

THE JOBS... ADRIAN DAVEY

Watermark Fisheries headman on big budgets, being different and introducing “a little bit of magic”.

Adrian, how did you get into the fishery management industry then?”

“I was fortunate to get into Sparsholt approximately 22 years ago. It gave me a fantastic grounding in fisheries management along with all the practical skills you need to run a fishery from electro-fishing to bricklaying! It was a great start. The latest batch of Sparsholt students, two of which are working at the Watermark, are a credit to Sparsholt. I cannot recommend Sparsholt highly enough.”

“What’s the most bizarre thing you’ve ever seen whilst working for Watermark Fisheries?”

“Better not go into the CARPology visit and the dance-mat incident – pretty bizarre...”

“You see, we’re oblivious to this story too! Anyway, run us through your daily routine.”

“I work as the Operations Manager at the Watermark, so I have plenty of Watermark business to look after. Luckily we have a team of people who look after the lakes in terms of maintenance, but I get around every day.

“I have zero tolerance in regards to litter, so I like to make my presence felt. We have planted a huge amount of trees on our lakes this year and with the dry weather I need to make sure they are well watered. I usually get the chance to do a bit of fish spotting along the way too!

“I have four boys and I get the opportunity to get them involved at the weekends which is a real joy. I must add that I am very lucky to have some very level headed bailiffs, Gary, Paul and Geoff – they are absolute stars and contribute immensely. They are critical to the smooth running of the operation and provide a constant running commentary of what’s going on – thanks guys!”

“What is primarily Watermark’s business?”

“Watermark develops luxury waterside homes. Luckily we are all mad keen fisherman so are in the position to develop and create new fisheries as well. Currently our main focus is in the Cotswold Waterpark, but we have some ideas on fishing abroad that we are currently exploring...”

“We’ll talk about that in a bit... So how many waters do you currently control?”

“We have 11+ lakes and stretches of the river Coln and Churn.”

“Are there plans for more in the not too distant future?”

“We are always looking to expand.”

“How many lakes are there in total in the whole of the Cotswold Water Park?”

“140+.”

“And you think East Anglia is under threat! What are your fish stocking policies?”

“If you are buying carp you need to deal with suppliers who are whiter than white! Ed Brown of Furnace Mill is one supplier that I would recommend highly. He produces fantastic carp with every scale pattern you can imagine, beautiful chestnut coloured fish that grow rapidly in the right environment! I like to see fish growing on in the lakes as we have prolific natural food.

“I found stocking with lumps costly and they take a few years to prosper. Fast growing singles can be doubles by the next season! This is the approach we took with Little Horseshoe four years ago, and it is throwing up new 25lb+ fish almost every week this spring and is rapidly

potentially still about. Have a look at the Small Pec Common on the Watermark website...”

“Little Horseshoe has some magnificent old fish. These fish are instantly recognisable, as some have them have very crinkly dorsal and pectoral fins and are typical old warriors.”

“We’ve heard you’re not your usual fishery manager and you like to do things differently. Could you give us a few examples?”

“I am not afraid to formulate my own plans rather than copy other people’s success. An example of this is Bradley’s. Rightly so people treasured this lake for its history and historic fish. The reality is that the original fish are very few in numbers and are coming towards the end of their time. In order to retain Bradley’s as a viable fishery it needed restocking and we have done this with the best fish we could get produced by Ed Brown and securing Bradley’s future as a fishery.

“I stocked 2000 fish – 18 fish per acre as I didn’t want to increase the risk of a problem associated to stocking fish by stocking regularly over a period of years. So far all the fish have stuck and we are in good shape. Lookout for the catchphrase, “France in England” going forward

“No, strictly natives only! What we have done is accelerate nature and have had a great time restoring our gravel pits working inline with local conservationists ensuring a good habitat for nature and anglers alike. I feel you need to enhance the whole encatchment area of your fishery to do a proper job. Personally, the quality of my surroundings are high on my list of priorities when I am fishing and I am sure the Watermark’s approach to habitat enhancement will be our trademark going forward.”

“Is this because you want to make the whole Watermark experience for the angler not just about the fishing, but just actually being there?”

“Absolutely, in the words of Keith Sykes, I want to introduce “a little bit of magic”.

“Bradley’s Lake is an enormous lake, but what are your plans for this lake?”

“This lake is getting all of our attention at the moment. We have spent a lot of time on this fishery improving the access, building swims, stocking with 2000 prime carp etc. Bradley’s will remain a day ticket venue for the foreseeable future. It is a joy to fish this lake, I find it really inspiring. We are hoping

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becoming an awesome fishery!”

“We can vouch for that. So how many fish have you stocked in total into all the lakes you control?”

“Two to three thousand.”

“Sounds pricey. Tell us about some of the special fish in Little Horseshoe? We’ve heard that there’s some Ashlea Pool fish in there.”

“I’m not sure about Little Horseshoe, but I know a chap that witnessed the netting of Ashlea or “Station Pool” as it was known at the time. Fish were definitely stocked into Bradley’s, a few of which are

as I think this is what we will have at Bradley’s!”

“Sounds good to us. Watermark is a huge company, so can you tell us how big your budget is for expanding the fishery side of the business?”

“No, but I can tell you that we have a detailed financial business plan specific to the fisheries that takes us through to the next decade!”

“Rob mentioned you like to plant weird and wonderful species of plants around the lakes. Is this correct, if so, can you give us some examples?”

that people will embrace the concept of a larger lake with a feeling of – “France in England”.

“Finally, what’s the most amount of money you’ve spent in one evening taking clients out?”

“That brings me back to the dance-mat incident! I am still saving up for the next CARPology visit!”

Interviewed by Joe Wright.

Check out:

www.watermarkfisheries.com



