

# Riffle **Autumn 2016**

Official Magazine of the Association of Barbel Fishers



Association of

**Barbellishers**

**Brilliant Floodwater Tips**

**General Barbel Fishing Tips**

**How to Choose That Perfect Swim**

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Design, Layout & Editor:  
**Paul Schofield**

Cover Photography:  
**Paul Schofield**

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## Editorial

Welcome to the Autumn 2016 edition of the Association of Barbel Fishers official magazine, Riffle.

Everyone remembers their first catch when fishing. My first fish came in my local pond, which was walking distance from my home. The rod, reel and in fact all the equipment was hand me down stuff. I remember the rush after the float bobbing and then disappearing. A quick strike and then the adrenalin of the pulling from the fish on the end of your line. The pure excitement when you land the fish. Admittedly the fish was only a small Perch, but that is it, I was hooked.

For many years I stayed fishing ponds lakes and reservoirs. Mainly float fishing with the occasional feeder fishing. I did often wonder what the fascination was for the species hunters who were hunting Carp mainly and staying overnight to catch that elusive big fish. I was happy to be catching the small fry and keeping busy topping up my keep net.

After reading about river fishing and what could be caught, I was drawn to the Barbel. Probably the look of the

species and the stories of this hard fighting brute of the river.

Many years I harboured the will to try and catch Barbel, but never had the opportunity until one opportune moment when a work colleague informed me of one of the supervisors on the shop floor was in to his fishing.

I approached Steve Maskill and we started discussing all aspects of fishing in detail and where were the best places locally. Steve then mentioned that he was going river fishing for Barbel with two other work colleagues and would I want to join them. Instantly I said yes, but then had my reservations as this was going to be an overnight session. My outlook for overnight sessions was for carp handlers who often rarely got a bite in several days of fishing. Steve then mentioned the social side of things on the river bank and I was sold. I was to be his guest on the River Trent for an overnight session at Fiskerton.

Although the overnight session did not grace me with a Barbel, I had an amazing time and managed to catch a Pike, and my first ever river Chub of around 5 lbs.

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My first ever River Trent Chub

Photography – Paul Schofield

Steve managed to catch several Barbel, so I saw the aggressive fight at first hand and the now familiar jabbing of the rod tip. I even managed to be on hand to ensure that the first Barbel was safely in the landing net.



Steve with a River Trent Barbel

Photography – Paul Schofield

Our next visit to the River Trent was much more fruitful and several Barbel were caught, along with Chub and Bream.

The same year 2011, I joined the Association of Barbel Fishers and the following river season 2012, I joined the Horsefield Knights Society and have been a member ever since.



Fishing the River Trent for Barbel can be challenging. However I have managed to catch in all weather conditions from low river levels and clear waters in the height of summer, to flood conditions with trees coming down the river with horrendous speed of flow, in the depth of winter.

I am now at ease with the overnight fishing taboo that I generated for myself, however pond, lake or reservoir fishing, overnight for Carp is still not for me.

**Paul Schofield**

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## General Barbel Fishing Tips

There are many different baits that are used to catch Barbel and everyone has their favourites. But like all fishing, not one bait fits all. However when the fishing is not as good as you would like, it is often as well to change your bait and the presentation of the bait.

Ledgered baits such as, and not restricted to, meats, pellets, cheese, boilies and maggots etc are often a great way to catch barbell. Sometimes lowering the weight of the ledger will allow the hooked bait to move along the bottom of the river bed in a more natural way, occasionally stalling on the uneven river bed then moving on, which in turn can incite some savage takes.

On most river venues, the angler will always have pellets in his arsenal and more often than not, Barbel will feed generously from these. However, if the Barbel have seen too much of this fishmeal pellet, they can associate this with danger and the bites can disappear.

In these instances a switch of tactics to a bed of Hemp, Maggots and Castors is a great attractant. Smaller fish will be attracted, however the

larger Chub, Bream and Barbel will move in with confidence.



Many anglers prefer open ended feeders, plugging each end with a method feeder mix and making a mixed size Pellet sandwich. The method feeder mix can be added to, with a mixture of different sized Pellets, Maggots, Castors, Hemp, Tuna, Salt and broken up boilies. Also a host of different liquid attractants are available to put in to the mix.



The mixture will break down over a period of time, depending on the stickiness and releasing the loose feed around the hook bait.

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If the water is coloured then be prepared to use smelly bait attractants and large hook baits too. However in clear waters, the size of the hookbait can be reduced as refinement is usually the best way forward.

Hook lengths can cause Barbel to get spooked by moving around in the flow. Many anglers will use shortened hook lengths or use braid and put blobs of tungsten putty on the line to hold the line on the bottom of the river bed.



An apple corer is a great tool for punching out meat when large Barbell are your intended target. The meat can be spiced up and the colour changed with food dye. Also changing the uniform shape can help too. It can give the appearance of being in the water longer and appear more natural.



A great tip when going to a venue, is to see what other anglers are using. If the fishing is going well, then copy the tactics currently employed. However if nothing is happening, then try small pellets if they are using large pellets. Try shaped boilies or even corn.

If people are fishing into dark then come before dawn and fish into light. Try and break the routine of which the fish are getting used to. If anglers use micro pellets, then you should try hemp, if they use paste, switch to casters. Different and out of routine presentation and baits will often lead to success.

Polarized sunglasses are a must for all aspects of fishing and even more so when river fishing. By walking the bank you can look for any signs of fish in the shadows, tucked under the banks, hidden in streamer weed or under over hanging trees etc.

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Finally and most important, when you have caught your intended species, take extra care when putting them back. Ensure that the fish has fully recovered before allowing it to swim away strongly and ensuring that the venue retains a healthy stock of fish.

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## Brilliant Floodwater Tips

The chances of catching a Barbel in high river levels, with consistent water temperature, is vastly increased. Provided that you prepare correctly and choose your swim wisely, then there is no good reason as to why a good days sport will ensue.



Floodwater Conditions – River Trent

Photography – Paul Schofield

In coloured waters, large and smelly baits are the order of the day. The fish will be hunting for food on smell, therefore choose a large and pungent bait, such as glugged luncheon meat, a boilie wrapped in paste or meatballs are often great options.

If you intend to take on a flooded river then ensure you pick your swim wisely. Always know your route of escape if the river bursts its banks and floods the surrounding fields.

When trying to locate Barbel, look for the slack water in the flow of the river, where it will appear to be smooth, as opposed to a raging torrent and turbulent. In flood conditions fish will look for some shelter from the fast and turbulent flows for a little respite.

Weir pools are a great target area for Barbel. However loose feeding here will not be the best mode of attack. Try using PVA bags or mesh as well as a large open ended feeder.

Cover is key to locating barbel on a river. Look for weed beds and overhanging trees. Try drawing the fish out with a bed of hemp. But be patient. Introduce the feed in several different locations and then wait to see which areas hold fish.



Pellets – Excellent Barbel Bait

Pellets, in recent years have gone wild with the staggering amount of

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flavors available. They can be used either singularly in a range of sizes. Or several glued together on a hair rig.

Ensure that your rods are pointing skywards. This will reduce the pressure of the flow acting upon the line and limit the movement away from your intended target area.

Luncheon meat or similar meats have always been a great bait for Barbel. However this method can be over fished, therefore spice the meats up in your own culinary style. Also a change in the shape of the bait offered can have some fantastic results.



Boilies also come in a whole range of different flavors too and make a great Barbel bait on a hair rig. Try breaking up several boilies and use them as part of your feeder or PVA bag as an attractant. The boilie can also be split in half and placed back to back, to form a butterfly shape.

Finally, if your hook bait alone is not doing the business for you, then do not be afraid to mix it up by adding plug, or wrapping the hookbait in paste. Also try two different baits on the hair rig.

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## Choosing the Perfect River Swim

Any successful river angler knows that shoals of fish are never evenly distributed. There will often be long stretches that are completely barren of anything fishy, particularly in areas where the gravel bottom is carpeted with silt deposits. However, clean gravel beds can be hotspots on any river, for all species, where foraging fish congregate for the ready food supply all year round.

The characteristics of river species is that pockets of fish shoal up in tight hotspots, which remain favoured holding areas. Should you find any of these areas, then your success rates could soar.

Over hanging trees and shaded bridge areas are hotspots that are worth investigating. Barbel can be found in the shadows of overhanging trees during hot sunny days. Also channels that run alongside dense reeds are favoured spots for Chub. Free lining bread or worm can entice a good take.

In the slack deeper water, during day light, there can often be larger species lurking around trying to conserve energy next to weed beds or an under cut in the river bank.

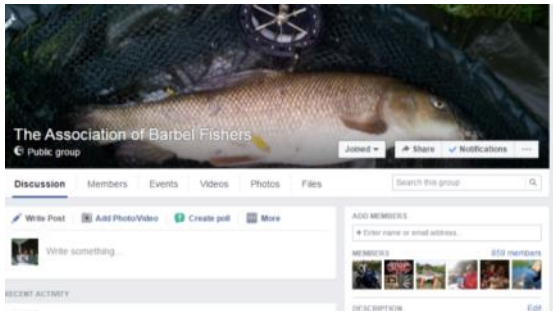
Weir pools, including rock formations, where increased river flows are generated. This tends to keep the bed of the river clean and very well oxygenated. The summer months are most prolific here. These areas are also favoured haunts of predatory fish.

Tidal stretches of the river system can prove difficult to master with the rise and fall of the tide, however if you get in the right area, then they can be prolific and the rewards are there with some powerful fighting Barbel.

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## Association of Barbel Fishers on facebook



The ABF now has a Facebook page where you can share your catches, ask questions and share information with likeminded anglers who like to fish for Barbel.

We currently have 859 members which is steadily rising. It is a friendly and respectful group.

We ask members of our fisheries not to publicise any catches with the location of the catch or any photographs that may identify one of the fisheries that the ABF currently runs.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/407506769268700/>

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## Fishing Adventures

### **How Not to Get Your Feet, Ankles, Calves, Knees, Thighs and Waist Wet When Fishing.**

*By Dave McCreath*

It started out as a fantastic Autumn's day, a few clouds, light breeze and whilst not too cold, it was comfortable. And here I was sat on the bank (in the upper 40's of the Fiskerton stretch), in my bivvy about to pour some boiling water into my cup when.....before I go any further, I'd just like to wind back a bit.

Having arrived at the peg, not one I fish on a regular basis, I stood on the top of the bank looking down about 12 foot to the water's edge and a somewhat steep gradient it was too. Now being someone who enjoys his creature comforts, and just in case it rained (certainly not in the forecast, but you never know!), I did a quick site survey. Not enough room down on the water's edge for a bivvy so that would have to stay up top. Looking up, too many tree branches above (for me anyway), so the rods would have to go down at the water's edge with the front feet of the pod 4/5 foot in the water and the rear feet on the edge of the bank. To

my left was a reed bed, so I took note to try and keep any fish heading that way away from them as best I could. To my right was a somewhat submerged willow tree branch, that had partially snapped off but was still alive, not a tight swim by any means, but one that did have its restrictions.

So, bivvy set up on top of the bank, rod pod set up down by the water, chucked in, two thirds of the way over and sat back and waited. Then I waited some more and got bored, so turned the alarms on and went to the peg next door to visit Spence, had a chat (mostly fishing related) and then returned; still nothing. Got bored again, so popped up to the peg above me to visit Nigel for a chat, returned to the bivvy, still nothing!

So two hours in and I'm still sat there looking down at the two rod tips, both motionless and knowing that the two pegs either side of me appear to be catching on a steady basis, I decide to change tack. I'd heard (through the grapevine) that a couple of river carp had been caught nearby over the past weeks and as I had an overhanging willow branch to my right I switched to a 2oz bomb on a short hook length with twin 16mm boilies. This I chucked just upstream and level with the end of the

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overhanging willow branch, only about 15/20ft out, the right hand rod on the rod pod, the left hand rod was still motionless near the far bank. Back to the bivvy to make a cuppa.

.....so I'm just pouring boiling water from the kettle into my cup, kettle in one hand, cup in the other when I hear a familiar 'beep' coming from the rod pod. On looking down at the two rods (both 13ft) my right hand rod, under the tree, is just twitching a bit to the right.....

Now bear in mind that the rod pod (a very sturdy Fox Sky pod) is already 4/5 foot in the water, the rod is 13ft long and I've cast directly to my right only 15/20 foot out, so I've got one line going straight out to the far bank and the other at almost 90 degrees to my right with the forward legs of the rod pod about 6ft apart.

.....I put the cup and kettle down a tad quickly, the first catch of the day is underway. I stand up and look down at the rod pod below me to see my right hand rod now truly bent over at almost 90 degrees with the bite alarm screaming and as I rush down the bank to my horror my entire rod pod is pulled over decanting both rods into the river. With the priority being the right hand rod I rushed towards it in the water to grab the handle, as I did so,

it disappeared in a cloud of mud at some speed into the murky depths of the river! I swore, loud enough for those fishing nearby to come to my aid. Having retrieved my rod pod and the other rod (which I pulled in) I quickly had a small group of onlookers stood above me who were somewhat bemused at the fate that had befallen my favourite rod (and not a cheap one) and reel (even more expensive). The onlookers, all bemused, offered a bucketful of advice and apart from Nigel offering to assist, they stood rooted to the top bank. Having used my one remaining rod to try and 'fish' for my lost kit using the tip to see if I could snag the line of the lost rod had failed, I resigned myself to having to buy another pair of rods.

Having wiped the tears from my eyes (it was after all, my favourite rod) and endured the hilarity from the onlookers, I decided I was not going to be beaten. On the one rod left, the feeder was taken off and replaced with a 4oz ledger, Nigel kindly lent me a size 6 (yes, size 6, where did that come from?) hook which I tied onto another short hook length. Starting at the branch on my right I started casting out a good 40 foot, waiting until the lead hit the bottom and slowly reeled in. I repeated this moving about 5ft to

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my left on each cast until I was casting directly in front of me.....nothing! So I tried again, still nothing.

Having scoured the right hand side of the swim I thought I'd give the centre a bash again and carried on casting the ledger now moving more to my left and just as I was about to hit the extreme left hand side of the peg, I caught a line and slowly dragged it in. Bugger me, it was mine, just the line and I could feel the fish still on! This fish had dragged the rod off to the right and then managed to swim with it from the right to the left of the swim.

First priority was to get the rod and reel back. Aply assisted by Nigel we slowly dragged the line in until the rod tip just broke the surface about 15 foot out when the reel probably got snagged in the weeds and it wasn't going to budge any more. Nigel had his waders on and was up to his thighs, slowly sinking in the mud; the rod tip was about 5ft from his grasp. I was not going to be beaten at all, boots, socks and trousers off and due to the gathering crowd now joined by some walkers and due to common decency, I kept my shreddies on. Then I waded out just past my waist, the mud oozing between my toes felt ruddy awful,

but I just managed to grab the rod tip and slowly coaxed it up out of the weeds, desperately trying not to separate the two piece rod whilst Nigel held the other end of the line with the fish on it. As I climbed out of the water with the rod and reel intact, treading gingerly as the stones were a tad sharp the fish managed to extract itself from the hook. On looking up at the top of the bank at the crowd (some of which were clapping) I'm rather glad I kept my shreddies on, the water was freezing and it felt rather cold round the nether regions. Did anyone come rushing to my aid with a towel or help me back up the bank, nah, they were all too busy taking photos and still offering advice!



Photography – An On-Looker

Bottom line, I got my rod and reel back in fine working order, I spent the rest of the day with my shreddies airing on the rod pod that attracted several comments from walkers

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passing by – they didn't dry in time to put them back on again by the time I left. Later on I caught some fish, what a day!



Photography – An On-Looker

Moral of the story, well several:

1. Make sure that the Rod Pod legs are far enough apart to account for any sideways tug.
2. Don't ever enter the river like this if you are on your own.
3. Always carry a size 6 hook in your tackle box.
4. Always take a spare pair of shreddies with you when fishing (ask Spencer Day, there are several reasons you might wish to change them).
5. Never give up trying.

**Dave McCreath**