

MASTER OF

Richard Walker was arguably the most creative angler of the past 100 years. But he is perhaps best known for a range of cane rods bearing his name, rods that are still hugely sought after today. Chris Ball details the story behind the Mark IV carp rod.

Long before Richard Walker started to get his head around the problem of designing a rod capable of dealing with large carp in waters other than those which were snag-free, there were a number of rods about that would more than fit the bill.

Hardy's successful 9ft LRH series of spinning rods, particularly the 9ft No2 version, was a fine weapon for big carp in less than ideal waters, where a rod's strength and action to battle with big fish was paramount. However, it must also be said, the LRH lacked the finesse to flick out light baits, and even with a 1oz weight attached, it would perform only moderately when casting longer distances.

At the other end of the scale, versions of well-accepted river rods such as Allcock's Wallis Wizard and Hardy's Wallis Avon rods would, at a pinch, do for more general carp fishing needs.

Against this backcloth, and within a year or two of the last war ending, Richard Walker started playing around with rods in a quest for an ideal weapon. He created a number of versions, the first being a Wizard with 12 inches looped off the top section. This he soon discarded. Then with a batch of choice quality bamboo, courtesy of Courtney Williams, then a director of Allcock & Co, Walker made another rod, this time a two-piece 10-footer with a 24-inch handle. It is not widely known that this rod is still in existence, and safely looked

after by a collector.

The next rod, designated the Mk III, featured several differences to any previous models that Walker had created. The most radical change was double building, a method of rod manufacture that meant two complete layers of hexagonal split cane being used throughout the entire length. He was after power, and felt double building might be the answer. He also extended the cork handle a further 4in, so the MkIII sported a 28in handle.

Its taper was constant throughout the length, ending with a tip measurement of 5/32in. It also featured a large 26mm lined butt ring, placed way up the butt section (the only ring on that section), intermediate whippings, and signed with his middle name, Stuart Walker, Hitchin, as are a number of other personally hand-built Walker rods.

A small mystery surrounds this rod. Pictures from the early 1950s show what is

almost certainly the same rod in Walker's workshop/hut. However, the handle shape at both ends appears different, plus the sliding winch fittings were standard versions of the period. By 1954, when he had landed Britain's second largest carp, a Redmire common of 34lb, the handle shape had been changed and upmarket Hardy sliding screw reel fittings applied.

I have no reason or evidence to suggest that Walker made two such rods, so I am inclined to think it must be the same rod,

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The man himself, Richard Walker, and an unusually fat