



A Review of the 2018 season, and looking ahead at Grafham Water

This note is a brief summary of meetings between the Reservoir Manager, Angela Tarry and GWFFA (January) and Invicta (March), discussing the 2018 season at Grafham.

Angela reported that 2018 had been a challenging season mainly because of the weather: the beast from the East in the Spring and the hot summer period leading amongst other things to algae blooms and gill fluke. There was no explanation for the proliferation of the algae blooms into the winter months. The continued lack of rain exposed vast areas of the bed of the reservoir to the extent that the harbour was high and dry. One angler had to be hauled out of the mud (thanks to Gareth!). Intensive pumping has now allowed the boats to get back into the harbour for the 2019 season.

The slight decline in trout anglers visiting AW reservoirs has continued (less so at Pitsford) but the situation was described as financially stable. Nevertheless, the axiom is use it or lose it. Charges for 2019 are on <https://anglianwaterparks.co.uk/grafham-water-park/trout-fishing>. The basic 8 fish + C&R day ticket is £28 and the equivalent Gold Season is £950 with many options in between. Holiday tickets were very popular with anglers regularly travelling from Scotland and the Continent. Guest tickets previously provided gratis with Season tickets are no more as they did not attract new anglers, according to Angela. Moreover, there was evidence that they were being misused. An example was given where an angler who was caught fishing without a permit, was "saved from prosecution" by an associate who handed over a guest ticket on the spot. Nobody seemed bothered by this (GWFFA) other than one person who considered the withdrawal to be a stealthy price rise! Angela countered by saying that, instead, season ticket holders will be able to claim a free breakfast (did I hear that correctly?) and will be eligible for unspecified special offers in the Lodge from time to time.

The beginner's courses attract upwards of 200 potential anglers but few seem to join the local clubs.

Stocking rates will be maintained at 2018 levels with 43,000 destined for Grafham, 68,000 into Rutland, 29,000 into Pitsford and 8,000 into Ravensthorpe. An AW policy of rejecting undersize stock has had a significant effect on the quality of the fish supplied by various farms.

An AW Open Day was held on Saturday 16th February when anglers holding a season ticket in 2018 were entered into a draw for a free Gold ticket for 2019. Monthly fly tying and casting sessions are planned throughout the season along with boat handling courses. The fishing opened at Grafham on Friday 1st March. Adverse weather, including mega winds, caused a slow start to the season but recent reports show that fishing has improved to a satisfactory level.

The invasive Floating Pennywort is rife in the Ouse and serious efforts are being made to keep it from the water intake at Offord. Anglers were urged to report any sightings in the reservoir.

The Killer Shrimp prevails as a major source of food for trout and seems to draw fish in towards the bank late in the season. No evidence has emerged that the beastie is having a negative impact on the Grafham ecology. Lice were present in 2018. A photograph in a recent forum allegedly showing a trout infected with gill lice when stocked, was refuted as fake news. Nevertheless, not much is known about lice, in particular how it is transmitted and whether it is solely a trout problem or found in coarse fish as well. David Moore suggested that when the problem arises, then returning fish is probably a bad idea.

The revamped Lodge and Cafe at Rutland Water have been well received. The "Anglers Guide to Grafham" has sold well and there is a plan to produce similar publications for Rutland and Pitsford. Quite a lot of bank work has been in progress at Plummers and the Willows to assist with access. Anglers contributed to working parties during February to clear up the dam. Angela was reminded that there has been little progress in providing a car park at the foot of Church Lane.

Invicta members praised the actions of the Rangers in facilitating an extra 30 minutes fishing for the Tuesday Evening League. Two more Rangers (Tim & Andy?) are joining the team in April.

There is a major new initiative ongoing in the form of a new website. On-line facilities to shop, book boats and tickets, and present fishing returns will be included.

There was some concern that there were plans for an "Aqua Park" similar to the one at Rutland possibly located in Marlow Bay. This was considered *unlikely as long as the shrimp and algae problem continue*. Is that a satisfactory excuse?

The quality of the trout at Grafham was queried by GWFFA members. Why was the green slime still prevalent in winter? Angela said that echo sounders (presumably used by the predator anglers?) showed that there were plenty of fish concentrated at a depth of 35 feet. These were identified as trout. Not many in the (GWFFA) audience accepted that theory. Nevertheless, it was conceded that there were plenty of fish in the reservoir; it was just that the species was not proven!

One person (GWFFA) questioned the quality of the water going into Grafham. Are we recycling sewage from Milton Keynes? Not surprisingly, Angela refuted that suggestion and said that the water quality was constantly monitored and met the standards for potable water. There must be some explanation why the water at Pitsford, fed from the Nene, was consistently clear through the season. Personally, I do not think that Grafham has ever recovered from the massive injection of iron sulphate.

Pitsford was rated the trout reservoir of the season although there has been reports of some friction with predator anglers. Allegedly they are hogging the points and fishing (legally) with 3 rods at a range of several hundred yards (*sic*), the distance being achieved using bait boats. These have now been banned.

The success of catch and release in preserving stocks was discussed. Angela thought it was good public relations to show that we returned our quarry. Not so: I understand

that the anti-angling brigade recognise that taking fish for the pot is marginally acceptable whereas catching dozens of fish for "fun" is a different matter. The survival rate of released fish is currently a matter for discussion. By all accounts, there are published papers which show that the returned trout are more susceptible to predation. There were suggestions from the floor (GWFFA) that returned fish should be tagged in order to assess the survival rate. Dangerous ground I might suggest. The significant contribution of the predator anglers to the coffers at Grafham has been acknowledged but some question the sustainability of the sport. Individual pike are readily recognisable from body markings and there is some suggestion from the lack of evidence that the larger fish are recaptured, that they may not survive C&R.

The meetings concluded with a vote of thanks to Angela

Dave Jones - Invicta FFC

Identifying Floating Pennywort



Leaves are green, shiny, kidney-shaped with a crinkled edge, and up to 7cm. diameter. Leaves can be floating or emergent.

Flowers appear between July and August but it rarely flowers in the UK. Winter foliage varies little but mats of vegetation may reduce in size and be found nearer the water's edge.