

## Simon Bath – owner of the Roxton Park Trout Fishery



I could see that not many of the audience, being fans of the large reservoirs, had any idea where Roxton was, never mind the fact that there was a tranquil trout fishery located alongside the River Ouse just south of the Black Cat roundabout.

The 28-acre lake was dug out by Redlands in the mid 70's, presumably to extract gravel, and filled by water seeping through from the Ouse. The depth of the lake varied between 5 and 13 feet and featured 4 small islands as well as the usual facilities such as a club hut with electricity. I noted that there was a fair depth of water under the bank. 35 years on, the lake has matured with large willow trees dispersed around the area. However, care has been taken to ensure that adequate room for casting has been maintained.



There is a jetty with 4 x 15ft Coulam pulling

boats, free to club members. The proximity of the lake to the river opened the possibility of converting it to a marina: however, the love of the Bath's for fishing overrode that consideration.

The initial stocking policy was 50 trout per member which with 50 members meant there were about 100 fish per acre. That density is in good agreement with best practice. The trout originally came from the West Country but when the number of anglers dropped to 20 it became uneconomic, because of transport costs, to stock at the desired fortnightly intervals. The fish now come from the Gwash at Stamford and include a fair sprinkling of larger fish up to 5 pounds. Pictures showed they looked in good shape and were claimed to fight well. In order to maintain the viability of the fishery, carp were introduced. This was a disaster because they multiplied rapidly and had a tendency to muddy the water. Hence it was decided to drain the lake and transfer the carp to Framlingham Fisheries who are a major supplier of coarse fish. This cured the problem but a few specimens which escaped the original operation, many of which exceeded 20 pounds, were caught by traditional techniques and transferred to an adjacent syndicate water. The lake has now reverted to a trout fishery.



There is abundant fly life, including the usual buzzers, sedges, damsels and even mayflies. Dry fly fishing is a popular and successful technique. Weed could be a problem which was previously dealt with using Clarasan pellets before it was banned. I was quite interested to hear, in the absence of approved chemicals, a blue dye (Diofix) is now the preferred route which works by absorbing green light necessary for photosynthesis and suppresses weed

growth rather than killing it. On occasions the water takes on a surreal Caribbean appearance! Other problems included cormorants which were dealt with legally by stocking larger than average fish -so he said! Argulus, a free-swimming parasite which feeds on the flesh of the fish, was an occasional problem. Treatment with SLICE through pellets fed to the trout is an effective treatment used in salmon farms (but I think is about to be banned). An added benefit, anecdotal rather than proven, seems to be that SLICE also wiped out Signal Crayfish. The Grafham shrimp has not arrived at Roxton – yet!

A famous paid-up alumnus of Roxton was the late Richard Walker who lived nearby in Biggleswade. In truth I think even he was finding the going hard at Grafham! Nevertheless, he was a welcomed acquisition as Simon reported that he excelled in passing on his skills to fellow members and, with an eye to business, ensured that they were mostly kitted out with Hardy Farnborough fly rods.



I did not get the impression that this was a promotional exercise but for the benefit of potential customers, the fishery is open from 1<sup>st</sup> April until the 31<sup>st</sup> October, roughly from dawn till dusk. Pike fishing is permitted in the winter. 3 trout can be taken per day with a limit of 6 fish per week. A catch and release policy is in force. The fishery is closed on Tuesdays. The rules are pretty flexible in accommodating guests and it is an excellent venue for introducing children to fly fishing. Fees are £500 per annum. Further details can be found on the website [roxtonparktroutfishery.co.uk](http://roxtonparktroutfishery.co.uk) You will, no doubt, be subjected to an informal interview. The advice offered was not to wear yellow wellies!