

Pixham Ferry Fishery

Introduction

Pixham has a long history of being a prolific barbel fishery and has produced some very large fish throughout the years: and still does. At the top end it borders the famous Beauchamp Court Fishery and at the lower, car park end it joins the equally prolific Pixham Farm fishery. I was asked by the editor, Chris Jones, as a Pixham regular, if I would pen a few words about Pixham for the magazine. In his words 'it was a very unsung fishery, but a very special place'. So, this article reflects my own personal experiences over the last 3 years that I have been fishing it.

History

It was at Pixham in 1265 that Simon de Montford crossed the Severn with his prisoner, Henry III, en route to his last battle at Evesham.

Pixham is steeped in history and the original Pixham Ferry was in the possession of the Lygon family of Madresfield from about 1600. It crossed from Pixham Ferry Inn on the west bank to Kempsey on the east. Until 1939, it was a large ferry vessel capable of carrying a considerable number of horses, cattle,

etc., and several motor vehicles at one time. It was moved across the river by a submerged chain. The ferry was in great demand on the special occasions when Kempsey Ham was used for military reviews which brought huge crowds from both sides of the river together because the Ham was a favourite military rendezvous. The last duel in the County was fought there in 1827. The ferry was operated regularly until 1939 when it became derelict, with a smaller boat occasionally operated until 1947.

Attached to the Ferry was Pixham Ferry Inn which was part of the Madresfield Estate, but this closed on October 10th, 1903. The inn is now a private residence just above the car park. The current owners have recently dug out and exposed the original cobbled path that leads down to where the ferry was originally accessed. Every Sunday in the summer months, steamers called at Pixham Ferry and unloaded hordes of day trippers, the men spending most of their time bowling in the fine bowling alley and drinking ale, while the women and children picnicked on the Old Hills.

The Fishery

The fishery is located in the area known as the Lower Severn where the river widens and deepens on route to the sea. It is looked after on behalf of the Barbel Society by the fishery manager Paul Coopey and his team of three bailiffs James, Josh & Andy. It is approx a mile in length stretching up river from the car park over 2 fields. As you enter the first field from the car park you pass three or four easily accessible swims until you come to the famous **green door swim**. Clearly identified by the large steel, green flood door in the bank behind the swim.

Above the green door there is a short beach area before a flood sluice gully cuts across the field into the river. Above this is the large main **beach area** which stretches upriver.

Above the beach you come to the famous **Cables swim**. This originally used to be directly under the electric power cables that cross the river here but is now situated some 30 yards above. Above the Cables there are a number of other accessible swims up to the first fence.

When you cross the fence into the top field you will pass several more swims, but as this part of the fishery is little fished, presumably because of the distance from the car park the swims are not so easy to be accessed. The top boundary of the fishery is marked with another fence.

The Fishing

The first few swims up to and including the green door are situated on the outside of a bend in the river and consequently the main flow



The Green Door



Main Beach



dependent on the river level not being too high. I always fish two rods in these swims, even when the river is very low. I always fish from the top of the bank because in my opinion you get better leverage, quickly, on a take which helps to get the fish up off the bottom and away from the snags enabling you to play them in open water.

From the cables onwards, up to the top of the fishery, the river becomes narrower, deeper and faster flowing so fishing not too far out is usually very productive. The cables swim itself is also best fished with one rod because there are two snags to the left, one mid river and another close in which hooked fish here always attempt to make for.

I pick up most fish here casting just beyond the large tree/bush to the right and letting the bait drift down

behind it.

The swims in the top field are rarely fished yet I honestly believe there is a lot of potential up there for anyone prepared to put the time in fishing up there.

River Levels

Most swims are fishable when the river level is up to six feet on. Above this level you need to adapt your approach depending on the swim. The first few swims can be difficult to fish as the river rises higher. The first beach swim can be fished up to levels of 16 feet, but above this height the water comes over the bankside up to the flood bank behind. The large beach area can be fished all along up to a river level of about 4 feet on. However, above this the beach is covered in water so you have to fish from the top of the bank and there

is towards the near bank. Therefore, I find fishing fairly close in over the first drop off is best when the river level is not too high. The green door in particular has a couple of notorious snags mid river. One below and one above, but it is these features that draw the fish into this area.

These swims are best fished with just one rod due to the restricted casting area between trees/bushes on each side. I have found

using two rods here you risk frequent tangles when you hook fish.

Above the green door the beach areas up towards the cables are on the inside line of a long sweeping bend in the river where the main flow is towards the far bank. Here, I aim to put my baits either on the edge of, or in, the centre of this flow. Casting three quarters of the way across here is where I have picked up most of my fish. Again, this is



are only a few places where you can get down to net the fish. When the water is up to the edge of the bank you can fish all along the beach from the top from where you can also easily net fish and it will produce fish throughout its length. When the river rises above 16 feet the first, lower half of the fishery becomes unfishable, but you can still fish the top half in certain places, with care, when you can still get fairly close to the bank edge.

Safety

When the river is up to the edge of the bank it is important to remember the depth, mid-river here can be up to 30 feet, with very strong flows even at the edge, so you must consider your safety precautions at all times. The banks, and especially the mud, in the beach areas is very slippery so I always wear stout walking boots that grip well and use a safety rope, attached to a dog spike when landing fish, etc. Also, always tell someone where you are going fishing and you're your expected time of return. This is especially important when you are fishing at Pixham alone and in the dark as I frequently do.

Tackle

During the spring and summer with normal river levels I use 1.75tc rods with baitrunners loaded with 12lbs Pro-Gold mainline. In autumn and winter or periods when the river levels are high, I use 2.25tc rods and 14lbs Pro-clear mainline with a standard running leger rig. I use 15lbs clear Amnesia mono for all my hook links which are 12 to 18 inches long with size 6 talon tip hooks and weights between 3 to 6ozs dependant on conditions. For baits I either use 18/20mm Source boilies with PVA bags attached every cast or meat, hair rigged, using Phoxinus meat coils. I don't use bite



alarms. At night I rely on the baitrunner with glowstick battery operated tip lights.

2018/2019 Season Pixham Results

The first two years that I fished Pixham I had limited success. So, this season I decided to put in more effort. It does not seem to fish so

well early on in the season, so I fished other Lower Severn waters where I had some good catches and I did not really start fishing Pixham until September. I am lucky in that I only live 20 minutes away so I can choose to go when conditions are favourable.

I tend to fish for five-

hours after work, usually into dark sessions, so I rarely see other anglers there when I fish. I much prefer to fish during the hours of darkness for best results.

Checked my diary, last season I fished 28 sessions at Pixham and of these I caught barbel in 22 of them. This consisted of a total of 47 Barbel including 3 x 10lbs+, 2 x 11lbs+, 2 x 12lbs+ and one of 13lbs 7ozs.

In one exceptional, memorable three-hour session in November I caught 10 Barbel. I am extremely pleased with these results and I know other regulars have had similar catches.

Other species I have caught include Bream, Roach, Perch, Chub, Pike, Eels and I know there are Zander also present.

Summary

I think Pixham is a great fishery and like any fishery, if you are prepared to put some time and effort into your fishing you will reap the rewards. I have only scratched the surface so far at Pixham, but next season I intend to spend more time exploring the other swims, higher up in the second field. There is something about the place that keeps drawing you back and when you cast in you just never know if the next fish will be. A 2lbs, 12lbs or even the next record fish.

