

Fishery Plan for Tithe Barn Lakes



September 2016
Steve Mottershead
FMO

Contents

- Introduction
- Description of Water
- Stocking Levels
- Current Status and Problems
- Long Term Plan
- Requirements for successful instigation of plan
- Conclusion

Introduction

This is the first 5 year plan for the Tithe Barn complex. The club purchased the complex in July 2014 and put a short term plan in place. The majority of the boundary and clearance work in that plan has been carried out, swims have been improved and there is now more clarity about the associated land. We also understand the stocks better so we are now better placed to take a long term view.

The aim is to make the 3 tithe lakes the most popular waters in the Portsmouth and District portfolio.

Description of Water

Tithe Barn is made up of 3 main lakes plus a very small pond. The total water area is approximately 3 acres. They are referred to as the Lower Lake, Middle Lake, Top Lake and Stock Pond. Access is via a permitted access road and track from Mill lane. The lower part of this is shared with the Tithe barn Theatre Company, the track beyond the barn is only used by ourselves for vehicles, however part of it is a public right of way (footpath).

Lower Lake

The smallest of the 3 main lakes; approximately 2000 sq mts (0.5 acre). It is roughly oblong with sides of 25 metres and 80 metres. All sides have fishing stations. The lakes has sloping clay sides with the deepest point being about 5'.

There are currently 20 swims which are positioned close together. All swims were created/renovated in 2014 as part of re-establishing fishing on the lake after it became overgrown. The swim stations are mainly wooden platforms.

In 2015, the paths, pedestrian gate and access track were improved. At the same time, swims by the barn were extended and improved to make them family friendly.

The bank is generally safe all round. There is limited room behind the swims on the east bank. Drainage from the middle lake enters the lake in NW corner. The lake drains through a pipe in the East bank. The path on the North bank can become wet after heavy rain. The lake does not normally flood. The level can drop in hot summers but this is an inconvenience to anglers rather than a threat to the fishery.

The lake contains one large patch of lily in the NW corner. It also contains submerged weed, which has tendency to over populate.

Middle Lake

The middle sized of the 3 main lakes ; approximately 4000 sq mts (1.0 acre). It is roughly oval with sides of 100 metres and 40 metres. All sides have fishing stations. The lake varies in depth considerably with the deepest point being over 6' on the East side. There is a small island which is not accessible to anglers.

There are currently 16 swims which are positioned about 10m apart. A few are doubles. Some of the swims were

renovated in 2015. The swim stations are mainly wooden fronted and backfilled. Some of the very old 'tyres' are still in situ.

The bank is generally flat all round however it suffers badly with poor drainage in the winter leaving paths, and some swims, very muddy. In 2015 paths were improved with drainage and woodchip. Access around the lake (and between middle and top) was also limited to prevent too much footfall and to avoid the winter bog in the SW corner. It also eliminated the very dangerous slope upto the top lake. In 2016, paths were further improved with a new slab based path on the north bank.

Drainage from the top lake enters the lake along the west bank. The lake drains through a monk/pipe in the East bank. The lake does not normally flood. The level is reasonably stable throughout the year.

The lake contains very large patches of lily. It also contains Canadian pond weed. Both lily and weed tend to over populate in the summer/autumn restricting fishing significantly.

Top Lake

The largest of the 3 main lakes; approximately 5100 sq mts (1.25 acre). It is roughly rectangular with sides of 100 metres and 50 metres. 3 sides have fishing stations, the East bank. The lake varies in depth considerably, shallowest at the west end, sloping continually with deepest point being over 7' on the east end.

There are currently xx swims which are positioned at various different intervals. A number of swim stations have significant space for bivvies. The swim stations are mainly areas prepared on the bank. Some have fronts.xxx.

The bank is generally flat all round however it suffers badly with poor drainage in the winter leaving most paths, and some swims, very muddy. Some swims are impeded by tree growth. In 2016, paths were improved with a new slab based path on the north bank.

Drainage from the stock lake (and surrounding land) enters the lake along the west bank. The lake drains through a monk/pipe in the East bank. The lake does not normally flood. The level can drop in the summer but there is enough water to make it reasonably stable throughout the year.

The lake contains several patches of lily in various areas. It also contains significant canadian pond weed mostly in the shallower water. The weed tends to over populate in the summer/autumn restricting fishing significantly in the west end of the lake.

Stock Lake

A very small lake of about approximately xxxx sq mts (x.x acre). It varies in depth and is significantly silty and overgrown. No fishing stations exist on the lake, and access is only available currently on the east bank. There are lots of fallen branches in the water and a small amount of Canadian pond weed.

The lake drains through a monk/pipe in the East bank. The lake flood, especially when the pipe becomes constricted. The level varies considerable throughout the year.

Stocking Levels

All the lakes had suffered from predation before the club took them back. The main predators were cormorants and people. The middle lake was worst affected a large number of fish being lost including many year groups. A programme of restocking has taken place since 2014. There has also been some rebalancing of species between the lakes. Further stocking and balancing is required to get a healthy and suitable stocking for the type of fishing required.

Lower Lake -

- In 2014 the stock was mostly carp and a few roach, perch and hybrids. It was extremely lightly stocked.
- In the last 2 years, the club has stocked rudd, roach, bream and carp in significant numbers plus juvenile tench and crucian.
- Future plans will be to maintain the stock and remove any species which becomes overpopulated (e.g. crucian, roach) and carp which grow beyond 8lb.

Middle Lake -

- In 2014 the stock was mostly large carp (upto 30lb) and very small silvers and perch. It was lightly stocked.
- In the last 2 years, the club has stocked carp, bream, tench, roach and crucian.

- Future plans will be to increase the stock of tench, bream and crucian and balance this (particularly bottom feeders) by moving some of the large sized carp to the top lake. We will consider the introduction of barbel and chub !!!!!

Top Lake -

- In 2014 the stock was mostly carp (upto 30lb) with a reasonable mix of bream, roach, perch which avoided predation in the weed. It was reasonably well stocked.
- In the last 2 years, the club has been removing bream, tench and roach, whilst increasing the stock of large carp.
- Future plans will be to continue to remove smaller bream and quality roach. 15lb+ carp will continue to be introduced from the middle lake. The aim is to have @40lb fish and more quality fish in a minimum of ten years time and ways of achieving this are being considered.

Stock Pond -

- The pond had no fish in until juvenile tench and crucian were introduced in spring 2016. These were donated by the EA from Calverton. Unfortunately, the water quality appeared to be unsuitable for the fish so large numbers were moved to the middle lake in August 2016. Some fish remained.

Current Status and Problems

Overall

Access to the lakes is via a long share drive from Mill Lane upto Tithe barn. This is double gated at the Mill Lane end but is not locked. The drive is deteriorating over time and may need repair in the coming years. There have been problems with travellers gaining access to the site in previous years.

Day ticket anglers park to the left of the barn and have foot access into a pedestrian gate on the lower lake. This car park is shared with the theatre company and there can be problems when functions (mainly weddings) are going on.

Members can progress to the right of the barn, through a locked gate, along a track (which is also a public footpath) and upto a parking area. There is a further gate which provides vehicle access right to the side of the lower lake. There is also another gate (only user by fishery management team) which gets vehicle access to the top lake.

The council are taking over the land with the public footpath to build a country park. We are on good terms with them, but the final impact on access, parking etc is unknown at this time. There have been occasional problems with the local resident on the house by the path however steps have been taken to mitigate these.

A care home is being built around 2 sides of the Top Lake and it is likely to affect the drainage of all the lakes. (unclear whether it will an improvement or not...there could be better general drainage but more significant run off after heavy rain with pollutants from the car parking potentially reaching the water).

Apart from Cormorants, rats continue to be a problem on the water and need to be controlled (and not encouraged).

Lower Lake -

The lower lake provides good mixed fishing with the emphasis on bites rather size of fish. The small carp are popular. Some larger carp remain can break anglers lines.

It has 16 fishing stations - 2 of which can be classed as family sized swims. Members' parking is available directly beside the water, with the family swims having parking next to the swim. These swims are very popular. They are very suitable for less able anglers.

Some swims have limited room, and can be slippery in the wet. The paths have been improved but can be muddy when damp.

The lake is currently used by:

- Anglers who like reasonably easy access and close parking
- Anglers who are like to be guaranteed a bite and a fish
- Day ticket anglers (limited numbers so far)

- Carp anglers primarily stalking fish off the surface

It is also used for club matches and coaching activities. Matches generally produce disappointing weights given the catches pleasure anglers achieve. Coaching sessions have been good with no blanks and plenty of entertainment with small carp, silvers and decent bream.

The lake suffers from some predation but the weed cover and cormorant lines appear to be making a difference.

The weed has to be managed each year. The lilies restrict 2 of the swim stations, and the submerged weed can impact most areas in the lake. There are still many underwater roots which can cause anglers problems but which are very difficult to remove.

There is no night fishing allowed on the lower lake.

Middle Lake -

The middle lake provides patchy fishing at present. There are some good carp to be caught but other fish do not come in any numbers.

Anglers can park reasonably close to the lake but there is no vehicular access to the swims, so it is not ideal for the less able angler.

It has 16 fishing stations. Most have plenty of bank space but some are restricted by trees, lilies or the island. This does lead to a lot of tackle being lost. The path on one side

is now solid and the other has been improved and wood chipped. Most swims have been fished although the larger ones are more popular as carp anglers use them for their bivvies.

The lake is currently primarily used by:

- Carp anglers
- Pleasure anglers looking for bigger fish

The lake suffers from some predation but the weed cover and cormorant lines appear to be making a difference. This is becoming more of a risk as we restock with the sort of fish cormorants like.

The weed has to be managed each year. The lilies restrict many of the swim stations, and the submerged weed can impact most areas in the lake. The island attracts anglers baits but that results in lost tackle which has to be frequently removed to prevent damage to wildlife.

The lake does suffer from some litter problems.

Top Lake -

The top lake provides quite good fishing at present. There are some good carp to be caught as well as roach and bream in some numbers. Also other species can turn up.

Anglers can park about 150m from the lake so it is not ideal for the less abled angler.

It has 12 fishing stations. Most have plenty of bank space but some are restricted by trees, lilies or weed. This does

lead to fish being lost. The path on one side is now solid but the other is susceptible to waterlogging making it extremely muddy. Most swims are fished. The swims are not ideally shaped at present for carp angling and could do with some better definition (both on the bank and in the water)

The lake is currently primarily used by:

- Carp anglers

The lake does not suffer so much from predation due to the size of the fish and the amount of cover they have.

The weed and lilies can be nice features but can easily become too much and need improved management. The bankside trees have become overgrown in some places. Certain swims became unfishable at times during the year.

The lake does suffer from some litter problems.

Stock Pond -

The stock pond is not fished. It is heavily overgrown and has a lot of leaf/branch litter. It is also silty in places.

It could be significantly improved by being cleared out, and more light being allowed in. It would be ideal for growing on some juvenile fish away from the cormorants beaks.

Long Term Plan

Overall

- Improved vehicle and pedestrian access to all the lakes particularly for the less able anglers.
- Better parking facilities
- On site toilet facilities
- Improved secure storage for maintenance tools and vehicles

Lower Lake -

- Reduce/eliminate the effect of predationfish havens, cormorant lines, shooting etc
- Manage current fish stocks to ensure bites but not over stocking of very small fish. Remove large carp.
- Consider adding aeration to enable fish to remain healthy
- Increase number of family sized swims with parking (upto at least 5)
- Replace wooden platforms with bank based swims

- Manage weed and lilies to ensure all swims have access and features. (this will involve some removing and replanting of lily)
- Improve paths so whole lake can be accessed all year round.
- Increase revenue (and club membership) by encouraging more day ticket use.

Middle Lake -

- Reduce/eliminate the effect of predationfish havens, cormorant lines, scarecrows on island, shooting etc
- Improve current fish stocks to provide good sized catches of carp, crucian carp, tench, bream balanced by roach, perch and rudd. Aim is carp to @15lb, crucians to 3lb, tench to 8lb, bream to to 6lb. Large carp need to be moved to top lake.
- Consider trying barbel and chub to encourage anglers to fish (more bait, bigger fish, better catches)..this needs EA consent
- Significantly reduce lily and weed coverage , provide each swim with a feature.
- Make all swims level and safe

- Provide at least 4 family sized swims in locations easy to access.

Top Lake -

- Manage current fish stocks to provide an excellent carp water with the majority of fish being over 15lb. This will involve removing smaller carp and other smaller bottom feeders (probably to the middle lake). Some monitoring of fish sizes and growth rates is needed.
- Consider future stocking to provide a) 30-40lb fish and b) quality fish. Potentially fast growing C5 will be needed to achieve results in 10 years or less. We can also stock some attractive mirrors.
- Improve drainage around lake to enable dry paths and swims stations
- Provide suitable fishing stations for carp angling, spaced out, well defined, level and safe. This should include some larger double swims to allow friends to fish together. This will potentially mean some reduction in total swims.
- Manage weed, lily and tree roots to minimise fish losses and damage, and encourage fish around the lake.
- Manage screening/fencing to ensure water is private and secure from care home, dog walkers and any other non-members

- In the future, we may need to consider a booking in system

Stock Pond - (probably after care home impact is known)

- Reduce leaf and branch litter from within the water
- Increase light
- Use to manage crucian and tench juveniles primarily
- Provide access to enable fish to be removed easily when required (but not predated) - this may be by adding small fishing stations to allow fun angling for members

Requirements for successful instigation of plan

Significant support is required to fulfil this plan. It contains major actions which will not be carried out overnight. The team to date have done an excellent job of getting the 3 lakes back into shape after years of neglect. However, it is time to move the lakes on further. They are different waters and need different approaches and skills.

We need the Top Lake to be taken forward by carp anglers with specific carp fishery management skills.

The middle and bottom will benefit by being taken forward by the current team who have worked tirelessly to establish the fisheries as we have them today.

The teams will need to work together (especially with stock management and bailiffing), but the overall directions of the lakes will be different.

The Committee will potentially need to be involved with :

- any negotiations over access and parking .
- planning required for aerators
- planning required for toilets
- publicity required for improving the day ticket usage of the bottom lake.
- Possible provision of grant monies to support access improvements
- Monies for materials and fish

All other activities can also be supported by the fishery management team.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Tithe is currently a unique complex of water for the club which has the potential to be the most visited (and hence the most popular) fishing in the clubs portfolio.

To realise this plan, there is going to be a need for significant investment in terms of effort, materials and fish. However the rewards are great and believed to be well worth this investment