

Old Bury Hill Lake

Old Bury Hill Lake is situated just outside Dorking. An attractive and well managed day ticket water, it has much to offer matchmen, specimen hunters and pleasure anglers. Banstead match star Ken Collings shows you around.



Nestling in a secluded valley less than a mile from Dorking town centre lies picturesque Old Bury Hill Lake. Over 200 years old, this tree-lined 12 acre fishery is clock-a-block with fish – and big fish at that. The possibility of catching specimen fish of several different species, combined with the regular stocking of mature fish, its handy location, and its ease of access to individual swims, make it a popular venue for anglers of all types.

Remarkable list

The list of specimens taken from Old Bury Hill in recent years is remarkable for a water of its size. They include pike and carp to just over 30lb (13.6kg), perch and rudd up to and roach over 3lb (1.3kg), chub to 7lb (3.1kg), zander to 16lb (7.2kg), bream to over 8lb (3.6kg), tench over 9lb (4kg) and crucian carp over 5lb (2.2kg).

“It’s not just quality that the lake is renowned for, but also quantity,” says Ken. “Over 30lb (13.6kg) is needed to win most matches here. In recent years there’s been an explosion in the numbers of small roach, bream and hybrids, but these can be avoided by using large baits. Fortunately the lake is rich in food, so competition between sizes and species isn’t too great.”

Management policy is to stock the lake only with mature fish, such as 5-6lb (2.2-2.7kg) tench. To ensure a good supply of insects and other natural foods the water is

regularly fertilized with dung to assist weed growth. The weed and lily beds then give the fish plenty of cover and encourage them to stay within easy casting distance.

Three banks

The lake is V-shaped, with the refreshments hut and entrance at the apex. Standing here, the Front Bank is to your left; it runs up one arm of the lake to where the spring-fed feeder stream flows in among thick reeds. To your right is the Long Bank, which goes up the other arm to the lake’s

▲ *The view from the hut, looking up the Long Bank arm towards the outflow. The foreground, just in front of the boathouse, at 2m (7ft) is the deepest part.*

▼ *Ken with a typical Old Bury Hill bream. The lake is full of fish between one and four pounds (0.45-1.8kg), with the largest reported bream weighing just over 8lb (3.6 kg).*





Front Bank

Pike and perch hunt their prey around the cover of the boathouse.

roach

bream

Carp move from deeper water into the margins at dusk and depart after dawn.

Tench live and feed in most parts of the lake, from the weedy margins to the deep water near the boathouse.

Rudd and crucians feed in the shallow, weedy margins.

Tip Keep it tight

When the water in a lake becomes coloured it is vital that you keep your groundbait in a tight area – the fish must feed by scent alone, so keep your bait area concentrated.

OLD BURY HILL LAKE NEAR DORKING

▼ *The area around the boathouse contains several fish holding features: deep water favoured by bream and carp; shallow reedy margins with a sudden drop-off loved by tench, crucians, rudd and carp; and snaggy ambush points for pike, perch and zander.*

Shoals of roach are found throughout the lake.

Bream prefer the deepest parts of the lake off the Front Bank.

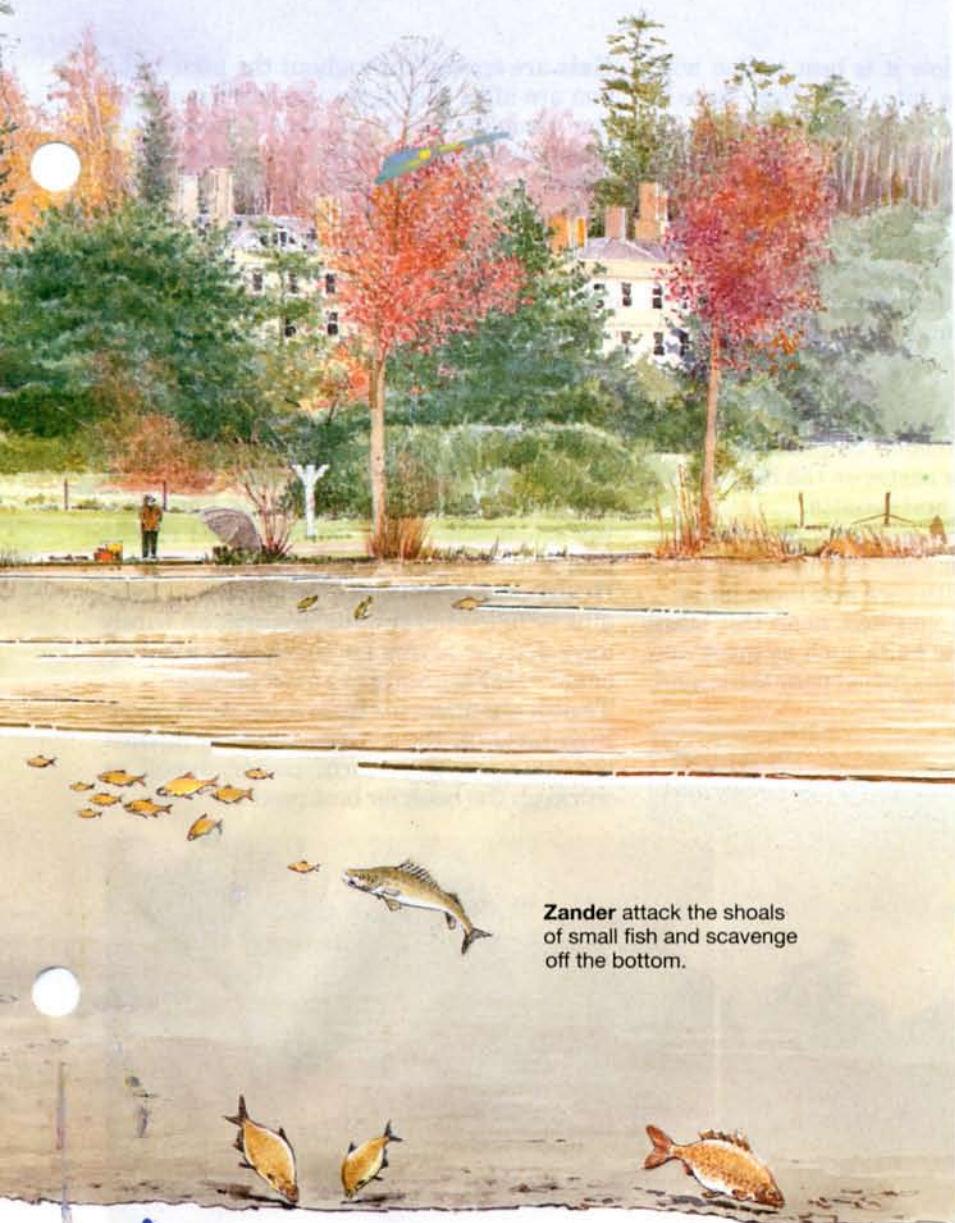


outflow. The far bank – Wimbledon Bank – has restricted fishing. You can't fish from the island facing the Long Bank, but you can fish as close up to it as you like.

"The deepest part of the lake is here, immediately in front of the boathouse," explains Ken. "We're at the apex of the V. Out there, the water is about 2m (7ft) deep. From here, up to a point almost level with the island on the Front Bank, there's a constant depth of about 1.8m (6ft), but it gradually shallows up to 60cm (2ft) in front of that dense bed of rushes that covers the feeder stream's entry point."

Weeds and trees

"Look over to the island," says Ken. "The water around there – and off the Long Bank – averages 1.2m (4ft), but it shallows up to 0.9m (3ft) as it approaches the outflow. Take particular note of the clumps of reeds and rushes in those margins and at the shallower ends of the lake. Most of the 80



Zander attack the shoals of small fish and scavenge off the bottom.

Rudd shoals follow food drifting on the surface.

The silty bottom is covered with leaf litter.

Large carp feel safe in the water around the island.



▲ *Because the water is cold and coloured, Ken has chosen a swim near the boathouse. His choice of a deep-water swim has payed off – he is playing a pole-caught bream.*

swims in this lake are flanked by beds of lilies and pondweed, but these aren't as apparent in the winter when they die down.

“Those weedbeds are one of the main fish-holding features of this lake, particularly in the summer. Most of the lake’s residents are attracted to them as feeding places at dawn and dusk. They also provide shade or shelter during the brighter parts of the day.

“The weedbeds hold vast numbers of snails, crustaceans, worms and insects and their larvae – they’re a natural larder for fish. Those overhanging trees hold the same attraction, especially for rudd and carp, because they offer shade and protection. They house an army of insects as well.”

Where to fish

“There are fish to be caught from all swims, but during the colder parts of winter check the deepest parts of the lake – the Front Bank swims from the boathouse to just past the island and the first few swims on the Long Bank,” suggests Ken. “Because the

Fishery facts



- 1 Front Bank
- 2 Long Bank
- 3 Wimbledon Bank
- 4 Bonds Lake
- 5 Milton Lake
- 6 bailiffs' hut and boathouse

● You can buy day tickets on the bank and season tickets are also available. There are 15 boats for hire, which means anglers can fish the swims behind the island. There are ample parking areas, refreshments and toilets on site. For more details tel: 0306 883621.



● To get to Old Bury Hill Lake leave the M25 at junction 9 and take the A24 to Dorking. The lake is situated just off the A25 Dorking to Guildford road and is less than a mile from the town centre and B.R. station which is a short taxi ride away.



▲ The lake's overflow, which is normally just a trickle. This is what it looks like after a fortnight of almost continuous rain.

lake is quite shallow it is best to fish with the wind blowing into your face since it moves the warmer water towards you."

The lake responds well to most methods, with pole, waggler and feeder all taking good mixed bags. Long range legering techniques are the best for the pike, carp and zander. Because it's so well stocked, arrive tackled up for a definite species and pick your swim accordingly.

Ken's tips

Bream Try for bream in the deeper water off Long Bank. Feeder tactics work best, with worm, corn or caster on the hook over a bed of groundbait and squatts.

Carp Explore the margins or weedbeds close in for carp, or leger at long range tight up to the island with corn and meat baits.

Chub are easily spooked near the main bank but fall to big baits such as meat and bunches of lobworms fished near the island.

Eels are spread throughout the lake, but if you are after the bigger specimens, aim for the deeper water at dawn and dusk. Deadbaits and worms are recommended.

Pike, perch and zander Concentrate your attack for these predators around the edges of weedbeds, old landing stages, sudden drop-offs and the island and boathouse swims. These are the areas where they ambush or hunt for their prey. Lures and static or moving fishbaits are successful, with perch also taking worm and maggot.

Roach and hybrids can be found in all parts of the lake, where they can be tempted on most baits, with bread and corn picking up the bigger specimens. For quantity catches use dark caster fished on the drop with a pole or waggler set-up.

Rudd and crucians Weedbeds and margins or following the surface drift on windy days are the places for these fish. Floating or slow sinking baits are most popular.

Tench are never far from some weed cover. Fish hard on the bottom tight up against the margins with corn, caster, bread or worm on the hook for best results.

The best bream fishing is found off the Front Bank. The feeder stream flows in to the right of this picture – fish spawn in the shallows there.



▲ Fishing is not permitted from the island, but it is reachable with a long cast or from one of the boats. Those overhanging branches are a great attraction for chub, carp and rudd – offering shelter and food.



▲ This is a popular spot in summer for carp, tench and crucians. They cruise around the weed and lily beds flanking this swim. (To see what the lake looks like in summer, see *World of Fishing*, page 246.)