

## **How to succeed fishing the Ilkley Angling Association (IAA) stretch of the River Wharfe by David Martin, IAA Secretary**

### **Introduction**

I have been fishing the Ilkley stretch since June 1972 and in that time I have caught many thousands of fish from it – mostly Trout, Grayling and Dace - but including lots of Chub and a few Eels. I am a very keen all-round coarse and game angler and I always have been. The purpose of this series of articles is to try to pass on some of my huge experience to others so that they can enjoy fishing the club's waters as much as I do. This article is focussing on Chub and Eels. Chub are a species to fish for mainly in the winter whereas Eels only seem to bite in the warmest part of the summer.

### **Chub**

The IAA stretch used to hold small shoals of Chub in many spots along its length but now it seems that the population has dwindled and there are only one or two good swims. The best of these is the area between the Ilkley Sewage works and the upstream end Beanlands Island. This pool holds some 3lb+ Chub with the largest probably approaching 5lbs. I have caught Chub weighing nearly 6lbs from other stretches of the River Wharfe not far from Ilkley so there may be bigger fish than I think in the IAA stretch. Chub are a wily fish and often you won't catch them even when you are fishing correctly in a good spot.

### **Angling Tactics for Chub**

The best way to fish for Chub is with a ledgered bread or cheese paste bait. They can occasionally be caught on a maggot or worm bait or by fly fishing but because of the number of Trout and Grayling on the Ilkley stretch these are not good tactics to use to target Chub.

### **Tackle for bait fishing**

I use an Avon type ledger rod of about 11' long, a fixed spool reel loaded with 6lb breaking strain line and a 5lb bs hook length. Chub have big mouths so for bait use a decent sized piece of bread flake, bread crust or cheese paste on a size 6 or size 8 eyed 'specimen' type hook.

### **When to fish**

I have found that it is best not to target Chub until late-autumn, after most of the leaves have come off the trees and have been swept away by a decent sized spate. So about late-November through to the season's end on 14<sup>th</sup> March is the best period to fish for Chub on the Ilkley stretch. Chub can be caught in low water conditions but they bite better, especially during daylight hours, if there is a falling river still holding 6" to 12" of extra water level.

Usually evening is the time to catch Chub and especially late-evening into dark. The lower the water level the more likely it is that you won't get a bite before it is nearly dark. So try to fish late. This also means don't start to fish much before dusk because you could well spook the shoal before they get the confidence to take your bait. As I said earlier they are wily fish.

## **Eels**

Eels are a strange fish. Most anglers fishing the IAA stretch would never know that they were here. They tend only to be caught on humid summer nights from the deepest still or slow moving pools – such as under the main road bridge and in the Crumbwheel pool (near Middleton Woods).

While most Eels caught will weigh less than 1lb we have caught them at Ilkley to weights just over 3lbs and bigger ones might well be present.

Eels are easy fish to catch so long as you fish after dark on warm summer nights.

### **Angling Tactics for Chub**

By far the best way to catch Eels is with a ledgered worm bait. They can occasionally be caught on maggots but this is not a bait that I would ever use if I am targeting Eels.

### **Tackle for bait fishing**

A good sized Eel is a strong fish so use an Avon type ledger rod; a fixed spool reel loaded with 6lb-8lb breaking strain line; and a 2' 5lb-6lb bs hook length. Eels have quite big mouths so use good sized worm bait on a size 8 or size 10 eyed 'specimen' type hook.

Eels feed by smell so it would be beneficial to use a block-end swim-feeder filled with pieces of chopped up worms rather than with a straight ledger weight.

Do not strike the bite immediately. Allow a few seconds for the Eel to get the bait fully into its mouth before striking.

### **When to fish**

Peak summer – mid-June to late-August; a low river; dusk to dawn; on warm, muggy, still and dark (not moonlit) nights. Good fun with a friend but perhaps a little spooky if you are on your own!