

## Winter Evening Report

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Jon Marshall – 04/02/16

### **PROSPECTS FOR THE ANGLIAN WATER RESERVOIRS IN 2016**

Jon Marshall visited the Invicta's to tell us about the prospects for the forthcoming season which is almost upon us. Jon is winding down and is currently "in the office" for a couple of days a week. Nevertheless he clearly had his finger on the pulse.

To those anglers living in East Anglia it is sometimes difficult to realise that there are reservoirs other than Grafham, never mind trying to justifying the extra time needed to reach the Northampton Reservoirs. I first encountered them when, in the days of having to take the A45 to Brum, I used to take to the lanes to avoid the traffic jams found in Northampton.

**Ravensthorpe** for example features a high dam visible from the road. I understand it was built in 1896 and only covers 100 acres. My only encounter has been in the pages of "Still Water Fly-Fishing" where Tom Ivens used the reservoir as a backdrop for a series of casting photographs. The oracle also declared that "rainbow trout were quite unsuitable for Ravensthorpe". I have heard of prolific catches, mainly it seems through its successful catch and release policy, and huge trout apparently deliberately introduced. The fish come from the Rutland farm on the River Gwash. The initial

stocking policy is to introduce 900 standard sized trout along with 350 in the 5lb range and a further 100 double figure fish. The fishing over the 2015 season was described by Jon as "steady" which probably accounts for the regular stream of anglers and the fact that the fishery makes a profit. I think John Caldwell is our club authority on Ravensthorpe.

**Pitsford** suffered a lean year in 2014, according to Jon, where the fish failed to grow on. A typical bag was 6 fish for 10-11 lbs. It appears to have been a blip in the statistics as the fishing proved to be excellent in 2015, particularly from the bank. I have no personal experience of the water.

**Rutland** was also described as having a poor season in 2015 with many fish coming out lean and lanky although the catch rate was  $\sim 3\frac{1}{2}$  fish per visit. Jon suggested that this may have been due to the lack of daphnia which is an important food item for trout in still waters. It is good news for water engineers though as it saves on filtration costs! You might have thought, based on trout in chalk streams, that clear water was a plus? There must be other forms of food in Rutland? Well, Jon did mention the red shrimp which can be found around the tower up the north arm. Despite these problems, Jon claimed that more anglers went to Rutland than Grafham. In an attempt to improve the fishing, AW intends to increase the stocking level of brown trout although at £3.60 for a  $1\frac{3}{4}$ lb fish, there are cost implications.

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**Grafham** was described as having an excellent season despite the general reduction in fly life over the years (where has the *big red* gone?), and this year, a lack of fry. Could this have been due to predation from cormorants, zander and pike?

"Killer shrimp" were still present and despite the name, according to Jon, there was little evidence that they have caused an environmental problem, but they have definitely contributed to the trout putting a lot of weight on later in the season. Rumour has it that there are plenty of fisheries eagerly awaiting this menace arriving on their waters!

In response to a question from the audience, Jon thought that there had been a decrease in poaching – night lining for example. Jon, in his youth, caught one angler with mackerel strips tied on as a wing to improve the fluttering action of the lure. I recall fishing a bank match at Rutland years ago when 200 anglers blanked yet one angler caught 3 – probably the day before! Minnows in Thermos flasks anyone!

The bank stabilising operation has cost £20 million. 20 years too late some might say? There was some concern that the large rocks present an H & S issue. I noticed that somebody has re-arranged a few rocks on G-Bank to create some steps but do not tell the management! 60 tons of fine stones are destined for Rutland to try and improve the surface on the coarse rocky areas.

Fish stocked in the Anglia Water fisheries come from 6 separate farms that are expected to supply

~170,000+ fish in total. All stocked fish are supposedly triploids – that is to say trout bred from eggs which had been shocked in order to render the resulting fish sterile. A few fish escape the triploid process but in general the quality of the fish is considered excellent.

(out of interest have a look at <http://www.trafish.com/> to get a grasp of the range of products available from just one of the suppliers apart from trout)

There is no proposal to go any-method. I might remind Jon of this statement in the future!! No chance of introducing non-native species – but I expect they said that about zander! Bringing your own boat will not be allowed! There is no chance of AW applying for a cormorant culling licence! Any other requests?

We got talking about Palm Springs fishery in Rutland which is renowned for its still water salmon but they also farm tiger trout. By all accounts this breed of fish really fights like its mammalian namesake. The salmon are somewhat less aggressive but a trip might be worthwhile just for the experience, if you can find a space in the bookings sheet. Charges are £130 for a 5 salmon limit. The record fish weighed in at 35 lbs. Have a look at <http://stillwatersalmon.com/>

Malcolm Reece has made a few visits and considers it a well-worthwhile venue. Anglian Water declined to take any tiger trout for stocking their reservoirs. Boo hoo!

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### So what are the new charges?

The good news is that boats will cost the same as in 2015. There are some modifications to the season tickets:

		Boat limit	Bank limit	Day limit	Days/week	Season limit	Price
		Rutland, Grafham & Pitsford		Ravensthorpe	Ravensthorpe		
1	Gold	8 + CR	8 + CR	2 + CR	7	n/a	£895
2	Silver	8 + CR	6 + CR	2 + CR	3	200	£650
3	Bronze	5 + CR	5 + CR	1 + CR	1	65	£500
4	Starter	2 + CR	2 + CR	1 + CR	1	65	£260

There are various codicils to these options which I suggest you investigate before committing

These are for an 11 month season except the starter ticket which is valid for 8 months. AW are considering the introduction of an April-September permit. Concern was expressed that the Bronze ticket only allowed a 5 fish limit. This conflicted with the match fishing requirement and clearly upset members of the Tuesday Night Social Fishing League. Personally, I would like to have to worry about exceeding a 5 fish limit!

The full range of ticket prices can be found on:

<http://www.anglianwater.co.uk/assets/media/Fishing-prices-Hooked-final-2016.pdf>

Nice to see that AW is continuing with its policy to encourage juniors. I wish everyone a successful season.

*David G. Jones* 04.2.16