

Here is an update on recent happenings in the club and the plans for the future.

I'll start with a bit of history.

The club originally leased the lake (Franks) in about 1987 (so I'm told) and I joined the club in 1990. Franks Pool was recently dug and contained no fish, the banks were overgrown and pegs were questionable – as was the car park. Work was done, pegs installed and fish stocked.

The club purchased 15 mirror carp from Larry Fitzgerald at Wyreside and moved a large number of carp and other fish up from their ponds at Staining. These mirrors from Larry were 5-8lb and provided many years of service, a couple eventually touching 20lb and were still going until last year when, I believe, the final 2 remaining fell foul of the otter. The fish from Staining were mainly (all?) commons and a number are still going strong in the lake now. These fish though had come from a farm pond and were either stunted or very slow growing. They are now starting to die of old age, with a couple of 10 pounders and some smaller fish turning over this year. The commons from 5 – 12lb that you catch are mainly these very old fish. I'm unsure how many fish were stocked but it must have been a large number as they have been very prolific over the years.

The lake matured nicely over the years with the fish making slow progress – some more than others. Match weights went from very poor in the early days through respectable to pretty good. In 2002 we purchased a number of fish via my friend Mark Walsingham who was head of fisheries for the National Trust. These fish came from The Vyne at Basingstoke. They were a mixture of single and double figure carp and included one common of 20lb+. Also stocked at this time were some big tench and large crucians. We also stocked 9 of the crucians into the stock pond at this time, as advised, and have cropped over 400 fish off these fish. Another couple of these Vyne fish pushed through the 20lb mark and at one point we had up to 5 twenties in the lake. Some of these fish did well but again others have not grown well and are still coming out as singles, they were however stunning fish.

The next carp stocking came from Highfield when their lake changed from a specimen lake to a match water. We bought 14 doubles from here and these fish have done well over the years. Again a couple of these fish went 20lb but the otter again had a few last year and of the ones remaining a number have bad mouths due to the hard fight they put up. These fish are torpedo-shaped, they fight really hard and are solid fish but none of them are carrying any excess weight. These fish were mid-high doubles when stocked (in I think 2005) and were of unknown age then, they certainly aren't going to go forward weight-wise now. At this point we also bought 300 fingerlings from Highfield. Some of these have progressed nicely to low doubles, others are still 3-4lb and have no prospect of growing now – these fish are in both the kidney and the main lake. We have sold some of these fish over the years and have no idea really of the number remaining on site – we certainly don't need 300 on top of everything else.

After the lake was securely fenced last year against the otter it was agreed that we would try and replace the fish lost and so agreed to buy 20 C4 (4 Summers old) fish from a supplier called Front Fish. These are top quality, stunning fish (as can be seen from the photos elsewhere on this site) and will hopefully give us 20+ years of service and should grow to 20lb+ - imagine if we could get 20 twenties in the lake!

So my assessment of where the carp stocks currently stand is, we have a mixture of carp from various previous stockings ranging from 4 year old quality fish with good prospects to 30 year old 4 pounders with no prospect of growing what so ever. We have a large number of double figure fish in the lake but many of these are now old fish and are unlikely to grow. We lost a number (at least 8) fish to the otter – it hit the lake next door much harder – and unfortunately it seemed successful in targeting our larger specimens and I'm not aware of anything over 17-18lb currently in the lake.

We currently have no 20 pounders in the lake, this is I believe disappointing for a club with a large number of members who fish solely for carp and I think most general/pleasure anglers would be over the moon to bank a 20 pounder. This is something we are looking to address but unfortunately fish of this size are very expensive and we need the biomass and feed levels correct to prevent them going backwards once stocked, although more anglers and more bait are highly likely if these target fish go in.

The water has to an extent stood still for the last few years with people wanting different things from it and the net result being little overall progress – although match weights have steadily improved over the years, the carp weights have gone backwards and the large tench and bream appear to have peaked weight-wise.

The silver fish successfully breed every year and this resulted in thousands of tiny 1,2 and 3 year old fish which no-one really wanted to catch, prevented match men presenting a bait properly for other fish, ate all the available food, lowered the water quality and generally added nothing to the water.

The decision was made by the committee to net these fish out as far as possible and this January 716lb were removed. These were all small fish of less than 4 inches and all the better quality fish were hand sorted and returned to the lake. The plan being that these fish then grow further with less competition for available food and hopefully growing into specimen roach and bream. No tench, crucians or perch were removed. Hopefully most members see the benefit of fewer fish of much better quality. There are some quality specimens in the lake, I've had a roach of 1lb 12oz on a boilie and a 3lb perch turned up in the netting. The skimmers are also improving in size – there's a really good number of fish around the pound mark which will hopefully grow with access to more food, they would just have stunted without stock management.

The plan is now to breed some more crucians in the stock pond for stocking into the main lake. It's now 10 years since the stock pond was dug and it is very silty and so we've approached John to improve it prior to pursuing this but it is definitely on the cards for next year. The club doesn't currently receive value from the kidney pond. I'm not sure what we can do about this – is anyone really going to drive all the way

up there and then fish the kidney rather than the main lake? It's really good fishing for tench and small carp but will probably only ever going to be a fall back if the main lake isn't fishing on a particular day – unless anyone has any ideas to get more from it?

A number of the carp in the main lake were coming back last year with damage and sores. It appears they are being damaged by something – mink, herons, cormorants?? – and then their wounds were not healing and were becoming infected. I requested Danny Hulme the fisheries management instructor at Myerscough college to do some water quality tests and the results came back stating the water quality is excellent. This is really good news and allows us to press ahead with plans for the future. Full results of his analysis will be posted on this site for people's information. We will have the water tested regularly in the future.

It was agreed at the AGM 2 years ago that we would improve 2 bivvy pegs. This hasn't happened but I have approached John and he has agreed to do it imminently and so I'm expecting that to have happened by the time you read this – it's really just a case of widening and levelling 2 existing pegs to make erecting a bivvy easier and prevent blocking the paths.

We recently had the first meeting of the new committee and good progress was made. Jobs were shared around and jobs which have been outstanding for years – such as signage on Wild Boar and the River – have been taken forward and will be finished shortly. I have obtained 2 pallets to install as pegs on the second water at Wild Boar and we need a work party on there to make it fishable and start getting our money's worth – again this will be done shortly. We then need to assess stock levels and agree what the members would like from the water.

I think this committee will get a lot done over the coming year. We have stocked small tench and a few carp but as the original water at Wild Boar is over-run with carp it would be nice to have something different from this pond. There's a large amount of work to be done, removing large dead trees from the water and opening up access.

We are looking to increase the membership slightly this year as we believe the lake is underutilised. If you have friends that would like to join the club then now is the time to apply. There's a few new members already joined and they are blown away by the appearance of Franks – it's truly stunning in its summer colours. Most of the lads that have joined are carp anglers so we're looking to balance this with some additional match/general anglers – speak to Alan Bellwood if interested.

A problem has arisen with HASSRA and a large number of our members not joining HASSRA, which is a condition of club membership. The club has had to pay over £1000 from club funds to cover this which isn't good use of the money. I think it's more a case of difficulty joining for non-DWP members rather than deliberate policy but you MUST be in HASSRA and we will be coming out for the money. It's unfair if you're only paying £45 a year for your membership for the club to then have to pay £20 of that out to HASSRA for you.

The website is popular with over 12,000 hits but needs fresh information to be most useful and interesting. Paul does great work with this but can only publish what is sent to him so I'd encourage everyone to either write something up or send some photo's.

The Front fish that were stocked are the future of carp fishing on the lake. These fish have grown rapidly prior to stocking and should continue to do so. Unfortunately this hasn't happened and they have lost weight. This is very disappointing. I had the two biggest ones recently and both are over a pound down since being stocked into the main lake in January.

These fish were very expensive, are top quality, and come with a great reputation. You can see from their body shape that they have the potential to be big fish. Now there are a number of possible reasons for this weight loss, stress of stocking/ being moved (from Devon), little food in the Winter/close season when they went in, adjusting to their new environment, but to me the main cause is lack of available food. It's obviously not a water quality issue as this has been eliminated so it must be lack of feed – more often than not there is nobody fishing and so no food going in. We are supplementary feeding coarse pellet but we don't want this to be to the detriment of the fishing.

We will discuss further stocking at Committee but some of the old, stunted carp need to come out before any new ones are added to ensure the biomass remains within what can be supported. I have lined up some large, quality fish but there is no point in paying top money for these if they haven't got conditions in which to prosper. I also have access to some top quality young fish around the pound mark which have bred in my syndicate and the owner is looking to thin out. These could be stocked to help boost match returns. All in all things look very positive and next year I'm hoping the lake will be transformed in terms of stock quality – it still needs more management before then but if this can be taken to fruition then we should be on the right lines for many years to come.

Simon Hoare

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