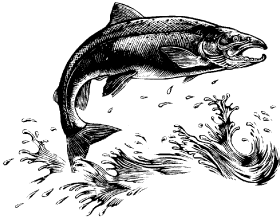


INVICTA

FLY FISHING CLUB, CAMBRIDGE

Affiliated to the Federation of Midlands Fly Fishers (Anglia), the Angler's Conservation Association and the Salmon and Trout Association



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www.invictaffc.org.uk



Boats coming ashore to nest at Rutland.

Bob Ayres receives a special award for his casting skills at the Annual Dinner



SPREAD THE NEWS

You are cordially invited to post information about how the reservoirs are fishing (or not as the case may be) on the Invicta web site:

<http://www.invictaffc.org.uk>

Remember – every little helps (as they say at Tesco).

STOP PRESS

It has been decided to cancel the last of our winter meetings on 17th March. This was to have been Chris McLeod's Quiz Nite – but we've done that already. Don't forget Colin Brett's talk on fishing in Canada on Thursday 3rd March, usual time, usual place.

GRAFHAM NEWS AND UPDATE – A VISIT BY ANGLIAN WATER

With the season less than a month away, David Moore and John Mees delivered what seemed like a history lesson on the 2004 season at Grafham.

Some of the information is contained in the AWA publication "Hooked!" which should have been delivered to most anglers by now. Many of the presentations can be found on the GWFFA web site www.gwffa-grafham.co.uk.

David said that it had been a good season overall. The catch return was £3.5 which was maintained throughout the season. For the first time, all four reservoirs recorded more than 50% of the catch exceeding 2lbs: the figure for Grafham was 64%. This was partly a result of the stocking policy. Good sources of fish have been identified. A few small stockies slipped through but it had only been necessary to reject one delivery. The 9lb 12oz brown caught by Gordon Watson from the dam was the best for two seasons. Growth rates for rainbows were slower at Grafham than in previous years but better at Rutland. The autumn sport was particularly exceptional at Rutland. The number of anglers at Grafham was slightly down partly due to the reduction in the number of competitions. However, courses for newcomers were heavily subscribed and showed great potential for further expansion: 55 courses overall are planned for 2005. The down side is that the average age of participants exceeds 40. Other developments include the acquisition of a Mk 2 Wheelyboat for disabled anglers who will also be greatly assisted by the tarmacing of one of the harbour arms. The tackle shop was very popular. Surveys showed that anglers purchased up to 75% of their tackle through the shop rather than through mail order outlets. Season ticket holders enjoy a 10% reduction from marked prices. The purchase of a rod costing more than £249 entitles the angler to a free boat. Shop manager, Tracey Rathbone, was the Ladies Home International after just two seasons experience.

David thanked local clubs for the active support offered to the Fishery staff.

Details of the permits can be found in *Hooked!* The flexible policy has been maintained and even widened. The Green Ticket for example can now be extended to include an extra couple of months. Anglers renewing tickets are entitled to a £25 loyalty bonus which is increased to £50 if upgrading to another ticket. Thus opting for a Silver rather than a Green ticket will only cost another £55 rather than the +£110 for first timers. Season ticket holders, apart from a 10% discount in the shop, are also eligible for a boat for £15 in July and August. There was a poor take-up of this in 2004 possibly through a lack of publicity. The average age of season ticket holders was claimed to be 60+. Any junior, on the other hand, who manages to get into the England team, will be awarded a free season ticket.

The stocking policy for 2004 was 12% 450g, 41% 750g, 43% >900g. Four per cent of the stock was browns. The intention was to increase the proportion of brownies at Grafham in the future although they cost 30% more than rainbows.

A lot of planned maintenance was needed on the pumps at Grafham last year that lasted over 12 weeks. The water became "stale". When pumping restarted in July there was a massive increase in algae which peaked at over 150,000 cells per ml.



John Mees demonstrates the tying of one of his bonefish flies at a meeting in January

August storms also increased the nutrients running into the reservoir. Notwithstanding these anomalies, the water was dirty, there was a distinct lack of weed throughout the reservoir (not just within the refilled zone) and fish did not feed. The lack of shelter forced the shoals of fry normally found around features such as the harbour, out to deeper water.

Cormorants seem to have returned. The count in November was 420. Damage to trout was, at 2%, much lower than the peak of 8% in 1997. Don't forget to tick the box in the returns if you land fish with the characteristic slash associated with a failed attack of the black death. The birds were thought to be feeding mainly on fry. AWA will not be shooting cormorants. Rather, they will maintain stocking with larger fish, slightly later in the season and spreading the fish around the reservoir. David described the situation as "tolerable".

Plans for 2005 are essentially as for previous years. Opening days at Ravensthorpe, Pitsford, Grafham and Rutland will be 4th, 11th, 18th and 24th March respectively. Note that fishing prior to 1st April will be restricted to outside SSSI boundaries. Early competitions penned in for Grafham include TFEO Championships (25-30th April), Anglian Water Fulling Mill International (24th May) and the Spring International (8-10th June).

In a Q&A session, our latest dipper, Peter Reeves, related the difficulty he experienced in climbing out of the water even though he was in the harbour. Attention was drawn to the lack of some kind of rail that could be grabbed. Apparently Eyebrook and Draycote have rails which were thought to be very useful in assisting anglers to enter and leave boats. David seemed interested in this possibility although he thought there was a need to balance something that was perceived as helpful but might also be a hazard.

David did highlight the availability of boat handling courses over the past three seasons. These were based on the RYA course "Introduction to Power Boating" modified to suit anglers. This covers general safety, use of the outboard, dealing with rough conditions and setting the anchor, amongst other topics. Nothing on retrieving fly lines from the prop! The cost for the one-day course is £55 and lunch is included, but

successful anglers will get £1 off each boat they hire for the next three seasons. It is possible, as in Germany, that an EU Directive will demand that no one will be allowed out in a powered boat without providing some evidence of competence.

Chris McLeod mentioned the inherent benefits of a drogue that was attached by two ropes fixed at either end of the boat. Such an arrangement can be left in the water when motoring unless radical manoeuvres were proposed. It is not yet permitted under International Rules but it must be worthy of an article judging from the novelty of the system to those present.

Blue-green algae, which release deadly toxins when rotting on the bank, was not present to any significant extent on any of the reservoirs last season. Although elephants have succumbed in Africa, no anglers have shared this fate at Grafham! Nevertheless, some care should be taken when fishing during the rare but well-advertised occasions when it is present, should the angler have cuts and abrasions on their hands. A briefing card is available in the Grafham shop.

The gill infestation, *Ergasilus*, has not recurred to any significant level at Rutland in 2004 and this undoubtedly accounts for the enhanced growth rates compared with previous seasons. Hence it is proposed to relax the catch and release ban in July except in June, July and August.

Out-of-hours access to the car parks at Grafham should be improved by the introduction of combination locks on the gates. Proposed improvements around Hill Farm have not progressed partly because an error was discovered in the definitive map showing footpaths in the area. Neither has the jetty been restored simply because the water levels have been too high.

Another excellent exchange of views, unimaginable 25 years ago, demonstrating that David and John have retained the enthusiasm necessary to ensure that AW reservoirs remain the first choice for anglers everywhere. Well done!

David Jones



CAPS AND BADGES
 The new cap is available from Alan Prevost at £7.50.
 Also badges at £3.00.
 If you buy both, Alan will accept a tenner.
 Very smart and in an understated, sophisticated tint of grey.

Get kitted up for '05



Serious business at the recent AGM

3 MARCH 05
COLIN BRETT ON CANADA
 Colin's report from his recent trip to the fabulous Fraser River and the area around Vancouver. Essential listening for all those planning a trip.

FISH FOR ENGLAND
 A further reminder that Invicta members can fish an eliminator along with East Midlands FTA.
 This is an alternative route to the Midland final, for East Mids and Invicta anglers, in addition to the established Odds and Sods eliminator.
 Please contact Chris McLeod if you would like to fish.

WHY NOT ON TOP?

Peter Reeves offers a thought on the changing fly life.

I suppose looking back at earlier seasons, like life, one gets a rosy impression of the past and remembers the good whilst forgetting the difficult. A detailed fishing diary does a lot to put this right. However, even with one I find that the surface activity throughout the season on the mainly fished water, in my case Grafham, has dropped off surprisingly in the last few years - although I did have a great day in late November with fish moving freely on top! I would not say the fishing has but the fish moving on the surface seem to have diminished considerably. This has been brought home to me in 2004 since I have fished other waters more and at Eyebrook in particular and Pitsford to a lesser extent I have been reminded of the circumstances experienced at Grafham in years gone by and wonder why. Huge numbers of fly pouring off the surface also seem a thing of the past but Anglian Water in their talk to

us prior to the 2004 season advised us on phenomenal numbers of larvae active per square metre in the bottom mud. What happens to them? They don't appear to get to the surface that much! Fewer surface hatches of course would indicate fewer fish on top taking advantage. Another aspect is that I have noticed more fish with cormorant marks on their flanks. Are the fish staying deeper perhaps to avoid these perils? If so why not at Eyebrook and Pitsford? We have seen great fluctuations in water levels over the last few years - can this be a factor in the apparent change of habits, or is it related to the rearing methods of the fish stocked or some other factor? Maybe you have some thoughts or information which can clarify the reasons, if so answers on an e-mail please to the editor so that we may all share in the rich diversity of views and experience. However, meantime, we are lucky indeed to have such diversity of fishing character in so many excellent waters available to us within reasonable driving distances. Let us be thankful.



CUP WINNERS

Some of the winners presented with their cups at the Annual Dinner.

Alan Prevost, Mark Searle, Graham Williams and Andy Linwood with a special prize for his extensive entomological knowledge(!!!).

DATES FOR THE DIARY

Some progress has been made with organising the club's summer trips. More details will be provided on one of Doug's pretty fliers but in the meantime:

Pitsford, Monday 4th April. Possibly meet for breakfast at the Little Chef at Kettering West and a pint afterwards at the White Swan in Holcot. No fixed start or finish time.

Rutland, Sunday 8th May. Meet for breakfast at the lodge. No fixed start or finish time.

Draycote: we hope to make this Saturday 18th June but nothing booked so far.

Ravensthorpe, Saturday 25th June. Meet at lodge 9 a.m. No fixed finish time.

Eyebrook, Friday 8th July. Breakfast at Little Chef, Thrapston, meet at lodge 9 a.m. approx. No fixed finish time.

Pitsford, Friday 12th August. Draw for partners. Start 09:00 and weigh in at 19:00. Trophy (Carl Hunter Bowl) for heaviest (first) six fish.

EARLY PLANNING

The Committee would welcome suggestions for speakers for next winter (some who might remember to turn up perhaps?).

Grafham, Sunday 11th September. Breakfast at the lodge and a draw for partners at 08:30. Start at 09:00 and weigh in at 18:00. Trophy (President's Cup) for heaviest eight fish bag. We plan to have a meal afterwards but the venue has not been decided.

Hanningfield: we hope to make this Wednesday 5th October.

Early notification of your intention to attend any of these trips would be gratefully appreciated by your ever-despairing bookings officer who can be contacted by e-mail at john.caldwell@unep-wcmc.org or by phone: 01480 381619 (home), 01223 277314 (work), 07956 275485 (mobile).

The Tuesday evening league kicks off on 17th May and finishes on 16th August, same format as last year.

It is also hoped to have a five week **October league** on Sunday mornings in (not unnaturally) October.