

Crystal Waters



When Keith ‘Backdraft’ Standley and Lee Papper kindly asked if I would review their new venture, I jumped at the chance. As soon as the Channel Tunnel was booked, I was off. After the short 35-minute crossing, and the 3½-hour drive to Saint Denis les Sens, I arrived at the gates and was welcomed by Backdraft, who proudly showed me around the new complex.



Head Bailiff Keith ‘Backdraft’ Standley (left) welcomes Joss Faulkner to Crystal Waters.



Crystal Waters Fishery is relatively new on the French angling holiday scene and massive efforts have been made to ensure that the complex caters for all the needs of the modern day carp angler and there are two packages on offer.

The first option is a full package; all you have to do is get yourself down to a designated car park on the M20 in Kent and a luxury mini bus will take you, without a care in the world, to the lakes, where you will get a full English breakfast in the mornings as well as a large meal, i.e. roasts with the full works, and/or barbecues, in the evening. If you can’t bear to leave your rods in the morning, your enormous breakfast baguette will be delivered directly to your swim, so all you’ve got to do is put the kettle on and enjoy possibly one of the best times of the day in carp fishing.

The second option is a drive-and-

survive package. It’s an easy route to follow because it’s all motorways, and if you have a satellite navigation device, it will take you direct to the lake. Once you are there you can park right behind your swim. You have full use of the showers, washrooms, and freezers. For everything else there is a sizeable town less than a mile away, where you can purchase just about everything you will need for your stay. There are plenty of restaurants, takeaways, garages, quaint

“Each swim has features to offer, you’ve just got to find them, and if you ask me nicely I could always let you have a map”

cafés, and all the ambience of a typical French town.

Within the 35-acre complex is a stunning 25-acre gravel pit that was extracted

approximately 30 years ago to build the nearby A19. The lake consists of two large islands, lily beds, lightly weeded areas, huge gravel patches, and features. With the aid of an echo sounder, I discovered underwater features that are commonly found in the larger European waters. The depths range from 8ft down to 19ft, with an average depth of 12ft. Each swim has features to



Looking out from The Balcony Swim, down the Parisian Walkway.



This swim is currently unnamed, so I called it The Long Chuck.

offer, you've just got to find them, and if you ask me nicely I could always let you have a map.

The complex caters for 12 anglers, so with 16 very spacious, well-presented swims, room is plentiful. The swims vary from logged steps, mowed lawns, double swims, platforms, and a beach from which to fish – all of which have been kept as natural as possible, whilst ensuring easy access and safety. Over 500 trees have recently been planted to complement the already beautiful wooded surroundings. Each swim is numbered at present, with possible names to be suggested by anglers in the future. Individual

swims have the lake rules on a post for easy reading just in case you forget, and they don't half come in handy for hanging up your baits!

The complex is completely fenced and has a 24-hour CCTV system for security. Access around the lakes is fantastic, allowing the drive-and-survive anglers to park directly behind their swims. If you choose to take the full package option, you and your mountain of kit and bait will be dropped off and picked up via a quad bike and trailer. Nice touch that one!

Facilities consist of a very impressive mobile F1-type hospitality suite with seating for up to 16

people and a fully-fitted stainless steel kitchen. It is equipped with Sky TV, mobile phone charging points, fresh drinking water, and Internet access is to be installed shortly. Anglers can enjoy meals and share a beer or a bottle of red wine or two over friendly chat in the conservatory that overlooks the lake. If the fishing is a tad slow, I'm sure Backdraft's stories will keep you all entertained for hours. For those of you who don't know him, he's a real card!



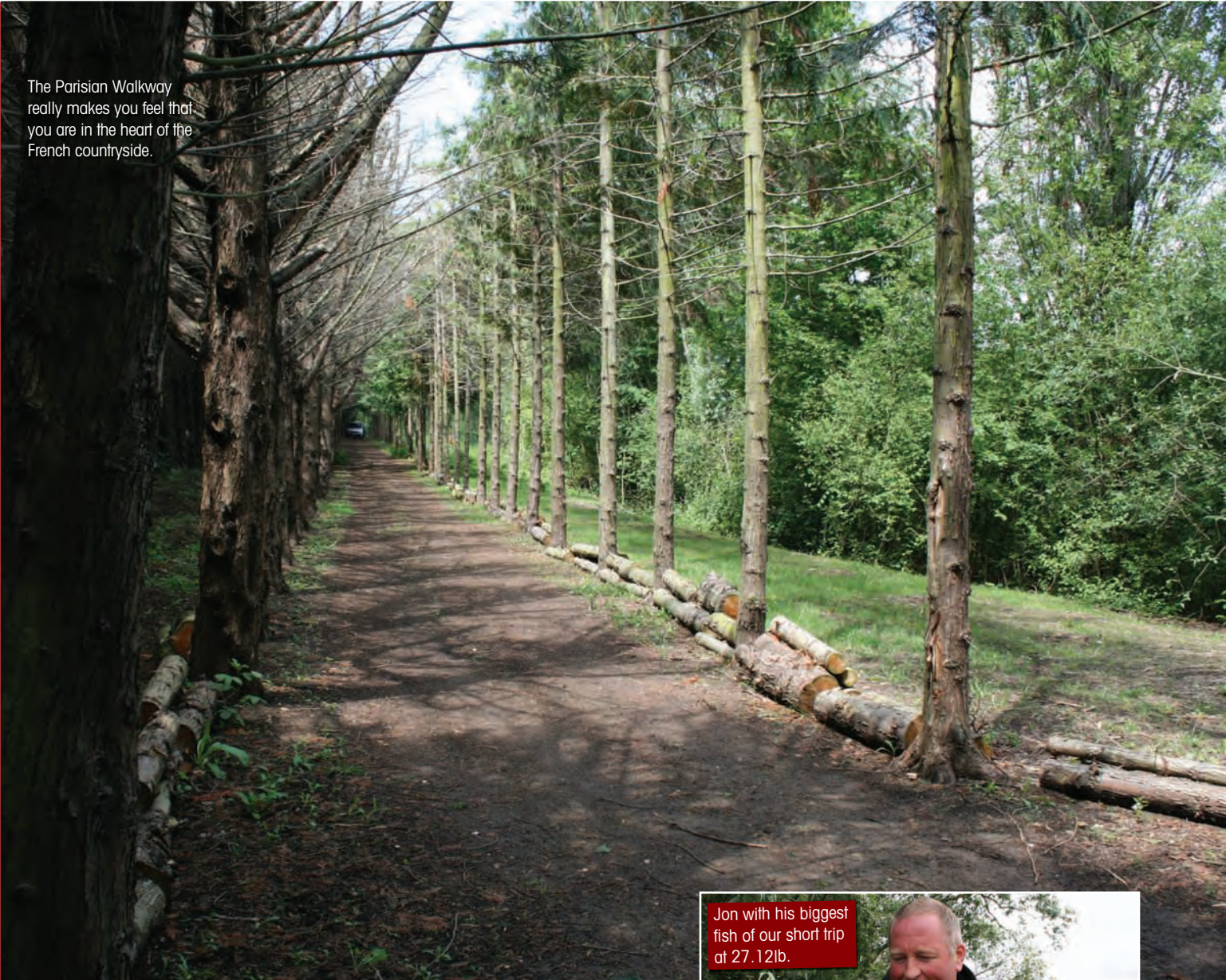
The F1-type hospitality suite was spotless and very comfortable.



The stunning Pads Swim, where I watched countless carp mooching in and around the lilies.



The Parisian Walkway really makes you feel that you are in the heart of the French countryside.



There is also a separate building with a fridge freezer and two chest freezers for bait for your use on site, keeping your valuable bait and snacks chilled and/or frozen for the duration of your stay. There are two separate shower cubicles with heating for the cooler months, washbasins, and toilets. Portable first-aid kits are also supplied, should you decide to stick a bait needle through your finger! The complex has the advantage of a cleaner (Daniel) who visits the site three times a week to make sure that everything meets Crystal Waters' high standards.

“During the very short session, I managed to land seven carp up to 29.12lb, with my fishing buddy Jon Holmes taking six fish to 27lb”

You can take your own bait or buy boilies on site. Crystal Waters has appointed Poacher Baits to create a special blend solely for the complex. This will be a naturally-coloured fishmeal base with a cream and fruit enhancer and is very competitively

priced. As fish weights are high on the list of priorities, nutritional fresh baits have been selected to maximise the potential weights and the health of the stock and to boost your chance of a good week's angling.

During the very short session, I managed to land seven carp up to 29.12lb, with my fishing buddy Jon Holmes taking six fish to 27lb. Not a bad result considering we were only really fishing for a couple of days. All the fish fell to simple, yet very effective rigs and plenty of bait. A mixture of pellets,



Jon with his biggest fish of our short trip at 27.12lb.

Spodding Poachers Nut and Seed Mix and boilies, encouraged them to get their heads down, and had we had a little more time, we would have given the fish a right pasting. The runs were unbelievable, as most of the carp have never been caught. A 19lb common took me 15 minutes to land and had I lost it, I'd have sworn it was a proper lump.

Both Jon and I had runs from the near marginal shelf, and a large weedbed to the left of Jon's swims was a natural holding area for the carp. Jon managed to continually trickle in Poacher Baits' Tiger and Maple boilies every hour and had five runs in the space of a morning's angling, one double, three 20s and a lost fish. Nice. Top angling, mate! My hottest area was on a 10ft plateau on the front of an island point (not an easy chuck at 140yds), baited with pellets and Poacher Baits' Fruit Frenzy. We were lucky enough to use H Blocks as an aid for accuracy and it definitely made casting and hitting the mark in lower light a lot easier. The carp responded very



Freshly rolled Poacher Baits boilies can be bought and stored in the on-site freezers.



A pretty 19.12lb margin-munching Crystal Waters mirror.



Joss Faulkner pictured with the biggest fish of his seven-fish Crystal Waters catch at 29.12lb.

well to heavily baited areas of pellet and boilies, and watching the bubbles rise in the water on darkness made me put down my wine glass – something I don't do very often!

The rigs we used were, as I've said previously, simple. A Hydro Link hooklength, stripped back for flexibility, Knotless Knot with a Size 8 Fox Arma Hook and a longish Hair, attached to a 4oz Carpio Dumpy Lead. Big Jon was successfully using a Snowman Rig presented the same way.

I think I've pretty much summed up the first-class facilities, so here's what also really matters. The lake currently holds over 4+ tonnes of carp within its depths; 250 carp were stocked in early February 2007, consisting of mainly 20s, up

to 39lb and all are showing great growth rates. All these fish have been selected from various strains, therefore giving you an excellent chance of catching big-scaled, heavily-scaled, linear, leather, and common carp.

“Crystal Waters has a five-year development plan, which is very impressive and one well worth keeping an eye on”

The lake record currently stands at an impressive 52lb mirror carp. There are two further stockings planned for October this year, consisting of 35lb+

common and mirror carp.

Crystal Waters has a five-year development plan, which is very impressive and one well worth keeping an eye on. At the time of compiling this article, the Crystal Waters Fishery team has just received a stocking of 40 more carp to 40lb.

If you fancy taking a light rod and a float, there are plenty of quality rudd to 3lb and tench to 9lb with which to amuse yourself while your carp rods do the fishing for you.

There is now a new website up and running for information www.crystalwatersfishery.com Have a browse, I think you'll be impressed. I know I was, especially with the high standards that Crystal Waters has achieved in a very short space of time, and I'm looking forward to a return trip – I just need to make the next trip be for longer than a few days.

Hope to see you at Crystal Waters at some point. Tight lines, Joss Faulkner.



My home for three nights in The Lawns Swim. You don't see many grass-laid swims in France, it was just like fishing at home.