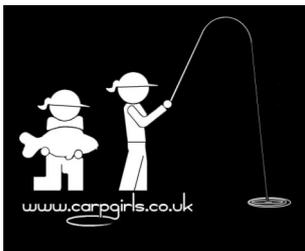


## The Carp Society Show 2012

By Elaine Taylor



**What better way** to introduce my first column for Sussex Angling than talking about one of the biggest and most established fishing shows; The Carp Society Show at Sandown Park. Carpgirls have been going for many years and are familiar faces at the event. We not only enjoy the show for the stands, it's also a chance to catch up with some old friends.



Now winter is upon us, fishing experiences a slow period as many anglers prefer to keep warm and not fish in freezing temperatures and uncomfortable lakeside conditions. Many lakes will be deserted apart from the hardiest of carpers who are happy to tolerate the cold, wet and windy conditions for the chance of landing a fish or two.

Like them the Carpgirls will still be on the bank, come what may. The fish will be wearing their winter colours now and the beauty of such colours makes grinning and bearing the weather in the winter well worth it.

At this time of year when anglers are fishing less, there are numerous shows up and down the country where anglers can see the latest products, check out the tackle and bait deals or just to stay in touch with their hobby and sport in some way.

This year The Carp Society Show at Sandown was as busy as ever and had a great number of stands. Many top named anglers were there giving talks and helping on the stands for people to have a chat to and ask a few questions, including Tim Paisley, Matt Hayes, Danny Fairbrass, Terry Hearn, Julian Cundiff, Gary Bayes & Tim Richardson.

The show has been going for many years and attracts 4500 visitors with 100's of stands from a wide variety of exhibitors. It is easy to overlook the amount of hard work and effort put in to organising such events by both the event organisers and exhibitors.



Very often our attention is drawn to the deals and latest products and no thought goes into what the organisers do. So, to go some way in addressing this I arranged a meeting with the event organisers at the The Carp Society, to find out more about their work behind the scenes and how it all comes together to produce such a successful show every year.....

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## Behind the Scenes at the Carp Show

David Mannall & Sabrina Widdows (see picture below) from The Carp Society are the driving force behind the event

I began by asking them how it all started and how they decided which venue to use for the show. "The Carp Society started in 2000 by holding a combined conference and show", said organiser David,



"When I took over, I was keen to open the show to a wider audience and bring in more companies to show off products, which would in turn enhance the professionalism of the show. "

"I knew Sandown Racecourse had the right profile because it is a central location and has many well known lakes not far away. It is easy to get to and plenty of parking with a large indoor hall." They originally booked half the hall for one day so I wanted to know how they decided to increase the show to the 2 day event we know now. "The event started off as a 1 day show for the first couple of years but we quickly filled the whole hall.

"Because of the number of people wanting to attend as visitors we had to increase the show to a 2 day event – and the bar ran out of beer!" The amazing thing is there are only 3 people who work on the show, although they are supported by 10 to 12 volunteers during the show. It's a huge feat of organisation and they deserve great credit for running it so well for so long.

## Getting the balance right

There are hundreds of companies who could exhibit and The Society doesn't want the event to turn into a tackle version of a boot sale. "We choose companies carefully we want to get a good balance of bigger names and small companies" say David of the exhibitors .



"We don't want it to be dominated by large retailers or bait companies, so we make sure we have the right mix of people like Nash, Trakker, Aqua and Avid, some publishers, tackle shops, bait companies and fishing holiday operators

The show also has a number of talks and Forums featuring well known carp anglers and according to Dave they select carefully who they invite so they don't get repetitive."

## Planning for next year

They have already approached some names for the forums in 2013. "We start planning next years show next week. We think we have led the way in popularising carp fishing shows along with the other shows, but the proliferation of events have not had a detrimental effect on this show. We have to keep working hard and not become complacent". They feel that the visitor numbers are holding up well even in a recession "



The CARP Society can be found at  
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## Some of the Highlights

I had a good look around the exhibition and met Dave & Graham who help with a great cause by raising money for the charity Carpin-forheroes.

The show was buzzing with thousands of people enjoying the event, looking at tackle and trying out the bivvies and bedchairs on display all to the sound of bite alarms ringing across the hall.



There were plenty of new and exciting products being released for the New Year along with some good old favourites still popular with Carp anglers. One new product that stood out, amongst many on the Aqua stand, was the new ATOM shelter (pictured). Andy from Aqua talked us through their product range including the Atom which had already caught our eye.



The Atom is a super-compact lightweight stalking shelter with a low profile design for the mobile angler, ideal for the quick overnight session or for swims that are tight for room. Packed away the shelter is nearly as small as a 2ltr bottle (pictured below).



Nash had a huge stand and including their bivvy village (below). Seeing the new Scope rods up close, you can see they will be a big hit. Gary Bayes was doing bait demos and Nick Burrage demonstrating rigs.



Each stand had plenty of interest and many stands almost sold out. There were some great deals to be had and some great people to talk to and learn from. We even got a sneaky preview of a product from one stand. The hustle and bustle was electrifying and if you have never been, make a note in your diary for next year because you don't know what you are missing!