



“Trotting ...it beats the leger”

Legered cheese paste is *the* classic chub catcher but specimen hunter Paul Elt has found a better method – flavoured red maggots trotted under a float...

Words: Mark Parker Pictures: Mick Rouse

LIKE the majority of specimen chub anglers, Paul Elt was a legered cheese paste man through and through.

This bait would be wrapped around a large hook prior to being cast under a likely looking snag on a simple link-leger rig.

If the 42-year-old then caught a fish or two, he'd be more than happy. But these days such an approach has more or less been consigned to history.

For Paul, trotting flavoured red maggot beneath a large Avon float is his usual attack.

“Being a specimen hunter, I used to link-leger bread, paste or meat, because that's just what you did if you were small-stream chub fishing,” said Paul as his left

hand flicked out a handful of red maggots.

“Once I had observed a match angler taking chub after chub on the float, the penny finally dropped. The rest is history.”

Having made the leap of faith from time-honoured leger tactics to trotting, Paul has landed some very impressive specimens – 6lb 13oz being his current personal best – as well as many multiple captures.

Long gone are the days of sitting like a statue in the freezing cold waiting for last light. These days, he actively pursues chub, rather than waiting for them to come to him.

To find out exactly how he does it, we joined the Drennan and Dynamite Baits-backed expert for a spot of long-trotting on his local stretch of the intimate River Ivel. It was an eye-opening session... ▶

“Trotting...”
with Paul Elt

The river runs through it

The Ivel is a relatively small river in the heart of the Bedfordshire countryside. Rising to the south in Hertfordshire, its course is a mere 15 miles, before it eventually spills into the larger Great Ouse at Tempsford, Bedfordshire. Though narrow and shallow, the Ivel is a surprisingly rich waterway containing sizeable specimens of several species. It is also the river where the late, great Richard Walker, thought of by many as the granddaddy of specimen angling, fished for chub and barbel from his back garden swim in Biggleswade. In fact, the Biggleswade and Hitchin Angling Association of which Walker was a member is still one of the controlling clubs at Biggleswade Church Meadow, where Paul was fishing today. (See information@bighitaa.co.uk). Paul first fished the waterway 16 years ago, when he happened across the river during the closed season. Like most of us, he was intrigued and couldn't prevent himself from stopping and having a five-minute look over the bridge. “The water was so clear and shallow that it looked more like an aquarium, than a river,” said Paul.

“As soon as chub pick up the trail of grubs they will generally be quick to respond”



Double red maggot hooked 'top and tail' helps stop line twist on the retrieve



Paul's third swim produced a good brace of chub

“But with tench, chub, roach, perch and even the odd barbel cavorting amongst the luxuriant weed I knew this was a place I just had to fish.” Paul, forever a lover of rivers, had found his very own piece of paradise on his doorstep. He now knows the place so well that he once held the river barbel record, with a monster of 15lb 14oz, while he still retains the Ivel's current roach best of 2lb 15oz. Generally only fishing the Ivel during the winter months, Paul leaves the place alone in the summer, purely because fishing maggot at that time of year would see bait-robbing minnows and bleak ruin every chub swim he tried to fish! And now, after combining match tactics with his specimen hunter's head, his captures have become ever more prolific. “If anyone wants to improve their chub fishing and increase their personal best, this is the way to do it,” he asserted. “You don't need to be any kind of trotting expert. If the float goes through okay, you are in with more than half a chance of a take.” For Paul it is all about fishing balanced

tackle and steering chub to the bank rather than bullying them as you may be tempted to on much heavier legering gear. “Getting that first chub on light gear is such a rush that it can become almost addictive, with playing times of 10 minutes before you can safely net your prize,” he said. **How to tackle the Ivel** Being only a handful of yards wide and a mere three foot at its deepest, location and roving are key elements to taking chub. Location-wise, the usual chub rules apply, with areas of snags, undercut banks and deep holes being the places to put bait. Float fishing for chub is not hugely different to legering for them. Rather than running the float right up to a big snag, where you would cast a leger rig, your float needs to be trotted along the side of the snag rather than straight into it. Once the fish is hooked, it is then a case of keeping the rod as high as you can while steadily playing it towards the net. When roving and spending time in different swims, Paul will give each peg up to

an hour before moving on. “You need to give your baiting a chance to work,” Paul explained. “There is no point feeding a swim for 20-30 minutes then moving off and leaving it for someone else to reap the benefits. “As soon as the chub pick up the trail of grubs coming through the water they will generally be quick to respond. But this isn't always the case and some swims need to be worked at a little more.”

Baiting up

With float tactics, you are trying to draw fish from their lairs – getting them to drop behind the snag from where they can be hooked without restriction, is even better. This is achieved by regular feeding. To draw the chub out of their snags, you need to bait regularly slightly upstream of the area. Around 20 yards is ideal in Paul's mind. By feeding the 'crease', the area of the river where the fast water meets the slow water, you will build the swim with a column of grubs going down the river in precisely the place where the chub expect to see them. ▶

Paul's chub essentials



Paul's first hook pattern choice is Drennan's Red Maggot, not because of the colour, but because of the hooks' unique shape



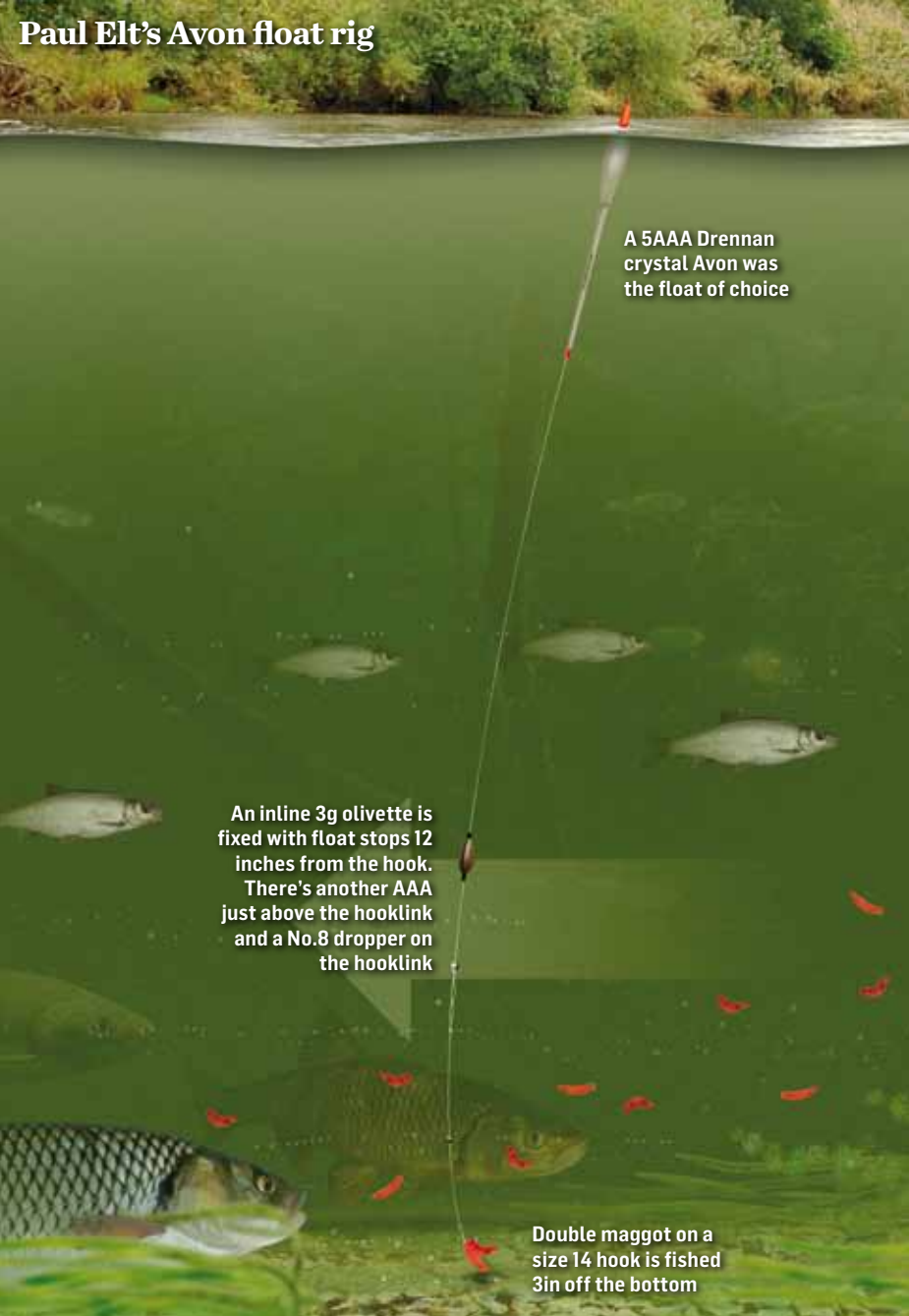
By feeding around two dozen flavoured red maggots every cast Paul was able to tempt his target fish out of the snags



Paul regularly traps the line with his index finger to hold the float back. This allows him to creep the rig through the swim



Avons, wire-stemmed stick floats or loafers are perfect for fishing small pacey rivers



Feeding this way also means that the odd maggot will go into the snag itself, further helping to extract the chub.

“I like to think of the river as a motorway,” Paul explained.

“The chub will be holding station in the slightly slacker water, just on the inside of the crease, then they will dart out into the main flow to pick off any tasty morsels that come down towards them, just like going into the fast lane.”

For Paul, getting the trail of grubs travelling downstream is the key to multiple captures as well as fooling cautious specimens.

Even when he has caught a fish, he will still be throwing in a handful of maggots into the swim every minute or so, even while he is unhooking the fish he has just caught!

He will think nothing of using up to five

pints in a day's session, although he was quick to point out that two or three pints should easily see you into plenty of fish.

Paul also has great faith in bait flavourings, his current favourite for chub being Dynamite Baits' Red Fish.

As a potent blend of meat and fish flavours, it is the perfect choice for targeting a highly predatory and greedy species like chub.

To two pints of maggots, Paul will simply add around two tablespoons of liquid flavouring (about 30ml). This is then mixed in so the all the maggots and the maize they are stored in is given a coating, usually as soon as he leaves the tackle shop. But you can do this on the bank if it's more convenient.

The beauty of flavouring the maize as well as the maggots is that it also acts as a carrier for the flavour once in the river. This brings

a sensory as well as a visual aspect to the approach.

“Many people think that flavours are just a gimmick, but they really work and I use them religiously,” said Paul.

Trotting the swim

A standard waggler float rod is perfectly adequate for chub fishing.

The line Paul uses is 4.4lb Drennan Float Fish. This specifically-designed mono features a coating to make it float.

When trotting you need to stay in contact with the float so that it isn't dragged off line, forcing it to run across the current and making the hookbait presentation look unnatural. A floating mono helps the rig to run true so the hookbait looks natural and remains appealing.

The float was a large 5AAA crystal Avon. Where most anglers advocate as light a float as you can get away with, Paul will use the heaviest float he has, regardless of depth.

“A heavy float is so much easier to fish with,” said Paul. “Most of the swims here today are between 30in-36in deep, yet I'll still use a 5AAA float. I'd honestly use a bigger one if I had one!”

The shooting is again very simple, with a large 3g olivette 12 inches from the hook, an



AAA shot just above the 9in hooklink with a small No.8 dropper on the hooklink itself.

The hook is a size 14 Drennan Red Maggot which is loaded with a pair of flavoured red maggots.

“The most important aspect in trotting for chub is balancing tackle, more than making it mega-sensitive,” Paul added.

“Chub have PhDs in snag-finding so the gear you use needs to be a balance between being able to get bites, but not so light that they snag or snap you every time.”

To plumb up, Paul guestimates the swim depth first, bringing the float up the mainline every run through until it starts to get hung up on the bottom. He will then move the float back down the line about three inches.

In shallow water like the Ivel, the chub will be sitting close to the bottom, so having the rig three inches underdepth places the bait right in the eye level of the stationary fish.

To kick off his given swim, Paul first makes sure he is stood comfortably because he could be fishing this swim for well over an hour. He will then commence his feeding regime of 12-24 maggots every run down.

The only time this feed pattern is interrupted is if he misses a bite. He will then launch four or five runs down the swim with no extra feed, hoping that the chub he missed

will hit the only bait in the swim.

With the first swim not producing anything in the first hour, Paul moved between a pair of mature willow trees further upstream.

Kicking off with his feed, it only took a couple of casts to gauge the depth. After fifteen minutes the bright orange float tip buried and Paul latched into the first fish of the day.

Gently playing it to the bank, it took him several minutes to subdue his prize, a fine chub of just over 4lb.

Even though the swim looked like it had a couple more fish in it, no more were forthcoming. He moved again, with a similar outcome before targeting what looked like a long, featureless stretch of water.

Repeating his earlier tactics brought a fine trio of similar size chub, before once again the bites dried up.

The final swim of the day produced only a single fish, with probably the shallow water putting off multiple captures that Paul has enjoyed here in the past.

But with five chub under his belt, all in the 4lb bracket, Paul had proved his point.

Cheese paste is good, but on its day, trotting is better.

Isn't it time you started trotting for chub, too?

