

Mike is Olney's nearly man as club gets unwelcome record!

OLNEY's Mike Farey is Mr 'nearly man' – the man who nearly caught a fish and nearly became the only local match-winner of a sub-zero week.

He was one of 17 hardy souls braving minus double digit temperatures to fish the club's Willen Hospice charity cup Ouse open, Sunday.

But unlike the other 16, he actually hooked a fish – playing the 2lb chub to within inches of his net...where it slipped the hook and sank back out of sight.

That meant the only winner on the day was the hospice, now due a cheque for 50 odd quid.

Olney treasurer Dave Partridge said: "It's the first time since 1949 that we've had a cup match without a name to go on the cup."

■ MKAA's Brush Mill club get together and Towcester's Shutlanger Tove do both finished in similar whimpering style – without anyone getting a bite.

■ BUT back at Olney, Monday, Ray Jones became a legend in his own lunchbreak, banking a 5-4 chub on red maggot and stickfloat...watched by (an envious) Dave Partridge who had been biteless, yards away, in the previous day's match.

■ ANGLERS may have been out of luck, but otters have been making a killing on the Newport pits Ouse.

No less than FIVE 'ottered' barbel (one pictured below) – with their throat-stomach areas ripped out in tell-tale style – have been



● 'Ottered' barbel



● Alan Ford with Newport pits biggie

found dragged up the banks during the cold snap.

Four of them, part of the river's brood stock and which won't now be breeding this spring, were five to six-pounders and the other a decent double.

Evidence of otter kills had abated since its 2008 peak – when the British record barbel 'the Traveller' and other Adams Mill biggies met grisly ends – possibly because the barbel population had been decimated in the initial onslaught.

But the sudden cold spell would have sent most crayfish, otters' main food, into riverbank burrows and left barbel, which can go almost comatose in low temperatures, as easy targets.

Newport committee man Dave Tebbutt said: "The saddest part is these are just the bodies we have found. Five otters were seen in one area by an angler back in November. If they carry on like this I

give it three years max before the river is devoid of barbel."

Not only river fish are under threat. Lower downstream otters looking for easy pickings have been wreaking havoc among big carp and bream on riverside pits. So it may only be a matter of time before fish like the big common (pictured above) caught by Alan Ford from Newport's Sherington road pits a while back, also fall victim.

■ FIXTURES: Feb 19, Olney pike & perch match 01234 240061. March 4 Pete Hobson memorial pike open (iced-off last weekend) Mount Farm, tickets £10 from MK Angling Centre.

■ **AND FINALLY: IT'S the end of an era as Stoke Hammond couple Charlie and Dawn Green retire, Saturday, closing their Chiltern Tackle shop after 25 years in business.**
Thanks for the service, guys.

Matches, catches, even rough patches? If there's a tale to tell call Trevor Johnson on 01908 270000 (office) or 07801 183381 or email angling@intermediauk.com (click link to email)