

A TALE OF TWO RIVERS

From the peaceful Warwickshire Avon to the tempestuous Teme, these Severn tributaries offer very different prospects



THE Severn is quite rightly judged by anglers to be the West Midlands' premier river, but I still hold two more wonderful waterways in this area in great affection. Ultimately, these tributaries supply life to the mothership, so to speak, and I find it fascinating how they can be so diverse in terms of how they look and fish.

The Teme and the Warwickshire Avon follow rather different courses. The Avon flows through Shakespeare country, but actually begins life in Northamptonshire, before gathering pace and volume as it heads to the Vale of Evesham. Here, its waters create fertile soil for the market garden of England and its bountiful crops of fruits and vegetables.

The fish, too, grow well, and the Avon is famed for its barbel. This is what I'd describe as a peaceful river, meandering through the Midlands and offering great fishing in a tranquil setting.

The Teme, on the other hand, is far more aggressive, cutting steep-sided banks before weaving its way to the Severn just below Worcester.

It actually rises in Wales, and having its origin in the land of the red dragon perhaps explains its fiery nature. It starts life as a fast-flowing and shallow torrent before calming down in the vicinity of Tenbury Wells, where it pauses to take a breath and coarse fish can gain a foothold. Chub and barbel can now make it their home.

For anyone who wants an intimate angling experience, the Teme should be their port of call. This river poses a very different challenge to the vastness of the Severn.

I love variety in my own fishing - so when my friend Adam Fisher of Angling Dreams

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Adam Fisher shows off a small but perfectly-formed River Teme chub.

A handsome brown trout was the first to fall.



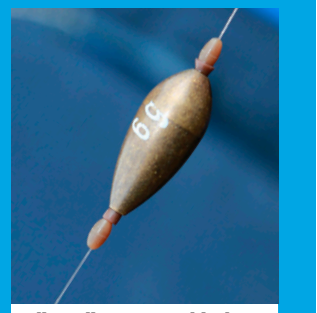
Merlin the dog mounts guard over the Teme.



The Teme is home to some decent barbel.



My tried-and-trusted end tackle for trotting maggots.



Inline olivettes are kinder to fine lines than split shot.



Yellow-tipped floats were the most visible on the day.



Bait was simple - maggots were the way to go.

invited me to try out a new Wye & Usk Foundation stretch of the Teme that'll soon be available to book on a day ticket, I decided to combine it with a trip to the Warwickshire Avon.

By putting in an evening and early morning on the Avon I could avoid the traffic and meet up later with Adam. Which is why I found myself sitting by the Avon on a beautiful evening

after a day of rain, my bedchair set up beside the van. As far as I was concerned, no hotel in the world could offer me a better place to stay!

I had nothing more ambitious in mind than to connect with a fish or two, and certainly I felt no need to go into overdrive and catch as many as I could. To be honest, once dinner was cooked I'd be reeling in and getting a good night's sleep.

Happily, I put a lobworm on the hook and flicked it out to the far bank where the chub patrolled, certain that soon enough a big white mouth would come along and suck it up like spaghetti. The quivertip flicked round four times before the angler in me was satisfied and I wanted to feed myself, rather than the fish.

With pizza in hand and a mouthful of pepperoni, I stared up at the stars and wondered

what life was all about, before quickly concluding that I was happy with mine. Really, that was all that mattered.

Given how close I was to the Teme, I didn't really need to get up early - but after an undisturbed sleep I wanted to see the sun rise and have another quick cast before I met up with Adam. On went the kettle while I still needed a headtorch to see the steam.

There was a distinctly autumnal chill to the air, but that didn't seem to put the chub - or, indeed, me - off breakfast. After a bowl of muesli I was holding up the bronze flank of a nice chub to the early-morning sun.

I had neither the need nor the time for another cast, so after a pleasant chat with the husband and wife who run the farm I closed the old metal gate and made my way to Tenbury Wells.

I had to cross the Severn and traverse the Malverns before I met Adam at the entrance to Newnham Fisheries. Here, to the rear of a farm, the Teme raced by through a small gorge, even though the water levels elsewhere were low.

Adam explained that the potential of this stretch was unknown, but that he'd seen and caught barbel on a reconnaissance mission. He'd spotted chub, too, as well as a shoal of big dace which I decided I'd certainly like to get to grips with.

It seemed logical to prebait a couple of spots with the obligatory pellets where the barbel had been seen, before wandering upstream with float rods and maggots. Merlin, Adam's dog, made up the numbers, and he seemed even keener than we were as he rushed excitedly along the river bank.

Where do you start when faced with so many pools and glides,

each one looking as good as the last? Sometimes it comes down to a best guess, and a beautifully spotted rogue brown trout gave us the first bend in the rod.

It was a joy to watch the fluorescent tip of a loafer wind its way through each run and, despite the lack of water, it still did so with purpose. In normal conditions the river would be full of energy, but today the only other fish we caught were small chub. Where were those dace?

As a nomadic species, they could have moved miles away as the river level dropped. We were both philosophical about the situation and, after lunch, returned to investigate the prebaited spots.

After 15 minutes of patient observation through polarised glasses a shoal of chub meandered by, then a solitary barbel materialised right under

my feet, so well camouflaged that I'd not seen its approach.

Alas, for the three hours that remained all the fish apparently took refuge in one of the many pools along the stretch and, because I had an appointment later that day, I needed to pack up.

No matter, I'd seen enough to justify a return when the autumn rains had swelled the Teme. This had been no red letter day, but a lovely one nevertheless. As the world becomes ever more confusing, rivers like the Warwickshire Avon and Teme can offer us the peace we all need.

● **Newnham Fishery is available to book through the Fishing Passport - wyeuskfoundation.org**



The Avon's chub couldn't resist a worm.



The early-morning chub were in obliging mood.

“The quivertip flicked round four times before the angler in me was satisfied and I wanted to feed myself, rather than the fish”