

Winter Evening Report

Russell Hill – 03/11/16

Russell Hill -Editor of Trout Fisherman magazine



Russell Hill, current editor of Trout Fisherman, drew a remarkably large audience for the November meeting. The first thing I learnt was that there were 13, not 12 issues a year! Nevertheless it was interesting to learn that he was an angler having kicked off as a 4 year old at Houghton Mill on the Ouse. I found it a bit strange that although he graduated in PE (which I presumed to mean Physical Education unless you know better?) he ended up in journalism. Trout Fisherman was the brain child of John Wilshaw who noticed the rapid growth in the popularity of still water trout fishing on the local reservoirs. It is sometimes forgotten that the sport had been active for many years, not only on the Scottish lochs, but also near at hand, particularly in the Northampton area. He has Chris Dawn to thank who took him on as a junior. John moved over to edit Trout and Salmon and Chris became editor of TF. Russell reckoned that after 3 or 4 previous editors he was the last man standing when he took on his current role 12 years ago!

The early editions of TF were in B&W, limited by the technology at the time. He had some examples of early editions. The magazine cost 50 pence in 1978 which was about the same as a day ticket at Grafham. The contributors included the likes of Geoffrey Bucknall, John Gawesworth, Frank Cutler, John Darling (on salt water fly fishing) Arthur Cove, Dick Walker and Bob Church.

Farmoor and Bewl were just some of the topics. The articles were packed with information rather than the snippets one tends to read in the recent editions. I must mention a contributor, one Allan Sefton, then of Carluke: hasn't he aged well? There were full page adverts from the likes of Normark, McHardys, Bruce and Walker, and Sportsmail. Lines retailed at ~£10, Streamfisher waders cost £11.45 and glass rods were still on the menu.

Russell thinks that the future of publishing is digital but the problem is that readers are reluctant to pay. My reservation about digital is that quite often you can flip through a journal and find something useful quite unrelated to the original search. On the other hand, demos such as casting and fly-tying are so much better presented as a movie. Trout Fisherman can be found on Facebook

(<https://www.facebook.com/troutfishermanmag>)

and a new web site is planned within the next few months.

The general editorial policy each month is to have a couple of articles on small waters, 2 on reservoirs and 2 on rivers and maybe an "adventure" trip abroad.

Russell piggy backs onto 2 or 3 feature trips a month in order to keep his hand in although I have not seen any mug shots! He judges the health of the magazine by the number of letters he receives. I must say that I find those in T&S much more interesting, I mean erudite. I discovered that the recent letter critical of Grafham in TF was written by an Invicta member! I prefer the T&S tackle test reports and I particularly like the recently introduced Know How section.

In terms of circulation T&S is just ahead of TF. Fly Fishing and Fly tying is lagging some way behind and Total Flyfishing seems to be in terminal decline. Neither FF&FT nor TFF are available at our local Tesco stores. There may be scope expanding into the USA. I see that there are several American magazines for sale in the Cambridge branch of Smith's but that is not much use to those of us who rarely visit town.

There seems to be a decline in participation in trout fishing. The Lechlade fishery once hosted 10,000 anglers a year whereas this has now dropped to 3000. It is estimated that there are 260,000 fly fishermen in the UK plying their trade over 540 commercial waters. Recruitment into all 4 local clubs has increased of late but the problem lies in retaining members. Anglian Water do their bit in offering free tickets to juniors accompanied by an adult angler. Some fisheries have a stock pond specifically for juniors to increase their chances of catching a fish. Mention was made of a fishery in New Zealand where juniors are shown how to catch a trout, prepare, cook and then eat it. I like that idea! There are some cracking juniors around. Some fall by the wayside perhaps hit by the expense of self-funding. Some return later in life when their families mature. The average age of TF readers is 54!! (Still well below the average of Invicta club members as demonstrated in the photo below!! - Ed.)



Competition angling is also in decline – a serious matter as it is widely believed that the matches are responsible for keeping the finances afloat at the reservoirs. On the other hand, I did not realise that the Trout Masters final at Graham was entirely free for qualifiers. TroutFisherman, the sponsors, declined to pay AW £3000 for the day so next year it will be moving to Draycote. Some concern was expressed that the reservoir was not large enough and there was hope that at least more bank will be made available for the competition. We were sure Ifor Jones will come up with the goods.

So there we have it. I was intrigued to find that Russ is a talented key board player with rock group Austin Gold (www.facebook.com/russell.hill.52?hc_ref=SEARCH&fref=nf). Some contrast with angling but I bet that is another very interesting story!

Dave Jones. November 2016

(There are a couple of North American magazines which I quite like.

<http://wp.thenewflyfisher.com/index.php/about-us/>

This is an online magazine and has video tutorials as well as a good range of articles. I think it is a free subscription. The other one is Fly Fusion which again is online but not free <http://www.flyfusionmag.com/content/sneak-peak> - Ed)