

# Rob Edmunds

For the February meeting we had a visit from the Edmunds family! Rob very kindly left a copy of his script with us and appears on the Members Contributions window on the Invicta site. A VERY INFORMATIVE MUST-READ DOCUMENT!

As an occasional scribe, I have taken the liberty of adding to a few of his remarks on the night which do not appear in the script.

Rob is not a new kid on the block and can trace his fishing experiences back over 40 years. His father was a coarse angler and along with mates, fished as a group, one of whom happened to be Arthur Cove. Rob generously attributed his present status to Arthur, even though at the time it was not obvious to him that any useful transfer of thoughts were occurring. He has won the Trout Masters competition twice and numerous other events. He is an ambassador for Fulling Mill but it didn't show in his talk.



RE dispelled a few myths which could be to our financial advantage. Fluorocarbon was, in his opinion, an essential weapon but most of the time his experience has shown that premium grades were mostly unnecessary. Stick with the standard makes such as G4, Fulling Mill (the cheap stuff on the red and black spool) and Greys. He normally uses stuff with a BS of 7-8lb.bs. There are circumstances when he deviates from this choice, for example, when the water is crystal clear, a flat calm prevails and if it was necessary to present very small flies by which he meant 18 and smaller. Then his preferred brand was Frog hair.

Forget extremely long leaders. By using the appropriate line, a set-up of an 12-15 ft leader can effectively carry 3 flies and is certainly a lot easier to cast without generating tangles in the dropper. There may be exceptions *but I fished the Snowbee floating line competition some years ago when all the fish were lurking around the tower off the dam, I am pretty sure that mulita long leaders were the name of the game ... except that there were so many boats in a confined area that a 25 ft leader alone would snag the nearest boat!*

Regarding lines, Rob did not express a preference for any particular brand. He did say that the balance between the AFTM rating of the line and that of the rod was often incorrect and that most anglers would benefit from using a line at least one AFTM unit above that specified.... or get some tuition! *Alan Sefton chipped in and said that a dry fly rod rated at say 3 used on a small stream would probably require a line of AFTM 7 in order to get the combination working correctly given that the length of line aerialised is relatively short.* Do not rely on braided loops for attaching the leader to the line unless it is thoroughly whipped in position: do not rely on the plastic sheath often supplied.

Rob loves his Loomis but concurred with the audience that the fittings left something to be desired in an £800 rod. His fall-back position was from the Snowbee Prestige range by which *I think he meant the ones reinforced with Graphene which come in at just under £500.* It was interesting to find that some manufacturers might send a high class rod blank to China/Japan and obtain a copy. The result might not be exact but it is pretty close and enables the rod to be marketed at a much lower price, possibly in the popular £80-£200 range. Regarding marketing ploys, he has encountered fly rods from the same manufacturer with a significant price differential but in fact differing only in the colour of the blank!

As a competition angler he had to use barbless hooks. In his experience Hanak were the best and also the most expensive at £4.20 for 25. The cost is trivial compared with the overall cost of a day out fishing. He reckoned in using a fly for 6 or 7 fish before he changes it simply because the colours may start to bleach out, or the pattern become ragged and possibly the hook loses its sharpness. A diamond hook hone can retrieve the edge on the hook but removes the corrosion resistant coating. Flies must be stored dry: snakes and minkies need to be held in a pad of kitchen roll with the hair stroked straight and untwisted.

Our previous speaker, Don Stazicker, outlined 42 possible thoughts an angler might have before wetting a line. RE recommends keeping things simple and regarded location as the most important factor. You cannot catch fish in an empty bucket. *There are anglers who would be happy catching fish out of the back of the stocking lorry! In the early days at Grafham it was common to make a note of the car reg. numbers of successful anglers and tour the car parks to see where they may be fishing. Some anglers declined to have photos of their catches put in the press unless the horizon was fogged out in order to conceal their location.* Nowadays, the grapevine has been overtaken by the internet where it is much easier to locate potential hot spots in advance.

*I have lost count of the number of times I have been fly-fishing unsuccessfully, only to be told that I should have been there the previous day!* So, despite what you may have heard, never arrive at the water with preconceived ideas of your proposed method but assess the conditions on the day. Has there been any water pumped in which generally puts the fish off their feed? Is the water murky: if so fish slowly with a large dark coloured lure. Bank anglers should avoid fishing areas where the bottom was exposed during low water the previous season as it is likely to be barren. The water temperature has a big influence on the behaviour of the fish and high temperatures may drive them into deep water outside dawn and dusk. *I was personally interested how to go about getting a day permit for a 4 am start and how do I enter the car parks or indeed leave them late in the evening?* If forced to fish in the day, look for deeper water. Areas accessible from the bank at Grafham include the harbour arms, the dam, Marlow jetty, Hart's Bluff, and Savages. *A good reason to take a few photos in times of drought. I didn't even know where Hart's Bluff was but it is on the North shore just around the corner from the inlet tower. The steep contours of the bank are a good indication of the potential depth of the water in that area. I think there is also a tiny promontory which I suspect was built by anglers to help avoid the trees on the back cast but I could be wrong! Fairly deep water was retained close-in when Grafham opened by the remains of hedgerows. Alas these were removed because they were damaging sailing kit. Later in the season fish may patrol close into the bank, for example, seeking shrimp or maybe corixa. I liked his advice to challenge these fish by adopting a stealthy approach. Sitting on the dam wall for example. Avoid anglers with an "animated" style (he did say that!). I loved his term "park the flies". Allow me to say something about camouflage. 40 odd years ago I went to a fish farm on the Isle of Man and the warden was feeding the fish from a fluorescent orange bucket. Apparently, the fish would shoal up and follow him and also visitors wearing a similarly coloured jacket. If this was true and becomes more widely known then anglers with suitable apparel could be a bank-side blob, the next great advance in still water fly fishing! Remember that you read it here first.*

There are probably another 10 pages of screed dealing with the changes expected through the year, how to get reluctant feeders to take the lure, the hang and washing line technique, and the induced take. READ THE BLURB! He confessed to hating bung fishing. Kid's fishing in his words! He had to admit though, that loads of competitions are won using the bung.

Meanwhile, in the background, Albert (England Youth International) was busy tying flies, some of which are shown in the photograph. Rob favours just a dozen patterns, which you might think was a fib but the bulging fly box's were composed of a range of sizes. I liked the fact that boobies, for example, were tied with a range of foam heads ranging from 2 to 5mm in order to achieve different sinking rates. Generic patterns were tied with a spot of fluo

material in order to make them stand out. Only the best materials were used, Fritz for example, from the likes of FNF, Flybox and Flycraft.



He finished by reflecting on how things have changed over the past few years. The fish have wised up! He attributed this to the proliferation of catch and release. He thinks that the fishing season is too long. Predators such as cormorants, have increased and have the ability to devour even the larger trout that constitutes the average stockie. Predator anglers account for a significant number of large brown trout. I had no idea that they run competitions where they try to catch a pike, perch zander and a trout on the same trip! Did you? They do help to balance the books though.

We had a Q & A session.

Q. Voice from the audience – “Barbed or barbless”?

A. Rob wasn’t bothered although competitions are generally barbless, but when pleasure fishing for the pot, he uses barbed hooks. This seems to imply to me that he thinks a barbed hook is more likely to keep its hold?

Q. Another question. “What do you think of Fasna hooks?”

A. Silence speaks volumes!

Q. I think it was Peter Thomas who was interested the results of a trial which Rob undertook to use small and lighter flies (something reported in Trout Fisherman?).

A. In general successful but small flies can only be useful in the appropriate conditions and if these did not occur in matches then he didn’t use them.

Q. When would you consider anchoring up?

A. Almost always at the start of the season up to mid-April at Grafham. The fish are generally 30-60 yards out from the points on the north shore in 12-18 feet of water. Fish a black and green booby on an 8ft leader and a Di5. Success guaranteed! Come mid-April, the fish may have dispersed searching for food and it is necessary to drift and seek out the fish.

Q. How do you deal with shrimp feeders?

A. Follow a simple strategy with a ragged Hares Ear and a cruncher, both 12’s, supported in the water by a booby of some sort (note the need for stealth already dealt with in the text).

Q. How do you go through the depths seeking the fish.

A. Note the conditions and have an informed guess as to where the fish might be. Keep an eye on other anglers and when successful deduce what depth they are exploring. His general ploy is to fish deeper than necessary and work up in the water. If the first drift proves unfruitful then he concluded there were no fish present and would change the location.

Finally, I would urge everyone to read the original script. Rob dispensed information freely without any attempt to hold back “secrets”. A very enjoyable evening!