

R & C Auction

A days fishing with Bob

Thanks for taking the time to read the following article, hopefully you may well recognise yourself in some of it.

One of the ironies I have found reading a number of the older copies of Barbel Fisher are the number of times I have been surprised to find out it wasn't just me that thought or felt like you do when chasing the whiskered ones.

Having been engrossed in that 'thirst for knowledge' stage of my fishing life, when I just wondered how I would have survived before eBay came along, I discovered the Society's yearly R&C auction. Now having bought every DVD and book on barbel, I still felt something was missing other than most of the money in my bank account! Of course it was the practical experience of time on the bank. Strangely all the time in the world on your sofa watching Barbel DVD's or reading about them doesn't actually catch you fish unless you're on the bank putting into practise something of what you have learnt.

Now here was a once in a lifetime chance to spend a day with, and more importantly annoy the hell out of with as many questions you have ever dreamed you could ask a quality barbel angler, Bob Roberts.

Or should I say THE Bob Roberts as I suspect he likes to be known?

After being as giddy as a giddy thing about winning the auction last December, I became aware that the poor chap is actually quite busy and sometimes not even fishing at that. What a hard life he must have I can hear you thinking. Okay, even he would admit it's not all that bad, just hectic at times. The result was that it took quite a while for an arranged date to be made, but nonetheless one eventually was.

If you read his on-line blog (I would recommend them for passing half an hour away), you could see that it didn't appear as though he was actually looking forward to the day as his phraseology was slightly open to misinterpretation. However, by the time the day arrived I had totally forgotten about that and was simply the sponge waiting to receive everything I could, first hand from someone who knows.

We arranged to meet at my house where the car was dutifully loaded with every bit of tackle I thought could come in handy. Last thing I wanted was that fateful "have you a so and so?", and to be caught out. For those of you who know me, you will also recognise whilst not

being overly a tackle tart, I am unashamedly a bait tart! You name it I will have got some of it somewhere. I'm sure I have the fattest mice on our street with signs up inviting their friends round for regular troughing out sessions at my expense. Why does it always look like an elephant gun has been fired through the garage when a mouse goes on the rampage and gets into its head to munch from one end to the other in a straight line, regardless of what's in the way?

I digress, with enough tackle and bait for four on the 'just in case principle', we managed to fit his, by comparison, meagre (but high quality) tackle on top. I had even included the barrow just in case we ended up with a walk to a peg, as it would be a physical impossibility to carry everything I had brought in one go.

Needless to say, Bob took one look at it all and said "you won't need that lot". He obviously had a different day in mind to mine! However seeing as it was all in the car loaded, he reluctantly let me leave it in.

When we got to the river, I was allowed a rod, landing net and some bait. Other than that the rest would have

to sit in my car until it was time for home. Some of that bait has more road miles than one of Wiggo's bikes as it often has the pleasure of travelling to the river, only for it to come back home with me and so it wasn't totally a new experience for it.

Now I don't mind admitting that one of the attractions I find in trying to catch a few barbel is that I get to sit in a chair with the brollie up, watching the world go by. With natures play unfolding in front of me, only rudely interrupted two or three times a day by one of those three foot twitches that our beloved prey is so fond of giving. Enjoying every minute of the struggle as you're never quite sure what is on the other end. It can be described as being like a large dog on the end of a play rope. If you have ever owned a large dog, you will know exactly how that feels. If not, you're missing out, as a large dog is one of the few things in life that is happy to see you every morning, and never has a crappy day, holds a grudge or asks you just to do something when the footie starts on telly, nor does it draw up a list of jobs for those days when you are not at work!

Anyway, back to Bob. He very patiently explained that we were going to bait up and fish at least three swims with a bait dropper, some hemp and pellets. So, first question of the day from him, "did I have a bait dropper?" "Well

n Prize Roberts



yes I do," I said but it was sat at home in the garage as I never took it with me on the Trent. A second look of disapproval followed. However luckily he had brought his with him, and so off we went.

On the way down he had asked what I wanted from the day, and I answered without hesitation that I would like to learn about watercraft. Now those of you who regularly catch and have an inbuilt barbel detector would just laugh to say fancy wanting to spend the day with a man with a barbel brain the size of a planet, and you want to talk watercraft. However, when you are the kind of person that just loves the pictures in the book that says cast here without really understanding why, now was the chance to find out!

I was hoping that when I returned on my own, I might have a better understanding of the features I should be looking for in a swim.

After walking approximately a mile with no tackle along the length of the river I had chosen to go to, he picked out what from his point of view were three very fishy looking swims. He explained in great detail why he had picked each particular swim, and every one was different. I have to say it was fascinating, looking for the feature in the water that was causing the crease in one peg, where there was an obvious snag feature in the water fishing upstream of it to increase your chances

of landing any fish from the peg in another, and a simple change in the speed of flow in the last one, which he took to denote deeper water.

It was also great to see other peoples' faces as Bob and I appeared in their peg asking how they were getting on. I could almost read their minds. "Is it or isn't that the famous Graham?" No, you're quite right they didn't, even the bailiff had a 'do you remember me Bob' tale, when he came across us. It must be hard for the guy to get some private fishing time, which we all take for granted.

Even whilst talking to others, he was thinking where were they casting, had they caught anything? Not for today he said, but for that time when you might just fish that peg, if fish were being caught, it's useful to know where the x was, as invariably where there is one, there is likely to be more. He also observed that they had a couple of bites early on, and a fish but the peg had died after that. That was something that I had taken for granted, as that's what often happened on that stretch. He simply said poor pre baiting or feeding was the most likely cause. Most people you observe don't cast particularly to a constant spot, or let the fish get comfortable over a bed of bait before tackling them. Good points well made and with real examples that I could see, and more importantly understand.

Two hours into the trip,

and I'd still not managed to so much as wet a line, but I had learnt so much already that any fishing was going to be a bonus. Indeed, at this point if he had said I needed to stand in the river on one leg with two pencils up my nose going "wibble wibble" to catch more barbel, then I would have done so without hesitation or question.

He took the bait dropper and proceeded to put 10 loads into the swim, of a mixture of hemp and pellets, working between the three pegs, but explaining why he'd placed them where he did in each. I was like a little puppy dog following him up and down the banks in each peg, and couldn't wait to get a bait in. However, he explained that there was no great rush, and that we needed to let the fish get comfortable.

In the first peg, the water was actually clear enough to see the barbel come out from behind a large boulder and chase right up to the bait dropper as its load emptied out onto the river bed. Rather than frightening them, they were actually nudging it for the contents, little did they know.

Obviously the second question of the day was did I have a pair of 'Polaroid's', as it made the fish observation a lot easier. Of course, with 30kg of tackle in the car, the answer was a no. Next disapproving look of the day followed!

The pleasure of watching my first ever shoal of barbel

on the Trent feeding was fantastic, and made me feel fourteen again. A feeling hopefully many of you connect with at some point in your season. It was new to me, and boy did I enjoy it!

Anyway, I finally got a bait in that first peg where we had observed the shoal of by now feeding barbel. Needless to say, I had a bite within sixty seconds whilst touch ledgering (now that is exciting when you can see the fish milling around your bait!) and I promptly missed it! Next disapproving look followed!

Bob went off to bait up again, and get the second peg ready for us to move down to, leaving me on a very steep slippery bank that obviously wasn't a peg, but did have a feature.

Next put in and again within sixty seconds the rod shot round as the line pinged over my fingers, so I slid down the bank taking the landing net with me. All fingers and thumbs, trembling with excitement as the barbel did its best to take me into the river with him. A feisty fellow it was, and eventually I got it into my net after having Bob return and laugh at me as somehow I failed to get it anywhere near the net for the first three attempts.

After unhooking and safely returning the fish did I get to cast in again? Not on your nelly. It was up and off into the next peg.

This time, we were fishing probably ten yards up from

an obvious tree in the water, in the hope of drawing the fish out into open water to have a better chance of landing one. As I sat there with my rod pointing in its normal quiver tip style, Bob asked me what I was thinking about. "Nothing" I replied, "maybe what was happening at work"? "There you go, that's a problem, should be thinking what are the fish doing" he explained. Also, given that I was touch ledgering why was I using the rod like a quiver, point rod down the river and let your hand feel the line, far more sensitive.

As sure as eggs are eggs, I suddenly felt the line move across my fingers and struck to have a brief engagement with a whiskered one that then came off. Another disapproving look! I even think he asked if I'd ever managed to hook and land any, to which we both let out a hearty laugh.

Well, time flew by and

we eventually finished in a peg that was a classic barbel swim, even I could tell, and that no prebaiting would be required as he was so sure they would be in residence. At this point Bob had (after much badgering by me) brought his own rod out for a dangle.

So there we sat together on a big upturned tree branch in a flat peg, on a bend, chewing the cud and watching the world go by. I asked myself if life got any better than this. Well it did, as Bob was talking to me, he struck and promptly landed one, followed by missing one and then losing one. Did I laugh? Of course I did, would have been rude not to. He then managed to land another as we had that infamous one last cast as the sun started to go down. What a way to finish a most pleasurable day in great company. Although in his own words we were at that time of night, even his

granny could catch one.

I learnt so much, he gave me his undivided attention for every minute of a long day, never complaining once about my questioning and that takes some doing and for which I am grateful.

So what 3 key things did I learn from the day and would want to share?

Bob really is a great guy, his way or the highway (ha ha), but nonetheless a great guy.

A roving style with one rod can be absolutely cracking fun.

If it's not working, don't be afraid to change bait, set up or God forgive, even peg.

I would also like to thank fellow Barbel Society member Lee whose brain I keep testing via the forums and threads in relation to fishing on the Trent. Lee is an absolutely top chap who can't do enough to help, and always provides some sound advice and tips. He has taught me a fourth one,

don't be afraid to ask, but do reciprocate when somebody asks you.

Last but not least I would like to thank Steve Stayner, whom I only met once but every time I re-read one of his excellent books, I spot something new which hopefully helps me become a better angler. He told me that he thought that in our rush for the thirst for knowledge, that we maybe missed something. By trying to suck out a hard earned lifetimes experience from somebody, we missed out on that journey of knowledge ourselves. Maybe a bit like you need the lows to recognise the highs? Therefore, a fifth point I would add is don't worry about the bad days, that's all part of the learning curve and catching barbel isn't a race to be won, so sometimes just enjoy the journey, for you will never stop learning!

Tight lines.

FISKY'S FANTASTIC FEEDERS

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Paul is a staunch supporter of the Barbel Society, attending regional events up and down the country, and providing raffle prizes at many Society events.

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NOTICE TO MEMBERS

The Barbel Society Annual General Meeting

Saturday 8th June 2013

**1pm start at the Chesford Grange Hotel,
Kenilworth, Warwickshire. CV8 2LD**

**Any proposals, questions, or matters for
discussion should be submitted in writing
to the Secretary, to arrive no later than
20th May 2013.**

**Pete Reading
17 Mayford Road, Branksome,
Poole, Dorset, BH12 1PT.**