



## STRENGTH THROUGH KOI - They saved Hitler's Koi and other stories

*Jonathan Downes*

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"For years I have augmented my income by working as a `hack` writer, penning throwaway articles for anyone who will pay me. Regularly, I would get the bus into Exeter City Centre, and sneak into W.H.Smiths and peruse the magazines for sale, and make a surreptitious list of any new publications whom I could approach to buy an article from me. One day in the late winter, I was doing just this when I found a copy of a magazine called Koi Carp. With my tongue firmly in cheek, I telephoned them, and asked whether they would be interested in an article - or even a series of articles - about the fortean aspects of their hobby. Much to my surprise and gratification they accepted, and so I started work on my first article. I had been so used to working for fly-by-night publications, that I had stopped taking a long-term view of my writing work. I was lucky if a series I wrote lasted three issues, so the fact that I knew next to nothing about the fortean aspect of koi carp-keeping didn't really matter. However, on this occasion, I was hoist by my own petard, as the series carried on for nearly two years! After six or seven issues, I bit the bullet, and started to employ the old journalistic adage that one should never let the truth get in the way of a good story. Some of the stories that follow are true. Some are mostly true, others have a germ of truth, and even the ones that I made up are based on true events. I think my proudest moment as a journalist came after the publication of "They Saved Hitler's Koi", when Simon Wolstencroft, an old friend of mine, and then editor of a sister-magazine to the one for which I was working, sent me the following email. 1. How did you think you would get away with having this printed? 2. How did you get away with it? For goodness sake, don't read these stories looking for any firm insights into the history and culture of koi keeping, but I hope that they may give you some little amusement, because that was the spirit in which they were written."



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