

Tring Reservoirs

by Hugh Lamberton

Hugh Lamberton describes the challenge of fishing the Tring Reservoir complex and offers some in depth tips, tackle advice and guidance to help you succeed. PS You might need a ladder!

I understand that Steve Aley is trying to organise a fish-in at Tring. For those who have not fished at Tring before, this article will hopefully give the newcomer an insight into the waters, the methods and the tactics they may wish to consider.



Startops Reservoir, Tring

Both Startops and Wilstone feature steep and high dam walls, which means it may be necessary to fish at the top of the dam on the grass bank when the water level is up. On those occasions when the water is low, it will be advantageous to fish at water level from the shoreline.

There can be a huge difference in water levels from Autumn to the Spring and last year the water probably came up around 9ft over the winter period. For this reason during the spring, an extending aluminium ladder is invaluable for gaining access to the waters edge and a landing net handle extending to at least 3metres is strongly recommended in order to avoid the arduous task of scrambling up and down the steep wall when the water level is up.



Early Spring - Wilstone Reservoir

When fishing from the dam wall, it is good practice, particularly if it is windy, to use a very short bank stick at the front of the rod, and a long bank stick at the rear. This allows the rods to be positioned at an acute angle, thus creating a more direct line towards the baits. This in turn, will reduce the length of line between the rod-tip and where it enters the water, thereby, reducing buffering of the bow of line from strong winds.

Rod pods may come into their own, when fishing from the muddy shore-line at low water levels, since the flint underneath the clay, can make it difficult to use standard rod rests. However, the “powerpoint” type of bank sticks manufactured by companies such as *Fox* and *Dinsmore* make an excellent alternative to rod pods and are invaluable for screwing into firm banks.



Fox Powerpoint Banksticks

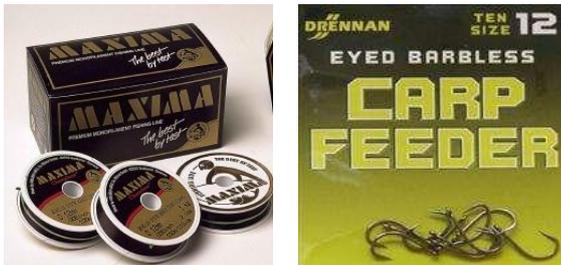
Since the waters tend to fish best when there is a strong westerly or southwesterly blow on the water, normal ledgering methods and tackle may need to be examined. By far my most successful method over the years has been the use of heavy, typically 2oz block-end feeders packed with maggots, which can either be free-running or fixed and used paternoster style. The new *Drennan* feeders with a flat profile are ideal for the purpose as they are free running and additionally the in-line versions are available in 1½oz, 2oz and 2½oz. The largest version is particularly useful for building up a swim with bait at the start of a session.



Drennan Bolt Rig Block-End Feeder

The *Thamesley* screw top feeder has a great track record at Tring but sadly is no longer available. A sinking main line of 6lb would normally be appropriate, this may need to be stepped up to 8lb if the water is weedy or if extremely long casting is required. To take the strain of casting a heavy feeder a robust line is required. Greatly recommended for this purpose is *Insight GR60*, which has the added bonus of being abrasion resistant.

Many Tring regulars still use *Maxima*, which is another reliable sinking line and has been used very successfully on these waters. Modern pre-stretched “hard” lines may be found wanting, and personally I have little confidence in them for this application.



Three maggots on either a size No.12 or No.14 *Drennan Carbon Feeder Hook* has been widely used and red maggot has proved very successful over the years. However, during the colder months, when the metabolism of the fish slows down, it can sometimes be advantageous to drop down to a size No.18 hook offering two maggots. If tench are around, it may be necessary to step-up to a heavier hook; another hook from the *Drennan* stable namely the *Superspade* would be a very appropriate choice.

For those anglers who prefer to tie their own hooks *Silstar Team Match* line makes a superb hook length. Good starting point is 5.5lb breaking strain, but of course it may be necessary to step up if weed is a problem. Flavoured maggots have also been used to good affect and Archie Braddock’s *Red Surprise* or *Solar Tangerine* are two flavours which have been particularly successful.



Two hook rigs are popular, and of course give the angler the opportunity to try different baits on each hook and to experiment with different hook lengths. However, this approach is foolhardy if there is weed around. In order to counterbalance the heavy feeder an indicator that shows drop-back bites is normally necessary, particularly when fishing in windy conditions from the dam wall. Light indicator bobbins are normally a waste of time if fishing in windy conditions, particularly if fishing from the exposed dam walls. If light indicators are selected, runs can be finicky and hard to hit.

One of the best indicators for this purpose is the *Bob Henderson* indicator that was almost “de rigueur” for the Tring specialist. The *Henderson* indicators are long and can carry a significant amount of weight to cater for forward or drop-back bites. The combination of the heavy indicators and the rig encourages a taking fish.

Unfortunately the *Rob Henderson* indicator was discontinued some years ago and thus is difficult to get hold of. However long-arm indicators available from *Fox* or *Solar* would also be suitable. These indicators have a facility for adding extra weights on the arm and this is invaluable for combating wind and undertow. On those rare occasions, when it is possible to fish at the waters edge, or on those rare days when there is little wind bobbin style indicators may be feasible.



Fox Swinger MK11 (Left) and the Matrix Sweeper (Right)

Since it will often be necessary to cast a heavy feeder into a strong wind, rods will need to be scrutinised. Soft action *Avon* rods will be limited to short range fishing and calm conditions. The weapon of choice for the Tring specialist will normally be a 12ft medium action rod with a test curve of between 1½ and 2lb. The *Harrison* range of long distance Tench and Bream rods ‘fit the bill’ and the 1½ *Specialist* and 1¾ test curve *Interceptor* models are very popular on these waters which are capable of casting a heavy loaded feeder accurately over distances of up to about 80 yards. Most manufacturers will probably have a rod suitable in their armouries, and provided the rod is fairly progressive and is capable of casting a 2oz feeder into a strong headwind should be suitable. Medium sized reels, such as the *Shimano Baitrunners* in 5010 format are ideal.

Accuracy in casting is very important, not only direction, but also distance. To ensure the bait from the feeder falls into a fairly small area, it is helpful to use the line clip on the spool of the reel, or some other indicator such as a rubber band or a small stop not made from braid. *John Roberts* produce a small item of tackle known as a range finder. The beauty of this cheap, but well thought out product, is that it features a small loop which is clipped onto the reels line clip, the reel line is placed behind the loop on the clip, and thus, helps to greatly minimise line damage.



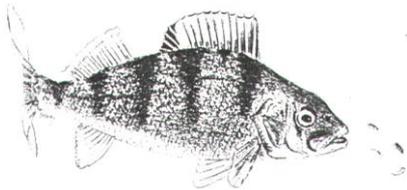
John Roberts Range Finders

It is normal to recast about every twenty minutes, at the start of the session. However, if the tufted ducks, which are abundant on these waters, are active it may be good practice to decrease this to every forty minutes. The ducks, which can be a real nuisance, are capable of picking baits up in surprisingly very deep water. If a bad cast is made, it is probably good practice to rewind and cast again. Accurate casting is vital and there is little room for compromise.



Tufted Ducks

The feeder can be covered in insulation or “gaffa” tape, as this will reduce the escape rate of maggots and will help to compensate for any inaccurate casts. Lobworm is also a very successful method at Tring, particularly if used in conjunction with an open ended feeder and is particularly affective when water temperatures are still fairly high during the autumn. Indeed my 5lb 5oz fish came to this approach. Most groundbait mixes, can be used to good affect, and of course free samples such as casters, dead maggots, and broken lobs can be included in the feeder.



Autumn Sunset - Wilstone Reservoir

Fishing for big perch at Tring on wet, wind lashed days is not for everyone. Like a lot of specimen hunting, the pace of fishing is invariably slow. However if you don't buy the ticket you wont win the lottery, good luck everybody.



28/10/09 - Hugh with a 5lb 5oz from Tring Reservoir

Hugh Lamberton