

The National Anguilla Club

BULLETIN

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EDITORIAL

Well, that's it for another year. The AGM for many of us represents the official end of the Eel fishing season as, in the same way, the SGM represents its start. Although the AGM may be the grand finale of the eel fisherman's season, it is but the start of the Anguilla Club's year, for it is at that meeting that the committee is elected and policy decisions are made. In the months that follow, it is the job of the elected representatives to put the policy into some kind of "working format" which can be discussed at the SGM.

Traditionally, the Club's policy is nearly entirely concerned with the reporting scheme. The policy direction is ascertained by the question: "what do we want to know and learn?" It is the committee's job to embody this into the session reporting scheme. But, might the time not have come for us to broaden our horizons?

Its all very well - highly commendable, in fact - for our one and only concern to be how to find out more about our quarry, but let us not underrate our own strength and importance within the angling community. We are a highly organised, well run Club. We are a democratic Club, so do not suffer to any great extent to domination by any one individual; our aims, with regard to species, are identical, so there is no conflict on importance as some of the other specimen groups are torn. As spread about the country as we are, our lines of communication - despite fifth columnist activity by the Post Office! - are always open and are efficient.

Whether we like it or not, we are a force to be reckoned with and we are not doing anybody any good by not flexing our muscles. Not, I hasten to add, that I think we should start going hammer and tongs at all and sundry, but I do think we should throw our weight behind something. That something should be the NASG.

Tony Hollerbach, in a letter published in 12.8, says that he cannot see how he can give both organisations his loyalty (NAC & NASG) "...it will call for split loyalty." I disagree, Tony. Your loyalty should be to the Anguilla Club; it is the Anguilla Club that is loyal to the NASG.

We already have a big say in the NASG with both Brian Crawford and Arthur Sutton on the committee of that body. The irony of the affair is that very few Anguilla Club members are NASG members.

There is another way in which we can flex our muscles and let our feelings be known. Doubtless we all belong to several Angling Clubs simply in order to be able to fish their waters: but how many of us ever attend their AGMs? Let's face it, we pay our money to fish waters, so we have as much say as anyone else, even if we are in the minority. But honestly, how can we legitimately complain about the action taken by a Club to which we belong when we are too apathetic to put ourselves out to attend the AGM? At least voice a protest at a time when that club's policy makers have to hear you, rather than hope that someone else voices that protest. You never know, but your views may not be falling on deaf ears.

Remember, divided we fall.....

DAVID SMITH.

MY SEASON 1975

By Tony Hollerbach.

Having completed my first year as a member of the Anguilla Club, I can only say that I am very impressed with the Club and am proud to be a member. Not only the actions of individual members have impressed me, but also the way in which members have co-operated in giving me answers to the questions I have asked. Only one thing spoils an otherwise perfect year: that is that my wife has been taken very ill and has had to go into hospital for an unknown length of time. Don't worry, though. I'll be back to pester you all again soon.

My season began early in April. The weekend following the SGM saw me on the Grand Union Canal in the company of Arthur Sutton and Dave Smith. That place ought to be called "Blanks Unlimited"! But, I did manage to catch one elusive eel.

Once the season proper began, my attention turned to Emberton park in Bucks. Again, I was in the company of Arthur and Dave and, as the season wore on, Barry Grey and John Vandercruysen. It was there that I had the somewhat dubious pleasure of fishing with Ernie Orme (Sorry, Ernie, but I had to hop on the bandwagon in having a dig!). I managed to catch a few eels from there. The best from the place being a fish of 3:4, much to the disgust of both John and Barry: indeed, they even threatened to throw me in! I'm sure that the water holds some good ones, and its only a matter of being in the right place at the right time for one of the very big ones to show. But time alone will tell.

Midway through the season, I decided to honour Brian Crawford with my presence at Bra Lake. I can here you all muttering to yourselves: "He's only been in the Club five minutes and he's crawling already!" I arrived at Brian's at five in the afternoon. Upstairs was Brian with no clothes on. Getting ready to go fishing according to his wife: but who goes fishing in the raw? Well, I was made very mush at home by him and his wife, and after a spot of grub we set off in Brian's car for the lake.

On arrival at the lake, who should we find, but A.J.S. and Dave Smith. I think they spent the season following me around - or was I following them? After looking round the place I decided to fish the swim that Dave and Arthur had fished the previous night with some success. I then allowed Dave to catch the baits for me - I told him that I was no good at it - and I soon had numerous small perch. I set up two rods, cast about 20 yards into about 40ft of water. At about 04.00 my buzzer sounded and line was being taken off my spool like the clappers. Lo and behold, this run resulted in an eel of 4:5½. It turned out to be the only fish of the night, but I was quite happy at that.

After my interlude at Bra Lake, I returned to Emberton Park again, but blanked most of the time. Only one session produced an eel. Most of the sport was now had by John and Barry.

On an exploratory motorbike ride in August, I got talking to the water baliff at a place called Castle Ashby in Northamptonshire. As it was opening time and the pub was right next to the lake - you boozers, please note - we went for a drink. We got on to the subject of eel fishing and he told me that over the last few years a good few eels have been caught between 4 and 6lb from the castle lakes. After I had fed him with a few pint glasses full of ale, I broached the subject of close season fishing. He told me that provided I could ensure that anyone fishing during the close season was fishing for

eels, we could fish there during the close season subject to the provisions of the Welland and Nene River Authority, and, of course, on payment of the necessary monies for a day ticket (50p). I fished this water with John Vandercruysen and Barry Gray. Under conditions that were far from suitable we caught eels, the biggest scaling 2lb. So, if any of you wish to join me there next season (and close season) you will be very welcome.

My final venue of the season was Ditchford lakes, a water quite near my home. I didn't fish there until late in the season, the first Tuesday in September to be precise. I had fished there some half dozen times before in previous years but had never caught an eel. But throughout this season I have learned quite a bit so returned there with a little more hope of the place than I had had earlier in the season.

I arrived quite early in the evening and decided to fish one of the swims I had blanked in a couple of times before. This difference between this visit and those previous ones was that I was now armed with all that new information I had gained through talking to Club members. I tackled up and fishing close to a large reed bed, cast in. Nothing happened until about half past one in the morning when the alarm sounded off and the line started to be pulled from my reel. After a pause, I struck and immediately felt what seemed to be a good eel. Eventually I had it on the bank. It turned the scales at 5:8. I don't claim any credit for it, after all, it was the information from the Club that really caught it.

Well, that was my season. I certainly hope that your season turned out to be just as good and that you have had as good sport as I.

THE HEATHEN

By Henry Hansen.

Smithy was his name,
Being awkward was his game.
He liked to drop a line,
To his mates from time to time.
But,
Despite reminders from a mate,
His letters were always late.
And,
So the theme of this ode,
Is don't forget!
Use your postal code!

BROADLAND '75

By Dave Smith and Ron Barnard.

It is always gratifying to be able to reap the rewards of many hours' hard

labour. This year's Broads trip was our fourth together after the elusive Broadland eels. Not that the eels themselves are in short supply up there, its just that their bigger brothers and sisters are not as forthcoming as we would like. The first year gave us the incentive and the following two years saw us amassing facts and figures. This year was to see us putting what we had learned through bitter experience and what we had deduced from our collective evidence into practice. Our aim was to catch an eel in excess of 3:1, the biggest eel caught by either of us from these waters.

Our story really begins way back in January when we confirmed with each other that another visit to the Broads was on. We set about hiring a boat which could act not only as our home for a fortnight, but also function as an eel fishing platform. We chose the first two weeks in August when the moon would be favourable, the nights of reasonable length and when the weather stood an even chance of being warm. Little did we know at that time that our chosen dates would preclude us from attending the Club's trip to Bala and also that we would have such a glorious summer.

This trip was to see a change in our normal Broads holiday routine. The boat booked for the venture was bookable from Friday to Friday rather than the normal Saturday to Saturday, meaning in our having to travel up to Norfolk after work. We also intended fishing on the Friday night. In previous years, it has been our habit to not fish on the first night, preferring to visit the local hostelry. The reason for this course of action being that we would be rushed to have to get to our desired fishing ground, catch bait, tackle up, affix rod rests and wire the boat for sound. This year, although we would be late arriving, we deliberately hired a boat based at Wroxham so that we could get to our "home" waters quickly and stand a chance of getting everything set up before dark.

Friday August 1st saw us both at work, but by hook or by crook, we were at Liverpool Street station in time to catch the 16.30 London-Norwich train, armed with the minimum essentials necessary to keep us going for two weeks. Food had been ordered and would be on board our boat on arrival, so there was no need to take any with us; the train was crowded and the booking hall full, but we had had the good fortune to think of booking in advance and reserving seats. Nothing had been left to chance. Once at Norwich, we took a taxi the ten miles to Wroxham and by eight o'clock we on board our boat. Settled into our happy holiday home, we were soon on our way to those familiar eel fishing grounds that we now know so well.

As we cruised downstream with the tide, we recognised the sites and sights. It was as if we had never been away. And with a hot cup of coffee in hand, it seemed incredible that but a few hours before had seen us at work. It was truly home from home!

Although we intended putting the bulk of our effort into tackling Wroxham Broad, we had agreed that we would fish this first night in Salhouse Broad. The reason for doing this was simply that we knew the water well. We were not going to have too much time to catch baits, and we knew we could get them without too much trouble in Salhouse. Above all, we knew we stood a reasonable chance of catching eels from that water: Wroxham was much more the unknown quantity.

We arrived in Salhouse Broad shortly after eight-thirty, and, finding our usual spots occupied with other boats, decided to fish the downstream entrance. This was something of a risky business since our chosen anchorage was in the narrow entrance channel itself, so we obviously presented a navigational hazard. Although hire craft are not allowed to navigate during the hours of darkness, there are inevitably those who find it a challenge (the odds on being caught are minimal) and there are the privately owned craft

which, if equipped with navigation lights, are not subject to such restrictions. Furthermore, we did not conform with the Port and Haven bye-laws by mooring in such a place. Bye law 35 of the Gt. Yarmouth Port and Haven Commissioners reads:

"Every vessel used for the purpose of angling for fish shall be so moored as not to constitute an obstruction to navigation and that no part of the vessel shall extend a greater distance than 12 feet into the navigable channel, and shall by night exhibit on the outer edge of the vessel a bright white light in a lantern capable of providing visibility all round, at a distance of at least one mile."

With a vessel of 24 feet and cheap Japanese torches, that bye law was flagrantly abused.

Securely moored in the channel, we had to sort out our priorities. The first thing to do was set up the rods; not the easiest of things to do in the confines of a boat when you are in a hurry. The old adage is very true: "More haste, less speed." Never-the-less, once this job had been accomplished, we thought it prudent to set up our complicated network of rod rests. Since this act requires the use of sticky tape, its best to do it before the dew starts to fall as the moisture tends to invalidate effort in that direction.

By the time we were in a position to catch baits, it was past nine. In the falling light we cast out our "spratt bashing" tackle confident that we would soon have a dozen small roach in the bait bin. Alas, our success rate would hardly have impressed Ivan Marks. We managed to catch about half a dozen fish, but they were all in the 6 - 8" class; a little big when you bear in mind that our better fish have fallen to small 3 - 4" baits.

It was midnight before we cast out the eel tackle. We continued our attempts to catch baits well into dark, but still the smaller fish that we had grown accustomed to catching in previous years did not show. Packing up this fruitless pasttime, we then had to wire the boat for sound - ie set up the oscillators.

To the uninitiated, the method of fishing for eels from one of these cruisers (a method pioneered by a group of Anguilla Club members back in 1972) is to have a cruiser with an aft cockpit. Rod rests are taped to the walls of the cockpit so that the rods can be fished conventionally, and by careful positioning the rods form a semi-circle. Two mud-weights are requested - we are yet to be refused this request - so by having one fore and the other aft the boat can be firmly anchored in mid broad and not drift at the whim of current and breeze. Sensor heads are set up in the normal manner and the leads draped around the boat, entering the cabin through one of the windows. In this way the bunks in the boat can be used to best advantage.

Wired for sound, and refreshed with a cup of coffee we cast out. Using two rods apiece, Ron decided to fish two half baits - a tail on one and a head on the other. Dave preferred to use one of the smaller fish - a 5" roach - on one rod and a head section on the other. At one time, Dave even felt like not bothering at all, but Ron talked him round!

Section baits turned out to be a difficult bait to fish. If one remained undisturbed for more than half an hour it was something of an occasion. Quite regularly a bootlace would interfere with the bait, twitch the line out from between the contacts and the oscillator would sound off. None of these half-hearted takes were converted into fish. Some runs were a little stronger. If left to their own devices, several yards of line would be taken and then stop, never to move again. So, we tried hitting them when they first moved. No matter how we tried, we could not convert takes into fish, and we became more and more frustrated.

Dave's whole bait was not above the attentions of the bootlaces now that they had developed the "taste". The gut and middle section was the first to be attacked, followed by other bits of meat. By 01.00 it was an insult to refer to it as being a whole bait, as all that was left was the head. As the bait grew smaller, Dave's temper became frayed around the edges.

By 01.45, the original whole bait consisted of no more than the skull. The eyes had gone as well as most of the flesh. Cast out as it was, a bad tempered, tired Dave thought that he may at last see some sleep. It was not to be. At 01.50 there was another run which was struck. This time the line was snagged solid. Encouraged by Ron, Dave, whose initial reaction on finding the line firmly snagged was to discard the rod in anger, managed to free the line from whatever it was snagged in. Furthermore, the fish that had brought about this minor disaster was still on the end. It was soon on board and in the bin.

The eel had been lip hooked and the bait was in tact - well, as in tact as it could hope to be, now resembling something reminiscent of a refugee from a "Hammer Horror" production! Deciding that this was as serviceable as bait as anything else we had on board, Dave cast out once more and set the line in the contacts - or at least tried. Mellowed none by the capture of an eel, Dave's attempts to put the line between the jaws of his sensor were frustrated by the line's continual attempts to move. It soon became apparent that there was more to the movements that had originally been thought. Dave struck, and soon there was a second eel in the bin.

Although lip hooked, the bait was now no longer useable and a fresh head was used as bait. The night proceeded in the same manner for another hour or so. But no more eels were to be caught, and after that time, no more runs were to be had.

In the morning we weighed and measured the eels. They turned the scales at 2:12 and 3:5 $\frac{1}{2}$. A good night - on paper - when you consider that at 2:12, here was an eel bigger than any we had taken for a couple of years and, at 3:5 $\frac{1}{2}$, our biggest broadland eel. Our main objective had been satisfied. All that remained was for Ron to catch his 2lb+ eel - a task he had failed in last year.

We put another four sessions into Salhouse to take a total of 13 eels, but none surpassed those of the first night. In fact, only one other Salhouse eel broke the 2lb barrier - an eel of 2:3 taken on our second night in that water.

Our third night of the trip saw our first night in Wroxham. We fished there in 1974, putting in three sessions to catch 12 eels to 2:7 plus a couple more over the 2lb mark. Being a bigger water, it was much more difficult to choose a spot to fish than in Salhouse; but we were agreed that it held more potential than the smaller water. We decided that we would concentrate our effort on the deepest part of the broad which runs parallel to the River Bure.

Our first night saw the fulfilment of Ron's ambition in that he caught not only one 2lb+ fish, but two one of which, at 2:8, was our biggest from that water. But, three sessions later had seen a turn for the worse with only two eels gracing the net neither of which merits further discussion, and two blank sessions. A night at Salhouse also proved as disastrous. With the daily temperatures soaring into the eighties, it was becoming increasingly difficult to catch bait and this, we felt, was also the reason for the eels' reluctance to feed. Never the less, we were philosophical about the situation. We had, after all, fulfilled our desires and, whatever else happened, we could hardly say that the trip had been a total failure. Ron, having fulfilled his aim, was now adopting large baits in preference to the small ones still chosen by Dave. It was the "in for a penny, in for a pound" attitude: eels were not too cager to take a bait, so it was just as well to blank out on large ones with the chance of catching a real biggy as blank on small baits which attract

more than their fair share of bootlaces. In any event, the weather was glorious and we were both getting as brown as berries, spending the best part of the day's quota of hours dressed in swimming trunks; we even spent several whole nights in that attire and had had the dubious pleasure of catching eels so dressed.

Our fifth session at Wroxham was started, then, with an air of reserved pessimism. We were going through the motions in the hope that the eels may come on to feed. The day had been hot and bait not too forthcoming, but the evening brought a gentle breeze that served to cool everything down. We arrived at our swim early and went through our ballet act getting our boat positioned. So early were we, that Dave had managed to cast out at 20.45 followed by Ron at 21.00: but not before Dave had caught two eels! Seven eels were boated before midnight when we could sit down for a meal. There was a lull in activity until about three-thirty when the runs started once again, resulting in a further three fish joining the crew. Our run of blanks had been brought to a head by the capture of ten fish. The best two fell to Dave's rods and scaled 2:3 and 3:7 $\frac{1}{2}$. The impossible had been done. Not only had the 3:1 target been met on the first night, but now there was another fish to surpass that one!

Because of the activity we had had the previous evening, resulting in our having our evening meal later than usual, coupled with the resurgence of runs in the early hours of the morning, we had had little sleep - couple of hours at most. We packed up and moved off to Salhouse Broad to spend the day and catch up on our sleep. Unfortunately, this was to be the hottest day of our visit, with the temperatures reaching the low nineties. It was impossible to sleep. We cooled ourselves with plenty of cool drinks - mostly of an alcoholic nature! - and the occasional plunge into the water. Despite the heat, we managed to catch bait with increasing ease, so when we at last set off for Wroxham, we had plenty of bait and were certainly more optimistic than we had been of late.

The evening, unlike that previous, was hot and sticky, and the accumulating cloud indicated that we may be in for a storm. It was so hot that we could not face food, preferring instead to sit in the cockpit. Runs were not as forthcoming as they had been the previous evening and it was not until 22.30 before there was any sign of eels.

We were talking philosophically once more and agreed that this must surely rate as our best season so far. Our best tally of fish had been in 1973, when we had caught five fish in excess of 2lb; already we had had seven fish over that weight, including two in excess of 3lb; we had shown that Wroxham has the potential to produce bigger eels - at least we had satisfied ourselves on that score.

"What would you like now?" asked Ron.

"A big three would go down well," replied Dave.

At 22.30, Dave had a run. After a spirited battle, a good eel was brought to net. Weighing it immediately, it scaled at 3:13 $\frac{1}{2}$. It was popped into the keepnet for safe keeping. We were both elated. As tired as we were, this called for celebration and it was not long before we had each cracked a tube and were toasting our success at having at last cracked the Broads.

The storm was now brewing and lightning, which up to now had been in the far distance could now be seen as blue streaks in the sky. Also there were the first rumblings of thunder and a few drops of rain. The cockpit was no place to be sitting once the downpour started. Leaving the eel secure in the net we went into the cabin in an endeavour to get some sleep. As hot as it still was, the onset of the rain had relieved the oppressiveness of the atmosphere and the pattering of the rain soon sent us to sleep.

Our slumbers were brought to an end at 04.00 by Ron's oscillator sounding off. Ron made his sleepy way to his rods, whilst Dave climbed on to the roof to grab the net: it was not there! As fortune would have it, the storm had blown it off the cabin roof and it was now floating alongside with the handle caught up with one of the fendoffs. It was soon retrieved and held an eel of about 2½lb. It had, by this time, become our practice to put eels into the net rather than the bin, but with eels over the 2lb mark we weighed them straight away. To keep them while we sorted out the scales, we put them in the bin. Thus, Dave went to open the lid of the bin to pop in Ron's eel.

"Look out, there's an eel in there!" yelled Ron, as Dave was lifting the lid.

"I know I was tired and had a quick beer, but I could have sworn that I'd put that in the bin." Dave was now looking at an eel of about the same size as the 3:13½ and, assuming it to be the same one, put it into the net.

"You did put it in the net. That's another one."

"When did you catch that one? I didn't hear your alarm go off."

"Let's weigh this one and get it into the net, we'll have a cup of coffee and I'll explain."

Ron's latest captive came in at 2:12 and soon that too had joined its fellows in the net. As we drank our coffee, Ron explained the saga.

"At about half past two you had a run. Your oscillator was going for some time before it woke me but it was having no effect whatsoever on you. I shook you and the only response was a groan and a tired 'whatsammata'. I told you you had a run to which you replied 'Oh?' and promptly fell asleep. I went outside and found line peeling off your spool, so I struck and pulled it in. I came back to get the scales, but felt so tired myself, that I decided to go back to sleep again. So that's how there was an eel in the bin already!"

We went back to sleep again for a few hours, waking just before eight. We transferred the eels to the bin and set off for Salhouse. En route we came upon an eel netsman. We slowed down to see what he had caught and were both amused and relieved to see that his catch consisted of a bootlace that would have been stretched to reach 3oz.

The eels spent the best part of the day in the keepnet. Despite the sound sleep we had had, we were still feeling very tired, so it was not until early evening before we finally weighed them. They were still in excellent condition and showed no ill effects from their capture many hours earlier. The weights of the two we had weighed on captured were checked and the other beast turned in at a fraction under 4lb: so near yet so far away. Ron felt that that fish should be attributed to Dave, but Dave thought it should be the other way round. We sought arbitration from a third party who supported Dave's claim that the eel was caught by Ron and should be his.

We had another three sessions on Wroxham, plus one in Salhouse, to catch another 13 eels - 10 from Wroxham and 3 from Salhouse. These included yet another 3lb+ fish - 3:2½ from Wroxham - giving us final figures of 520 in 14 sessions, with a total catch of 43 eels (12RH/E) which included 14 over 2lb (37RH/2) and five over 3lb (104RH/3). This is undisputably our best effort to date. And, but for an act of fate, we would have had a "four". That is our aim for next year!

As well as being a good holiday and eel fishing marathon, our venture was also a good public relations job. In previous trips we have elicited the looks of fellow holiday makers who probably think that we are a couple of mild eccentrics having a boat bedecked with strange attire and a net

enough to catch swans in; plus sufficient rods to equip the whole of the Norwich and District Angling Club's "National" squad. This year we were still looked upon as mild eccentrics but we made the effort to communicate with the world! As stated earlier, we spent our days in Salhouse Broad. The reasons for this were that bait were fairly easy to catch; it has a sunny aspect; the shops are nearby and there is a sandy foreshore - invaluable for measuring lively eels using the "lie them on their backs in a groove" method. Because we took our fish to the mainland to obtain their vital statistics, they were seen by many people. People who had previously thought of eels as being small wriggly things now realise that they do have big cousins that are worth catching.

Furthermore, our boat boasted an Anguilla Club sticker and several people asked about it.

Finally, that we returned them to their element added to the impact.

"Couldn't you sell them?" enquired a woman on a neighbouring boat.

"Oh, yes," we replied. "They are fetching over £1 per lb in Billingsgate. You've just seen getting on for ten quid swim off."

"Why don't you sell them then?"

"On principle."

THOUGHTS ON BALA LAKE

By Dave Holman.

Llyn Tegid, or Bala Lake has seen a fantastic amount of the Anguilla Club since Ernie Orme proposed the water as the venue for the 1974 summer trip. The water itself is big, its deep and with such a variety of features that if we were all to spend our entire spring and summer there, it is possible that many of the questions concerning the eels would still be unanswered by the autumn.

Even so, all the eel anglers I have had the pleasure of fishing with at Bala have been of the opinion that here is a superb water in every respect, where the chances of an enormous eel are very high indeed. Yet, two seasons and all that effort by Club members have resulted in just two eels over 4lb. Are we doing something wrong? Or is it that monster Bala eels just do not exist?

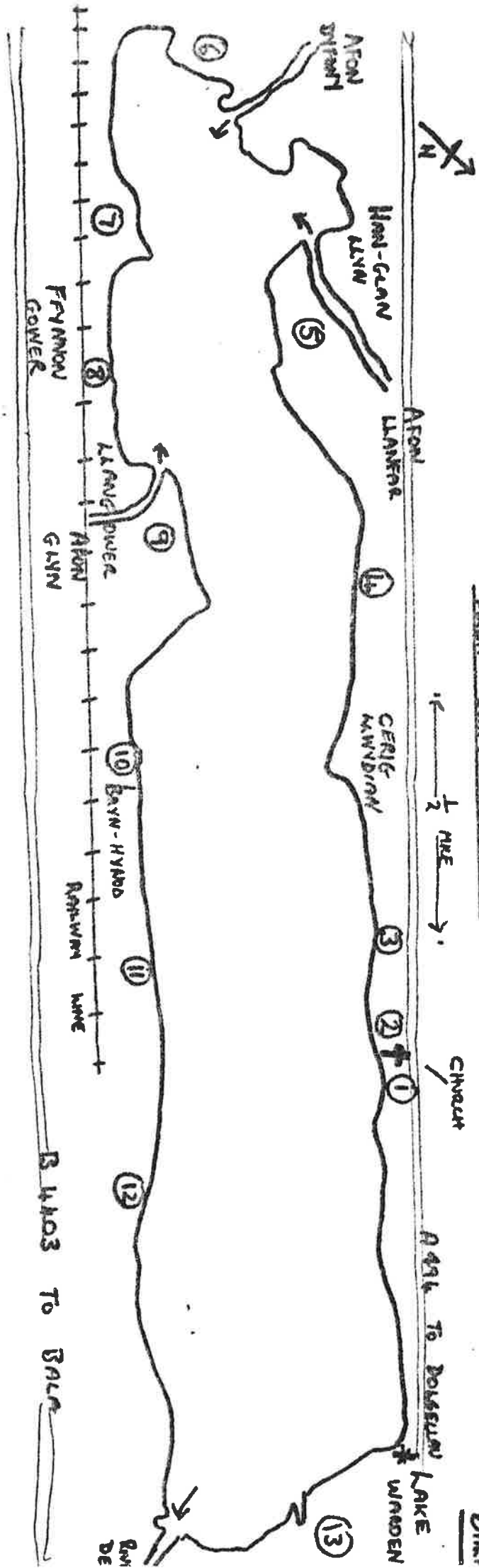
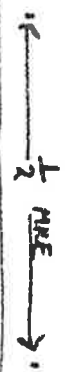
Getting to grips with the place is quite a task in itself. At four miles in length and a mile wide, there is obviously a lot of bank. Depths go down to 140 feet. It is fed by three rivers and one - the Dee - is the outflow. Huge boulder strewn ledges, strong undercurrents and a windswept coast line are but a few of the features the successful eel fisherman has to contend with. Actually, it's a credit that any eels have been caught at all.

The eels themselves can be divided into groups dependant upon size. Naturally, not all eels fall into a definite category, but the majority caught do seem to be divisible as follows:

1) 5 - 10oz. There are literally millions of these bootlaces. They gratefully accept any lobworm offered, but fortunately they do not seem to bother with dead baits and it is rare to have one chew at even a portion of perch or roach.

Bala Lake

AREA SWAMP NUMBERS



Bala

⑥ AREA SPOT NUMBERS

2) 1:1 - 1:5. Fish of this size are common. They have already developed the large flat heads for perch gobbling and it's quite amazing just how big a dead fish they can manage.

3) 3lb+. Unfortunately, these are not as common as we first thought. They are often very short and fat fish. Again, they are well equipped for seizing their mainly perch diet. These are the fish we want to be able to locate and catch with regularity.

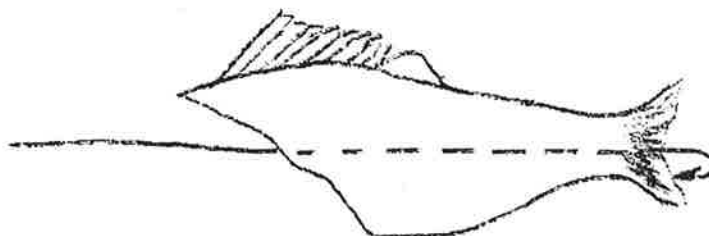
Shortly after our first visits in 1974 it became apparent that the eels feed almost exclusively on small perch, of which there are millions in the water. What was not so clear is that in many areas exist large quantities of small roach. Many rod-hours with freshly caught roach later, I am still to get a decent run on that bait. Small trout, dace, eel chunks, gudgeon and bleak have all been tried and have met with the same success*. So, unless things alter drastically, I shall look no further than the perch for my bait.

The size of the perch bait is of paramount importance. In this respect, I believe the eels may be ultra selective: after all, they have millions to chose from. It is so easy to arrive at a given area, pull out six perch, thread them on to traces and cast out the tackle before dark. This way, the angler has everything sorted out well before the eels can be expected to feed. Would it not be better to catch as many perch as possible and with the equipment set up, kill and position the baits as darkness descended? This way the baits are as fresh as possible, and with plenty of volunteers around, I prefer to use the $3\frac{1}{2}$ - 4" size.

But, getting a run and landing an eel is a very different matter and during an eight day trip during July, after far too many abortive runs and dropped takes, I discovered a method which has since proved most effective.

Bala eels invariably take a perch bait tail first and anyone who has had a bait return with a flattened rear end will, perhaps, agree. This is a very interesting point and, to my mind, indicates that even when dealing with a dead fish, Bala eels go through the same ritual of demobilising it before swallowing it. At first I tried using livebaits, but this proved a failure. Then, I tried a hook rig which had a single size 2 terminating in the tail. Experimenting with two rods on a conventional set up and two with this new one proved disastrous. I certainly had plenty of runs but at two in the morning with the alarm buzzing, which is the instant strike rig and which is the conventional gorge set up? I missed several good takes by either striking when I should have been letting them carry on running, or letting them run when I should have been striking!

Eight nights for two eels is not exactly a success story, especially when you consider that I had seventeen runs. So, on returning for a three night stint with the Club members in August, I had my plans carefully laid: I would have the courage of my convictions and set them all up with the tail hook rig as shown below. Using two whole baits and two half baits, this proved very effective.



* Nigel Jeyes caught an eel of 2:12 on the 1975 summer trip using trout - Ed.

Using a sharp filleting knife, I cut the tail portion from just behind the head across and below the vent. This released plenty of juices for the eel to home in on. Another advantage of this set up is that with an instant strike there is a high probability of lip hooking and no need for wire traces.

Positioning half baits or "turned about" whole baits did prove a problem, especially when a long range cast was required: but there are ways to overcome this. By using PVA strip, a lead or stone weight can be attached to give the necessary casting weight but, because the strip dissolves, the casting weight will not interfere with a taking fish. A better method is to row the baits into position with the help of one of those cheap inflatable dingys: but a word of warning, it is not advised in choppy conditions. However, it does have the advantage that you can position the bait exactly where you want it and you can also drop in a few chopped up perch for good measure to act as groundbait.

Using these methods, in my three night stay during the Club trip, I had six runs, hooked five and landed four eels to 3lb. This was considerably better than anyone managed for the whole week. If this wasn't pleasing, the fact that they were all lip hooked did. Not only was I able to return the fish without fear of them dying shortly afterwards, but also the fight they put up was much better than I am used to from gorge hooked eels.

Location of the eel hot spots has been another problem. In 1974 some areas consistently produced 3lb+ eels and we considered that it was but a matter of time before a really "biggun" was taken. Yet, in 1975 these same swims were hammered all through the year and, frankly, they were a waste of time. Had we caught them all or were the eels that more cautious? My own theory is that the warm summer meant heavy weed growth at the top end of the lake and this shallower water provided a new area for the vast majority of fish. Unfortunately, the thought of long walks with masses of heavy tackle meant most of us lazy lot fished the more usual deep water areas which are much more accessible. Perhaps the '76 season will see a change; after all, we can't hope to have another glorious summer for years.

Problems with abortive runs are very common and are due to a variety of reasons, such as weed, trace wire, heavy tackle, etc. It is worth a mention, however, of the gravel area around the water. This makes a terrific noise when anyone crashes towards a rod in response to a pulsating bite alarm. Even at a range of fifty or sixty yards, the disturbance may be sufficient to send an interested eel away from the bait.

Consider also that the summer nights in this part of the world are very short and the only period of real darkness is between 23.59 and 03.00 and the main catching times are between 01.30 and 03.00. Wading out to recast during this time may have the effect of sending any feeding eels in your fishing area away. It would be better to cast straight out from the bank rather than take steps into the water or, better still, if using a multi rod set up, leave the rod out altogether rather than risk unnecessary disturbance by casting.

This summer, I was interested to hear a member of the local diving club explain the topography of Bala lake. It appears that back in the Ice Age (even before Ernie Orme's time) when the lake was formed, not only did it make the lake shallow at each end and deep in the middle, but it also made the lake slant at an angle so that the main road side is actually undercut. This is the reason why the council are continually filling in the collapsing banks around areas 2 and 3; and perhaps it's no coincidence that it has been these spots which have produced the vast majority of our 3lb+ eels.

I was also told that below depths of twenty feet everything is completely blacked out, even on the brightest of days. "Why" one may ask, "is it that

daytime eeling is such a waste of time?"

Bala definitely has many such problems to pose. On top of everything though are those terrible winds which can, at times, make life very unpleasant. But Bala does have its good points. There are no night limits on the number of rods used, although it is prudent and courteous to reduce the number to two during the day. The farmers do not object and they are only too pleased to offer good camping sites for as little as 7½p per night. There is no close season, even bait fishing for perch is allowed. Brolloy tents are permitted around the water's edge provided, of course, they are not too conspicuous, and the two bailiffs are always delighted to see us - I can't think why! All this, and a day permit will cost 60p, or less than £2 per week, plus a River Dec River Authority licence at 40p per rod per season.

So, I am not too unhappy about the failure of 1975 and I sincerely hope that I will be able to fish Bala for many years to come and have memories of perfect summer evenings watching great salmon and pike crashing well out on the "glass" surface, with hopes of a mighty eel during the falling darkness. Such thoughts will keep me forever optimistic.

I honestly believe outside eels are unconventional fish of devious ways: if we are to successfully ensnare them, perhaps, we must be devious and unconventional in our approach. It may just pay off. But we must now wait until the 1976 season.....just wait.

A WEEK ON BALA LAKE

By Ken Goward.

Kevin Richmond's entertaining article "The Cornwall Trip '75" (Bulletin 12.8) has given me the inspiration to record on paper an expedition Terry Jefferson (Hobnail) and I went on to Bala Lake in the company of a non-Anguilla Club friend.

It began on Saturday 5th July and got off to an excellent start when I ran out of petrol 200 yards after leaving home! Having pinched some "go-go" juice from the lawnmower, I drove over to collect Paul, a non-member who is in the Army and was trying to make the best of some leave from Northern Ireland. We met Terry near Chelmsford at 8.00am

By twelve noon we had reached the Hilton Park service area on the M6 outside Birmingham and took a break. You see, Terry has got a thing about playing with the amusement machines there just ask Dave Smith. We resumed our journey some half hour later suitably refreshed and entertained, and laden with our ill gotten gains such as condiment set! Well, with the prices they charge at the Hilton, they can afford to throw in a salt, pepper and vinegar pot.

At 3pm we arrived at Bala and immediately the place impressed me. What with the size of that pool and its surrounding scenery, what more could one ask for? We had arranged to meet Ernie Orme - a little known fellow who has, on occasion, fished this water - on the North-West bank, and sure enough, we found the eel mobile parked just off the road. Ernie, stout fellow, had been there a couple of hours and was busy harvesting out bait sized perch. The sun blazed away and the temperature was around 90F, as I recall, which made setting up our pitches a ver long, sweaty affair. We all set up within a few

yards of each other ('cos we like to be together, ducky!). Paul and I shared our pitch which was made very homely by the presence of a crate of beer generously provided by Paul.

At dusk, we had a big nosh-up and settled down to have a chat with Ernie. Do you know, I could sit and listen to Ernie talking about eel fishing all night. Anyway, we all used small perch dead bait at maxi range, although Ernie dropped short.

The night's total was a fine fish of 3:12 to Ernie, another of 2:0 to Paul, Terry had a bootlace and I pigging well blanked! Ernie's fish was very short and fat, quite unlike the eels in my own area of Essex. Unfortunately, the eel died and was eventually taken home by Ernie.

The following day was fantastically hot and was spent catching baits and snoozing. It came as something of a shock to Paul and I to be told by Terry and Ernie that pubs do not open on Sundays in Wales. What a strange custom! However, the day was saved by Ernie, who produced a pack of "Colt 45" beer from the depths of his basket.....and the famous hip-flask....

The following night, which turned out to be rather uneventful except for my getting my first Bala run, we fished the same swims. My run came at midnight on a three inch perch. I had been told that they were unbelievably fast and never stopped: this one was very slow and twitchy! Eventually I hit it, only to loose whatever it was a few seconds later. I remember waking Paul up with some very choice Anglo-Saxon words! As I recall, Terry and Ernie also missed fish during the night.

The next day, like the preceeding one, was very, very, very hot. We decided to change pitches and moved into the next bay, the one past the Doctor's House. We decided to fish about sixty yards apart. Ernie did not come round with us. It was a great shame, but Ernie had to go home being unable to get any further time off work. We hid our gear in the bushes and retired to the nearest Ale House, to say "goodbye". The upshot of this was that I got well and truly p'd to the point of throwing up in the cafe and again outside the International stores, much to the amazement of the locals! I shall never be able to show my face in the High Street again! In fact, we were all so "under the weather" that we did not fish that night - just slept it off.

The next day was the start of the first rain in North Wales for several weeks. Yes, the monsoon had begun in earnest! It rained all through the day and night. At 3.30am my pog was blown apart by the wind which didn't finally stop until 8.00am

Paul and I decided to take out a boat and troll for pike. We hired a boat for less than a pound, which we thought to be very cheap. Bala looks big; Bala is big: but, by golly, its even bigger when you try to row along its shores. We tried all manner of trolled spoons and plugs without success and finally gave it up as a bad job when the heavens opened up again and we were rained off.

Anyway, Terry decided to move again, whilst Paul and I stayed put. Terry went back along the north-western bank to the area where they have rebuilt the bank by the telephone box. All the while it rained and rained (Kevin, we know how you felt). Paul and I used perch dead bait again, although we decided to use tail halves, 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " long, soaked in pilchard oil on two of our three rods. Up until 01.15 all was quiet (except for the rain and thunder). Then I had a short twitchy run on one of the rods with the half bait. It stopped after taking only a few feet of line and so I left it alone. At 02.00 it was off again, fast and with no sign of stopping. Eventually I hit it and the beast was on. I called out to Paul to assist with the landing net. The perisher was fast asleep, having had a heavy day on the beer. I managed

to pick up the net and boldly waded in to land the eel which, by now, was close in and thrashing the water to foam. It was then that I became aware of the fact that I was not wearing my blasted waders - just desert boots! Anyway, the eel was landed and duly deposited in my bin. The following morning it weighed in at 3:13, my best eel this season. Paul went round to Terry to let him know and returned some time later to announce that Terry had banked a magnificent fish of 4:10 during the night. That eel was a pleasure to look at, really well proportioned and wonderfully coloured.

Paul and I decided to move round for the last two nights of our stay and join Terry. I fished off the point and Paul towards the centre of the bay with Terry. The weather had brightened up to some extent and we spent the day catching small perch from below our rod tips. We all again used perch dead bait, whole and halves soaked in pilchard oil that night, but to no avail. Still, we slept well! On our final night, Terry and Paul blanked, although I took a small eel of 1:15 at dawn on one of the pilchard oil soaked half baits.

On the day of our departure, Saturday, Johnny Watson and Alan Billington arrived for a weeks piking, although I did not have the opportunity of speaking to them, before we hurriedly departed. Please do not think me rude, John and Alan, its just that we were a bit pushed for time.

To sum up, it was a very enjoyable week and a pleasure to fish with Ernie Orme for the first time. It was grand to see Terry catch such a fine eel and the beer was good. I'll be back next year as a priority because, to quote Ernie: "It's got plenty of potential....."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I sincerely hope that members did not take your Editorial (Bull. 12.8) with a pinch of salt. What we must realise, and this not only applies to members of the Anguilla Club, but to any person who fishes with rod and line, that there are those people, particularly in Whitehall, who will do their utmost to ban angling, or at least present legislation to curtail certain aspects of the sport.

I do not feel that this statement is as outrageous as it might appear, especially when one bears in mind that legislation against wild-life sports is often professed by those who know nothing at all about it! Members may not be aware of the new hare-coursing bill that is at present going through Parliament. Whether you agree with it or not does not matter, but what does matter is that it is the start of things to come. Of this I am sure. Some individuals or groups of bodies will make their next moves against fox-hunting, shooting and then angling.

The majority of anglers fish for sheer enjoyment of the sport, not for financial gain as some match anglers. I do not want to verse my opinions of match anglers in this letter, but would it really be a bad thing if fringe money, etc. was taken out of the sport? On the other hand, perhaps the day will come when anglers will only be allowed in organised matches: first think of that.

I endorse your comments regarding Ivan Marks entireley. Who does he think he

is?! A few years ago he was unknown, a nobody. What right has he to tell fellow anglers who are both older and more experienced, how to fish? No doubt, because because he has a fat wallet, he feels he is the king. I hope a submarine sinks his "Mabey Boat"!

If the time comes when our sport is in danger, every one of the three million of us must be committed. We cannot do it with splits in our sport and bloody mindedness.

Yours sincerely,

R.L.Pountney,

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