

# Annual General Meeting and Angela Tarry, Park Manager (Grafham and Northants) March 2018

A very short Extraordinary AGM revised the arrangements for subsequent AGM's. The formal meeting included a series of very buoyant reports delivered regarding the success of Invicta members during last season. It was pointed out that we do not rely on bought-in talent for success and many of the successful anglers rose through the ranks by participating in club events thanks to freely exchanged information. All officers bar one, were re-elected - Graham Williams having indicated that he would not be standing due to his health issues. Graham's position was replaced by Paul Heavens. The club now boasts 74 members.

Angela Tarry, the Park Manager for Grafham and Northants, bravely appeared unaccompanied and continued the meeting with a talk describing new developments at Grafham and where possible, Rutland. It was with some relief to the audience that she said that Anglian Water was going to retain their trout fisheries as they currently stand and that there was no intention to follow the Hanningfield path.

However, there has to be an element of realism and accept that there has been a steady decline in the number of full day tickets on all waters) from 14,500 in 2013/14 down to 11,500 in 2017/2018. On the brighter side, the sale of season tickets has plateaued and the sporting tickets sold have increased, albeit slightly. Predator tickets have soared following the dropping of the 5 boat rule which applied 10 years ago, and no doubt, the splendid zander fishing at Grafham. Season tickets have increased from ~20 to ~80 over the '13 - '17 period. Predator day tickets have also increased in the same period, from 1,350 to 3,700pa. At current rates, this amounts to a revenue in excess of £100,000 per annum without the charge for boats. (note that per annum is actually 16<sup>th</sup> May - 31<sup>st</sup> Jan with fly, and 1<sup>st</sup> Oct - 31<sup>st</sup> Jan with lure or dead sea fish).

Stocking levels are to be broadly in line with the 2017 season with 74,600 at Rutland, 48,500 at Grafham and 29,500 at Pitsford. No breakdown was provided regarding the ratio of rainbows to brownies. Catch returns in 2017 were 4.93 at Rutland compared with 5.88 at Grafham. Andrew Flitcroft (at the last meeting) claimed that the fishing at Rutland last season was adversely affected because the rainbows suffered from eye fluke although this was not obvious from the fishing returns. Fish of the year was a 15lb 8oz brownie from Pitsford.

The fishing lodge at Rutland has been revamped. Alas the shop at Grafham has also been restyled thanks to unwanted visitors in the night who maliciously entered through the front window and stole almost all of the fishing clothing. Note that all of the AW shops operate a price match policy against on-line tackle retailers on items costing more than £25. Season ticket holders will continue to receive a 10% discount on tackle.

The restaurant above the Rutland shop has reverted to an AW operation. It is normally open at 8am and special deals can be organised, for example, following a major fishing contest. Be nice to Lorna who previously ran The Brampton Pie Co. and is now the manager of the "Waterfront" café. A full English breakfast comes in at £6.95.

Some new parking bays have been built at Pitsford which could save some long walks. However, you have to be in possession of a key and that means purchasing a season ticket.

The banks at Grafham were patrolled last season by a couple of volunteer bailiffs, Chris and Pat. In the event of specific problems, they can call upon the services of the Rangers back at base. According to Angela, poaching is not a serious problem at Grafham.

There are 47 competitive events at Grafham and Rutland in the coming season and that does not include the club-run events such as the evening leagues. Events inaugurated in 2017 at Grafham, such as the Shrimp-masters, have been joined by the Sierra Pairs and The English National final. Without these events, the trout fishery would be less viable.

Brian Calvert and Chris McLeod have written a booklet illustrated by Stewart Stenning-White (in the Grafham shop) for the benefit of new bank anglers to help them identify hot spots and the best methods to employ in order to catch fish. Hopefully, it will make Grafham less daunting and encourage further visits. The booklet is available from the Grafham tackle shop for £3.50. Plans are in hand to produce similar booklets for the other reservoirs.

Finally, there is a new web site under development ([www.anglanwaterparks.co.uk](http://www.anglanwaterparks.co.uk)). The site contains a comprehensive guide to the services provided by AW – a far cry from the early days when sporting facilities were regarded as a pain! Plans are in hand to include a section enabling anglers to book tickets, complete fishing returns, and shop on-line. The launch date is a little uncertain. The 2018 edition of “Hooked” gives a comprehensive summary of fishing activities and charges on the AW waters.

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During the discussion on predator fishing, I think it was Alan Sefton who claimed that pike do not eat trout but preferred roach. I found that incredible considering almost all of the monster pike which are regularly reported in the press come from reservoirs stocked with trout. Someone pointed out that pike may well be mopping up dead trout just as they succumb to legered herring. Interesting point. Do trout really survive catch and release I wonder?

Several evening league competitors, wondered if there was any chance of raising the limit allowed on the Bronze season ticket from 5 to 6 or perhaps allow a top-up ticket to be purchased. No chance my son, Angela seemed pretty adamant in that!

How can we increase participation in fly fishing at Grafham? Alan Sefton (that man again!) said that angling participation was on the increase. His experience is that trout fishing attracts the middle-aged male whereas juniors tend to take up coarse fishing. Angela thought it was the natural consequence of cost, time, and other responsibilities. Are we likely to attract students when they are already likely to incur costs of £50,000 from tuition fees? Alan reckoned that the large reservoirs are not ideal waters to start on because of the need to handle the conditions presented by even a modest breeze and the requirement to be a competent caster. Alan drew a comparison with Ireland where any number of gillies are available on the loughs to assist even competent anglers. Although gillies are available on Grafham and Rutland, but if Chew is anything to go by, some newbies might find the costs prohibitive. Angela told us that the management were observing the way in which shooting is marketed. Someone thought that there was no comparison with fly fishing as the trout, unlike pheasants, could not be driven into the “arms” of the angler. (wind lanes are a good place to start, but generally inaccessible from the bank!) Angela said that the Mid Northants club held an open session, one day a month at Pitsford specifically aimed at beginners. I am not sure that Peter Hartley would be very happy with us doing that at Grafham.

Although not raised at the meeting, I wondered what was happening on the July Bank which in the early days of Grafham was a hot spot. Rumour has it that it is now overgrown with willows. What a pity.

*Dave Jones*