

## Goring fish restock 'going well' but much more work needed, says fishing club chair

The chair of Goring Fishing Club, Neal Debono, has told GGN that the two year fish restocking programme is going well. The Environment Agency (EA) partnership with the local club has resulted in 500 barbel fish going into the River Thames by Goring Lock, and Neal says there are more on the way. Another 250 barbel are due to go into the river this December in a bid to increase stock for anglers.

Barbel are distinguishable by the two pairs of whisker-like 'barbels' on either side of their mouths, with one pair slightly longer and down positioned. All the new fish added to the river have a blue tattoo on the underside of their bellies: 'The first lot, their tattoo is mid-center, the second lot, top center, and the third lot should – when they go in – have one bottom center'. (See images for reference.)

Neal says there was an initial delay with the first batch because of river conditions: 'Because of how the river was behaving at the time, the first lot went in during January 2024'. However, the second batch went in when he wanted them to, in December of last year. Neal says that Goring is quite unique in having four weirs, and that this has added its own challenges. The water is highly oxygenated, he says, and this means the fish going in needed to be more mature (on his recommendation, three summers old) in order to survive. 'We could have had 10,000 little fingerlings (two inches long) but they wouldn't have survived.'

Predation from crayfish is likely when the new fish reproduce, but the club has permission to lay down crayfish traps around the spawning ground, and, once they are laid, will be checking to make sure there is no concretation either (build-up of a concrete-like sediment over the top of fish spawn). Overall, it seems that every precaution has been taken to ensure the new fish survive. Neal is fairly sure the barbel will have 'hunkered down' on the river bed and, because of their natural shape, will be pushing the water safely over their heads.

While he is happy with the progress of the restocking, he admits they haven't caught many of the new fish: 'three have come out,' he tells me. However, after a recent conversation with the EA, it looks like they'll soon have a clearer picture of how successful the restock has been. 'They're going to come up and electrofish it probably around June time.' This will help identify how many of the freshwater barbel are still at Goring and how many have moved up or down stream. He anticipates around a 10% survival rate, so only about 75 barbel across the two year programme: 'that's 75 fish more than are here now,' he tells me, optimistically.

Neal is very pleased with the EA's decision to invest in the river here at Goring, but he says there's still lots more to do, particularly given the under-investment from the government and the failing water infrastructure: 'At the minute we're only scratching the surface.'

He says it's important that the outcome of this restock is positive for the fish population: 'We want to try and be able to make sure that they're going to spawn'. Once we know that, then they will hopefully be self-sufficient and it's a case of 'happy days'. He emphasises that community engagement is key: 'If we don't look after the river, or try to look after the river, it's going to end up sterile'. He explains further: 'The problem is that only anglers know what's below that surface'. However, he seems to be hopeful that more incremental positive changes are possible, and that we can increase public awareness about the state of our rivers: 'If we know the fish populations, we know we've got a healthy river'.

Dan Gordon-P





## About Goring Fishing Club

Goring Fishing Club is over 60 years old and was established by the firefighters of Goring Fire Station after their social club closed. However, photographs confirm that there has been a fishing club in the villages for more than 160 years. Today, 'the club' continues to manage and control angling along the east bank of the River Thames. Its venue starts from the green at Ferry Lane immediately downstream and has done so for over 60 years. It stretches 1½ miles and consists of four distinct sections and more than 80 designated pegs. According to their website, their venue contains good stocks of Poach, Chub, Dace, Bream, Perch and Pike, as well as some Carp, Barbel, and occasionally Tench. All fish caught in club water are returned and (excluding pegs 78 to 86) night fishing is also permitted. Details about membership for the 2025-26 season will be available on their website [fishgoring.co.uk](http://fishgoring.co.uk)



*A barbel showing the whisker-like 'barbels' on the side of the mouth (left), and the blue tattoo on the underside (right)*



## Paying for my brown bin

You are probably aware that the way SODC allow us to pay for our brown bins has changed. After 1 April we must have a sticker on our brown bins to prove that we have paid to have it collected. The system for paying for brown bins online went live at the end of February. I have used it to pay for mine and I thought it might be helpful to record my experience. I spent about 20 minutes on it, but did achieve my goal of paying – I now am living in hope of receiving my sticker.

Start at [www.southoxon.gov.uk](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk)

You see a banner:

*You can now pay for your garden waste permit. The quickest way to do this is online. Our phone lines are busier than normal. If you encounter any issues, this may be due to the high volume of users in the system – please try again later. – Pay here:*

[www.southoxon.gov.uk/gardenwaste](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/gardenwaste)

Click on the link – there is a page of info about garden waste but click on 'Apply for your garden waste permit' then again on the next page 'New Garden waste permit' (confusingly this is not highlighted or underlined). The next page is headed 'New Garden Waste permit' (encouraging – it could have been worse).

Reading through, there is a recommendation to register for a 'MyAccount' – I clicked on this and successfully managed to receive the necessary PIN by email. The next bit was more challenging. If, like me, you are not in the full flush of e-youth, bear in mind that in order to create a password for your account you must be ready for this:

*Passwords must contain at least 12 characters, at least 1 special character, at least 1 numeric character, at least 1 upper case letter, at least 1 lower case letter and no more than two of the same characters in a row.*

Assuming you can understand that you must also be able to accurately type the password twice, without being able to see what you have typed (no helpful eye symbol on this one). I got it on the second go but I was having a good day. Some days it might be better to skip opening an account – you don't actually have to have one to pay for the bin and I got sent back to the beginning page anyway in order to start on the actual purchase.

So back to the 'New Garden waste permit page' and of course the first thing required is to tick the box to say you have read the T&Cs. I know you won't read them so I'll help you out – it's basically a list of 20 draconian reasons why you won't see your money again.

After that it is fairly plain sailing – I had to enter all my details again despite opening an account and I even had to put in my address a third time and provide a one-time passcode in order to pay (my bank really doesn't like withdrawals). I'm fairly confident I've done what was required so I'll sit back and wait for it to all go wrong as usual.

*Gill Haigh*