

The National Anguilla Club

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# BULLETIN

VOLUME TWELVE.

NUMBER FIVE.

THE NATIONAL ANGUILLA CLUB.

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EDITORIAL

First and foremost, I must apologise for the late arrival of this issue. The reason for this is purely one of administration coupled with a gross shortage of days in the month!

As I sit writing this, I can recall the events of a few days ago whilst on the Club's Spring Trip. I feel really sorry for those members who could not make it for one reason or another, for, although the eels were conspicuous by their absence, it was just about the best trip I have ever been on. As a social exercise, it was a roaring success.

I suppose everyone is now looking forward to the next few weeks with a large amount of anticipation. Although I have been out every weekend since the SGM (a total of ten sessions) there are, no doubt, those who have been unable to go out fishing because of the close season restrictions in their area. For my own and Arthur Sutton's part, we have to travel a fair old way in order to get in our legitimate close season eel fishing. I said earlier that the month has not got enough days in, this is because I have spent a lot of time travelling back and forth from Ernie Orme's abode (did you say Lake Bala?). In fact, as soon as I've finished this piece, I'm off to the frozen north once more.

It is Alan Hawkin's theory that the further one travels, the bigger the eels. I'm sorry Alan, but I disagree - wherever I venture, I seem to fail to catch the honourable beast: ten consecutive blanks is a little worrying. However, that is the advantage of being an Anguilla Club member. When I first started eel fishing - some considerable time after Ornie Orme had shown the first little *Leptocephalus* larva the way across the Atlantic - I knew very few reasons for not catching eels: nowadays, I have no end of excuses to choose from!

But, I have that certain feeling in my little bones that this string of blanks is soon due to come to an end: I sincerely hope so.

My personal problems apart, there is a bigger danger facing all of us when it comes to the question of close season fishing. That is the question of the Water Authorities' decision to standardise their by-laws. I mentioned this last month, pointing out that ANGLING had brought to my attention the fact that the Authorities were about to do this. How right they were. The proposals by the Anglian Water Authority are extremely biased against us in particular. Although I do not regularly fish in the Lincolnshire area - my own interest being the Welland and Nene area - I feel that the deprivation of these close season venues is a blow to our own basic liberties. As one Lincolnshire angler said: "Why should anglers in Essex decide on whether or not Lincolnshire anglers should be able to fish in the close season?"

But who will step forward to help the minority groups - and in the case of Lincolnshire, the whole county constitutes a minority! It is certain that the primary interests of the Consultative committees do not include the specimen hunters: just look at the way the Severn WA railroaded its proposals through on dredging.

The proposals of the AWA must be fought at every level. As individual anglers we must fight; as angling clubs and groups with a vested interest in close season eel fishing we must fight. Let's not let a decision of this importance be left in the hands of the already too powerful Water Authorities, let's force it up into the hands of the Dept. of the Environment, Denis Howell and Anthony Crossland. Long Live Democracy!

DAVID SMITH.

GRONDBAITING: THE PROS AND CONS

By Kevin Richmond.

It was with great interest that I read the article by Tony Hollerbach on groundbaiting (Bulletin, 12.3 - March 1975).

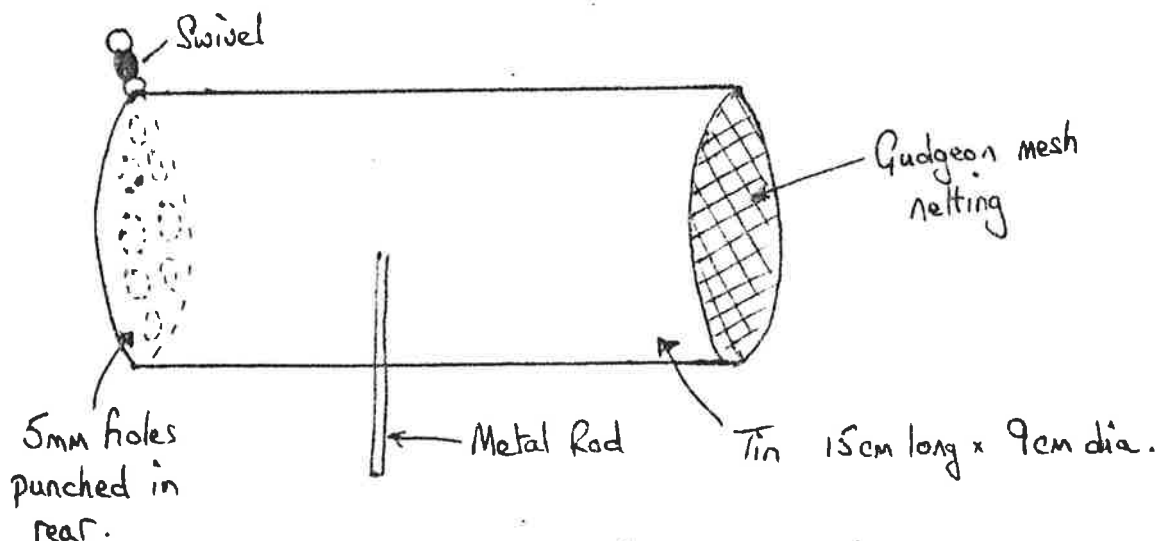
During the '72/'73 season, and more recently this winter, I did a lot of experimenting along the same sort of lines - that is, to find a method that will attract and hold eels in one's swim.

Various methods were tried and although most were discarded I have been able to modify a few ideas into workable methods. Tony mentions that he uses a net attached to his terminal tackle. I have my reservations about such a method: if an eel takes the bait before the net is empty, some resistance must occur, and this may cause the eel to abort.

My first attempts were with ox blood mixed with ground bait, but the snag was that the mixture tended to go off quickly - it is one way of keeping away unwelcome anglers, though!

Then came the unforgettable saga of the PVA soluble bags (I think I've got the name right). At the time, this method seemed to have fantastic potential. What a fool I must have been! As you all know, soluble bags dissolve on any contact with water - that's why they're called soluble, 'emnit! - and putting groundbait in them can be nigh impossible. I well remember fishing on the banks of the River Taw, rain pouring down, howling winds and zero temperatures - a typical summer's day. Lads, the tears would be running down your legs if you had seen me trying to induce a spratt and 'erring mixture into an already semi-dissolved bag - Charlie Chaplin has got nothing on my antics! Being coated with an inch layer of fish guts, does not tend to leave one with much social life. Hence, my moving on to another method. Although, if I can get hold of some slow dissolving bags, I might try that method again.

The best idea that I have come up with so far consists of what I call "anchored tins". The idea is to place these containers directly above one's baited hooks so as to get the desired effect of attracting eels to the terminal tackle. Below is a diagram of one of these devices. Any resemblance to a swim feeder or the first stage of a Saturn V moon rocket is purely coincidental.



I painted all outside metal black in case the shine might scare the fish. Also, in fast flowing rivers, the use of the metal rod through the middle stops any rolling around.

As there is only gudgeon mesh at the opening, all the fish pieces put inside the container must be well cut up. My favourite method is to put my fish through a mincer. Should anyone wish to try this, I'm sure the "missus" would oblige! A word of warning, however. If anybody uses such a tool, it is recommended to clean it out straight away - stale fish is not a pretty sight. Most fish can be used, but oily fish - eg Mackerel or Herring - are best if they can be afforded. Being skint most of the time means that I can't afford to buy any, so I catch my own. And, seeing that I'm a better bait snatcher than eel fisher, this is no problem.

Some of you may question the disturbance that these tins cause when they are put into position. I admit that this is a problem I have yet to solve. Maybe Arthur Sutton can devise a 35ft long mechanical arm to place them on the bottom! Fortunately, bridges are near the swims I fish, and, as a result, I am able to lower the groundbait dispensers from there. I had better add that I use three of the tins spaced about three feet apart from each other so that the trails of fish particles overlap when they are dispersed. From personal experience, I have found that the tins only need to be refilled once every three hours or so on slow flowing rivers. Of course, fast flowing rivers either need smaller mesh or to be refilled that much more often.

During 1973 I was able to compare my results by fishing two rods in a baited pitch (A) and a further two rods upstream from the cans (B) The results were encouraging to say the least. Below is a table of five sessions, which I hope will be of some use.

Session	1		2		3		4		5	
Swim	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Date	2/7	2/7	3/7	3/7	15/8	15/8	24 - 25/8		26 - 27/8	
RH	8	8	12½	12½	4	4	18½	18½	22	22
Eels	2	0	0	0	4	1	0	1	3	1
Weights	0:11 1:13				0:6 2:1½ 1:8 1:2	1:14		2:0	0:13 1:12 1:11	0:10½

With the exception of trips 2 and 4, the groundbaited patch produced more than the unbaited: nine eels to three. Undoubtedly, groundbaiting makes a difference but the data available are insufficient for firm conclusions to be reached.

During the coming season, I hope to be able to continue this experiment and get some really good results. Of course, this method of groundbaiting only works in water with a flow. More conventional methods are sufficient for stillwater.

Let me stress that these are only my opinions and methods. Some members may have progressed further than myself. If so, I would be pleased to hear from them.

TO BAIT, OR NOT TO BAIT

By David Smith.

The question of groundbaiting has been a topic of discussion between Tony, Kevin and myself for some time, so, now that they have both put forward their views, I feel that I may as well follow suit and present my own.

Firstly, without wishing to appear too critical of Kevin's hard work, I think it is very difficult to obtain comparisons between baited swims and unbaited swims on rivers. Alan Hawkins pointed out that eels forage upstream (3) and Dave Holman has said that in his experience on the Shropshire Union Canal - where there is a flow - the downstream rods score, whilst that upstream is notorious for its lack of action (5).

As for my own forays into the realms of baiting, I used a system similar in many respects to both that used by Tony and that used by Kevin. The similarity lies in the fact that they work on the swim feeder principle with the current being used to wash the attractant downstream. I used a piece of lambscloth, sewn to form a bag measuring some 5"x4". Into this went all manner of gunge - smelly gunge! A knot was tied in the open end to seal in the contents, and the bag attached to a piece of twine. The whole lot was then hurled into the river. If the flow was such that the bag tended to drift, a few stones were put into the bag to weight it down and prevent the drift.

The big difference between this method and those described by Tony and Kevin is the fact that the particles do not get washed out of the bag by the current, save the very, very small ones. Instead, it worked on the rubby dubby principle, in that smell only emanated from the bag.

From the comparisons of the methods, two questions arise. Firstly, are particles necessary? I feel not. Again, I think Alan has hit on the answer (3). He points out that an eel can detect a substance when only 3 - 4 molecules of that substance enter their organ of smell. Thus, something that emits smell is as good as something that emits both particles and smell. Kevin himself supports this view - even if he doesn't realise it - by stating that oily fish are better as the contents of his anchored tin; Tony, too, depends to a large extent on the smell of his concoction. Secondly, since the bait dispenser, whatever it be, be the source of the smell, will the eels show a preference for attacking that rather than the somewhat dour and flavourless bait? This is a difficult one to answer, but I feel sure that such an attractive item of potential food could not escape the attention of eels for long. Whether or not they would deliberately ignore the hook bait in favour of an attractively smelling, inedible container, I would not like to say.

In view of that, the point raised by Tony (4) comes into play - ie. the ground bait should be as near the hook bait as possible. Take it a step further, and if the eels do show a preference for the dispenser over the hook bait, and we end up putting the hooks into the dispenser! Better still, of course, is to make the bait that much more attractive by putting the attractant into the bait. Pilchard oil will well up in most minds (Please excuse that horrible pun. The editor, were he doing his job properly, should have axed that!).

The use of pilchard oil raises new problems. Since the pilchard oil is less dense than water, it tends to float. Henry Hansen (1) and Alan Hawkins (2) have both commented on the use of emulsifying agents to make the oil soluble: but is pilchard oil the be all and end all of bait additives. My cousin has

used aniseed with some small success and we intend experimenting this coming season with gravy - Oxo and Bisto - injected into the bait.

Thus, we are left with two alternative styles. Either we can use an attractant physically detached from the bait, or we can inject the bait to make it that little bit more appetising. I suppose one can be very non committal and say that the tactic employed depends on the water - although Kevin and Tony have based their pieces on rivers, I don't think still waters need be excluded. In all other forms of angling, groundbaiting is as much a science as bait presentation; so why not with eel fishing?

Prebaiting, as described by Dave Holman (5) may have advantages in some waters where the eels tend to be nomadic (assuming, of course, that eels are at all nomadic); in others, the local eel may be fed so much that it will not have room in its tum to accept that extra tasty morsel presented on a hook! In some waters an injected bait will attract the calibre of eel we all seek; in others it will only serve to attract the bootlaces from adjacent ponds. A rubby dubby or bait dispenser in one water may be helpful in keeping the small fry busy, leaving the hook bait free for the biggun; in others the biggun will spend the whole session pondering how to devour the rubby dubby rather than the fairly odourless bait.

To answer these questions will take many years of search and endeavour by the club. Perhaps groundbaiting details could be included on the Session Reports?

In conclusion, I must mention Ernie Orme's attempts to groundbait on a Club trip to Castle Howard (I hope he doesn't mind). He baited with kippers. He caught pike!

#### References

1. Hansen, H (1973) NAC Bulletin 10.5 December.
2. Hawkins, A.F. (1973) NAC Bulletin, 10.5 December
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#### THOUGHTS ON WINTER EELS

By Henry Hansen.

For many years now, I had often thought of fishing for eels during the winter. Up until this year, I had not actually done it, merely thought about it. As we all know, thinking about something and actually doing it are usually two very different things! It seems, to me, that winter eels are now in the same position as winter carp were a few years ago. That is, people thought about fishing for them in the winter months, but, for varying reasons, never got round to it. I have often wondered if the occasional missed "pike" run was, in fact, due to a cagey pike or, perhaps, a winter eel - especially when the bait has a small "V" mark across it (no Zander, please!). There are several reports in the angling press of eels being caught in winter and, often, they are good sized fish too. These fish are generally looked upon as flukes or freaks: but after

much thought on the subject (plus a little experience), I would be extremely wary of classing winter eels as freaks.

First of all, we must ask the question: "What is a winter eel?" My usual eel season begins in early March and ends in late October or early November. Hence, to me, winter is that time in between. I feel that it cannot be further classified as the "cold months of the year", as it is invariably cold all the year round in Lincolnshire! It is also fairly obvious that there is a large psychological barrier to be overcome before winter eel fishing becomes a regular thing: after all, the cold months are for hunting old Esox, are they not? and the summer is the "correct" time for eels! Thoughts such as these, must have been met and subsequently dealt with by winter carp anglers (care to comment Mr Ball?). Obviously, then, a lot of anglers are put off the idea long before they actually start.

Looking at the problem from another angle, it seemed that if an approach was used similar to the carp men, then, we might be on the right track. Basically, this was to fish a water holding a large head of eels, and where the water itself was of a reasonable size and depth. With a large head of eels present, there would be constant competition for the available food and consequently they would have to feed a lot more often, probably all year round. Obviously, eels would feed at intermittent intervals throughout the winter anyway, but, with this increased competition, it might swing things the angler's way.

As luck would have it, just before Christmas Steve Hope and myself managed to get access to a new water. This we knew to have a large head of eels of all sizes, as the place has not been netted - yet. It is a three acre clay pit with depths varying from 5-14ft, and holds a good head of quality coarse fish except for pike which are totally absent. As mentioned previously, we usually start eeling in March, but, with the weather in January being so mild, we thought that then was as good a time and opportunity as any to put our new ideas into practice.

Our first full night session was on 11th January; our aim simply being to try to catch a decent eel (2lb+) intentionally. The wind was a strong South Westerly with intermittent cloud cover. Steve and I fished different swims and decided on slightly different tactics. Steve used four rods, all with medium sized deadbaits cast into relatively shallow water - 4 to 5ft - at close range. A friend of Steve fished three rods in the same manner, in the same swim. I used three rods baited with small deadbaits. This was intentional. The use of small baits fitted more in line, I felt, with the eels slower winter feeding cycle: whereas they might refuse a large offering, perhaps a small tit-bit might tempt them. These baits I placed at varying distances of eight to forty yards, the swim itself varying in depth from seven to twelve feet.

We cast our baits out just before dusk - at 16.00! I hadn't realised how long the nights were at this time of year, fifteen hours to be precise. This represents a hell of a lot of time to sit and wait, and, of course, there is the problem of keeping warm as well. To combat this, we had brought along a b..... enormous mound of blankets, sleeping bags and food, as well as a certain amount of liquid refreshment! These, plus the usual brolly, coverall, bed-chair and tank-suit combination kept us pretty warm. Mind you, it was pretty warm for the time of year and I wouldn't like to think what it could have been like if the weather had been a bit harsher.

Just before dawn, I had a slow steady run on a small roach treated with pilchard oil emulsion - the only bait to be so treated, incidentally. This resulted in an eel of 3:12 which measured  $35\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{4}$ . This was in really great condition. At the time of capture, the air and water temperatures were 42°F and 43°F



respectively. Inexplicably, the eel died shortly after capture, so we took the opportunity to examine its stomach contents. The stomach was found to be empty but it was very noticeable that its intestines seemed to be very much larger than usual.

On that first session, Steve and his friend did not have a touch.

Being somewhat chuffed with ourselves, we returned to try again two weeks later. Steve and his pal fished a deeper swim this time, whereas I opted for the same one as before - well, why not? Steve and his friend used seven rods between them baited with worm as well as deadbaits, fished in fourteen feet of water (the deepest part of the pit). As on the previous occasion, I fished with three rods baited with small deadbaits placed at varying distances.

The weather was different this time. There were no clouds and there was no wind; but there were plenty of stars and a half moon in evidence. Despite this, it did not freeze.

At 03.10 I had one of those seemingly "perfect" runs on a margin fished bait: again the only bait treated with pilchard oil emulsion. This run I missed. At the time the air temperature was 37F and the water temperature was 39F.

Once again, Steve and his friend did not have a touch, despite their worms!

When it comes to drawing conclusions from these results - if in fact one can - it must be remembered that only a relatively small amount of fishing time - about 350RH - has been put in: but, as Club knowledge in this area is very limited, I feel that any conclusions may prove useful to others about to venture into this field. It may be felt that the capture of this eel was merely a fluke. Perhaps it was. Obviously we did not expect an eel of that size: but what is more important was that we were actually fishing for eels in winter, having modified our methods as we saw best. It should also be remembered that our conclusions are based on our experience of still waters, unlike Kevin Richmond who concentrated his effort on moving water.

It seems certain that eels, including good ones can be caught throughout the winter months as long as a different approach is used. It appears to be better if small fish baits are used, fished fairly close in near to reeds, provided that the water is not too shallow. Positioning of bait does appear to be important, as it is clear that winter eels do not forage about as much as in summer. The results obtained with emulsified pilchard oil, as opposed to untreated baits, cannot be ignored: the odds against the results obtained being pure chance are 100-1 (approx). This reinforces the results that I have been getting when using the emulsion - when will the sceptics be convinced? Obviously, it would be better to use some form of treated bait; perhaps pilchard oil injected lobworms would be good bait.

Feeding is more spasmodic than in summer, but then this is expected of most fish during the colder months. Noticeably, all runs came in early morning, just as usually happens in late season. Hence, I would think that a complete night session is unnecessary: fishing an hour or two before and after dawn and dusk being best. Water choice is very important and it is better to fish one with a large head of eels. I should think that eels could be caught in most weather conditions provided that the weather has been settled for a few days prior to the session.

Obviously, the previous statements might be construed as being hasty and, perhaps, rash; but one must start somewhere and I am always prepared to listen to constructive criticism. As such, I can only hope that this article will, perhaps, stimulate others to have a go for themselves: the results could prove remarkable. I definitely feel that in this area, as in others, we have a great deal to learn.

REFLECTIONS

By Bob Pountney.

There must be times whilst sat there by the rods waiting for the first run of the night that we all, at some time or another, think to ourselves: "How did all this begin?" I refer, of course, to fishing in general.

I can recall, although I am now at the ripe old age of 22, that my first introduction to the sport was at the age of about nine, when my rich uncle took me down to West Bay on the Dorset coast to do some mackerel spinning from the beach. Although this met with reasonable success, somehow the sea did not hold so much attraction as inland fresh water. So, future sea exploits have been few and far between.

Unlike a lot of anglers, the sport was not born in my blood; indeed, my father thought me some kind of idiot in participating in such a "cruel" and "unrewarding" pastime, instead of taking up football as he and my grandfather had done. Of course, angling grew on me and, as time went by, more and more pocket money was spent on tackle and angling literature.

Having secured a grammar school education on passing the 11+ (I haven't passed anything since) I looked forward to the holidays to follow, especially the six and a half week summer one. This would be the time when several of us boys would spend nearly every day at our favourite drain, which had the attractive name of "Black Ditch". This water, which I fished up until three years ago when I moved away from the area, runs directly south from the River Kerm (near Clevedon) and holds precious memories for me. For it was from this twenty foot wide drain that I caught my first roach, rudd, tench, perch, pike and, yes, eel. In the summer of 1966 and again in 1967, I landed two 2lb rudd from Black Ditch and, as a "Kingfisher Guilder", was awarded two certificates by Angling Times. They are still treasured to this day. I might add that this water was very under-fished by the senior local anglers and, to this day, I'll never know why.

Eels had never shown up in numbers before, until one day, that is, when a local farmer decided to drown some puppies and dumped two sacks of litters off the local road bridge into the muddy depths. Over a period of time, as the sacks and their contents decayed, we started catching eels thick and fast by fishing off the bridge by the stone pillars: and not small eels, either.

I shall always remember a young lad fishing with his dad in the same spot one Sunday evening. On seeing his float disappear like a rocket, he promptly started reeling in, and all hell let loose. Thick black mud started churning up from the bottom, but with a sudden crack, the young lad's rod snapped. I have never seen a rod broken since then. Needless to say, the catch escaped: undoubtedly an eel of big proportions.

Looking back over those years of innocent youth (well, fairly innocent) I realise that as far as fishing was concerned, like so many other things, I learned by my own mistakes; the lads I fished with and myself had no senior to show us where we were going wrong. As time went by, standards of tackle increased, and so did the knowledge that needs to go with it.

There are those members who have many more years to look back over than I have (no offence, you over 25's!). So, next time you're sat there waiting for a run, have a think back. That is, until line starts stripping from the reel and .....

CHAIRMAN'S TOPICS - EEL TAGGING

By Brian Crawford.

Since mentioning this as a future Club project in my Editorial in the January issue, I have been overwhelmed by the response. It is a project that will definitely be on for the coming season. Of course, it is an optional one, and mainly aimed at still waters.

I have made enquiries concerning buying eel tags. Several of the firms that make them are unable to supply them, and the cost seems high. There is still the problem of marking them.

After much thought and wishing to get things off the ground, I would suggest, therefore, that the following method may suffice for now. If any member knows of a supplier of eel tags cheaply, with an easy method of attachment to the eel, please let me know.

As we are doing this on a club scale, it seems sensible for each individual to use his Club membership code plus the code NAC. Then, each tag can be in simple numerical sequence, ie 1, 2, 3, etc.

To provide the actual tag, I considered cutting up plastic detergent bottles as follows:

NAC 025 1

(my code number is 025)

These can be inserted just in front of the eel's dorsal fin. The snag is that they are difficult to mark. To overcome this, I used a Dymo embosser bought from Boots for about 70p. Then I considered using the strips of adhesive plastic supplied with the Dymo. These three inch strips are just right to make two tags as follows:

NAC 025 2

These tags can be simply attached to the eel, in the position described above, with a short length of strong old line.

The real problem in using this method is for each member to buy his own embosser or, if possible, team up with one or two fellow members in his area. Spare strips can be bought very cheaply, and you can make 100 tags in a very short time. All that is required, then, is to carry the tags in sequence on each session, record all the usual measurements of the eel and record the tag number. This should also be recorded on the Session Report form under "Additional Comments". One should also state if a tagged eel is recaptured.

Each member must use only his own membership number, with only one of each number for eels. Each tag, therefore, is unique. Even if different waters are fished, there must only be one eel for each set of code numbers, otherwise confusion may arise. I will notify the NASG and National Anglers Council that we are engaged in an eel tagging experiment. I am reluctant to tell the press and would prefer that each member tells the bailiff and Club secretary of the club running the water concerned, so that tags will be returned if the eel is killed. If this happens, provided it is recorded, the number may be reused.

I must point out that when using the Dymo tape, it is not necessary to remove the backing paper! They are being tied on to the eel, not stuck on!

Eels of any size can be tagged, for it will, of necessity, be a long term survey. At the end of each season I will compile a list of tagged eels for future reference. This will solve the problem of members who mislay their records from time to time.

Of course, members are free to create tags of their own design. All I ask is that the same method of identification on tags is used to keep a uniform system. This will make the keeping of long term records easier, and quickly provide cross references of eels, members, dates, weights etc.

#### AS FAR AS POSSIBLE

By Ken Goward.

Arthur Sutton's article "How far should we go" (Bull. 12.1) really deserves some comments. To my mind, for what it's worth, advances in tackle design and a strive towards ultimate angling efficiency is only for the better. Without this gradual improvement in tackle, we would still be back in the old days of heavy, split cane rods, gut lines or reels that are as ancient as Chris Davy's bike. Perhaps there are members who would prefer to use this kind of tackle. If so, no offence, Guv!

Many are the nights eel fishing that I've spent trying to keep awake, slowly going round the twist straining my eyes at silver foil bite indicators, or even listening for that magic rustle. It's only in the past season that I've gone over to using electric alarms of the Heron type. There, you see, I've called them alarms, thereby proving myself as an expert in the art of deep slumber; a confession! However, Arthur's buzzers and headsets put any commercially made unit to shame. As for his new Ultra Sonic version, it really is ace pukka - a local translation of b.... good).

Fast taper, Compound taper, tungsten carbide rings or whatever are all words synonymous with the modern day rod. I presume that all or most of our members use rods that incorporate one or more of these features. Yet, even as little as ten years back, rods of the MkIV type were almost standard equipment within the specimen hunting fraternity, and very good poles they are too. Their supremacy reigned for several years in the 50's and 60's until progress overtook them. Nowadays, differing blanks are quickly relegated as improved versions are constantly appearing. Of course, improvements are being made in all types of tackle items. To call an artificial limit and say: "This is as far as sophistication should take us" is pure stagnation and, possibly, retrograde.

A good place to draw any sort of line in matters piscatorial, I feel, is around the commercial exploitation of angling. Anyone who is familiar with the situation at Aquatels in Basildon (Essex), or any similar place, will know what I'm getting at. A Trout/Coarse fishery that is run on a put and take basis. It is a freshly dug hole into which have been heaped carp approaching 30lbs, bream nudging the record and other good fish of most species. Add to that a playground atmosphere and a ticket that costs the earth: its like fishing in an aquarium. The sort of water that the larger angling organisations would, no doubt, like to run. The whole spirit of angling, as I know it, is lost. This is the state of affairs rapidly becoming dominant in my own area.

As Ernie Orme rightly stated at the SGM, we must begin to look north and away from the heavily populated areas for our future Anguilla hunting: How far should we go?!

One final point, being a new member, I met most of you for the first time at the SGM. May I say that I found you all to be a splendid bunch and I hope for a long and happy association with you all.

### HOW FAR DO WE GO? - ANOTHER VIEW

By Henry Hansen.

Arthur Sutton's article (Bull. 12.1) certainly gave me plenty to think about, as I have often wondered about the future of our sport. I'm sure that angling was once purely a simple recreation designed, perhaps, more for peace of mind than anything else. But when one considers the vast advances made by mankind in every sphere of human life and activity, it is not surprising that angling is also caught up in these advances. Although, when this train of thought is applied specifically to angling, I am not sure whether it should be classed as "progress" or "angling evolution".

As in all such things, modifications and new ideas are constantly being sought after, found and deployed. These are soon replaced by others, of course, and hence the cycle keeps on repeating. What is, perhaps, thought of as being solid fact, is often replaced by a new concept, and so on. As long as Man is free to think and, equally important, put into practice what he believes in, progress will always be a fact. Hence the phrase: "it had to happen sooner or later" does have a definite truth behind it. As for the idea of "science" being applied to a "non-scientific" pursuit, surely most things are in some way connected with science. Is not the idea of a fishing rod based on the scientific concepts of levers and fulcrums? Does the idea of a float not base itself upon the laws of bouyancy? It is merely a question of how you look at the problem involved and also at what depth.

I agree that the basic ideas should be kept simple, for are not the majority of such ideas nearly always the best? Mind you, in the case of people such as ourselves, what could be more basic than rod, line, trace and bait? But what of the other angling paraphernalia such as landing nets, brollics, bite detectors, etc. The majority of such items, I would class as essential, so that their confused use is greatly repayed by the help (and comfort) they afford.

Despite this, there is often great controversy whenever bite indicators are mentioned - perhaps understandably so. Perhaps we ought to consider the reasons why bite indicators are used so widely.

If an angler uses one rod and is able to sit next to it, then silver paper (as a means of bite detection) is perfectly adequate. Let's be honest about this, I should think that the majority of Club members started in this way. I should point out that I think an angler will get from angling what he is prepared to put into it. Consequently, if an angler should feel the need to use more than one rod, then who can say that he is wrong to do so? (without first knowing his motives). The use of, say, two rods requires the use of

two indicators: but what if the rods are to be placed a short distance apart? It is a very strong - physically - person who can watch over two rods in such a way, using silver paper indicators, for a complete night session.

Obviously, then, some other sort of bite detection system is needed. The buzzer type indicator is often used and is a logical alternative and step up from silver paper. The use of such an indicator is greatly repaid by the reduction in the degree of alertness required and subsequent increase in personal comfort - be it physical or psychological. I realise that the line of argument might seem perfectly obvious and perhaps trivial to many people, but the point behind it is that it shows a simple and logical step forward.

Carrying the whole idea of bite detection a few stages further, we arrive at the ultra sonic or even radio controlled type of system. It might seem strange now, but it wouldn't if you were familiar with the system and had actually used it. Assuming that it was more efficient than other systems, it could only improve the angler's ultimate goal: to catch more fish - this point should not be forgotten.

Obviously, bite detection is merely an example of how angling progress can work. Taking things, perhaps, to their ultimate conclusion, it might be conceivable that we could arrive at some arrangement similar to that envisaged by Tony Hollerbach (Bull. 12.2). Of course, it sounds totally alien now, but it wouldn't be then (AD 2050), and be accepted as the norm. It would be on par with, say, an angler of fifty years back viewing our methods and tackle of the present day. He would, obviously, regard our glass fibre rods, monofilament lines and bite detectors as weird: we certainly do not.

I hope you see the point I'm trying to make. Really, if an item X is better than an item Y, ie it is more efficient, does the job better and serves the angler's purpose better as a whole, then would it not be logical to use item X? Hands up all those people who want to go back to cane rods and silk lines!

I regard the whole issue as a personal view balanced by one's objectives as regards angling. Obviously, there is no straightforward answer to this, seemingly, simple question. But generally, in answer to the question "How far do we go?" I would reply "As far as necessary".

#### MY SEASON 1974

By Graham Booth.

My 1974 season started slightly later than usual with a visit to Haxby Pond, on the first Friday night in May. I had purposefully waited until this, rather late, date because I prefer to start my eel fishing with a session spent in conditions incorporating a fairly high water temperature. I cannot really explain why, but I always feel happier to descend upon my waters at a time when I can be reasonably certain that the eels they contain will be feeding avidly, rather than make an earlier start merely on the chance that the eels might be feeding well, if I am lucky.

At this point, I must state that I am not the unenlightened fellow some readers may be summarily judging me to be. I realise that eels feed all year round and that, accordingly, they can be caught during the winter months:

indeed, I have taken them in reasonable numbers myself at this time of the year. Winter eel fishing is, however, a slow process and I am sure that most eel anglers will agree that the rate of capture takes a dramatic upward trend as the water temperature climbs into the fifties Fahrenheit.

So it was, then, that six-o'clock on the evening of 3rd May found me hurriedly stowing the mountain of Anguilla hunting accoutrements without which, we tell ourselves, no eel angler would be complete, into the back of my van. On completing this onerous task and having called to collect fellow Anguilla addict, Richard Hudson, I drove the eight miles which took me to Haxby Pond and the threshold of another season.

On arriving at the water, I decided to fish a favourite pitch from which I had taken three eels to 4:11 the previous season, and by 9 o'clock I was once more admiring the well ordered symmetry of the three outfits, poised for action with that air of well bred confidence which modern eel rods, balanced by Mitchell 306's, have.

By 5 o'clock the following morning, however, the outfits seemed to have lost all former traces of confidence and, instead, were clearly of a decidedly miserable and deflated disposition as they drooped lifelessly in the rests. Cold and seemingly shivering and hung with hundreds of droplets of water - a result of the continuous rain which had commenced shortly after dark. Richard, I soon learned, had fared little better. He had been helping a professional colleague celebrate his twenty first birthday the previous lunchtime and was decidedly the worse for wear when I had called for him the previous evening. In consequence, he had fallen asleep shortly after commencing fishing, only to be rudely awoken very shortly afterwards by a strange buzzing sound. At length, the realisation that this was indicative that a run was in progress, filtered up through the alcoholic haze and gave rise to an impulse which caused him to strike, play and land the eel, confine it to a sack and promptly return into the recently disturbed oblivious state. On awaking, shortly after dawn, he couldn't decide whether he'd actually caught an eel during the night, or if he'd dreamed it all! A quick search in the margins revealed a sack pegged out with a bankstick, confirming that he had, in fact, made a capture. At 2:14, this eel was only an ounce heavier than our previous all time smallest from the water. Hardly an encouraging start.

On the following night Richard moved to another pitch, while I decided to stay put. At about half past ten that evening, Richard caught another eel; this time a fish of 3:3. I made it a trio of well below average sized eels for the weekend's effort with an eel of 3:6 later that night. I must hasten to add that by "below average", I refer to the average size of the eels from this particular water, the median weight being just under four pounds.

The following weekend again found us at Haxby pond, only this time I fished a different pitch. The night was cloudless and a bright, almost full moon threw its unwelcome light over the pond. At about 3 o'clock, just as the first rays of dawn were beginning to hint that it was about time they took over the job of lighting the world from the moon, I had a twitch bite on my left hand outfit, which, like the other two, was baited with double lobworm. I picked up the rod and by holding the line between my forefinger and thumb I was able to feel something contentedly munching my juicy lobworms.

"Blasted perch," I thought as I put in the pick up arm. Adhering to my philosophy that it is better to be safe than sorry, I struck hard and was astonished to have the rod almost wrenched from grasp by what was obviously a very powerful eel. After some tense moments and some very hard pulling on both sides, I had the eel in the margins, "lashing the water aboil in fury"

as Terry Coulson once so picturesquely described the antics of a hooked eel when brought to bay. Richard, it seemed, was either asleep or had gone deaf, as my desperate exhortations to him to render much needed assistance had apparently fallen on stony ground. Consequently, I was faced with the problem of how to confine an interminable length of highly uncooperative eel into my landing net single handed. Eventually, the eel condescended to enter the meshes and was accordingly landed. I knew straight away that I had just landed our biggest Haxby eel - the 4:11 specimen of the previous season being the biggest up to that point. I weighed the fish immediately and was overjoyed to find that it was, in fact, almost a pound bigger, turning the scales at 5:10.

Another three night sessions at Haxby produced an eel of 3:11 to Richard; and then it was 24th May and the weekend set for the Anguilla Club Spring outing to Westfield lakes. I fished two nights there, but failed miserably.

On my return from Lincolnshire, I spent a night at another of our favourite waters, Gun House Pool. I decided to fish a pitch from which I had taken the only two eels we had caught from the water during the 1973 season. These were both taken on the night of 4th August and had weighed 4:10 and 6:0 $\frac{1}{2}$  respectively.

With the events of that memorable night in my mind, I set up in a manner identical to that which had proved so successful almost ten months before. Having attended to the last details of arranging the pitch, I sat back in eager anticipation of a run. Time passed without event until sure enough at 01.45 the buzzer on my middle outfit stuttered into life. All three outfits were fishing perch heads which, owing to their small size, enabled me to strike as soon as the run commenced - a very important advantage on a water as choked with weed as Gun House Pool. Yet, despite this precaution, I had, on this occasion, been too late, as the strike met with an almost solid resistance: the eel had already gained the sanctuary of the dense hornwort, and no amount of pulling on my part, despite the stout 17lb line, would induce it to come out. After half an hour of pulling, tugging, straining and cursing, I resolved to put the rod back in its rests until morning when I would be able to swim out to the offending weedbed. I knew that the eel was still hooked because, despite the unyielding nature of the weedbed, I could feel the eel giving an occasional tug. The minutes dragged by with agonising slowness, during which time the eel had, in my mind, attained astronomical proportions.

At last, when it was almost fully light, I decided that the time had come to, quite literally, take the plunge. Having divested myself of my Anguilla hunting apparel with feelings of apprehension and trepidation, and offering a silent prayer to Isaak that no sisters of the angle were contemplating an early morning session at Gun House Pool, I strode boldly forward into the unfathomable depths of the aforementioned inland sea. On reaching the place where the line entered the water vertically, I pulled hard and with my free hand stripped away the fronds of hornwort into which the line descended, until eventually out came ..... a long length of weed.

"Damn and blast!" I exclaimed to Richard who was stood on the bank, grinning like an idiot. "It's got off."

Then I noticed a tail dangling from the bottom of the weed. On clearing the slimy mass of hornwort away, I exposed a none too large and very dead eel. With mixed emotions of surprise, relief and disappointment, I waded ashore. At 3:2, this eel was the smallest from the water by far - the previous smallest being over four pounds.



Another four sessions at Gun House Pool produced two missed runs and a Chub on deadbait - an incident nowhere near as abnormal as the night in 1973 when Richard, fishing the "dead eel" pitch, had two runs with perch deadbait, producing Mirror Carp of 5:15 and 10:6!

The next trip was a return session to Haxby with fellow NAC member Chris Bowyer. Chris had Perch trouble all night, having decided to use worm on a couple of his rods. This was very unfortunate, as one can usually get away with using worm at Haxby, the Perch only putting in an occasional nocturnal feeding session. Luckily, I had all my tackles baited with deadbaits, so escaped their attentions. I had just one run, and that produced an eel of 5:1 $\frac{1}{2}$ . Just what I had done to cause the gods to be so pleased with me, I could not think.

After another couple of blank sessions at Gun House Pool, we decided that it was high time that we made a start on our third water: Elmfield Pond, near York. Our first night there produced an eel of 3:8 $\frac{1}{2}$  to Richard at 06.00. On the following night, it was my turn as I had an eel of 4:4 on the bank before it got fully dark. Thinking that such an auspicious start augured well for our prospects of a bumper Elmfield season - both these eels being bigger than our previous best for the water - I settled down to await further events. By 09.00 the following morning, however, nothing further had happened.

Four weeks later, and still nothing had condescended to pick up our baits at either Elmfield or Gun House Pool. At the end of the fifth week, I took another Elmfield eel: a fish of 4:5. The same week, Richard got one of 4:2. This more than compensated for the intermediate lean spell, and, in fact, we were both rather puzzled as to why all our eels from the water, so far that season, had been bigger than our previous biggest Elmfield eel of 3:5.

After this came another blank period of about a month until, once again, Elmfield broke the monotony with an eel of 3:2 $\frac{1}{2}$  which I took on deadbait at about 07.00 one morning.

This pattern of experiencing a good start to the season with runs on most nights, followed by long periods of eellessness is typical of nearly all our waters and I understand that it is, in fact, a feature of a good many of the smaller eel waters up and down the entire country. It is puzzling that after having apparently fished the water out during the season's initial effort, there is a renewed supply ready for the taking the following spring. All that one can assume is that the initial effort quickly denudes the water of the eels which are accessible at that time. It is as if there are a fixed number of eels that are, for want of a better word, "available" each season. These can be caught quite easily, and so they are: until suddenly, when all but a few of these available eels have been caught, things quite markedly go stale, and this in spite of the fact that the captured eels have, in most cases, been returned to the water alive and, as far as can be ascertained, little the worse for their experience. When the following season arrives, sure enough, another "batch" are ready for the taking. As the saying goes: "There's nothing as queer as eels except for women, and they're a sight easier to catch!"

Accordingly, in the light of these experiences, it was generally agreed that the time of the season had arrived when it would be most judicious and profitable to adjourn to pastures new. In consequence, we decided to spend the next session at a Lake some thirty miles distant. So, on Saturday 17th August, three of us - Richard of the deadbait eating carp fame, John Shaw and myself - set off in search of renewed fortune.

I had never fished this particular water for eels before, although I had spent many a winter session there in pursuit of Pike. Richard and John, however, had spent a night there earlier in the season and had taken several

eels of around 2:0. On this particular evening we were unavoidably delayed in starting off and, in consequence, it was dusk before we arrived at the water. Not being a great lover of setting up my pitch in the dark, I therefore set about the task of tackling up with greater than usual haste.

Because I intended fishing at a range of over fifty yards and would, therefore, have to ensure that the line was sunk quickly to avoid line drift, I decided that it would save time if I cast to the desired spot, closed the bale arms and placed the rods in the rear rests only with the rod tips under the water, thereby giving me extra time to attend to the task of baiting up the next rod as the line sank on its own accord.

I had cast out two outfits baited with one inch sections of small roach and arranged them on the rear rests as described and was in the process of baiting up the third outfit when I noticed a heavy swirl about fifty yards out. "Hm," I thought, "must be a large Carp cruising about." Next instant, one of the outfits which I had already cast out shot forward into the lake, like a cork out of a bottle. I stared down in horror as the rod began to sink. It had only sunk a couple of feet into the gin clear water, when it again zoomed forward straight out into the lake. Without further hesitation, I plunged headlong into the water after it and by a stroke of luck, my frantic groping found its mark. Hanging on to the retrieved tackle for grim death, I was now standing waist deep in the water in the gathering dusk, and connected with what felt like an irate sea monster. Paying scant regard to my soggy predicament, the sea monster set off on a terrifying run, pausing only to swim through a handy weedbed.

Presently, Richard, who had received audible indication in the form of plaintive cries, not to mention watery gurgles, that all was not well, came sprinting round babbling the inevitable silly questions in an endeavour to discover the trouble. Having brought him up to date with the recent cataclysmic events, I continued being played by the sea monster which had, by now, detached a large portion of the weedbed from its rightful place and was having tremendous fun giving it a conducted tour of its domain. Eventually I was able to persuade the monster to part company with the weedbed and from then on we conducted the battle in open water.

At last, after having given birth to three litters of kittens, I was able to bring the gargantuan demersal vertebrate under control and thereby enable Richard to slip the net under a Pike of 21:4.

My first thought was "what a disastrous start to an eel session," for, despite being a keen pike angler, I confess that I was none too pleased to have taken my first "twenty" whilst eel fishing. Eventually, having brought some semblance of order to the chaotic appearance that my pitch had recently assumed, and having replaced my sodden garments with a spare heavy sweater and my trusty tank suit, I was able to resume eel fishing. Astonishingly, I did manage to catch a couple of eels of 2:0 $\frac{1}{2}$  and 2:12 $\frac{1}{2}$ .

After this traumatic experience, I had only one more trip in pursuit of *Anguilla immensus*: a blank trip to Haxby.

As I write, I am, as is usual at this time of year, looking forward to the approaching eel season. As I look out of my window on this ninth day of spring, I cannot help recalling the words of the poet Browning:

"Oh, to be in England, now that April's there,  
For whoever wakes in England sees the snow laid everywhere."  
(Or something like that, anyway.)

Yes, it looks as if my 1975 eel season might open slightly later than usual!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Just a note to say how thrilled I was to receive the bouquet from you all.

I think it was a very nice thought. I do not mind the little things I do for Arthur - posting, etc. - as I know how much the Club means to him and if I can help him in this small way, I will continue to do so.

Thanking you all once again, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

Sheila Sutton,  
15 Westoe Road,  
London N9 OSH

Dear Editor,

In answer to Dave Holman's article, (Bull. 12.4) here is my interpretation of what Dave wrote. Please don't get the wrong impression. As Dave Smith commented, we are all individuals and it is that which makes the Anguilla Club one of, if not the first in specialist clubs.

To start with, the first comment you made regarding the habits of a hooked eel. In my experience, an eel does make for a snag if you let him (her). When I first started eeling I used to fish fairly light - a light carp rod plus 5/7lb line. The water I fished at the time was the river Derwent in Yorkshire where the Selby/Howden road crosses it. Well, being a novice for my first few sessions, I played an eel as one would play an ordinary fish, with the object of tiring it. But every time an eel ran off with the bait and pressure was applied, the eel moved into the bank where it always connected with willow roots or some other snag and no amount of pulling or waiting would shift it. I soon learned to achieve success by changing to a heavier rod and ten pound line. Using this tackle I was able to get the eels out with no messing.

As to dropped baits or pips on the buzzer could they be caused by line bites? It does happen you know. Or, in the case of a bait being touched, I was fishing the Great Ouse last season with a  $3\frac{1}{2}$ lb test rod and 12lb line and experienced these types of bite. In fact, it happened quite a lot. So, instead of lying back, I sat over my rods and as soon as the beep sounded, I struck. Lo and behold I caught a Roach! This happened several times, so it was no fluke. Could this be the answer? It did not happen on deadbait.

One thing I do agree with is the point about wire traces. I too am convinced that it does affect the way an eel takes, or, indeed, whether it takes at all. But what else can you do when some eels can be likened to Dracula (teeth wise). Perhaps the Club could prepare details as to which areas/waters have the most teathy eels. That could be interesting to know. What do others think?

Anyway, to finish, when I hook the big one I intend to land it (sorry)!

Cheers,

Tony Hollerbach,  
39, High Street,  
Wymington, Northants.

THE BULLETIN - AN OPEN LETTER

By Henry Hansen.

Up until the end of last year, I was getting used to receiving a Bulletin very spasmodically (if at all). I mean no offence to anyone concerned with it at that time: I fully realise the effort that has to go into such a thing and also that Bulletin articles are not always plentiful at the best of times! When I heard that the Bulletin was to be produced virtually every month, my heart sank, and I'm not afraid to admit it. I was worried, and I'm sure that other members were too, that due to this more frequent production, both quantity and quality of the Bulletin was bound to suffer. I'm certain that members can tolerate a sparse issue as long as a reasonable standard is maintained.

It was with some fear and trepidation that I read through the first of the "new style" issues. How wrong I was! It was simply excellent, quantity as well as quality. Was this, perhaps, just initial enthusiasm, or was it a real turning point as far as the Bulletin was concerned? Subsequent issues have reinforced the point and left my mind in no doubt. The Bulletin is on the way up and, for me, it is now at its most healthiest state ever, and this is obviously a good thing for the club.

How is it then that the Bulletin has suddenly developed into this favourable position? There are two main reasons. The first being the re-election of Dave Smith as Editor - now back to his old self again and as enthusiastic and resourceful as ever. Dave is a decided asset to the Club, doing a grand job.

The second reason, equally important as the first, is the fact that at long last Club members appear to have realised what the Bulletin is for and, as such, are using it. As long as members realise that it is for them and, equally, is written by them, it will continue to go from strength to strength.

No member, new or old, should be wary of writing anything, for I feel sure that all submitted articles will be published, in one form or another, no matter how light hearted, serious or controversial. I am of the opinion that light hearted pieces have their place as well as the more usual serious ones: I don't think it does any good to be too serious all the time.

It merely leaves me to conclude by saying: "Well done, Dave, keep up the good work, and when is the next episode of SLASH coming out?"