

# An Angling Experience

Well the day started with a good breakfast and a very welcome cup of tea. Weather outside was a glorious sunny day, with little if any cloud cover.

The Northern lad's annual trek down South, this time was on the river Loddon. This was not going to be the North verses the South as in the past, but old-uns verses young-uns.

The three of us would be fishing for the old-uns. Tony Rocca (Two Canes) Fred Bonney (The new B.S. editor) and me (Hobby, or Burmese Barbeller), we had decided to contribute our fishing talents as well as our money, to Graham Elliot's Charity Fun Fish-in on Bfw (Barbel Fishing World).

The previous weeks information on the Loddon, was that it was going to be very hard going. Even so it would be good for the craic we where looking forward to the challenge. Meeting up with old, and making new acquaintances.

Catching a barbel, or even a fish would be a bonus.

How true that would turn out to be.

Fred pulled up in the car park, in front of us was Graham Elliot, doing his duties as organiser and all round good guy for the cause.

We got out of the car, greetings where in order,

hugs and kisses all round. Formalities taken care of, now was the time to draw out our swims.

I drew out number twenty five. Having never fished here before, I had no idea if it was a good or bad swim. Graham with his expert knowledge of the Loddon said "it was a no hoper!"

He did say it with a smile, so I thought he was just winding me up. Tony had drawn well, but below me and Fred above me, apparently in the better swims.

Anyway, that put the dampers on the situation to start with. I was really looking forward to fishing the swim with a long length of rope to hang myself. "Put it back and draw another" said Graham. "Nope I'll stick with it, you never know what might happen" I replied.

I gathered my tackle and off I toddled to the river, head held low as if Anne Robinson had just sent me packing on the walk of shame. To be honest, I did not really fancy my chances at catching anything at all. My contribution and enthusiasm for the old-uns where slowly diminishing.

I walked through the woods, eventually reaching the riverbank. At first glance it looked quite appealing and very promising. There where some good looking swims as I walked past them (sigh). Looks, I suppose are deceiving.

It was quite chilly really, the tall trees blocking the sun light, making it all very shady in places. It did not seem as warm as the open car park. The sun was still very bright and hot, odd rays of sunlight splintered through the trees reflecting

in the water, turning the river lime green in places.

It's funny, as you walk past all the swims, before you get to your own, how your brain go's into overtime, mentally assessing them all as you go by. Trying to interpret, where the intended quarry may reside. In reality it's just open water, or is it?

Oh for superman's x-ray vision, Polaroid's, or Optilabs would be no good in this pea soup broth of a river.

Reaching the end of the line of trees, Poplars I think, ahead of me, the river bank branches off, with a plateau of open flat grassy bank in front.

The murky green looking Loddon suddenly turns into a mottled yellow green river bed of cabbage type plants which had no doubt taken residence from bank to



bank. The sun was boiling this shallow open part of the river, there was very little cover at all.

On top of the plateau, was base camp of five bivvies, the occupants pitched camp the night before ready for this morning's sortie.

I was far from happy. My thoughts of last night disturbance from the bivvie boys, the sunshine and a clear river, full of cabbage type plants.

Where's that rope, I thought.

I counted down the peg numbers past the bivvies and arrived at my swim.

It was the end swim of the clearing, and then the tree cover restarted again, just my luck. Best make good of a bad job, some how.

The bank was high, with man made steps leading down to the bottom of the river bank.

Not fancying to fish it from the bottom, it did not feel right some how, I opted to fish it from the top of the plateau.

I had no cover in front of me so it did not really matter I thought, only cabbage plants. No chance of spooking any fish. This was

the dead zone.

My thought process in making this judgement, is that I would have a vantage point in which to see any fish present, if and when, the conditions were right.

I would not be able to accomplish this if I where on the bottom bank. The higher up you are the clearer you can see into the river.

Looking around I could see some dark patches of water, which lead me to believe that there was a little depth there, but nominal.

The sun, though useless at times, can be useful on a clear river like this, aiding me to see better. The reflection and refraction of light would cause me problems, if I was to be sat low to the river bed, it would have been like a glass sheet, impossible to spot any barbel.

The truth is I needed the warmth of the sun on my back, as I was cold!

On the far bank, under a half petrified tree, barren of any foliage below the bottom branches, I noticed two small clumps of streamer weed, about six feet in length with a gap of around a foot in between them. These where

surrounded by cabbage plants.

This was noted, but put away in the back of my conscious mind.

My chosen method was to fish down the inside, to the right of me in a little shade with a touch of depth to it.

After introducing a handful of mini pellets, I began to get tackled up while the wonder bait doing it's magic, hopefully.

Meanwhile Tony Rocca had popped along to see me and have a gander at my swim. "You fishing from up here" he said. "Yes" I replied; "I need the sun, because I don't think I will catch anything else" I laughed.

You could sense he was a little disappointed in the swim I had drawn, he returned back to his own little aquarium, without any positive comment.

Having just cast in ready for that arm aching wrench from a barbel, I heard, "Hi Hobby" a beaming Graham Elliot.

The man the myth as Graham is, and dare I say it, a legend on the barbel circuit, with his all knowing knowledge that is barbel, and the Loddon.

"Crap swim this one he retorted, if I had known, I would have left it out of the draw"

"Thanks for the confidence booster mate".

I did not know weather to laugh or cry, but I did have the last laugh, it just shows you how right, but how wrong you can be.

Time had moved on with not so much as a twitch on my quiver tipped rod, the inside line was proving fruitless. By this time I was lacking in concentration, the sun was slowly cooking me.

Call it what you like, instinct, sixth sense but I looked over towards the other side of the river at the streamer weed. The fronds where hypnotising me with their undulating sways in the water.

I blinked to refocus, and then blinked again. It's funny how streamer weed plays tricks with your eyes.

There on top of the cabbage plants was a barbel of double figures, just basking in the sun. A sudden feeling of euphoria overcame me, seeing a barbel was a blessing in its self, on this sun soaked day.

Out came my tackle from the river, all concentration was now aimed at observing that barbel.

Without any notice, the sun was covered by the only cloud in the sky, and darkened the river, making the barbel obscure and I lost sight of her.

After a while the sun shone through again, but it was too late, the barbel had disappeared to whence it had come.

I just had to see her again, maybe catch her, let her grace my landing net. How?

That was another thing, would I get a second chance to see her again?

Time past by, I carried on fishing down the inside line, with little sign of any action.

The sun had risen high and now reached its peak.





My throat was dry and I think I was getting sun stroke. Good job the bivvie boys where there to quench my thirst.

As I stood up, there on the far side was that barbel. Andy Francis had just come by so I pin pointed it out to him. "That's a good double" he responded, "I know, I'm going to try and catch her now. Will you fish watch while I try to get a bait down to her from up river?" I asked. "Ok" he said.

Having nothing to lose I grabbed hold of my rod, and checked the pellets, they were fine and do not need replacing.

The lead bomb, not though so I changed it to a lighter one, so as not to cause too much of a disturbance as it hit the water.

I just hope it is enough to hold in the light current.

All things ready I walked a peg down river, the barbel was still there when I reached it.

First cast was well short, my Wallace casting is not all that clever.

"Is she still there" I asked Andy?

"Yes", he said.

So, I had not spooked her. I recast, and on the third attempt I was happy, but just as the bomb settled the current took the line round and dragged my bait off line.

It was so frustrating, I could have jumped up and down, but that would not have helped me for sure.

The bait presentation from this swim was not good.

So having gathered my senses I climbed back up the bank to my own swim.

Andy had said he had lost sight of the barbel.

My face dropped, and he returned to his own fishing.

Looking over the far side to see if I could see where she had gone to I somehow read that swim.

There must be some sort of route, or channel between the streamer weeds, even a



little shelter out of the direct sun light, I thought.

It was getting late by now, and the sun had afforded a little shade on the far side, a foot, or so over the streamer weeds.

Right, change bait to mini pellets, hair rigged alternate down the hair. I put the 10z bomb back on for more hold, buggler the splash.

It was all or nothing now.

I catapulted a capful of mini pellets into the head of the swim from the top of the bank. Then walked down to the river with my rod to cast into the gap in the streamer weeds.

This had to be an accurate cast and it was, bang on the money in my opinion.

I hastily clambered up the bank to where I had my rod rest.

Gently tightening up to leave a dip in the line just where it entered the river, with just a little tension on the quiver tip.

A gust of wind would have indicated a bite, that's how delicately I was fishing.

I sat down still holding my rod, and waited with an

anticipation that seemed like an eternity. Never taking my eyes off the quiver tip.

Deep down inside of me I knew she was mine, you get that feeling when things are right, but nothing is going your way.

Ten minutes past by, the tip dropped back a quarter of an inch, there was no wind, and then tugged forward half an inch.

In a nanosecond, I could feel my heart beating faster, my body was getting lighter but heavier, with the adrenaline rush..... I struck she was on.

There was an almighty splash four yards down river from where I had cast, she was up in the water. It's a good thing I was playing her from up the bank over the cabbages.

Andy had returned, along with Andy Davies, to see what the commotion was all about. "You got her then". "Yes" I said elatedly, and full of the stuff that makes me a proud barbel angler.

She gave a spirited account of herself, but I play my fish hard, in these circumstances, I had to.

Luckily the gods where with me as she caressed my landing net after a brief tussle. Once un-hooked and rested in the landing net, came the weigh in.

All manner of guesses came flooding my way, as by now quite a crowd had gathered.

12lbs plus seemed to be the going, but when weighed she was 10lb 15ozs. Photographed by Andy D, and released after a breather in the landing net, she nestled into the cabbages, where she stayed sulking for the rest of the day.

A great fish for me personally, no matter what weight, or if blind in one eye, they all give me pleasure.

She helped in giving the oldies the overall lead on the day, with the total tally being in our favour.

A new river double, and barbel for me from the river Loddon.

For the rest of the day, little though there was, just spent looking, and admiring her. My fishing over, mission accomplished.

I walked back to the car with my head held high, doing the walk of fame.