

## Winter Evening Report

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### Anglian Water – 02/02/17

AW Review of the 2016 season with Jon Marshall and Angela Tarry



#### **Jon Marshall**

Previous reviews of past seasons have been a bit of paralysis by analysis with graphs showing all sorts of correlations. This time around the approach was more informal and relied on a question and answer approach. This was partly necessary because the extended winter season meant that there was precious little time to continue with the original format.

We started off with a review of catch rates in the various waters:

Ravensthorpe topped the league with 6.1. The reservoir was held up as an example of the success of catch and release, providing that the summer temperatures were not too extreme.

Pitsford recorded 5.1. It was my only trip of the year I was impressed by the facilities, the scenery and above all, the quality of the fish. I wish it was closer. Apparently spinning is permitted in July and August. Has anyone experience of this?

Rutland at 4.2 was said to be much improved over previous seasons with plenty of evidence that the fish had grown on well. I wonder if this will be reflected in the size of overwintered fish? Winter fishing was claimed to be exceptional with one angler reputedly landing 60 fish off the bank in 3 days.

Grafham did well with a catch rate of 5.7.

The catch returns are based on the slips submitted after a fishing session. Some anglers think that presenting a nil return regardless, will mean that the stocking rate will be increased. Not so said Jon! There was no differentiation between bank and boat catches. I would guess that the ratio is about 1:5. Jon reckoned that freshly introduced stockies head for the deeps at Grafham whereas those at Rutland stay around the banks.

Jon praised the fish farms in maintaining the quality of the fish. However, there is a decline, season on season, on the number of anglers. Evening fishing is not so popular – not surprising considering the requirements demanded by the efforts to prevent the spread of the killer shrimp. Efforts are in hand to increase participation.

Tuition at Grafham has been very effective and Jon could not understand why it was not more widely used at other venues. Competitions were essential in maintaining income although even the major events are in decline. Club events are important and include a wide range of activities including an Over 50's event, Fur and Feather, Floating line, Pairs, Tuesdays Night's and Winter leagues.

Predator fishing accounted for 80 season tickets. Jon liked the care shown for their quarry prior to release. Providing pike to Hambledon Hall for remanufacturing as paté at Rutland has now ceased! Apparently, according to Jon, pike catches at Chew have declined dramatically.

Other sources of funds are, for example, the shop. Expensive items such as rods and clothing tend to be purchased on the internet. Fishing licences are not sold at the shop because of the limited staff and the queues likely to form when anglers are filling in forms. In any case they are readily available on-line or at Post Offices. Potential customers might moan about the parking charges incurred prior to shopping. I did not realise that they can be reimbursed at the shop. It was suggested that they sold coffee but that might conflict with the services offered by the restaurant.

Sykes Lane at Rutland is a popular venue for the public in the summer such that it is sometimes difficult to find a parking spot. Life guards, a sandy shore and an outer barrier in the water make it quite a pleasant site - I know because I have been there! The water is about 5 feet deep at the barrier given normal water levels. The bed of the reservoir in this area is firm and free from silt (and weed?). I am not sure there is a suitable site at Grafham. There is also an Aqua Park in Whitwell Creek which provides sporting activities (for a small fee) if you can swim 50 metres without a buoyancy aid.

The rocky shore reinforcements were a source of controversy and considered to be dangerous. AW accepts no responsibility for H&S issues. They are experimenting at Rutland and Pitsford to reduce the hazard by covering the rocks with fine stones. In the early days at Grafham, the banks were preserved by submerged hedgerows. Bit dangerous if you happen to take one step too many when you could end up in 3 or 4 feet of water! Pity that they were removed though at the request of the Sailing fraternity. To be honest, I cannot understand why anglers feel the need to climb down the rocks. (Ed - difficult to carry out the Grafham shuffle from the top of the rocks!!). It seems logical to me to stay on the top bank, where casting is much easier, and buy a long handled landing net to retrieve fish. Match anglers seem much more adept at solving problems like this.

If you have a gripe with things at Grafham you could raise the issue with Gary How who sits on an annual meeting of club representatives with AW for just this purpose. Better still you could volunteer to participate with the Rangers who run working parties on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday's in the month, meeting at the Lodge at around 9-9.30am ending around 3pm. (Invicta website says there is another working party on Tuesdays).

Already access has been improved on the north bank and a lot of terrestrial weeds removed from the rock strewn areas. A car park has been made at the foot of Church Road but I am not sure if this was down to the Rangers task force.

Rudders are not allowed at Grafham but you can now take your dog. I am not sure mine would appreciate the application of the bio security measures!!

Finally, we had the opportunity to find out more about Angela. I thought I had mis-heard when she said that she had been at Grafham for 8 years. Her background so far is entirely in leisure management starting with a golf club. In 2008 she joined Anglia Water as manager of the Visitors Centre and moved on to her present post of Park Manager (Grafham) in 2011. This covers all activities, not only angling. She has no fishing related qualifications other than those acquired in spending a day out on the reservoir in a pairs match with Chris McLeod!



**Angela Tarry**

Reservoir opening days for 2017

Fishing starts at Pitsford on the 25<sup>th</sup> February, Grafham on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, and Rutland 10<sup>th</sup> March. The structure of the options on tickets will remain the same although charges will increase slightly. Full details will appear in "Hooked" which will be available on the 18<sup>th</sup> February at the Pitsford Open Day.

Tight lines everyone!  
Dave Jones Feb 2k17