



The National Anguilla Club

BULLETIN

VOLUME: I.A.

NUMBER: 4.

NATIONAL ANGUILLA CLUB BULLETIN.

Volume: I4. Number: 4.

CONTENTS.

EDITORIAL.....	Arthur Sutton.	Page 30.
REPEAT SESSIONS.....	Kevin Richmond.	Page 31.
NOTABLE EELS 1975 and 1976.....		Page 34.
LIFFORD RESERVOIR, 74, 75, 76.....	Kelvin Hardman.	Page 35.
NIGHTS TO REMEMBER.....	Ian Mann.	Page 38.



Copyright; The National Anguilla Club 1977.

EDITORIAL.

by; Arthur Sutton.

The Spring is here, the lawn grows apace, the birds sing and carry nesting material, and one might be forgiven for feeling that everything in the garden is rosy.

Unfortunately, from an eel anglers point of view, it is anything but rosy. The pressures mount on our particular way of angling. We may soon find ourselves fighting a desperate rear guard action- with little hope of winning.

But retreat, and the burning of bridges is out of the question. Many a great General has indicated that the best policy of defense is to attack. So be it, and attack we must.

It may seem a little mundane and contrite for peace loving men to talk of fighting, but even the worlds greatest philosophers must fight, and attack when there be a cause to defend. That is what we must do. That is what we shall be doing when we join the Anglian Water Authority in battle at the forthcoming Inquiry. I am going to that event EXPECTING TO WIN!, and I am in fighting mood.

The Anguilla Club has a responsibility to defend not only it's own members interests, but the interests of others too. I believe our status is such that if we raise our voice we must be heard.

Recently we have been offered a regular platform in a monthly angling journal which will be named 'Coarse Angler'. This paper is being produced for and on behalf of the National Federation of Anglers, and for us to be invited to submit regular material and feature articles is something we can be proud of. An opportunity we can not afford to miss.

I need hardly tell you that eel fishing is just around the corner. For those of us with close season facilities some may have already started. I wish you good sport, but would plead with you to do nothing which might harm our case for close season eeling.

At a talk on eel angling which I recently gave to a keen and interested audience at a London Technical College, I was asked the question, "What are the organised eel anglers doing about the masses of elvers being taken from our rivers?" I was taken aback and was searching for an answer when the questioner followed up with, "Surely an organised eel body could take its own share of elvers from the rivers in question and redistribute them to other watersheds."

Well, there is something to think about. It may not do this old'un any good as far as eel catches are concerned, but it would do my heart good to know that we were securing eel angling for our younger members, and perhaps, their children.

With this issue of the Bulletin we have used every scrap of material we have on hand. I was hoping that, following the Spring meeting, there would be something like a flood of material for us to get our teeth into. Sadly, such is not the case. No doubt I could fill a few pages in each issue, but noone wants an Arthur Sutton monthly, so what about it?

You must surely be thinking about eels know. Just jot a few notes and thoughts down on paper. Otherwise I must warn you all that I will have to turn to poetry again.

Arthur J. Sutton.

REPEAT SESSIONS.

by; Kevin Richmond.

During 1968, a main topic of conversation within the Anguilla Club concerned eel holding places and first sessions at a particular swim. The basic question was whether the largest eels were taken from the water on the first session, or on more subsequent visits.

A significant amount of data was submitted to the Bulletin by Terry Goulson, (Vol;15-No;6). More data may have been sent in, but I do not possess a complete set of Bulletins..

Terry's tentative conclusions pointed to the fact that we should not necessarily assume that a blank first session means that there is not a decent eel to be caught from the swim, and that one does not necessarily catch the biggest eel from the swim on the first visit.

However, it was pointed out that more data would be needed before any analysis was attempted--Terry's results consisted of 2,230 Rod hours for 71 eels.

I have in my possession the analysis forms for the 1974 seasons Reporting scheme. Part of this data is devoted to the effect of repeat sessions in one swim on rate of catch and eel size.

The total effort covers 14,939½ Rod hours and 414 eels. I have tried to analyse and note any significant trends, and what I have extracted from available data is set out in table I. Only 2:1 and 2:2 class waters are included in the analysis.

Out of the total 99 sets of data for class 2:1 waters, there are 67 cases where an eel was caught on the first or more subsequent sessions. Of the 67 cases, there are 11 where no eel was landed on the first visit to the swim, although an eel or eels were caught on one or more subsequent sessions. It must be remembered though that the basic question concerns large eels because in the above cases some of the eels caught were of no great size.

In 6 of the 11 blank first sessions, a 2lb.+ eel was caught in a later session, (assuming that one considers a 2lb eel respectable.)

Of the 56 cases where an eel was caught on the first session, there are only 23 subsequent sessions that produced a larger eel. It must be remembered that there are 34 out of the 67 sets of data where the biggest eel of the year for that swim was not taken on the first visit.

There are a total of 104 sets of data for 2:2 fisheries. In 61 cases, an eel was caught on the first or more subsequent sessions. There are 17 cases where no eels were landed on the first session, although an eel or eels were taken on more subsequent visits. In 11 of the 17 cases of blank first sessions, a 2lb+ eel was caught later.

Of the 44 cases where an eel was caught on the first visit to a swim, only 4 subsequent sessions produced a larger eel. It is worth noting that there are only 21 out of the 61 cases where the biggest eel of the year for that swim was not taken on the first visit.

It seems that the data presented shows that 2:1 fisheries are more likely to produce eels on the first session rather than on more subsequent visits, though we should not necessarily assume that the largest eels will be caught on the first session at a swim. In contrast, it seems that although one is more likely to catch an eel from a 2:2 water on the first visit to a swim, evidence shows that the chances of catching the largest eels present on the first session are extremely favourable.

As regards the rate of catch and median weights, class 2:2 waters seem to give a higher median and slower rate of catch. Median weights increase session by session on class 2:1 waters reaching a peak of 2lb 2ozs. at session 5. Owing to the limited amount of data for sessions 6-17 we cannot draw significant conclusions from them. A great deal of effort is still required to enable any conclusive analysis to be achieved. Rates of catch do decrease as the number of sessions increases and the RH/2 did tend to increase slowly. This is in agreement with what has been suggested above, i.e. that there is nothing to suggest that the most favourable time to fish class 2:1 waters on the first session- the difference in RH/2 between sessions is not highly significant.

However, although median weights for 2:2 waters do improve session by session, it must be remembered that 6 of the 7 four pound plus eels were taken during sessions 1 and 2.

Rates of catch for 2:2 waters are at the fastest on session 8 and at their slowest on sessions 2 and 3, although sessions 6-13 do not offer sufficient data for significant conclusions to be reached. Taking those sessions that offer a reasonable amount of data, 1-5, session 1 gives the fastest rate of catch as was suggested above.

If these sets of data are significant, then it is appropriate to give more thought to explanations suggested. Obviously, class 2:1 waters are going to receive a greater influx

....of elvers and as such, will have larger eel populations than those waters with no connections to the river systems.

This would mean that "Prison waters", although possessing less dense eel populations would have a better weight distribution. Probably one of the main differences between 2:1 and 2:2 waters as regards catching large eels, would be due to the relative densities of the eels, (we would have to land more small eels from a lake with an access before we catch a comparable number of large eels such as could be expected from an enclosed water.). This is only speculation on my part, but I do possess data which shows that there is some truth in this statement.

Another explanation offered as to why big eels seem to be caught first on 2:2 waters was suggested by Alan Hawkins, (Bulletin, Vol; II. No; 2.), and that is, eels may have strong territorial habits, the larger eels dominating the smaller and generally having first refusal of any food items. Obviously, (as Alan says,) this would be very hard to prove either way.

I must add that although we can draw conclusions from data presented, one years results cannot be taken as conclusive. More information is needed, and as this becomes available, I will incorporate it with the above.

CLASS 2:1 WATERS.

SESSION NO:	I	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Weight range.	0-1:	40	37	4	3	2	4	I	I	2	I	0	0
	1-2:	59	23	14	2	I	2	I	I	2	0	0	0
	2-3:	I7	I7	4	3	3	0	0	I	0	0	0	0
	3-4:	I2	3	I	2	0	0	I	I	0	0	0	0
	4-5:	I	I	0	I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MEDIAN :	I:03	I:03	I:03	2:00	2:02	0:07	I:0I	I:II	I:00	0:I3	-	-	
U.Q. :	I:I2	I:I2	I:I3	3:0I	2:I2	I:00	3:06	3:00	I:04	-	-	-	
L.Q. :	0:I3	0:II	I:02	0:I4	0:I2	0:04	0:I4	0:II	0:I3	-	-	-	
TOTAL EELS:	I29	8I	23	II	6	6	3	4	4	I	0	0	
CULM EELS:	I29	2I0	233	244	250	256	259	263	267	268	268	268	
CULM R.H.:	3I87	53I0	6507	7I26	7449	760I	777I	7923	8062	8I5I	82I6	8269	
CULM RH/E:	25	25	28	29	30	30	30	30	30	30	3I	3I	
CULM RH/2:	I06	I04	II6	II4	II5	II7	II8	II7	II9	I20	I2I	I22	

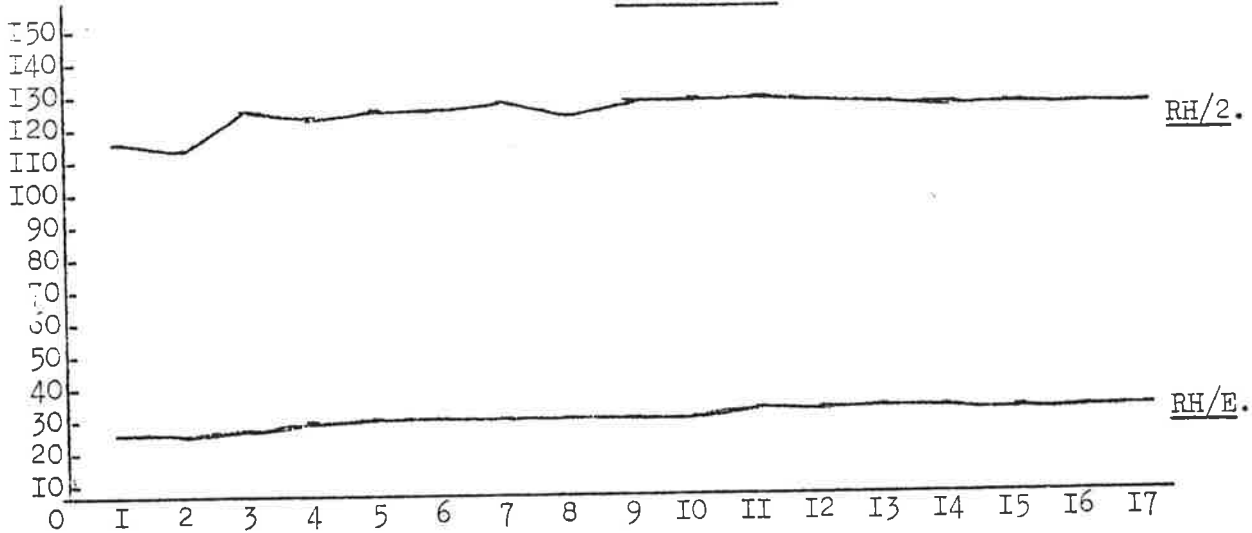
SESSION NO:	I3	I4	I5	I6	I7	
Weight range.	0-1:	I	0	0	0	2
	1-2:	0	0	0	0	0
	2-3:	0	0	0	0	0
	3-4:	0	0	0	0	0
	4-5:	0	0	0	0	0
MEDIAN:	0:04	-	-	-	0:04	
U.Q. :	-	-	-	-	-	
L.Q. :	-	-	-	-	-	
TOTAL EELS:	I	0	0	0	2	
CULM EELS:	269	269	269	269	27I	
CULM R.H.:	8335	8392	8462	8524	8590	
CULM RH/E:	3I	3I	3I	32	32	
CULM RH/2:	I23	I23	I24	I25	I26	

(cont'd over)

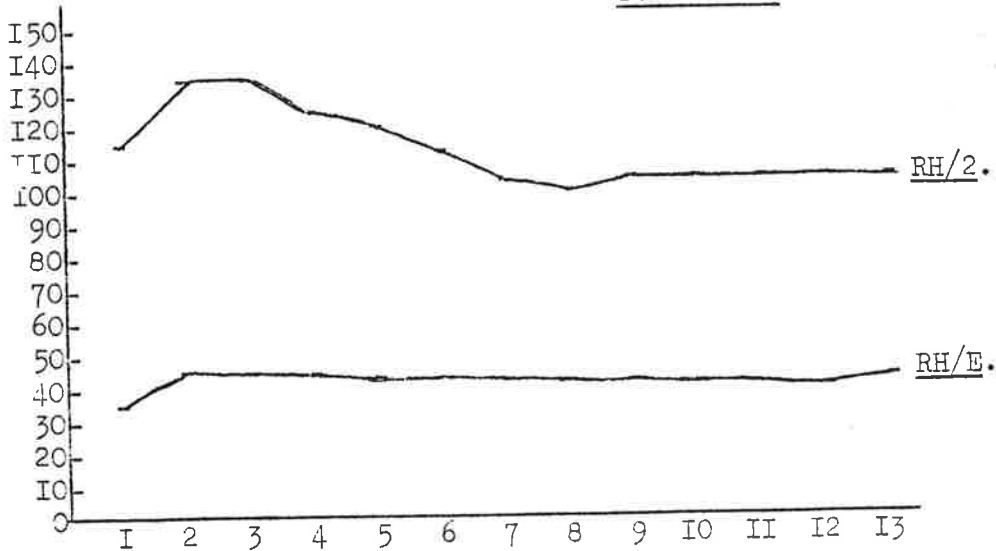
CLASS 2:2 WATERS.

SESSION NO:	I	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
0-1:	24	7	1	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1-2:	29	8	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
2-3:	15	4	2	3	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
3-4:	4	4	3	2	2	5	4	1	0	0	0	0	0
4-5:	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5-6:	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MEDIAN:	1:06	1:04	2:00	2:00	2:00	3:05	3:02	3:01	-	-	1:12 ¹ / ₂	-	-
U.Q.:	2:03	2:13	3:02	3:01	3:00	3:06	3:06	-	-	-	-	-	-
L.Q.:	0:06	0:13	1:02	0:07	0:09	3:02	2:10	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL EELS:	76	25	9	11	7	6	7	1	0	0	1	0	0
CULM EELS:	76	101	110	121	128	134	141	142	142	142	143	143	143
CULM R.H.:	2655	4525	5207	5636	5979	6160	6211	6230	6245	6251	6273	6303	6350
CULM RH/E:	35	45	47	47	47	46	44	44	44	44	44	44	45
CULM RH/2:	115	137	137	128	122	112	101	100	101	101	101	102	102

2:1 WATERS.



2:2 WATERS.



THE NATIONAL ANGUILLA CLUB.
NOTABLE EELS 1975 and 1976.

1975.

CAPTOR.	DATE.	TIME	LOCATION	BAIT.	WEIGHT.
C. DAVY	JULY	NIGHT	ESSEX	D.B.	5:14
A. HOLLERBACH	SEPT	NIGHT	N'HANTS	D.B.	5:08
R. CROXALL	AUG	NIGHT	B'HAM	D.B.	5:06
D. HOLMAN	SEPT	DAY	CHESH	WORM	5:04
G. BOOTH	MAY	NIGHT	YORKS	D.B.	4:15½
T. JEFFERSON	JUNE	NIGHT	ESSEX	D.B.	4:10
T. JEFFERSON	JUNE	NIGHT	WALES	D.B.	4:10
R. CROXALL	AUG	NIGHT	B'HAM	D.B.	4:08
C. HOUGHTON	JULY	NIGHT	YORKS	D.B.	4:05½
A. HOLLERBACH	JULY	NIGHT	CAMBS	D.B.	4:05½
B. CRAWFORD	JULY	NIGHT	CAMBS	D.B.	4:02
D. HOLMAN	SEPT	DAY	CHESH	WORM	4:01
G. BOOTH	MAY	NIGHT	YORKS	D.B.	4:00½
H. HANSEN	AUG	NIGHT	LINCS	D.B.	4:00
S. HOPE	AUG	NIGHT	LINCS	D.B.	4:00

(15)

1976.

R. HUDSON	MAY	NIGHT	YORKS	WORM	5:13
K. HARDMAN	JULY	DAY	B'HAM	D.B.	5:09
J. VANDECRUYSEN	MAY	NIGHT	N'HANTS	D.B.	5:08
D. HOLMAN	JUNE	NIGHT	CHESH	D.B.	5:08
J. WATSON	MAY	NIGHT	LANCS	D.B.	5:02
D. HOLMAN	JUNE	NIGHT	CHESH	D.B.	5:02
K. STEPHENSON	AUG	NIGHT	HANTS	D.B.	5:02
J. WATSON	MAY	NIGHT	LANCS	D.B.	4:13
D. HOLMAN	JUNE	NIGHT	CHESH	D.B.	4:11
A. BILLINGTON	APRIL	NIGHT	LANCS	WORM	4:10
K. HARDMAN	JULY	NIGHT	B'HAM	D.B.	4:09
A. HOLLERBACH	JULY	NIGHT	N'HANTS	WORM	4:08
D. MINARDS	MAY	NIGHT	DEVON	D.B.	4:06
A. HOLLERBACH	JUNE	NIGHT	N'HANTS	D.B.	4:04
D. KNEE	JUNE	DAY	HANTS	D.B.	4:04
R. GOLDSMITH	JULY	NIGHT	B'HAM	D.B.	4:03
G. BOOTH	MAY	NIGHT	YORKS	D.B.	4:03
K. RICHMOND	AUG	NIGHT	DEVON	D.B.	4:01½
B. CRAWFORD	MAY	NIGHT	CAMBS	D.B.	4:01
A. HOLLERBACH	AUG	NIGHT	N'HANTS	D.B.	4:00½
J. WATSON	APRIL	NIGHT	LANCS	WORM	4:00

(21)

LIFFORD RESERVOIR; "74-75-76".

by; Kelvin Hardman.

Lifford Reservoir is situated in Kings Norton, Birmingham. It's a day ticket water, holding bream, tench, roach, perch, pike, carp and more important, eels.

My first visit to Lifford was for pike in the winter of '73'. Talking to some of the locals, the place appeared to hold some nice eels. All that was forgotten until, on a visit to the Fens with ex Anguilla Club Member, Ray Brown, told me about his exploits with eels from the G.U. Ray made his quarry sound so exciting that the following summer, I made a start.

Remembering what I was told about Lifford, I thought this would be the place to iron-out any difficulties that might come way when I started eel fishing.

Some friends were willing to help me in a campaign on Lifford, as it turned out, four of us. Gerald Jaynes, Nick Rose, Roy John and myself. We wrote to Birmingham Parks Dept. asking for permission to night fish in pairs, on a rota basis. We sent in details of our aims and said that night fishing would help a great deal in achieving the results we were after.

Much to our surprise, a letter was sent back saying that we could go ahead with the study of eels in the Birmingham Parks, ie; Lifford Reservoir and Cannon Hill, only two, but what a concession to get, as the parks are patrolled by Police with dogs.

Preparation started, chicken offal baited in certain swims, swims numbered, depths taken, and bouyant leger rigs made up. All close season work.

Bleak and roach were taken from the Severn, threaded on traces ready for use, then frozen. We wondered how to keep the baits frozen for longish periods on the bank, and soon found the answer in the shape of wide mouth flasks. The frozen baits were just put in the flasks till they were needed. Once the bait was cast out, the thawing process meant that the bait settled gently onto the silkweed which covers the bottom of Lifford, a fact that later proved not to matter.

Lobworms were also collected, but we were more interested in deadbait, a chance we took but it proved to be a right move.

Lifford is not a big water, 20 acres or so, it's oblong in shape, twice as long as it is wide, (see diagram).

There are land drains along the shallow side, and an inflow, but this is from a Factory known as Sturges, who use the water for filtering calcium fines. There is an outflow into the River Ray, but there is no direct link with the Canal system which runs nearby.

Now to business.....the first session at Lifford produced eels of 2:12½ and 1:09½, not an astonishing start, but eels never the less. A week later, Roy and I were to have better luck. On Friday night, we set out two rods each, all baited with deadbait, hoping for some sport. Dusk came and went and we were beginning to regret our choice of swim (No:1), the same swim where Nicky and Gerald had caught the eels the week previous, but at 00.10 the silver paper lifted and we were in business with a nice eel of 2:06. Sitting back and giving ourselves a pat on the back we had another run and another eel, this one went 2:10. Our very first eels and one apeice, very nice. There then followed a lull until 04.00. Roy had this one, a lovely 3:06. Admiring our three eels it was starting to get light, when at dead on 05.00 my silver paper lifted slowly and picked up speed, with no sign of stopping. It's now or never I thought and flicked over the bale arm and it was on, a better one this time I thought, and I was right, it turned the scales at 4:06. Really chuffed with ourselves we packed up and headed for home.

Two sessions, six eels, very nice, next weekend was Gerald and Nicky's turn on the rota.

The following Saturday night, they fished the same swim as before and the choice was a good one as Nicky had an eel of 4:11½ and Gerald had a 3:11. All four of us were really pleased with the results so far. Would somebody take a 5:00+ before the end of the season? Sadly it was not to be, the only eel to follow our previous success was a 2:04, 37"x 6", an extremely long and thin fish. Another two week-ends were spent at Lifford but nothing came our way.

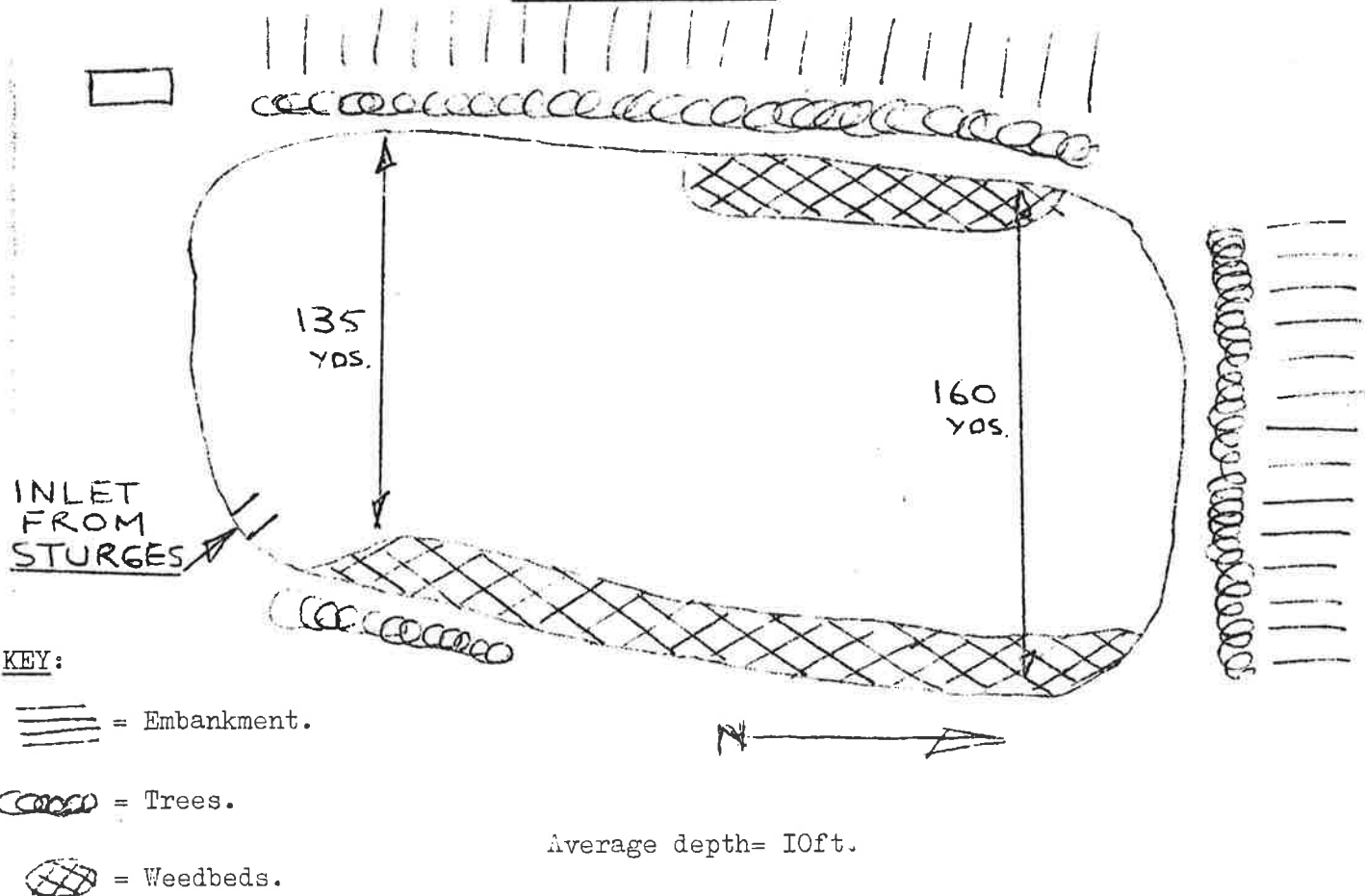
The word had spread that Lifford was producing good eels, so many people fished lobs early morning and late evening taking only small eels up to 1:08.

So the choice of deadbait seemed right. In the first three sessions we had 8 eels, 4 between 2-3lb., 2 between 3-4lb., and two between 4-5lb.

We heard that Earlswood lakes was fishing well so over to Earlswood we went, but that's another story. Our last session at Lifford that Summer was on the 15th. August 74.

(cont'd)

LIFFORD RESERVOIR.



A report was sent in to the Birmingham Parks Dept. and they were highly delighted with it. There was no problem in obtaining permission to fish the next season.

Unfortunately, I had to go it alone. Gerald Roy and Nicky had gone back to carp fishing, the bug had not bitten them.

June 16th. Armed and ready to go, I returned to the same spot where we had taken the eel previously. After a thunderstorm on the 15th. I thought it would be ideal but I blanked. Not to be put off, two nights later, I was back again and at 10.45, I had a run....a real belter would this be my first eel of 75..No!!, a bloody pike of 5½lbs. Back again the following night and I was determined to get off the mark and catch my first eel, but it wasn't to be. I had to wait until two nights later when I had an eel of 2:01, great, I had found them.

Back again the next night, at 11.30 I missed a take, then at 01.20, an eel of 1:12, yes I thought, I've found the sods. At 2.20, another eel, this one going 2:06 and that was that for the night. I fished two more blank sessions and on the third I was in for a shock. I fished in the same swim again and at 01.30 I had a run. I hit it too soon and started swearing and cussing myself. I rebaited and recast and at 02.20 I had another run, much the same as the one fifty minutes earlier, just a trickle off the spool. Give me something to strike at I thought. If I strike now I could miss it and that would mean more cussing and probably a rod thrown up a tree.

Becoming more impatient, I wound down and struck and what a feeling, solid resistance, great it's on. My 1½lb. Test curve rod was well over, it was some fish. At 60yds. it felt like an eel, a great big bugger at that. I gained line slowly dreaming of huge proportions. Would my 42" net be big enough? I was getting worried, but at about 15yds this eel leapt clear of the water, Still wanting to think it was an eel, I now had my doubts and they were proved right. Yes, you've guessed it, a pike hooked neatly in the scissors, and it fought like merry hell, all 12:06 of him. Summer pike are a sporting fish, so much so, that they fight themselves to death, literally. After that experience, I had a week off to have a rest.

On July 4th. I went back to the same spot that had been so kind to us in the past. I set up four rods, all with deadbaits, sat back and waited. It was 03.00 before anything happened, when my penny dropped off the spool. I rushed forward, no line going. I replaced the penny and about two minutes later, it fell off again. A bream shoal going across my line I thought, but why was it not happening on my other rods. I took the offending rod off the rests and very slowly the line fell off the spool. All manner of things were running through

my mind, could it be another pike? I wasn't going to hit this one until something positive happened, and about five minutes later it started to go at a steady rate. At first it was the same solid resistance as the pike but it kept deep right up to the net. First time, straight in, definitely an eel. I ran up the bank and put my hand in the meshes of the net and felt a nice girth. I was sure this was to be my best eel, and it was. It tipped the scales at 5:01. I was very pleased with myself for a campaign carried through alone. It took me another nine sessions to get an eel from Lifford. This was taken at 02.10 on D.B. and weighed 2:15 $\frac{1}{2}$. Two nights later at 23.45 another eel, would you believe 2:15 $\frac{1}{2}$. My last session for that season was on August 30th. 75.

I had put in 23 sessions that summer at Lifford, it seemed like hard going but I did get the big one. No three's or four's though.

I sent off my report for the season and another permit was granted for 76 but between times, I met Reg Whitehouse.

We were going to fish another water thinking that Lifford could be over the hill. One night, we passed Lifford and decided to have a look and that proved fatal. This was my first session at Lifford this season. I was already catching some nice eels in the close elsewhere, non bigger than 3:01, but nearly all over 2:00. I set up in my favourite swim with Reg alongside. I had told Reg the strength of Lifford, it's hard going, but at 22.40, I had a run, going, stopping, generally messing about. Probably another pike I thought. I wound down and struck, nothing but slack line, I wound down and struck again.

"It's on Reg,"

"Pike or eel?"

"eel I think".

What a bloody scrap, this eel fought every inch of the way. After getting the eel in the net twice and twice coming straight back out, Reg decided he was going to dive into the shallow water. The eel went straight in the net this time with no mistakes and as we ran up the bank with the eel in the net, I thought that the line had parted, and it had. On looking at the eel, we could see the hook was neatly in the bottom jaw with no sign of the deadbait. We weighed the eel in the net and the two together weighed 6:01. The net was then weighed at 10ozs. so the eel weighed 5:07, but in the confusion I discovered that my Avons had gone out of true. So in daylight the weight was checked again, dead on 5:09 and I was over the moon.

Two further blanks followed and then Roy said he would come with me to the res. We decided to fish an entirely new pitch. We set up three rods apace, then sat back and waited for something to happen. I was now using section baits having caught eels on them during the close season. We did not have to wait long, at 22.30 my silver paper shot up to the butt ring and I could hear the line slapping against the rod as the eel made off at tremendous speed with no sign of it stopping. I flicked over the bale arm and there was no need to strike, the eel did that for me, nearly wrenching the rod from my hand. I got the upper hand and in due course landed a beautiful eel of 3:05. Twenty minutes later I was doing the same again, another real belter of a run. I struck and the rod began to creak, "this is the one Roy", I said. I made hardly any impression on this fish at all for about 20 seconds, which is a long time at full pressure. Slowly it came in, a colossal weight record eel here I come

Roy was by this time vomiting all over the place after seeing the permanent curve on my rod for a full 7-8 minutes while I played this fish. I finally beached it, a very good eel plus 5-6 pounds of silkweed. The eel weighed 4:09. I'm glad I landed the eel because I would have been telling stories about the huge record eel in Lifford. I fished that swim many times but it never produced again.

They were the last two eels I caught from Lifford. If there is one thing that Lifford taught me, it's never to write a water off.

It's only small when compared with other Reservoirs as I'm sure you'll agree. You might also agree that after fishing Lifford for three Summers, a fourth wouldn't go amiss!

NIGHTS TO REMEMBER.

by; Ian Mann.

After chin wagging for hours and hours our minds were made up as to where we would fish, our destination was to be Hanbury Canal, a water known to many eel anglers.

On arrival, we walked the mile to our well known hot spot. I didn't fancy this particular spot at the time so I carried on walking to a spot where I have taken eels to 3:12 in the past. Things didn't look to be on our side from the start with a full moon beaming down on us and wild carp spawning.

Being a keen eel fisherman, it didn't bother me in the slightest. I set up my three rods all 11ft fast taper carp jobs, 12lb. main line and 18lb. Seastrand traces. Pokey tackle is necessary on this stretch of the canal as there are a few hidden snags to contend with. Baits were, gudgeon, roach and worms, and whenever possible, I like to freeline my baits so that there is no resistance when an eel picks up the bait.

One rod was positioned thirty yards upstream baited with gudgeon, another rod was placed thirty yards downstream and baited with roach. The middle rod was baited with paternostered lobworms, four on the hook. My personal preference is for gudgeon as baits, even if they are small baits, I have found them to be excellent in the past, particularly on this stretch of canal as there are a lot of gudgeon in the stretch and 60% of the eels I have caught in the past have been taken on gudgeon.

The roach deadbait I was using was larger than the baits I would normally use. I don't believe that big baits necessarily produce big eels as some people do. The majority of big eels are caught on worms, small deadbaits or even section baits.

As the hours passed, things began to look much better for us, my mate set the hook in an eel of 2:03, and I wondered when it would be my turn.

I noticed small patches of bubbles going up and down the stretch I was fishing, twenty minutes later, the alarm on my right signalled a run and I noticed the silver paper jammed in the butt ring. I darted out of my sleeping bag and tore the silver paper off and the line was still going out in a very businesslike manner. I picked up the rod and hooked and landed an eel of 3:04. My heart really began to beat as it lay there neatly lip hooked. I felt over the moon. I slowly lifted it out of the landing net and placed it in my keepnet, happiness was mine. After rebaiting and casting out, I got back into my sleeping bag and nestled down again not knowing what else lay in store for us.

Time passed and the silence was occasionally interrupted by buzzes on my worm rod, but they were caused by unwanted fish.

All was quiet until I had a run on the roach deadbait, the line was tearing off like an express train. I began to wonder when to hit it as I had never had a run like this on a canal before. My hands were shaking, my heart pounding, I closed the pick-up on the reel and set the hook, not knowing if it was a big eel. Minutes had gone by and I began to wonder if it might be the record. I knew it was a big eel as it charged up and down the canal. I began to gain line slowly, with the eel thrashing and splashing all the time. I bent back to get my landing net, slowly sank it, and there it was, not the record but a beauty of 4:04. My personal best from the canal. My biggest ever eel weighed 8:00 but I was no less delighted with this fish.

It was very satisfying to have taken two eels in the session knowing that I would have to pack up sooner or later to get back in time for work in the morning. How nice it was to get back to the lovely nagging wife and kids.

Come the middle of the week when I have a few hours to spare, I go down to Hanbury as it is only eight miles away.

Roll on weekends though when I can have a good long session.

How nice it was to have been successful on more than one occasion. Having taken the two eels mentioned above, three weeks later I had two more of 3:06 and 4:02. Happiness is all mine when I am eel fishing, and how good it is to see those eels in the net, and then to see them swim away later in the morning after a slight interruption to measure the length and girth and better still, to take photographs.

Come 1977, I'll be hoping again for fives, sixes or sevens on rod and line. Not like certain parties who prefer to trap theirs!

Hopefully, one of us will be rewarded with an eel of 8:11. I would like to see the new record set by one of us, and not by one of England's so called top eel anglers who appears to catch those elusive fives, sixes and sevens like nobodys business from waters where we fish.

SO COME ON LADS, FINGERS OUT!!!