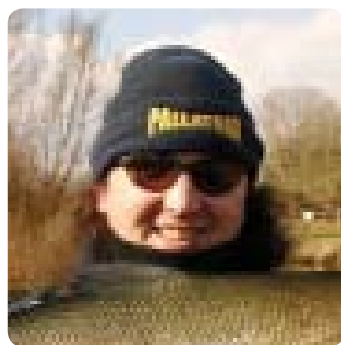


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# Barbel

## Questions And Answers



This month it is the turn of Paul Smythe, who has been targeting barbel for fourteen years with great success.

### PROFILE

**PAUL SMYTHE**

**Age:** 36

**Home Town:** Thatcham

**Occupation:**

Painter & Decorator

**Sponsor:** Pallatrax

**PB:** 17lb 8oz

### How long have you seriously been targeting barbel?

I first started to fish for barbel on purpose when I was twelve, but I suppose I have seriously targeted barbel for fourteen years.

### Average time spent fishing per week?

This varies quite a lot according to work commitments, but when I can I try to fish at least two evenings a week.

### Which rivers are you currently fishing?

I live right on the bank of the Kennet so obviously that is where I spend most of my time. I do, however, enjoy fishing the Thames, as I believe it is

capable of throwing up a real surprise for someone who is prepared to put some time and effort into it.

### What is your PB barbel and where did you catch it?

My personal best is a Kennet fish of 17lb 8oz, a truly magnificent fish for the Kennet.

### What is your most memorable catch?

Surprisingly enough it's not my biggest fish by far. It was a 9lb 14oz fish from the Kennet while trotting a stick float using a centrepin. This fish was landed on a size twenty hook on a 1lb 14oz bottom and 2.5 main line. Bait was a single maggot. This fish gave me a most memorable scrap and there were several times during the fight I was convinced that I would lose it. That scrap will live with me for a long time.

### Rods and reels, what do you use and why?

I have a variety of rods that I use according to the river conditions. I use a Ray Walton River Roller for a lot of my light line work as it has a lovely soft action, and it is ideal for the narrower bits of river as it is only eleven feet long. I also use a Fox Barbel Specialist for quiver-tipping when bites start to get a bit cagey. As for reels, I love my Ray Walton Rolling Pin and for static fishing I use the superb Shimano Stradic with a fighting drag.

### What hook-baits do you use in a low and clear river?

On a low, clear river I tend to use just small bits of paste or small pieces of Pallatrax sticks and, of course, pellets.

### What hook-baits do you use on a flooded river?

For flood water fishing I use larger pieces of my clear river baits, which are usually glugged in flavour for added attraction. Though I have caught a load of fish on Campbells Meat Balls in gravy.

### What hook-length material do you use?

I very rarely fish with a different hook-link. I usually fish with my mainline straight through to avoid any unnecessary weaknesses. I attach my weight via a link of lighter line so that the only knot I have is to my weight.

### Braid or mono reel lines?

At present I use the new Gamma nylon in 8 or 10lb for most of my fishing. I have found this line to be superb in all aspects. I do, however, use Spider Wire braid for rolling meat baits, as I like the direct feel that this gives me.

### Do you think it's okay to retain barbel for short periods?

I think it is very important to retain barbel for a short period in a sensible manner so they can recover fully before being released, especially in the summer. They should never be retained for long periods just for the sake of a photograph.

### What are your favourite conditions for summer and winter?

My favourite conditions in the summer are those hot, muggy evenings with the threat of a storm. In the winter any conditions where there is a rise in water temperature.

### Swimfeeder or PVA?

Neither. I prefer to loose feed small amounts of bait. My mates say that I am just to mean to throw any bait in.



### Do you use back leads or lead core?

I am allergic to lead so if I feel the need to pin down my line I will use a small Flying Back Stonz from Pallatrax.

### Bolt rigs or running rigs and why?

I prefer to link leger as I feel this is what works best for me.

### Do you use a quivertip for bite detection or the end of your rod?

I do like to use a quivertip as I believe it is the best way to see those very sensitive bites when the barbel are being a bit moody.

### Do you use buzzers?

No.

### Clutch or backwind?

Clutch when I am using my Shimano Stradic, but obviously when I am using a centrepin I suppose it's backwind.

### If you could use only one hook-bait which would you choose?

Various sized trout pellets, they are a very consistent catcher of barbel.

### If you could use only one feed bait which one would you choose?

Pellet again.

### What was the best bit of barbel fishing advice you've been given?

Use a Stonz my son. The Stonz from Pallatrax have made a huge difference to my catches over the last few years. I can't believe that anyone would use a lead to fish for barbel.

### What are your barbel fishing ambitions?

I'd love to catch a twenty, pound barbel from the Kennet, but I wouldn't say no to one from the Thames either. **CF**

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