



# LOB IN A WORM AND PREPARE TO DO BATTLE!

No fish can resist this most alluring of all natural baits – as the chub and barbel of the Hampshire Avon prove on my latest adventure...

**S**OMETIMES, it's not how many fish you catch, but how you catch them that matters most, and on a recent trip to the Hampshire Avon with Laurence Hanger, I decided to try to put this perspective into practice.

We were staying at The Riverside Lodge just outside Fordingbridge, where the river offers some of the country's

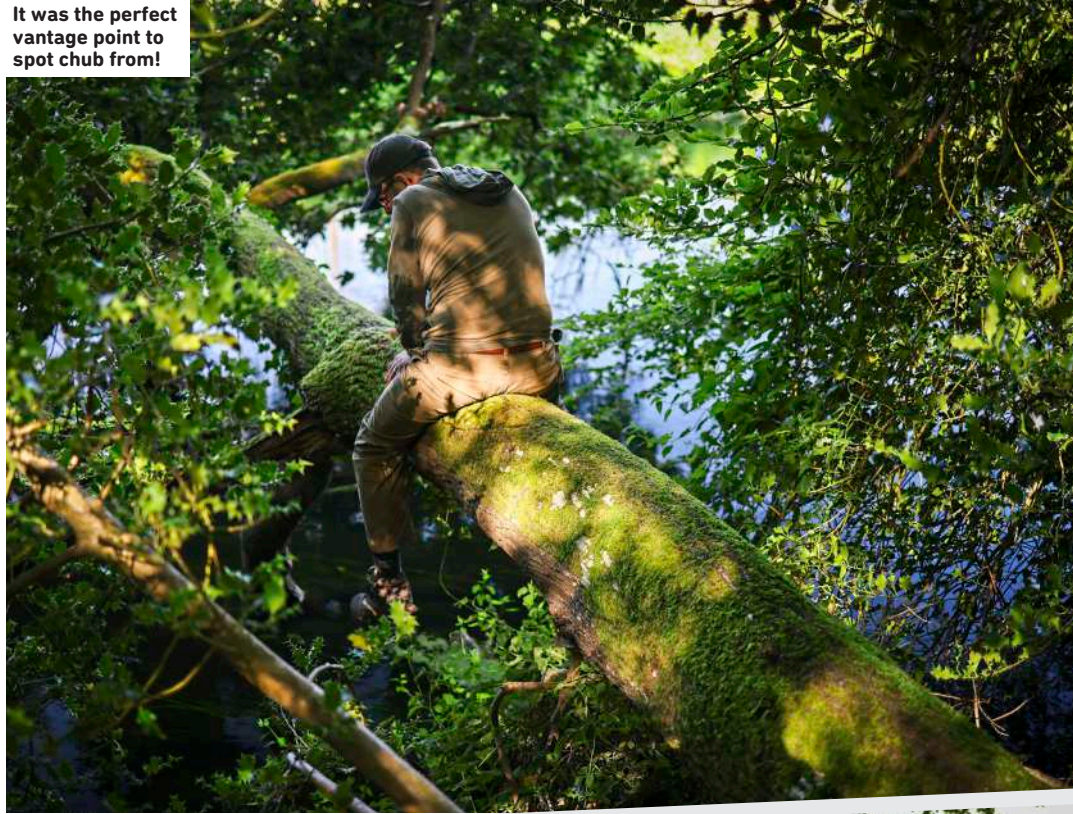
best chub and barbel fishing. A freelined or quivertipped lobworm would catch both these popular species, and maybe more besides, because everything that swims loves a lobby. The best part of it was that we'd be waking up next to the river, no more than a dozen footsteps away from some fantastic fishing! After a good meal and a blissfully peaceful night's sleep

in the lodge, we were up early and eager to see what the Avon had to offer. A spectacular view of the water meadow was a good start as we drank coffee, watching the streamer weed swaying in the current and chublets pimpling on the surface. It was mesmerising, but we needed to snap out of our reverie and

Continued over the page



It was the perfect vantage point to spot chub from!



Laurence succeeded with a barbel where I failed!



think about wetting a line.

First, I needed to check my worms were in good condition and, like me, had enjoyed a nice meal – in their case, a chunk of cucumber. Swathed in damp newspaper, they were plump, juicy and wriggly – just how the fish like them. This was the only bait I had, and to deliver it I used an 11ft rod with a 1½oz glass quivertip painted white with three coats of acrylic marker pen, and finished off with two coats of varnish.

To my 6lb line reel line I added a simple paternoster rig that could be used for link-legering, or simply left without shot if I wanted to freeline.

A hook was the only other thing needed for this simple, yet effective, approach and the worms were consigned to a baiting pouch, leaving both hands free to carry the rod, net and unhooking mat. I donned polarised glasses and a baseball cap and I was all ready for a spell of fish spotting.

An unintended trout took the worm first and, while I'd rather have caught it on a fly, there

Sheltered behind a tree, I waited for the worm to work its sorcery.



This prime dace was a very welcome bonus.



was no arguing the beauty of its silvery blue gill plates and spotted flanks, each marking ringed in a halo. Back went this magnificent creature unharmed, and next came an equally beautiful but totally different fish, a perch.

Had I lost it, I'd have sworn it was twice its actual size but, at around 1½lb, it was still a pleasing catch.

I now needed to focus on chub – if I could locate any, they'd require a stealthy approach. They'll eat just about anything, but the slightest disturbance and they're gone!

If I could get a worm in place without arousing suspicion I was certain it would be taken confidently.

Climbing trees, peering around bushes and, in Wilson's words, 'walking like a chicken' to avoid a heavy footfall, are all part of stalking chub. And I

## "The 'plop' of the worm landing put the chub shoal on red alert"

was rewarded for my caution when half-a-dozen big chainmail-clad specimens drifted into view.

From their leisurely behaviour it was apparent that they didn't know I was there, so I slipped down behind a tree trunk while I impaled a worm through its saddle.

If I could present this naturally in the water I was confident of success, so I turned back to the Avon and poked my rod out over the river. I opened the bail-arm, and the 'plop' of the worm landing put the chub shoal on red alert. It fell towards the riverbed, writhing as it went, but was destined never to quite get there!

Without further ado, a big white gob sucked it in like spaghetti, and I struck. Wonderful stuff, but I had no time to dwell on this as I needed to focus on preventing

the chub from smashing me under a raft of debris.

I plunged the rod-tip deep into the river and hung on, slowly but surely gaining line. I then lifted the rod back up and piled on the pressure to ensure the fish never reached sanctuary again, and boils on the surface soon drained my quarry of its energy. Fantastic stuff!

It was now time for lunch and, with a kitchen close-by, it was a big step up from soggy sandwiches. After eating well, returning to the river was hard, and I admit I was tempted to have a siesta!

Fortunately, I didn't, and although chub were the mainstay of my afternoon's sport I also had a lovely bonus dace, a fish which, come winter, would develop a deep chest on its way to becoming a proper specimen. All this

Our fishing lodge couldn't have been much closer to the Hampshire Avon!



was great fun, but what I really wanted was an Avon barbel. Should I change hookbait to a pellet? No need – in autumn they crave earthworms, and I cast one for the final time under a fallen branch.

I don't always fish well, but I know when I do, and the bouncing of the tip as the split shot shuffled across the bottom told me that I'd got it right. Sure enough, the tip soon slammed round! I'd got what I wanted, but now the barbel was intent on showing me who was boss.

At one point I thought I'd won, but that was all part of

the barbel's masterplan. At the last moment, as I was wielding the landing net and sensing victory, it dived for the tree roots under the bank and smashed me up.

The barbel didn't have the last word, though, because Laurence, who'd stayed on for another day, sent me a picture of him holding the prince of the river! The bait, of course, was a lobworm!

● The Riverside Lodge is run by [www.shortstayhomes.co.uk](http://www.shortstayhomes.co.uk). It can also be contacted on [info@riversidelodgegenforest.co.uk](mailto:info@riversidelodgegenforest.co.uk) or 01425 517311.