chopped worms and a stuck

big lobworm on a size 8 hook.

I was pretty sure the perch in Furnace were more used to seeing delicate pole tackle and small baits, but their instinct remains the same...they love lobbies.

My first chuck delivered a perch not much short of 2lb and every cast for the first two hours brought some form of action. I pulled out of a perch that I think was the one that would have made it a red-letter day, but you win some and you lose some. Perhaps on another trip I'll land a real biggie from Furnace.

The bites were slow, confident takes and my old butt swingers slowly made their way to the rod butt on numerous occasions.

I also prefer to use old Optonics for this kind of fishing. For carping I plump for Gardner's alarms, but having roach-fished with Martin Bowler I noticed he used old Optonics. He explained they worked better for light-line fishing than modern buzzers.

Of course, AT editor Richard Lee had great fun taking the mickey out of my old gear with comments like 'old tackle for old men' but the smile was wiped off his face

when I pulled my keepnet out the water.

Joking apart, there is still something very special about a group of decent-sized perch lying over the landing net with the backdrop of trees in winter cover.

I continued to chop up my worm and add Ace Liquid Extract. Then it was simply a case of mixing my groundbait fairly dry so it would 'explode' when it hit the deck – a method that draws loads of perch into the area.

I also hooked a couple of carp, but I expected that, although a roach of about 8oz and a 2lb 8oz bream were more of a surprise. Who said you always need perfect, fine presentation on commercials?

Carl left at 3pm to miss the traffic but, living near the water, I stopped until last light.

I sat there on my own relaxing now the 'pressure' was off and the Ace had proved its worth on this cold winter's day.

It had helped catch our target species – small carp and medium-sized perch – but I have a feeling it would have done just the same if we'd have been after bream on a stillwater or barbel on the river.