

# Two Boys, One Aim

Aaron and Ashley Bunning are only 15 and 13 respectively yet, with the fantastic encouragement of their supportive parents, they have travelled hundreds of miles and fished several rivers in an attempt to catch their first barbel. This is the tale of the trip where it all came together and they were rewarded with memories that will last a lifetime – Ed.

## My Introduction to 'Billy Barbel' By Aaron Bunning

What's the time? A quick look at my watch tells me its twenty to eight. There is no point in trying to sleep so I sit up and think of the prospects that the day ahead could hold. Another look- eight o'clock. Time to get up,

load the gear in the van and we're off.

We were staying at Moorhampton campsite, a few miles from Bredwardine and the wide, majestic waters of the river Wye. We had made our way up from Cornwall the day before.

A short but stinking drive (the drains in are campervan were playing up, need I say any more?) and we

were there. We met Dave Burr and his friend Sean Archer at the Red Lion, they had both kindly volunteered to help me and my little brother Ashley during the day.

We made the short drive to the area of river we had decided to fish, unloaded our tackle from the van, said bye to mum and dad and we were off.

Ashley, Buddy (Dave's dog) and I walked (in Buddy's case ran) to the river while Dave and Sean drove down. Then there it was, more beautiful than I could have



*Above: Two seconds before we had to go, then . . . Left: success!*





## Two Boys, One Aim By Aaron & Ashley Bunning

ever imagined, the River Wye.

Dave and Sean unloaded their gear from the cars and we walked to our swims. Mine and Dave's swim was the first we came to, it was fairly deep and had a rock close to the far bank which was the feature that we had to cast to.

I took my already set up rods out of my quiver, one had a semi-fixed lead to an eight pound mainline and a braided hook length, this was to be fished on my pride and joy a 1.5lb test curve Greys Prodigy barbel rod which I got for Christmas. The other rig, a method feeder, with the swivel of the hook length which was also braided, pushed into the bottom of the feeder to create a semi-fixed affect. This was fished on a ten pound mainline on my beloved bait runner to my 2.25lb test curve carp rod as I had no other barbel rod. Dave thought the feeder rig

was a good starting point but as I suspected, he thought the carp rod was too heavy. He said the bait runner was a 'must have' feature to prevent me from losing my rod, so I set up my barbel rod with the bait runner and feeder rig.

Dave then remembered he had forgotten a bucket of groundbait so I went back to

a few plucks; I then looked into Ashley's swim to see his rod bent. Dave and I walked over to see Sean net a bream of about two pounds which was Ashley's personal best.

I got back to my swim and got a vicious pluck that pulled line from the bait runner, then I got a screamer. I reeled down and lifted into the fish that

4lb 6oz. My new p.b. then put it in the net to rest. Sean then netted Ashley's chub which had several wounds along its body. It went 3lb 10oz also a new p.b. We then had a photo with our brace of fish and returned them. Not a bad start to the day but still no barbel. By around midday Sean came for a chat with Dave and they decided

---

**"It went 3lb 10oz also a new p.b. We then had a photo with our brace of fish and returned them. Not a bad start to the day but still no barbel"**

---

the car to retrieve it (*well his legs are younger than mine. Ed.*) We then mixed the ground bait up. I made up the balls while Dave catapulted them out.

It was now time to make the first cast; the feeder was loaded up I cast it towards the rock, it landed about six feet from the rock with the subtlety of a breeze block!

It did not take long to get

quickly kited downstream. I heard Ashley shout he also had one, I thought he had snagged me. I brought the fish in and saw it was a chub; one thing I did notice was that Ashley's rig was not tangled on mine. We then realised Ashley had another fish. Dave did the honours with my chub. Ashley saw that his was also a chub. I weighed mine and it went

to move to an area of the river known as Greenbanks. On the way Dave told me he had been trickling bait into this swim for a while so there should be some fish there.

After a short but very steep walk we arrived in our swim. I moulded the ground bait around the feeder and cast it to a sunken tree near the far bank and it landed with a noise that only a method feeder could make. I waited a long time for a run, all of five minutes. I reeled down then bent into the 'fish' with just the slight problem of the fish not being on the end of my line.

I cast it out again, got a run and landed yet another new p.b. chub of 4lb 8oz. Dave set up his rod with a semi fixed ledger to a hair rig with three mini Xstream boilies. This rod was cast to the middle of the river. Half an hour later and with no runs forthcoming Dave changed bait to a worm and put it to the same spot. Within minutes we started to get lots of violent taps Dave told me to pick up the rod and strike at anything. At the exact second I picked it up the plucks stopped so I put it back on the rests.

Mum and dad arrived and went to see Ashley. Dave went to see how Sean and Ashley were getting on as well as Mum and Dad. Ashley shouted "I'm in!" and landed a new p.b. chub of



*The smile says it all*





*Ashley & Aaron*



*2lb Bream for Ashley*

4lb 6oz. Then they asked me to bring the weigh sling, not a difficult task you may think, I finally got the sling to them after successfully tripping over four times! When I arrived they told me they didn't need it any more! Shortly after arriving back at my swim I landed a chub of around 3lb 8oz then Dave put the boilies back on his rod and put a small p.v.a bag full of pellets and mini boilies on the hook and positioned it back in the centre of the river.

Then I heard that magical sound of a screaming bait runner. I lifted into the fish and immediately it ran upstream. Dave said "Well done I think this is your introduction to Billy Barbel because chub don't run upstream". Sure enough, as I drew it closer I saw that unmistakeable gold flanked, streamlined beauty of a body. I drew it to the surface and it made one more powerful run. I then eased my most memorable fish over the rim of the net. I had my first barbel.

We rested it in the net for a few minutes and lifted it on the mat to unhook it and admire its beauty. With the sling wet and the scales zeroed we put the barbel in the sling. She went 7lb 2oz,

not that it mattered. I then had my trophy shot taken and rested her in the net until she had enough power to swim back. We then packed up.

Would it be Ashley's turn tomorrow?

Thanks Dave for giving me the opportunity of catching my first barbel, an experience I will cherish forever and never forget, and also Sean for giving up his time to help us.

### **Day Two – My Turn By Ashley Bunning**

We arrived at the Red lion Inn to get our day tickets at 9am, then went under the bridge and walked along the bank until we saw a swim that Dave had described to us the day before. We crept down.

My rig was a running ledger and my brother's was a bolt rig. We used PVA bags, in them we had whole and crushed Source and Xstream boilies, Mainline n-r-g and Sensas Crazy Bait carp pellets. We had a few pulls but nothing special then my brother brought out his secret weapon, the trotting rod. He caught 6 chublets and 1 bleak and I caught 5 chublets and 3 minnows. After that we waited an hour and then we

went to look at other swims and saw 6 big chub so we catapulted some boilies, they were straight on them.

I cast out, then a canoe went straight over the shoal of chub that were feeding and spooked them. I returned 15 minutes later they were back. I catapulted some more boilies out where they were feeding, cast out and almost instantly I got a bite. I struck and after a minute I landed it, it was a 2lb 8oz chub.

Then my brother came

sitting on the floor). My brother held the rod, I got up but my legs were like jelly, I took the rod, it was going like a "good un". Three minutes passed, we nearly netted it then it went again, still as strong as an ox. At last I turned it, Aaron netted it, YES!!!!!! I was shaking like anything, two anglers walked past, looking at the beautiful creature. My Mum and Dad come along with smiles on their faces, Dad saying "Bring it up, bring it up".

We weighed it, 5lb 8oz.

---

**"It was about two seconds before we had to go and then whack! The rod went flying. I grabbed it; only one thought was going through my head BARBEL!"**

---

in the swim we catapulted some more boilies then cast out to the far bank. Mum and Dad then went up to the van to carry back some gear. It was about two seconds before we had to go and then whack! The rod went flying. I grabbed it; only one thought was going through my head BARBEL!

The rod was going mental, Aaron shouted "GET UP GET UP!!!!!!" I said "I can't" (because I was

Dad took loads of photos. Then we took it back to the river to revive it. I held it, it kicked, I let go with so much joy in my heart it was the happiest day of my life.

I could not have caught it without my brother Aaron's help my Mum Kay my Dad Mark for taking me to the Wye, Dave for arranging the trip and Sean helping me the day before, and for the advice and encouragement of John Found.